



RESEARCH ON MEN'S PERCEPTION OF GENDER EQUALITY IN THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA

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Foreword

Dear readers,

Gender equality has long ceased to be an expression of goodwill or a matter of choice. It is a constitutional obligation and an integral part of international treaties that the Republic of Serbia has accepted. Yet, a decade after the first Special Report of the Commissioner for the Protection of Equality on Discrimination against Women, and a year after its second edition, data show that formal equality in Serbia still does not follow the distribution of real power in the family, on the labour market and in public life. The extent to which gender equality is actually achieved depends not only on laws and institutions, but also on the attitudes, expectations and everyday decisions of those who participate in these relations.

That is precisely why the research before you was necessary. The research on men's perceptions of gender equality in the Republic of Serbia, with a special focus on inheritance rights, is the first comprehensive research on men's attitudes in Serbia in the past ten years. It is a logical continuation of the research cycle that the Commissioner for the Protection of Equality, with the support of the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit GIZ GmbH, began in 2024 with two studies dedicated to the female perspective — a study on the perception of women at a greater risk of discrimination and a study on inheritance rights and attitudes towards inheritance. These studies provided the first systematic picture of women's experience, but left an open question that could only be answered by direct conversation with men: how they see gender equality in Serbia, what they expect from it, where they resist it, and what patterns of behaviour they recognise, justify or change.

This study fits into the continuity of the work of the Commissioner for the Protection of Equality, an institution that, over the past fifteen years of its existence, has built a systematic practice of recognising, documenting and addressing discrimination against women in all areas of social life. Special reports on discrimination against women, regular annual reports to the National Assembly, opinions, recommendations and actions taken on complaints form a comprehensive network through which the Commissioner, in accordance with his legal powers, contributes to the construction of a more equal society. The following findings will be incorporated into that network, through recommendations and activities that the Commissioner will direct towards state bodies, local self-government units, employers, media, educational institutions, the judiciary and civil society organisations.

I would especially like to emphasise that this research was prepared within the framework of the German International Cooperation project “Support for Social Inclusion in Serbia”, implemented by Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit GIZ GmbH with the Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veteran and Social Affairs and the Ministry of Human and Minority Rights and Social Dialogue. Our gratitude to the partners is not formal; without their continuous support, this research cycle, which for the first time in Serbia provides comparative data on the views of women and men on key domains of gender equality, would not have been possible. I also owe

special gratitude to all the research participants who took the time to share their views on issues that are often not touched upon in the public space.

As the Commissioner for the Protection of Equality, I want this publication to be seen not only as a source of data, but as an invitation to partnership. Men in Serbia are not an obstacle to gender equality — they are, together with women, one of its most important carriers. Changing social patterns that lead to real equality does not come by itself, it is a joint effort of all of us, both women and men, institutions and families, decision-makers and citizens who live this society day after day. Therefore, I call on all stakeholders in society to use the findings of this research to advance equality between men and women, and especially to change the social and cultural patterns of behaviour that produce and maintain inequality.



Milan Antonijević

Commissioner for the Protection of Equality

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Definitions of key terms

In order to ensure a uniform understanding of the text, the following are definitions of key terms used in the study. The definitions are based on international instruments and domestic legislation.

Sex – the biological characteristics that determine whether people are male or female.

Gender – the socially determined roles, opportunities, behaviours, activities, and attributes that society considers appropriate for women and men, including the relationships between them.

Gender equality – a state in which women and men have equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities, equal participation and balanced representation in all areas of social life, as well as equal opportunities to exercise rights and freedoms, use personal knowledge and abilities for personal and social development, have equal access to goods and services and achieve equal benefits from the results of work, while respecting the different interests, needs and priorities of women and men.

Equal opportunities – equal exercise of rights and freedoms of women and men, equal treatment and equal participation in political, economic and other spheres, including all stages of planning and decision-making.

Formal equality – the principle according to which everyone is equal before the law and the same rules and rights apply to everyone, without making distinctions based on personal characteristics.

Substantive equality – the principle according to which existing social and structural inequalities are recognised and measures are taken to ensure that everyone has equal opportunities to exercise their rights in practice.

Special measures – measures in favour of persons or groups in an unequal position, including the underrepresented sex, aimed at accelerating the achievement of full equality in practice. As a rule, they are targeted, proportionate and linked to the achievement of the objective, they are applied until the objective for which they were introduced is achieved, and they do not constitute discrimination when they serve to eliminate structural inequalities.

Discrimination – any unjustified distinction, unequal treatment or omission, including exclusion, restriction or preference, based on real or perceived personal characteristics, including sex and gender, which has the purpose or effect of impairing or nullifying the equal enjoyment of rights and freedoms.

Direct discrimination – action that places a person or group in a less favourable position than other persons in the same or similar situation due to a personal characteristic.

Indirect discrimination – an apparently neutral rule, criterion or practice that places a particular group of persons at a disadvantage based on a personal characteristic, unless it is objectively justified by a legitimate aim and appropriate and necessary means.

Multiple discrimination – discrimination based on two or more personal characteristics simultaneously, where the impact of individual grounds of discrimination can be analytically distinguished.

Intersectional discrimination – discrimination that arises through the interweaving of multiple personal characteristics in a way that produces specific, combined patterns of disadvantage where the impact of individual grounds cannot be separated or reduced to their simple sum.

Harassment – unwanted conduct based on or related to a personal characteristic, which has the purpose or effect of violating the dignity of a person and creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment.

Sexual harassment – any unwanted verbal, non-verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature that has the purpose or effect of violating a person's dignity or personal integrity, especially if it causes fear or creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment.

Gender stereotypes – simplified and generalised beliefs, expectations and ideas about the characteristics, abilities, behaviour and roles of women and men, based on sex, or gender, which can influence unequal treatment, limit personal choices and contribute to maintaining the unequal position of women and men in society.

Gender norms – social expectations about what women and men should be like and how they should behave.

Gender roles – a set of expected responsibilities and tasks that are typically attributed to women and men in a particular society.

Gender-based violence – violence directed against a person or group because of their sex or gender, including violence that disproportionately affects a particular gender; it can be physical, sexual, psychological, economic and social, including threats, in public or private life.

Violence against women – a violation of human rights and a form of discrimination against women, and includes acts of gender-based violence that result in or are likely to result in physical, sexual, psychological or economic, or financial harm or suffering, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life.

Domestic violence – physical, sexual, psychological or economic violence within the family or household, or between current or former spouses or partners, regardless of whether the perpetrator shares or has previously shared the same residence with the victim.

Economic violence – forms of behaviour that limit or control access to money, property, labour, and resources, including withholding information, pressure regarding the disposal of property, and preventing economic independence.

Unpaid domestic work – unpaid activities necessary for maintaining a household, including meal preparation, cleaning, laundry, shopping for household needs, running the household, caring for and looking after children, elderly and sick family members, farm work, and other similar unpaid work.

Unpaid care work – unpaid activities of providing care and support to household or family members, including caring for children, the elderly, the sick and people with disabilities, as well as organising and coordinating care.

Inheritance rights – a set of legal rules that regulate the transfer of property and rights in the event of death, including the right to inheritance, inheritance shares, the procedure for exercising rights, and the formalisation of rights through documents and registers.

Inheritance practices – customary patterns and informal rules in families and communities that in practice guide or determine the distribution of property, regardless of legal standards.

Gender mainstreaming – a method of achieving and promoting gender equality through the systematic inclusion of a gender perspective in all policies, plans and practices and through a prior assessment of the impact of regulations and measures on the position of women and men.

Access to justice – the ability of a person to obtain information, advice and legal assistance and to use effective institutional mechanisms for the protection of rights, including proceedings before authorities and courts, without disproportionate obstacles.

Vulnerable social groups – groups that, due to personal characteristics and/or social status, are exposed to an increased risk of discrimination, exclusion and unequal access to rights and services.

Commissioner for the Protection of Equality – an autonomous and independent state body of the Republic of Serbia responsible for protection against discrimination and promotion of equality, established by the Law on the Prohibition of Discrimination, with the authority to act on complaints, provide opinions and recommendations, monitor the situation in the field of protection against discrimination and report to the National Assembly.

1. Introduction

Gender equality in international and domestic law is a fundamental principle of human rights and an integral part of the right to equality and non-discrimination. Its normative content goes beyond formal equality before the law and includes the obligation of the state to refrain from all forms of discrimination against women, to provide effective protection against discrimination by private individuals, organisations and enterprises, and to actively build conditions in which equality is achieved in everyday relationships. These obligations of the state cannot be effectively implemented without systematic knowledge of the attitudes and patterns of behaviour in the population. The implementation of this research specifically on the male population is justified given that men have so far been insufficiently covered in domestic research. This is particularly important in the context of Article 5 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and Article 12 of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence, which oblige the state to take appropriate measures to change social and cultural patterns of behaviour of women and men based on prejudices and stereotypical roles, so getting to know the views of men is also crucial in order to develop educational, media and public policy measures in this area. Men's views on gender equality are therefore not just a private matter of individuals, nor a value preference. They are one of the mechanisms in which gender equality is reproduced or contested in everyday social relations, and as such represent a legitimate and legally relevant subject of public research.

There are several immediate reasons for launching a comprehensive survey of men's attitudes towards gender equality in the Republic of Serbia in 2026. In 2025, the Commissioner for the Protection of Equality published a Special Report on Discrimination against Women for the period 2015–2025, which indicates that discrimination against women in Serbia occurs as a permanent pattern, not as a series of individual incidents, and that formal equality does not follow the distribution of real power in key areas of social life. This raises the question of the causes and mechanisms of discrimination, which cannot be comprehensively understood without data on men's attitudes. A special focus on the topic of attitudes towards inheritance is justified by the results of the study “Trapped in Violence”, published by IDEAS in 2025, which indicates that women in situations of domestic violence are often economically dependent on their abusive partner, with 46% of women stating that their partner makes all financial decisions in the household. The same study shows that almost half of women who are financially dependent on their partner remain in an abusive relationship for more than five years (48%), compared to 22% of women who are financially independent. Understanding men's attitudes towards women's inheritance rights becomes, in this context, part of a broader legal and public debate on the economic prerequisites for protection from violence.

The research context is also important. During 2024, two surveys were conducted on a representative sample for the territory of the Republic of Serbia, with a focus on women: a survey on the perception of women at higher risk of discrimination on gender equality, on a sample of

1,207 respondents, and a survey on inheritance rights and attitudes towards inheritance in Serbia, on a sample of 1,196 respondents. These surveys systematically documented women's views and experiences in both areas, but left open the question of the male perspective. The existence of a comparative women's database from the previous two years makes the present moment suitable for collecting data on a sample of men, as it allows for a systematic comparison between the two perspectives.

Comparative data further support the need for this research. The Gender Equality Index for the Republic of Serbia, calculated in 2021 according to the methodology of the European Institute for Gender Equality on data from 2018, is 58.0 units compared to the average of the European Union member states of 67.4 units. The Eurobarometer 545 on Gender Stereotypes, conducted in the European Union member states in early 2024, does not cover Serbia and therefore does not allow for direct statistical comparison with the domestic population. However, it provides an important comparative framework for understanding the prevalence of gender stereotypes.

Finally, the research is also important in the context of the accession of the Republic of Serbia. Directive (EU) 2022/2381 on gender balance on the management bodies of listed companies requires Member States to ensure that members of the under-represented sex hold at least 40% of non-executive director positions or at least 33% of all director positions by 30 June 2026. Directive (EU) 2023/970 on pay transparency introduces new obligations regarding the disclosure of pay criteria and reporting on the gender pay gap. Directive (EU) 2024/1500 on standards for equality bodies further strengthens the institutional framework for protection against discrimination in the field of equal treatment and equal opportunities for women and men in matters of employment and occupation. Since Serbia is not a member state of the European Union, these directives do not create direct obligations for Serbia as for member states, but they represent relevant standards of the European Union *acquis* in the process of accession and harmonisation of domestic legislation. In this process, data on the attitudes of the domestic population in the areas covered by these instruments represent a necessary analytical basis for the formulation of accompanying policies and measures.

This research was conducted within the framework of the German International Cooperation project "Support to Social Inclusion in Serbia" (SIP), which is being implemented in the period from April 2023 to September 2026. The project is funded by the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development — BMZ, in line with the gender-responsive approach to development cooperation of the Federal Republic of Germany, which prioritises strengthening the rights, representation and resources of women in partner countries. The project is implemented by the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit, GIZ, in cooperation with the Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veteran and Social Affairs and the Ministry for Human and Minority Rights and Social Dialogue.

The institutional user of the research is the Commissioner for the Protection of Equality of the Republic of Serbia, an autonomous and independent state body established by the Law on the Prohibition of Discrimination. The Commissioner has the authority to act on complaints regarding discrimination, to provide opinions and recommendations, to monitor the situation in the field of protection against discrimination and to submit an annual report on work to the National Assembly, as well as special reports on individual areas of discrimination when there are particularly important reasons for this.

The field part of the research, including the implementation of a quantitative survey and the organisation of focus groups, was conducted in cooperation with the Faktor Plus agency,

specialising in public opinion research. The analytical processing of the data and the preparation of the publication were carried out by a research team of experts, in close cooperation with the expert service of the Commissioner for the Protection of Equality and with the advisors of the SIP project.

The results of the survey have several specific channels of institutional use. First, they contribute to the Commissioner's regular annual report to the National Assembly, in the part relating to the assessment of the state of play in the field of combating discrimination and promoting equality. Second, they represent an empirical basis for possible proposals for amendments to legislation, especially in the field of inheritance law, prevention of domestic violence, gender equality and prohibition of discrimination. Third, they are used to identify future activities of the Commissioner in the field of combating discrimination and promoting gender equality, including opinions, recommendations, public campaigns and educational activities. Finally, the research also contributes through the creation of comparative data at the European Union level.

2. Legal and analytical framework

Gender equality in contemporary international and domestic law is not merely a principle of formal equality before the law. It is at the same time a fundamental human right, a measure of the development of the legal order and a measure of the achieved democracy. Its legal content is explicitly regulated by Article 2 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women,¹ which obliges member states to take a set of interrelated measures: to introduce the principle of equality of men and women into their constitutions or other appropriate regulations and to ensure its practical implementation; to adopt appropriate legislative and other measures, including sanctions where necessary, prohibiting all forms of discrimination against women; to introduce the protection of women's rights on an equal basis with men and to ensure effective protection of women against any act of discrimination through the competent national courts and other public institutions; refraining from any act or practice of discrimination against women and ensuring that public authorities and institutions act in accordance with this obligation; taking all necessary measures to eliminate discrimination against women by any person, organisation or enterprise; amending or repealing existing laws, regulations, customs and practices that constitute discrimination against women; and abolishing all domestic penal provisions that discriminate against women. These obligations are systematised in the interpretation of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women through three interrelated dimensions: the obligation of the State to refrain from discrimination, the obligation to protect women from discrimination by private actors, including individuals, organisations and enterprises, and the obligation to actively ensure substantive equality in everyday relations, and not only in the text of regulations. In the domestic legal order, these obligations are primarily elaborated through the Constitution of the Republic of Serbia, the Law on Gender Equality and the Law on the Prohibition of Discrimination.² The constitutional

¹ Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, 18 December 1979, 1249 UNTS 13 ("Official Gazette of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia — International Treaties", No. 11/81) (hereinafter referred to as: CEDAW), Article 2 of the

² Constitution of the Republic of Serbia, "Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia", Nos. 98/2006 and 115/2021 (hereinafter referred to as: the Constitution); the Law on Gender Equality, "Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia", No. 52/2021 (hereinafter referred to as: the LGE). The Constitutional Court of the Republic of Serbia, in the case IUZ-85/2021, at the 8th session held on 27 June 2024, initiated proceedings to determine the unconstitutionality of the Law on Gender Equality and suspended the execution of an individual act or action taken on the basis of the provisions of that law. According to the status verified on 1 June 2026, the proceedings were ongoing, and the aforementioned suspension remained relevant for the application of the provisions of the Law; Law on the Prohibition of Discrimination, "Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia", Nos. 22/2009 and 52/2021.

basis of gender equality is contained primarily in Article 15 of the Constitution, which stipulates that the state shall guarantee equality between women and men and develop a policy of equal opportunities. This guarantee is supplemented by the general prohibition of discrimination in Article 21 of the Constitution, which guarantees the equality of all before the Constitution and the law, the right to equal legal protection without discrimination, and prohibits all direct and indirect discrimination, including discrimination on the basis of sex. In the same article, the Constitution also emphasises the importance of special measures, stipulating that measures that the Republic of Serbia may introduce in order to achieve full equality of persons or groups of persons who are in a substantially unequal position with other citizens shall not be considered discrimination. The Law on the Prohibition of Discrimination further specifies the constitutional prohibition of discrimination, and in Article 20 prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex, gender and gender identity, including the denial of rights or recognition of benefits in relation to sex, or gender and gender identity. The Law on Gender Equality, on the other hand, in Article 3 defines gender equality as equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities, equal participation and balanced representation of women and men in all areas of social life. In this way, the domestic legal framework positions gender equality not only as a prohibition of unequal treatment, but also as an obligation to actively create conditions for equal opportunities and the real participation of women and men in public, professional, private and family life.

Precisely because of this character, determining the state of gender equality in a society requires a simultaneous understanding of three layers: the legal framework and its compliance with international standards; the degree of application of these norms in public and private life; as well as the attitudes, values, and behavioural patterns of community members, on which both the application of the legal framework and the legal framework itself that a particular society adopts depend to a large extent.

Only when these layers are brought together does it become clear how much the legal norm actually reaches into everyday life and what obstacles stand between formal recognition and real equality. In this sense, men's attitudes are not a secondary element in the picture of gender equality, but one of its important factors. International and European standards explicitly recognise this: the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action politically guide states towards involving women and men in changing social patterns, the Istanbul Convention legally obliges states parties to encourage all members of society, especially men and boys, to actively contribute to preventing violence, while the general recommendations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women provide an authoritative interpretation of states' obligations with regard to eliminating stereotypes, achieving substantive equality and preventing gender-based violence.³

The areas covered by this analysis — general notions of gender equality, gender stereotypes, unpaid work and parenthood, economic equality and the labour market, property and inheritance, violence and control, political participation and leadership, special measures and multiple

³ Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 15 September 1995, UN Doc. A/CONF.177/20/Rev.1, Annexes I and II; Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence, 11 May 2011, CETS No. 210 ("Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia – International Treaties", No. 12/2013); the Committee for Elimination of Discrimination against Women, General Recommendation No. 28 on the Core Obligations of States Parties under Article 2 of the CEDAW, UN Doc. CEDAW/C/GC/28; Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, General Recommendation No. 35 on gender-based violence against women, General Recommendation No. 19, UN Doc. CEDAW/C/GC/35.

discrimination — represent points where different legal standards intersect and where the gap between regulations and practice is documented. Each of these areas has legal and analytical significance:

- The general perception of equality speaks to the extent to which citizens understand the state of their own society in relation to measurable indicators of inequality;
- Gender stereotypes constitute the basis for state action in accordance with Article 5 of CEDAW and one of the key causes of violence against women;
- The distribution of unpaid work and parental responsibilities has a decisive impact on the position of women in the labour market and their economic independence;
- Property and inheritance represent a space in which formally equal regulations systematically diverge from customary practices;
- Violence against women, including partner control as a form of controlling behaviour, constitutes a form of gender-based discrimination and requires an enhanced state obligation to pay due attention to prevention, protection and punishment;
- Political participation and leadership are a condition for real, not just declarative, democracy;
- Special measures are one of the key tools for eliminating structural inequality;
- Multiple discrimination includes those groups of women who, due to the overlapping of multiple grounds, such as ethnic origin, disability, age, place of residence, and financial status, suffer the most severe forms of discrimination and exclusion.

These areas are linked by a common conceptual framework, and the sequence of presentation leads from general concepts to specific areas in which they are reflected in everyday life. This legal and analytical framework has a dual function: first, to show that the areas covered by the research stem from relevant international, European and domestic standards of gender equality, and to enable the respondents' views to be interpreted not only as individual opinions, but as indicators of the degree of social recognition of structural inequalities and support for measures to eliminate them.

2.1. General idea of gender equality and unequal treatment

The general idea of the degree of achieved gender equality forms the starting point for analysing the state of equality in a society. It does not measure equality directly, but rather the degree to which citizens see the state of their community. The gap between objective indicators of inequality and subjective assessments of its presence, as well as the difference in perception between men and women, is an independent social problem because it directly affects support for policies and measures necessary for the achievement of equality. The specificity of the general idea of equality is that it combines three different layers of ideas: the direct experience of the respondent, the general image of society that the respondent builds from public discourse, and the normative understanding of what the state should be. In the literature on gender equality perceptions, the notion of a gender equality gap refers to a pattern in which male respondents in a number of research contexts overestimate the degree of equality achieved compared to female respondents, a difference that is not a consequence of ignorance of statistics, but rather an expression of the structural position from which the situation is viewed. The European Institute for Gender Equality found in a 2025 report that perceptions of gender equality vary significantly across member

states, gender and generation, with women, particularly in the areas of work and advancement, more likely than men to perceive unequal treatment, while men are more likely to perceive equal treatment or equal opportunities.⁴

In order to contribute to a better understanding of the perception of the degree of achieved gender equality, as well as the gender gap in Serbia, this research attempts to answer several analytical questions. One is the relationship between the general assessment of equality and assessments in individual areas. The second relates to which areas society recognises as areas in which there is the greatest degree of inequality, while the third question relates to the extent to which there is a difference in perception between men and women, i.e., to what extent the gender gap is expressed in Serbia. It should be borne in mind that the responses of men suggesting that women are in an equal or more favourable position can be interpreted as a reaction to a perceived decrease in relative advantage, which is a mechanism in which the loss of previous superiority, experienced as a natural state, is subjectively perceived as a personal loss, although objectively no one has lost rights, but only another group has gained them.

Obligations of the state

Citizens are not required to have accurate knowledge of statistics, but a significant deviation of public perception from objective indicators of inequality, especially if such deviation is a consequence or reflection of entrenched gender stereotypes and prejudices, indicates the need for the state, in accordance with its obligations under Article 5(a) of CEDAW, to take measures aimed at eliminating such prejudices, including educational measures and awareness-raising measures in the media and public space.

Data on the perception of gender equality in Serbia are available from several relevant sources. According to the findings of a 2024 survey by the Commissioner for the Protection of Equality, 41.7% of respondents believe that gender equality has been achieved in Serbia, while 45.9% believe that it has not, and only 4.6% state that equality has been fully achieved.⁵ The areas in which inequality is most pronounced are identified by respondents as caring for children and family members (45.6%), property and income (41.1%), and access to leadership positions (34.0%). When it comes to the perception of the areas in which women are most often exposed to discrimination, respondents most often associate discrimination with work and employment (63%), followed by social protection (29.7%), education (22.1%), and housing (20.5%). The Special Report of the Commissioner for the Protection of Equality on Discrimination against Women in the Period 2015–2025 formulates the systemic conclusion that discrimination against women in Serbia occurs as a permanent pattern, not as an individual incident, and that formally guaranteed equality is not accompanied by an equal distribution of power in key areas of social

⁴ European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE), *Perception to Policy: Dismantling Gender Stereotypes in the European Union* (Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2025) (hereinafter referred to as: EIGE).

⁵ Ivana Krstić, Marko Milanović, *Research on the perception of women at greater risk of discrimination on gender equality* (Belgrade: Commissioner for the Protection of Equality, 2024) (hereinafter referred to as: Krstić and Milanović, *Research on the perception of women in 2024*).

and political decision-making.⁶ The Gender Equality Index for Serbia, published in 2021 and calculated according to the methodology of the European Institute for Gender Equality based on data from 2018, is 58.0, while the average for the European Union member states is 67.4. By individual domains, Serbia records the lowest value in the domain of power (46.5) and the domain of time (48.7), while the highest value is achieved in the domain of health (84.1).⁷ The IMAGES Serbia survey, conducted using the International Men and Gender Equality Survey methodology in November and December 2017 and published in 2018, shows that, on the GEM scale from 0 to 3, men achieved an average score of 1.73 and women 1.99, with 0 indicating the most negative and 3 the most affirmative attitude towards gender equality.⁸ Although both sexes are in the zone of moderate egalitarianism, the difference of 0.26 points indicates that women express less conservative, or more affirmative, attitudes towards gender equality than men. Education appears to be the strongest predictor of egalitarian attitudes, as men with the lowest level of education achieve an average value of 1.57, and those with the highest level 1.88. This makes education one of the most important predictors of egalitarian attitudes, especially within the male sample. From a generational perspective, the most egalitarian group of men is not the youngest respondents, but those between the ages of 25 and 30, with an average value of 1.84, which raises the question of whether there is a shift away from egalitarian values in the youngest generation. The aforementioned IMAGES survey also shows that 46.5% of men disagree that “equality between women and men has been achieved in our society”, while the remaining 53.5% agree with this statement or take a neutral position towards it, which indicates that there is a divided opinion among men about the degree of equality achieved. About 70% of men disagree with the statement that “more rights for women means fewer rights for men”, which suggests that zero-sum logic is a minority, but not a marginal phenomenon.

2.2. Gender stereotypes, norms and roles

Gender stereotypes in modern anti-discrimination law represent a normatively relevant legal category, which means that they impose on states the obligation to recognise, prevent and eliminate them. Article 5 (a) of CEDAW explicitly obliges states to take “all appropriate measures” to change the social and cultural patterns of behaviour of men and women, with the aim of eliminating prejudices and customary and all other practices based on the idea of the inferiority or superiority of either sex, or on stereotypical roles of men and women.⁹ This obligation is systemic and applies to legislative, educational, cultural, media and other measures within the competence of the state. The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women in General Recommendation No. 28 emphasises that the obligation under Article 5(a) is not exhausted by the prohibition of discrimination, but requires active State action to review and reshape educational content, media messages and cultural practices.¹⁰ Further development of this standard is evident in General Recommendation No. 35, which recognises gender stereotypes

⁶ Commissioner for the Protection of Equality, *Special Report on Discrimination against Women 2015–2025* (Belgrade: Commissioner for the Protection of Equality, 2025) (hereinafter referred to as: Commissioner's Special Report 2025).

⁷ Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia, *Gender Equality Index in the Republic of Serbia* (Belgrade: SORS, 2021) (hereinafter referred to as: SORS, Gender Equality Index 2021).

⁸ Marina Hughson, *Men in Serbia: Changes, Resistances and Challenges — Results of Research on Men and Gender Equality* (IMAGES Serbia) (Belgrade: Centre E8, 2018) (hereinafter referred to as: Hughson, *Men in Serbia — IMAGES Serbia*).

⁹ CEDAW, Article 5(a).

¹⁰ Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, General Recommendation No. 28 on the core obligations of States parties under Article 2 of CEDAW, UN Doc. CEDAW/C/GC/28.

as one of the structural causes of gender-based violence against women.¹¹ At the same time, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, especially in Area J dedicated to women and the media, points to the importance of combating stereotypical portrayals of women as a prerequisite for achieving genuine gender equality.¹²

The Istanbul Convention, in Article 12, specifies the obligation under Article 5 of CEDAW in the context of preventing violence, by stipulating that States Parties shall take the necessary measures to modify the social and cultural patterns of behaviour of women and men with the aim of eradicating prejudices, customs, traditions and all other practices based on the idea of the inferiority of women or on stereotypical roles of men and women. Articles 13 and 14 oblige to conduct public awareness-raising campaigns and to include teaching content on non-stereotypical gender roles in formal curricula at all levels of education, where appropriate to the age and educational context. In domestic law, the Law on Gender Equality defines gender stereotypes in Article 6, regulates obligations in the field of education in Article 37, and obligations in the field of public information in Article 44. The domestic framework is further comprised of the Law on Public Information and Media and the Law on Electronic Media, which provide the legal basis for action regarding discriminatory content, hate speech, insults to dignity and other unacceptable content in public information and electronic media.¹³

When discussing gender stereotypes, it is particularly important to keep in mind that they operate not only through overtly negative attitudes about women, but also through seemingly positive expectations that place women in predetermined social roles. Therefore, the concept of ambivalent sexism is important for interpreting the findings of this research, according to which attitudes towards women have two interconnected components: hostile sexism, which is based on beliefs that women are less capable, less rational, or less suitable for leadership roles, and benevolent sexism, which portrays women as individuals who need special protection and values them primarily through the qualities of caring, tenderness, and dedication to family. Although the second component can be presented as positive, both serve to maintain the gender hierarchy, as women are valued in relation to stereotypical expectations, rather than as equal actors in private, public, professional, and political life.

Given that gender stereotypes do not only act as individual beliefs, but also as patterns that influence the acceptance or rejection of public policies aimed at gender equality, this research starts from several related analytical questions. The first question refers to the gap between the principled acceptance of gender equality and the willingness to support concrete changes in the family, professional and public roles of women and men. The aim is to examine the extent to which support for equality remains declarative, or to what extent it decreases when equality implies a reassessment of the traditional division of roles, a redistribution of power or a change in the usual expectations of women and men. The second question refers to gender and generational differences in attitudes. The research examines in which dimensions these differences are most pronounced, especially when it comes to resistance to the process of achieving gender equality. This is also important in light of comparative European data indicating a growing polarisation between young women and young men in terms of value orientations, attitudes towards feminism and support for equality policies. Finally, the research also examines attitudes towards media

¹¹ CEDAW General Recommendation No.

¹² Beijing Platform, Critical Area J, Strategic Objective J.2.

¹³ The LGE; Articles 37 and 44; Law on Public Information and Media, "Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia", Nos. 92/2023 and 51/2025; Law on Electronic Media, "Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia", Nos. 92/2023 and 51/2025.

representation as a specific area of reproduction of gender stereotypes. The research seeks to determine the extent to which the public recognises stereotypical portrayals of women and men in the media as a social problem. This dimension is important because the degree of recognition of media stereotypes is an indicator of social sensitivity to more subtle forms of discrimination, but also a prerequisite for the effectiveness of public policies and legal protection in the field of public information and the media.

Obligations of the state

Since gender stereotypes represent one of the structural causes of discrimination and mechanisms through which gender inequality is maintained in society, and at the same time are one of the key causes of gender-based violence, the state, in accordance with Article 5, paragraph (a) of CEDAW, Article 12 of the Istanbul Convention and relevant provisions of the domestic anti-discrimination framework, is obliged to undertake systemic measures aimed at identifying, preventing and eliminating stereotypes, including educational and media interventions aimed at overcoming stereotypical notions of the roles of women and men.

The empirical basis for the analysis of gender stereotypes in Serbia is well documented, and the structure of the existing findings allows for a direct comparison with the findings of Eurobarometer 545, which was conducted in 2024.¹⁴ According to the Survey on the Perception of Women at Greater Risk of Discrimination, there is a significant division among women in relation to gender stereotypes. Thus, when it comes to the role of women, 38.6% of respondents accept the statement that a woman must primarily fulfil herself as a wife and mother, while 31.1% reject it. When it comes to the role of men, 32.9% of respondents accept the thesis that the most important role of men is to earn money, while 40.4% reject it. The majority of respondents (51.7%) agree that women predominantly base their decisions on emotions, which indicates the survival of stereotypes about the emotional nature of women's reasoning. At the same time, 69.4% of the respondents accept the statement that it is acceptable for men to cry, which may indicate a certain re-examination of traditional gender norms that associate emotional restraint with masculinity. Together, these findings confirm that the gap between formal equality and internal representations of roles is not exclusively a characteristic of the male population. The media plays a special role in the reproduction of gender stereotypes. Stereotypical portrayals of women in the media and advertising are recognised by 45% of the respondents as an existing problem, while 27.4% believe that the problem does not exist, and 24.1% are not sure.

Eurobarometer 545 provides a comparative basis for each of the ten statements examined in the questionnaire of this survey, and since the data in that survey are broken down by gender, the results for the male subsample in the European Union are presented below, as directly comparable with the male population in Serbia. The statement that it is acceptable for men to cry is accepted by 83% of men in the EU, with the overall national results ranging from 98% in Sweden to 64% in Romania, indicating that in the domain of men's emotional expression, the European

¹⁴ Krstić and Milanović, *Research on the perception of women in 2024*; European Commission, Special Eurobarometer 545: Gender Stereotypes (Brussels: Directorate-General for Justice and Consumers, 2024) (hereinafter referred to as: Eurobarometer 545).

standard has significantly shifted towards accepting gender equality, but still with pronounced regional differences. The statement that women make decisions driven by emotions more often than men is accepted by 62% of men in the EU, and the statement that the most important role of men is to earn money is accepted by 45% of men in the EU, with a range between countries from 75% in Slovakia to 11% in Sweden. The statement that the most important role of women is to take care of the home and family is accepted by 40% of men in the EU, with a range between 74% in Bulgaria to 10% in Denmark. This section shows the ranges between countries in the EU, in order to approximate the significant differences that exist at the EU level. The statement that it is equally important for women and men to be financially independent finds the strongest consensus in the entire survey, as it is accepted by 89% of men in the EU. The statement that men should have the final say in important family decisions is accepted by 24%, while the statement that raising children gives a woman a greater sense of fulfilment than a man is agreed by 41% of men. The statement that it is unattractive when women publicly express strong opinions is accepted by 24% of men. When it comes to the issue of shared benefits from gender equality, 73% of men in the EU accept that men would also benefit from greater equality. One of the most pronounced gender gaps among the above statements occurs in the view that feminism has gone too far, which is accepted by 52% of men compared to 39% of women, a difference of thirteen percentage points.

2.3. Unpaid work and parenthood

Unpaid domestic work and care for family members represent economically and socially significant work that has long remained outside the formal concept of work and economic valuation. In modern anti-discrimination law, this area is taking on an increasingly important place, because the uneven distribution of unpaid work directly affects women's access to the labour market, opportunities for professional advancement, acquisition of property, economic independence and participation in public life. Therefore, international, European and domestic standards increasingly clearly require the state to recognise this work, measure it and, through public policies, reduce its disproportionate distribution between women and men.

At the universal level, target 5.4 of the United Nations 2030 Agenda establishes a development standard that requires States to recognise and value unpaid domestic work and care work through public services, infrastructure and social protection policies, and to promote shared responsibility within the household and family, in accordance with national circumstances.¹⁵ The corresponding indicator 5.4.1 operationally monitors the proportion of time spent on unpaid domestic work and care work, disaggregated by sex, age and place of residence.¹⁶

CEDAW, in Article 5, obliges States to ensure that family education includes a proper understanding of motherhood as a social function and recognition of the shared responsibility of men and women in the upbringing and development of children, while Articles 11 and 16 elaborate on obligations relating to parenthood, protection from discrimination on grounds of pregnancy and maternity, paid maternity leave, childcare services and equal rights and responsibilities of parents in family relations.¹⁷ General Recommendation No. 29 of the Committee

¹⁵ UN General Assembly, Transforming our world: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, Resolution A/RES/70/1 of 25 September 2015, Goal 5, target 5.4.

¹⁶ UN Statistical Commission, Methodological Manual for Sustainable Development Indicator 5.4.1 (proportion of time spent on unpaid domestic work and care, disaggregated by sex, age and place of residence).

¹⁷ CEDAW, Art. 5(b), 11 para. 2 and 16 para. 1(d).

on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women addresses the economic consequences of marriage, family relations and their termination, emphasising that substantive equality must address the impact of gender roles, childcare and non-financial contributions on women's economic capacity and the distribution of property after the termination of the union.¹⁸

In European Union law, the key instrument is Directive 2019/1158 on work-life balance for parents and carers.¹⁹ It sets minimum standards aimed at a more equal sharing of family and caring responsibilities between women and men, including the right to at least ten working days of paternity leave following the birth of a child, at least four months of parental leave for each parent, of which at least two months are non-transferable, and at least five working days of annual leave for carers. The Directive also recognises the right of parents of children up to the age of eight, as well as carers, to request flexible working arrangements. Directive 92/85/EEC regulates the protection of pregnant women, women who have recently given birth and women who are breastfeeding at work, including the right to at least fourteen weeks of maternity leave, of which at least two weeks are compulsory, as well as protection against dismissal related to pregnancy and maternity.²⁰ For self-employed persons, Directive 2010/41/EU is relevant, which regulates the application of the principle of equal treatment between women and men engaged in an activity in a self-employed capacity, as well as spouses and life partners participating in that activity, including access to adequate compensation in the event of interruption of activity due to pregnancy or maternity.²¹ At the level of fundamental rights, Article 33 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union guarantees the right to protection against dismissal for reasons related to maternity, as well as the right to paid maternity leave and parental leave following the birth or adoption of a child.²²

In domestic law, the Labour Law regulates maternity leave, parental leave, and special child care leave, as well as protection against dismissal during pregnancy, maternity leave, parental leave, and special child care leave.²³ The Law on Financial Support for Families with Children regulates the system of wage compensation, i.e. wage compensation during maternity leave, parental leave, and special child care leave.²⁴ The Law on Gender Equality in Article 6 defines unpaid domestic work as work for which no monetary compensation is received, including running a household, caring for children, elderly and sick family members, work on an agricultural property, and other similar unpaid work. Article 12 of this law regulates the collection and publication of data on

¹⁸ Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, General Recommendation No. 29 on the core obligations of States parties under Article 23 of CEDAW, UN Doc. CEDAW/C/GC/29 (hereinafter referred to as: CEDAW General Recommendation No. 29).

¹⁹ Directive (EU) 2019/1158 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 June 2019 on work-life balance for parents and carers and repealing Council Directive 2010/18/EU, OJ L 188/79.

²⁰ Council Directive 92/85/EEC of 19 October 1992 on the introduction of measures to encourage improvements in the safety and health at work of pregnant women and women who have recently given birth and are breastfeeding, OJ L 348/1.

²¹ Directive 2010/41/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 7 July 2010 on the implementation of the principle of equal treatment between men and women engaged in an activity in a self-employed capacity, OJ L 180/1.

²² European Union (EU), Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, 2012/C 326/02, 14 December 2007.

²³ Labour Law, "Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia", Nos. 24/2005, 61/2005, 54/2009, 32/2013, 75/2014, 13/2017 — decision of the Constitutional Court, 113/2017, 95/2018 — authentic interpretation and 109/2025 — amending law (hereinafter referred to as: LL).

²⁴ The Law on Financial Support for Families with Children, "Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia", Nos. 113/2017, 50/2018, 46/2021 — decision of the Constitutional Court, 51/2021 — decision of the Constitutional Court, 53/2021 — decision of the Constitutional Court, 66/2021, 130/2021, 43/2023 — decision of the Constitutional Court, 62/2023, 11/2024 — decision of the Constitutional Court and 79/2024 (hereinafter referred to as: LFSFC).

unpaid domestic work as part of official statistics, while Article 28 provides for the valuation of the total value of unpaid domestic work and the right to health insurance on this basis for a person who is not insured on another basis.

With this in mind, the following questions of importance for empirical research are raised. The first concerns the perception of how the division of parental responsibilities and household chores should look like, i.e. to what extent men accept as justified traditional claims about the role of the mother as the primary caregiver and about the alleged “natural” male incompetence in household chores. The second question concerns the perception of the existing distribution, i.e. to what extent men recognise that women in the household spend more time on household chores and caring for household members, and to what extent they consider the distribution to be equal. The third covers specific patterns of behaviour at the household level of the respondents, where a comparison between the normative attitude and the actual division of specific activities reveals to what extent the formal acceptance of equality is accompanied by a real change in behaviour. The fourth question concerns the actual or hypothetical use of parental leave by fathers, as an indicator of taking on responsibility for childcare.

Starting from the premise that the unequal distribution of unpaid work is not only a matter of private household organisation, but one of the mechanisms that directly affect the economic position of women, the research looks at this area through three related analytical dimensions. The first relates to value perceptions of parenthood and housework, i.e., the question of the extent to which men accept traditional beliefs about the mother as the primary caregiver and about housework as a primarily “female” responsibility. The second dimension concerns the recognition of the actual distribution of unpaid work in the household. The research examines the extent to which men perceive that women spend more time on housework and caring for household members, and the extent to which they see the existing distribution as equal or fair. This difference is significant because it shows whether inequality in unpaid work is socially recognised as a problem or remains normalised as part of ordinary family life. The third dimension refers to specific patterns of behaviour and willingness to take on responsibility for childcare. A comparison between principled attitudes and the actual division of household activities allows us to determine to what extent the declarative acceptance of equality is accompanied by changes in everyday practices. In this context, the actual or hypothetical use of parental leave by fathers is of particular importance, as an indicator of men's willingness to take an active role in childcare and participate more equally in family responsibilities.

Obligations of the state

Since unpaid household and care work represent economically and socially significant work that is disproportionately distributed to the detriment of women, the state is obliged to take measures for its recognition and more equitable distribution. In this regard, the state is obliged to develop accessible and accessible public care services for children, the elderly and people in need of support, to ensure statistical monitoring and evaluation of unpaid work, to encourage equal use of parental leave and flexible working arrangements, as well as to prevent and sanction less favourable treatment on the basis of pregnancy, maternity, paternity, parenthood and caring responsibilities.

At the national level, the perception of the unequal distribution of housework and care in the household is documented by a survey conducted in 2024 by the Commissioner for the Protection of Equality. According to this survey, 76.6% of respondents believe that women spend more time than men doing housework and caring for household members, while 70.5% support the equal division of housework as a value principle. These data show a high degree of principled recognition and support for a more equal distribution of unpaid work. At the same time, 47.9% of respondents believe that women should be paid for the work they do in the home, which can be interpreted as an expression of recognition of the economic value of unpaid work, but also as an indicator that this work is still primarily associated with women. This is also indicated by the fact that 35.1% of respondents accept the claim that it is right for women to take care of people who need help and support to a much greater extent than men. This finding shows that declarative support for the equal division of household chores does not necessarily imply a complete rejection of the traditional female role in daily family care.²⁵ Data on the actual distribution of time further confirm this imbalance. The publication of the Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia *Time Use in the Republic of Serbia, 2021/2022*, published in 2024, shows that women in Serbia spend an average of 4 hours in unpaid work and 9 minutes per day, while men spend 2 hours and 3 minutes. This means that women spend approximately twice as much time in these activities as men. Expressed as a share of a 24-hour day, unpaid work occupies about 17.3% of women's daily time and 8.5% of men's daily time. The SSO data also show that the gender imbalance in the distribution of unpaid work persists across different types of settlements and educational groups.²⁶

Eurobarometer 545 provides a comparative basis for interpreting the data in this survey. The statement that, overall, family life suffers when the mother works full-time is accepted by 52% of men in the EU, while the statement that parental leave is an enriching experience for the father is accepted by 79% of men, while the statement that men are naturally less competent than women to do housework is agreed by 48% of men. The statement that, if the father's salary is lower than the mother's and the family have to decide who stops working to care for the children, the father should be the one to do so is accepted by 50% of men in the EU.

2.4. Economic equality and the labour market

Economic equality and the position of women in the labour market represent one of the areas where the gap between formal and de facto equality is most clearly observed. Although the right to work, equal pay for work of equal value, protection from discrimination and equal opportunities for advancement have long been an integral part of international, European and domestic legal standards, their formal recognition does not in itself lead to an equal position of women and men in the labour market. The unequal distribution of unpaid work, gender stereotypes about “desirable” occupations and roles for women, discrimination related to pregnancy, maternity and parenthood, as well as limited access to decision-making positions, continue to shape women's economic opportunities. As a result, women in Serbia, as in the European Union, remain exposed to the gender pay gap, horizontal and vertical segregation, slower career advancement and systemic barriers to access to leadership positions.

At the universal level, Article 11 of CEDAW obliges States to take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the field of employment and to ensure equal rights for

²⁵ Krstić and Milanović, *Research on the perception of women in 2024*.

²⁶ Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia, *Time Use in the Republic of Serbia, 2021/2022* (Belgrade: SORS, 2024).

women and men in this field. These rights include the right to work as an inalienable right of all human beings, equal employment opportunities, equal remuneration for work and equal treatment for work of equal value, the right to social security, and the right to protection of health and safety at work, including the protection of the reproductive function. The International Labour Organisation Conventions No. 100 on Equal Remuneration for Work of Equal Value (1951), No. 111 on Discrimination in Respect of Employment and Occupation (1958), No. 156 on Workers with Family Responsibilities (1981) and No. 183 on Maternity Protection (2000) constitute an additional layer of international standards in the field of labour, which are binding on Serbia upon ratification.²⁷ In the law and policies of the European Union, the 2017 European Pillar of Social Rights, through principles 2 (gender equality), 3 (equal opportunities) and 9 (work-life balance), sets a policy and normative framework for the promotion of equal treatment of women and men in the field of work and employment.²⁸

In primary EU law, Article 157(1) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union obliges Member States to ensure the application of the principle of equal pay for equal work or work of equal value, while paragraph 4 of the same article allows for the adoption of measures providing specific advantages for the under-represented sex in order to facilitate access to occupations or to eliminate disadvantages in professional careers. In secondary law, these principles have been elaborated through Directive 2006/54/EC on the implementation of the principle of equal opportunities and equal treatment of men and women in matters of employment and occupation. The Directive consolidated the previous EU *acquis* in this area and regulated the application of the principle of equal treatment in relation to access to employment, including promotion and vocational training, working conditions, including pay, and occupational social security schemes.²⁹ A particularly significant recent intervention is Directive (EU) 2023/970 on pay transparency, which strengthens the application of the principle of equal pay for equal work or work of equal value. It introduces an obligation for criteria for determining wages, wage levels and wage progression to be accessible to workers, objective and gender-neutral, as well as the right of workers to obtain information on their own wage level and average wage levels, disaggregated by sex, for categories of workers performing the same work or work of equal value. The Directive also introduces an obligation for employers with at least 100 employees to periodically report on the gender pay gap, with different deadlines and reporting frequencies

²⁷ International Labour Organisation Convention No. 100 concerning Equal Remuneration for Men and Women Workers for Work of Equal Value, 29 June 1951, C100 ("Official Gazette of the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia – International Treaties", No. 12/1952); International Labour Organisation Convention No. 111 concerning Discrimination in Respect of Employment and Occupation, 25 June 1958, C111 ("Official Gazette of the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia – International Treaties", No. 3/1961); International Labour Organisation Convention No. 156 concerning Equal Opportunities and Treatment for Men and Women Workers (Workers with Family Responsibilities), 23 June 1981, C156 ("Official Gazette of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia – International Treaties", No. 7/1987); International Labour Organisation Convention No. 183 on Maternity Protection, 15 June 2000, C183 ("Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia – International Treaties", No. 1/2010).

²⁸ European Parliament, Council of the European Union and European Commission, Interinstitutional Proclamation on the European Pillar of Social Rights, 17 November 2017, 2017/C 428/09, Official Journal of the European Union, C 428, 13 December 2017, pp. 10–15 (hereinafter referred to as: European Pillar of Social Rights).

²⁹ Directive 2006/54/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 5 July 2006 on the implementation of the principle of equal opportunities and equal treatment of men and women in matters of employment and occupation (recast), OJ L 204/23.

depending on the size of the employer.³⁰ Directive (EU) 2022/2381 on improving the gender balance among directors of companies listed on stock exchanges requires Member States to ensure that such companies reach one of two targets by 30 June 2026: that members of the under-represented sex account for at least 40% of non-executive director positions or at least 33% of all director positions, including executive and non-executive directors.³¹ In addition to quantitative targets, this directive requires transparent election procedures, reporting on the gender composition of management bodies and effective sanctions for infringements of national rules adopted for its implementation.

In domestic law, the basis for the protection of economic equality between women and men in the field of work and employment primarily stems from the Constitution of the Republic of Serbia. Article 15 of the Constitution guarantees equality between women and men and obliges the state to develop a policy of equal opportunities, Article 21 prohibits direct and indirect discrimination on any ground, including sex, while Article 60 guarantees the right to work, free choice of employment, availability of all jobs under equal conditions, fair remuneration for work and protection of dignity at work. This constitutional framework is further elaborated by the Law on the Prohibition of Discrimination, which in Article 16 prohibits discrimination in the field of labour, including the violation of equal opportunities for employment, promotion, professional development, and equal remuneration for work of equal value, while Article 20 specifically prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex, gender, and gender identity, as well as less favourable treatment in connection with pregnancy, maternity leave, and leave for childcare.

Within the framework of labour law, the Labour Law in Article 18 prohibits direct and indirect discrimination against job seekers and employees, including on the grounds of gender, pregnancy, marital status and family responsibilities, while Article 19 defines direct and indirect discrimination. Article 20 prohibits discrimination in relation to employment conditions and selection of candidates, working conditions and all rights arising from employment, education, training and development, promotion and termination of employment contracts, and Article 21 prohibits harassment and sexual harassment. The principle of equal pay for equal work or work of equal value is regulated by Article 104 of the Labour Law.

The Law on Gender Equality further regulates specific obligations in the field of work, employment and self-employment. Article 16 stipulates the obligation of public authorities and employers with more than 50 employees and engaged persons to determine and implement special measures for the achievement and improvement of gender equality within the framework of annual work plans or programmes. In the field of work and employment, Article 28 guarantees equal opportunities and the application of general and special measures regarding access to employment, promotion, payment, working conditions, professional development, flexible working hours and the reconciliation of family and work obligations. Article 29 prohibits discrimination in the field of work and employment on the basis of sex, gender and family status and obliges employers to ensure equal opportunities in the exercise of rights arising from employment and work-related matters. In addition, Article 30 of the Law on Gender Equality

³⁰ Directive (EU) 2023/970 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 10 May 2023 on strengthening the application of the principle of equal pay for men and women for equal work or work of equal value through pay transparency and enforcement mechanisms, OJ L 132/21.

³¹ Directive (EU) 2022/2381 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 November 2022 on improving gender balance among directors of listed companies and on related measures, OJ L 315/44 (hereinafter referred to as: Directive 2022/2381), Art. 5.

refers to the balanced representation of genders in the management and supervisory bodies of employers, Article 31 prohibits dismissal, termination of employment and declaration of an employee as redundant on the grounds of sex, gender, pregnancy, maternity leave, parental leave and special child care leave, and Article 32 prohibits harassment, sexual harassment and sexual blackmail at work and in connection with work. Article 33 protects employees upon return from leave related to pregnancy, maternity, parenthood, adoption, foster care and guardianship, while Article 34 prohibits unequal pay and guarantees equal pay for equal work or work of equal value. The obligations to maintain gender-disaggregated records and report on the achievement of gender equality, including data on salaries, benefits, promotions, dismissals, reports of harassment and the gender structure of management bodies, are regulated by Articles 65 and 66 of the Law on Gender Equality.

When we talk about economic equality, three concepts stand out that help us understand the structural patterns in this area. The first is gender segregation, which occurs in two forms: horizontal segregation refers to the concentration of women in certain industries and occupations, usually lower-paid, such as education, health care, social protection, and retail, while vertical segregation refers to their underrepresentation in higher hierarchical positions within the same occupations. The second are the concepts of the “glass ceiling” and the “sticky floor,” which describe mechanisms that block women’s advancement to the highest positions, or their retention at the lowest — patterns that are often not related to overt discrimination, but to a network of seemingly neutral rules and practices whose cumulative effect produces gender-asymmetric outcomes. The third is the concept of comparable value, which indicates the systematic undervaluation of female-dominated occupations, even when they are functionally comparable to male-dominated occupations, which leads to a real gender wage gap even under conditions of formal application of the principle of equal pay for equal work.

Given that inequalities in the labour market are not exhausted by individual acts of discrimination, but are maintained through structural patterns of employment, promotion, work evaluation and the distribution of family responsibilities, the research before you looks at this area through two related analytical dimensions. The first dimension refers to the recognition of the structural causes of economic inequality between women and men. The research examines the extent to which men in Serbia recognise that the gender wage gap, slower advancement of women and their underrepresentation in management positions are not the result of different abilities, motivations or ambitions, but the result of structural patterns that are reproduced through seemingly neutral practices of employment, work evaluation and professional advancement. In this context, it is particularly important to examine whether stereotypes about women as less ambitious, less committed to their careers or less suitable for management positions are still maintained. The second dimension relates to support for concrete measures to reduce gender inequalities in the labour market. The research examines whether support for gender equality in principle is accompanied by support for instruments for its practical implementation, such as wage transparency, sanctioning discrimination on the grounds of pregnancy, maternity, paternity, or parenthood, as well as measures for a more balanced representation of women in management positions. This dimension is particularly important because it shows the boundary between declarative acceptance of equality and the willingness to support measures that change existing power relations in the sphere of work.

Obligations of the state

The state's obligation in this area is not limited to formally prescribing the prohibition of discrimination, but also includes the development of measures that enable gender inequalities in the labour market to be recognised, prevented, and eliminated in practice. Therefore, the findings on men's attitudes are significant because they show the extent to which the gender pay gap, slower advancement of women, discrimination related to pregnancy, maternity and parenthood, and the underrepresentation of women in decision-making positions are recognised as a consequence of structural inequalities, rather than as a result of individual choices, abilities or ambitions. If research shows that such inequalities are not sufficiently recognised or that there is no support for measures to eliminate them, this indicates the need for the state, in addition to legal protection, to develop information, education, gender-sensitive data collection, and public policies that strengthen the understanding and implementation of gender equality standards in the field of work.

At the national level, a 2024 survey by the Commissioner for the Protection of Equality indicates that work and employment are one of the areas where discrimination against women is most prevalent in Serbia, recognised as such by 63% of respondents. Among the specific obstacles they encounter at work, 42.7% of respondents cite employers' prejudices against women, 38.4% pressure to prioritise family, and 32.9% insufficient protection for pregnant women and mothers at work. At the same time, 79.9% believe that women should have the same career opportunities as men, and 67.3% reject the thesis that women should not be in management positions, which indicates a strong support for equality despite the recognition of structural discrimination.³²

An objective picture of the labour market situation is provided by data from the Republic Statistical Office in the publication *Women and Men in the Republic of Serbia*.³³ The unadjusted gender wage gap in Serbia ranges between 8% and 11% depending on the sector, while the adjusted gap, which takes into account differences in sector, education and work experience, remains significant and shows that part of the wage gap cannot be explained by different individual characteristics of workers.³⁴ Women in Serbia also achieve lower employment and activity rates than men, and the labour market shows pronounced horizontal segregation, with women concentrated in education, health, social protection and retail, while men are dominant in construction, transport, manufacturing and information technology.

Eurobarometer 545 provides a comparative basis for the five statements examined in this survey. The statement that women should prioritise family responsibilities over career is accepted by 36% of men in the European Union, while the statement that women have the same chances of promotion as men is accepted by 57% of men. The statement that men often earn more because

³² Krstić and Milanović, *Research on the perception of women in 2024*.

³³ Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia, *Women and Men in the Republic of Serbia* (Belgrade: SORS, 2024) (hereinafter referred to as: SORS, *Women and Men in the Republic of Serbia*).

³⁴ The unadjusted gender pay gap refers to the difference between the average earnings of women and men without additional statistical consideration of their characteristics, such as their sector of work, education, occupation, or work experience. The adjusted gender pay gap shows the part of the difference that remains after such characteristics are taken into account, and is therefore interpreted as a difference that cannot be explained by available measurable factors.

their jobs are more demanding is accepted by 46% of men, and the statement that men who take parental leave are less ambitious in their careers is accepted by 21% of men. The statement that women do not have enough ambition for top management is accepted by 23% of men.

In a broader European context, Eurostat data on the gender pay gap for 2023 show an EU average of around 12% unadjusted gap in favour of men, with significant differences across Member States.³⁵ The European Commission's 2025 report on gender equality in the European Union documents a stagnation in the gender pay gap over the last three years, with slight improvements in countries that have introduced pay transparency measures.³⁶

2.5. Property and equality in inheritance

At the universal level, Article 15 of CEDAW guarantees women equality with men before the law and grants them, in civil matters, legal capacity identical to that of men, in particular with regard to the conclusion of contracts and the management of property. Article 16 expressly provides for the equality of spouses in the right to own, acquire, manage, use and dispose of property. General Recommendation No. 21 of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women stresses that formal equality in family and property relations is not sufficient if customary practices, social pressures or stereotypical expectations prevent women from effectively enjoying property rights.³⁷ General Recommendation No. 29 further develops this standard in the context of the economic consequences of marriage, family relationships and their termination, pointing in particular to the need for full equality in inheritance and the inadmissibility of legal or customary practices which result in daughters, widows or other women being deprived of property or being encouraged to renounce inheritance rights under circumstances in which their real freedom of choice is called into question.

The Istanbul Convention does not regulate direct inheritance, but its concept of economic violence in Article 3 is relevant to situations in which pressure on daughters or widows to renounce inheritance rights occurs as a form of family coercion, control or economic conditioning. Under European Union law, the substantive rules of inheritance remain largely a matter for the national law of the Member States, while the EU primarily regulates cross-border aspects of inheritance matters. In this context, Article 21 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, which prohibits discrimination, and Article 17 of the Charter, which protects the right to property, including the right to bequeath property, constitute a relevant protective framework when inheritance issues are considered in the field of application of EU law.

In domestic law, Article 62 of the Constitution of the Republic of Serbia guarantees the equality of spouses in marriage and family relations. The Law on Inheritance of the Republic of Serbia accepts the gender-neutral principle of legal inheritance, whereby the first line of succession consists of the testator's descendants and their spouse, and the testator's children and spouse inherit in equal shares.³⁸ The Family Law stipulates that the property acquired by the spouses through work

³⁵ Eurostat, *Gender pay gap statistics*, Statistics Explained, European Commission.

³⁶ European Commission, DG JUST, 2025 Report on Gender Equality in the EU (Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2025).

³⁷ Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, General Recommendation No. 21: Equality in Marriage and Family Relations, UN Doc. A/49/38.

³⁸ Law on Inheritance, "Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia", Nos. 46/95, 101/2003 — decision of the Constitutional Court of the Republic of Serbia, Articles 8 and 9.

during the duration of their marriage is their joint property, that the spouses manage and dispose of that property jointly and by agreement, and that it is assumed that the spouses' shares in the joint property are equal.³⁹ The Commissioner for the Protection of Equality's research on inheritance rights and attitudes towards inheritance in Serbia, conducted in 2024, shows that domestic positive law formally guarantees equality between women and men in inheritance, but that inequality is reproduced in practice through customary norms, family pressures, insufficient information and economic dependence of women.

In this section, the research focuses on the extent to which men accept the view that sons and daughters should have equal inheritance rights and that parental property should be divided without distinction by gender, as well as how respondents see the criteria for fair distribution of property in specific family relationships, including situations in which unequal distribution is justified by caring for parents, working on the estate, preserving family property, or expecting a son to continue the family line. The research also analyses the perception of social sanctions and family pressures against women who insist on their inheritance rights.

Obligations of the state

Since equality between women and men in inheritance is formally guaranteed, but inequality is often reproduced in practice through customary norms, family pressures, economic dependence and insufficient information, the state is obliged to ensure not only an equal legal regime, but also the conditions for the actual enjoyment of women's inheritance and property rights. This obligation includes measures to provide information about equal inheritance rights, recognising and preventing pressures that lead to women's *de facto* disinheritance, strengthening protection in inheritance proceedings, as well as measures aimed at changing customary and stereotypical expectations according to which family property is primarily tied to male heirs.

At the national level, a survey conducted in 2024 by the Commissioner for the Protection of Equality on a sample of 1,196 respondents of both sexes represents the most complete source of data on attitudes towards inheritance in Serbia. According to this survey, 47% of respondents accept the view that men should have an advantage in inheritance, with a pronounced gender gap. Full equality in inheritance is supported by 66% of women and 39% of men, a difference of twenty-seven percentage points. Awareness of the legal framework was at the level of 64% of respondents who knew that the law prescribes equal inheritance rights for sons and daughters, which means that more than a third of the adult population is not familiar with the basic content of the legal regime.⁴⁰ Regional differences are pronounced: in rural areas, 63% of men accept some form of inequality in inheritance, while in Belgrade and Vojvodina, over 70% of respondents support full equality, which confirms that customary patterns in this area are maintained primarily in environments where the agricultural and residential-family regime is more traditionally organised.

³⁹ Family Law, "Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia", Nos. 18/2005-26, 72/2011-73 (amending law), 6/2015-6, 109/2025-252 (amending law), Art. 171, 174 and 180.

⁴⁰ Ivana Krstić and Marko Milanović, Research on Inheritance Rights and Attitudes Towards Inheritance in Serbia (Belgrade: Commissioner for the Protection of Equality, 2024) (hereinafter referred to as: Krstić and Milanović, *Research on inheritance in 2024*), pp. 31–52.

The qualitative component of the same research documents two dominant patterns of rationalisation of women's renunciation of inheritance: the notion of a moral duty towards the family (so that there is no quarrel) and the notion of compensation for the investment (the brother who remained on the estate received more because he works), which indicates a pattern in which renunciation is presented as a voluntary, morally justified act, although in the background there are expectations of the environment, fear of family disputes and ignorance of legal consequences.

2.6. Violence, control and recognition of unacceptable behaviour

Violence against women in contemporary law is not exclusively a criminal category, nor is it just a matter of family relations. It is legally qualified as a violation of human rights and a form of discrimination against women, which means that the state's obligation in this area goes beyond punishing individual perpetrators and includes systemic measures of prevention, protection, support and compensation.

At the universal level, CEDAW does not contain an explicit provision on violence against women, but the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women has established in General Recommendation No. 19 that gender-based violence constitutes a form of discrimination within the meaning of Article 1 of the Convention and that it includes acts that cause physical, psychological or sexual harm or suffering to women.⁴¹ General Recommendation No. 35 of 2017 expands this standard by explicitly including economic harm as a form of gender-based violence. It also elaborates a standard of due diligence, according to which States are responsible not only for the actions of their own authorities, but also for their failure to prevent, investigate and punish acts of violence committed by non-State actors, and to provide effective protection and redress to victims.

The key international instrument in this area is the Istanbul Convention. Article 3 defines violence against women as a violation of human rights and a form of discrimination that includes all acts of gender-based violence that result in, or are likely to result in, physical, sexual, psychological or economic harm or suffering, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life. Articles 33 to 40 oblige States to criminalise or otherwise punish psychological violence, stalking, physical violence, sexual violence including rape, forced marriage, genital mutilation, forced abortion and forced sterilisation, as well as sexual harassment. Article 12 explicitly excludes culture, custom, religion, tradition and honour as justification for any act of violence covered by the Convention. The Republic of Serbia ratified the Convention in 2013, and for the European Union the Convention entered into force on 1 October 2023, in the areas of its competence.

In European Union law, Directive (EU) 2024/1385 on combating violence against women and domestic violence represents the first horizontal EU legislative intervention in this area.⁴² The Directive establishes common minimum rules on criminal offences, penalties, protection of victims, access to justice, specialised support, prevention, data collection, coordination and

⁴¹ Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, General Recommendation No. 19 on violence against women (1992), UN Doc. A/47/38.

⁴² Directive (EU) 2024/1385 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 May 2024 on combating violence against women and domestic violence, OJ L, 2024/1385, 24 May 2024.

cooperation. Of particular importance are the provisions relating to genital mutilation, forced marriage, unauthorised sharing of intimate or manipulated material, cyberstalking, cyberharassment and cyberincitement to violence or hatred, as well as provisions on individual assessment of victims' needs, urgent injunctions and specialised support services.

In domestic law, the Law on the Prevention of Domestic Violence introduces a special system of risk assessment, emergency measures, institutional coordination and individual planning of protection and support for victims.⁴³ Emergency measures include the temporary removal of the perpetrator from the apartment and a temporary ban on the perpetrator from contacting and approaching the victim, while coordination and cooperation groups are tasked with reviewing cases, developing individual protection and support plans and proposing measures to the competent public prosecutor's office. The Criminal Code prescribes criminal liability for certain forms of gender-based violence and related crimes, including stalking, rape, sexual harassment and domestic violence.⁴⁴ The Law on Gender Equality, in Articles 51 to 58, regulates the prevention and suppression of gender-based violence, including the prohibition of violence based on sex, sexual characteristics, or gender, special measures and programmes, the obligation to report, general and specialised support services, programmes for persons who have committed violence, and measures to raise public awareness. In addition, the Family Law, in Articles 197-200, regulates family law protection against domestic violence, including the definition of domestic violence and protective measures that the court may order against a family member who commits violence, such as an order to evict from the family apartment or house, an order to move into the family apartment or house, a restraining order, a ban on access to the area around the place of residence or work, and a ban on further harassment.

Within this segment, two questions are raised that are important for the empirical analysis. The first relates to the recognition of different forms of control and harassment, i.e., the extent to which respondents recognise control over a partner's finances, monitoring her activities and communication, as well as suggestive comments about a colleague's appearance at work as unacceptable forms of behaviour even when there is no physical aggression. The second question relates to the presence of a pattern of minimisation and privatisation of violence, i.e. the extent to which attitudes are held that women often invent or exaggerate reports of abuse and that domestic violence should be resolved within the family. These attitudes are important because they can influence victims' willingness to report violence, the reaction of their environment, and social support for institutional action.

⁴³ Law on the Prevention of Domestic Violence, "Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia", Nos. 94/2016 and 10/2023 — amending law.

⁴⁴ Criminal Code, "Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia", Nos. 85/2005, 88/2005 – corr., 107/2005 – corr., 72/2009, 111/2009, 121/2012, 104/2013, 108/2014, 94/2016, 35/2019 and 94/2024, Art. 121a, 138a, 178, 182a, 187a and 194.

Obligations of the state

Since gender-based violence constitutes a violation of human rights and a form of discrimination, the state is obliged to ensure an effective system of prevention, protection, support, prosecution and punishment, as well as available legal remedies and compensation for damage in accordance with domestic law and accepted international obligations. This obligation includes not only responding to physical violence, but also recognising psychological, sexual, economic and digital violence, including various forms of control and harassment. In this regard, the state is obliged to strengthen the institutional response, provide accessible and specialised support services, improve the conduct of professionals, collect and use gender-disaggregated data, implement public awareness-raising measures, and eliminate patterns that justify, minimise, or place violence exclusively in the private sphere.

At the national level, a survey conducted in 2024 by the Commissioner for the Protection of Equality documents that respondents in Serbia recognise protection from violence as a primary area of action in gender equality (32.8%), and that 30.5% of respondents note sexual harassment at work as a problem, which together confirms that the perception of the level of violence and related forms of control in our society remains high.⁴⁵ The 2025 IDEAS survey indicates that 55% of women in partner relationships report some form of violence, 37% report domestic violence by a current or former partner, while 53% of women with experience of violence feel financially dependent on their partner, confirming that economic control is not a secondary, but a central pattern in the structure of gender-based violence.⁴⁶ The 2020 GREVIO report on Serbia and the first GREVIO thematic report published in 2025 document progress in the legislative framework, but identify gaps in implementation, particularly in terms of the availability of shelters, specialised support services, and gender-sensitive treatment of victims by institutions.⁴⁷

Eurobarometer 544 provides a direct comparative basis for the claims in this survey. When it comes to situations involving control and harassment, at the European Union level, 79% of respondents consider it unacceptable for a man to control the activities or relationships of his partner, with this share ranging from 62% in Hungary to 89% in Denmark. Similarly, 78% consider it unacceptable for a man to make suggestive comments about a female colleague's appearance at work, but only 63% consider it unacceptable for a man to control his partner's finances, with the share of disapproval ranging in an extremely wide range from 36% in Cyprus and Hungary to 77% in Ireland, which shows that financial control is still the least recognised as an independent form of harmful control.⁴⁸ When it comes to claims about the credibility of reports

⁴⁵ Krstić and Milanović, *Research on the perception of women in 2024*.

⁴⁶ IDEAS Centre for Research and Development of Society, *Trapped in Violence: Analysis of the Impact of Women's Unfavourable Socio-Economic Position on Domestic Violence* (Belgrade: IDEAS Centre for Research and Development of Society, 2025).

⁴⁷ Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (GREVIO), GREVIO's (Baseline) Evaluation Report on legislative and other measures giving effect to the provisions of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention): Serbia, GREVIO/Inf(2019)20 (Strasbourg: Council of Europe, 2020); Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (GREVIO), *First thematic evaluation report: Building trust by delivering support, protection and justice — Serbia*, GREVIO(2025)3 (Strasbourg: Council of Europe, 2025).

⁴⁸ European Commission, *Flash Eurobarometer 544: Gender Stereotypes – Violence against Women* (Brussels: DG JUST, February 2024).

and the privacy of violence, the same survey shows that 73% of respondents at the European Union level disagree with the claim that women often make up or exaggerate reports of abuse or sexual violence. 87% of respondents in the EU disagree with the claim that domestic violence is a private matter that should be resolved within the family, and in all member states the share of disagreement exceeds three quarters.

2.7. Political participation and leadership

Although the formal right of women to vote and be elected, as well as to participate in the exercise of public functions, is fully ensured in Serbia, formal equality of electoral rights does not necessarily mean real equality in access to political power, public influence and decision-making positions. Women's political participation is therefore one of the areas in which the difference between the legal recognition of equality and its actual implementation is most clearly seen. In this area, it is not enough to observe only whether women have the right to participate in political life, but also whether they are actually present in that life, whether they have access to positions of influence, whether they participate in making key decisions and whether they are exposed to gender stereotypes that limit their political legitimacy.

At the universal level, Article 7 of CEDAW obliges States to eliminate discrimination against women in political and public life and to ensure to women, on an equal basis with men, the right to vote and to be elected, to participate in the formulation and implementation of public policy, to hold public office and to perform all public duties at all levels of government, as well as to participate in the work of non-governmental organisations and associations involved in public and political life. Article 8 of CEDAW further obliges States to ensure to women equal opportunities to represent the State at the international level and to participate in the work of international organisations. General Recommendation No. 23 of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women elaborates on these obligations and emphasises that effective equality in political and public life often requires the application of temporary special measures, including quotas, targets and other instruments aimed at increasing women's participation in decision-making.⁴⁹ The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, in strategic area G, also recognises the participation of women in positions of power and decision-making as one of the key prerequisites for achieving gender equality.⁵⁰

In European Union law, the issue of gender balance in decision-making is most directly addressed in the area of corporate governance through Directive 2022/2381 on improving the gender balance among directors of companies listed on stock exchanges. This directive does not directly address political participation, but it is significant for the broader framework of leadership and access to decision-making positions, as it stipulates that by 30 June 2026, members of the under-represented sex should hold at least 40% of non-executive director positions or at least 33% of all director positions in listed companies. In addition to quantitative targets, the directive requires transparent selection procedures, objective criteria and reporting on the gender composition of management bodies.⁵¹

⁴⁹ Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, General Recommendation No. 23 on the political and public life (1997), UN Doc. A/52/38/Rev.1.

⁵⁰ Beijing Platform, Critical Area G.

⁵¹ Directive 2022/2381, Art. 1, 2, 5 para. 1, 6 and 7.

In domestic law, the constitutional basis for equal participation of women and men in political and public life stems from Article 15 of the Constitution of the Republic of Serbia, which guarantees equality between women and men and obliges the state to develop a policy of equal opportunities, Article 21, which prohibits direct and indirect discrimination and allows for special measures to achieve full equality of persons or groups of persons who are in a substantially unequal position, as well as Articles 52 and 53, which guarantee the right to vote and the right of citizens to participate in the management of public affairs and to enter public service and public office under equal conditions. The electoral legislation introduces special measures regarding the composition of electoral lists. The Law on the Election of Members of Parliament, in Article 73, stipulates that the electoral list must include at least 40% members of the underrepresented gender, so that out of every five candidates on the list, there must be three members of one gender and two members of the other gender, respectively.⁵² The same rule for electoral lists of candidates for councillors is stipulated in Article 41 of the Law on Local Elections. The Law on Gender Equality, in addition, in Article 47, regulates gender equality in the exercise of electoral rights and within the framework of political activity, including equal opportunities for participation in decision-making and management of public affairs, while in Article 48 it regulates gender equality in political parties, trade unions and associations, including the obligation of political parties and trade unions to adopt action plans with special measures to encourage and improve gender equality and balanced gender representation in their bodies. When talking about women's political participation and leadership, it is particularly important to distinguish between descriptive and substantive representation, in the sense that the mere presence of women in decision-making bodies, which is descriptive representation, is not the same as representing women's interests, which is substantive representation.

Several research questions arise from this normative and conceptual framework. The first concerns the prevalence of prejudices that women are less interested, less ambitious, or less qualified for responsible political positions. These attitudes are significant because they directly indicate whether formal equality in the political sphere is also accepted at the level of social beliefs. The second question concerns the recognition of the limitations of formal equality, i.e. the extent to which respondents understand that the mere existence of equal rights does not necessarily lead to equal representation and equal influence. The third question concerns attitudes towards special measures, especially quotas, as instruments for eliminating the underrepresentation of women in political life. The fourth question concerns the perception of the actual treatment of women and men in politics in Serbia, including the question of whether women in political life are assessed according to the same criteria as men. Finally, the research also examines attitudes about female leadership, i.e., the extent to which stereotypical notions of men as more natural, authoritative, or capable leaders are present.

⁵² The Law on the Election of Deputies, "Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia", Nos. 14/2022 and 47/2026; Law on Local Elections, "Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia", Nos. 14/2022, 35/2024 and 47/2026.

Obligations of the state

Since political participation and access to decision-making positions are a condition for real, not just formal, democracy, the state is obliged to ensure the conditions for the effective and equal participation of women in political and public life. This obligation is not limited to ensuring equal suffrage, but also includes the implementation of measures that enable the real representation of women in decision-making bodies, transparent election and appointment procedures, monitoring of gender-disaggregated data, and eliminating stereotypes that portray women as less capable, less authoritative, or less legitimate holders of political power.

At the national level, existing data show that quotas have contributed to increasing the representation of women in representative bodies, especially in the National Assembly, but that gender balance has not been achieved equally in all parts of political and public life. Women's representation is generally higher in bodies where there are clear rules on the composition of electoral lists, while the imbalance is more pronounced in the executive branch, in management positions, in public institutions and public enterprises, as well as within party structures where actual political decisions are made.⁵³

A survey conducted in 2024 by the Commissioner for the Protection of Equality shows that 56.4% of respondents support quotas to increase the representation of women in politics, but that only 2.1% of respondents recognise political participation as a priority area of action.⁵⁴ This finding is analytically important because it indicates a difference between support for a specific gender equality instrument and the perception of political participation as an immediate life priority. Such a difference may mean that women recognise the importance of more equal representation in politics, but that they do not see political participation as the area that most directly affects their everyday situation, especially in comparison to economic security, work, social protection, family care, or protection from discrimination and violence.

In a broader European context, Eurobarometer 545 provides a comparative basis for the five statements on political participation examined in this survey. The statement that women are less interested than men in positions of responsibility in political life is accepted by 36% of men in the European Union, with the proportion of agreement increasing with age and decreasing with level of education. The statement that men are more ambitious than women in politics is accepted by 48% of men, making it the most widespread stereotype in this group of statements. The statement that women do not have the necessary qualities and skills for responsible political positions is accepted by 22% of men, while the statement that temporary measures, such as quotas, are needed to overcome the underrepresentation of women is accepted by 50% of men, and the statement that greater representation of women in political life would lead to better political decisions is accepted by 52% of men. In the area of attitudes towards leadership, 31% of men agree that men are better leaders than women, and 26% of men agree that women in leadership positions do not have the authority to be taken seriously, while 26% of men agree with the statement that women are too emotional to be good leaders. Affirmative statements about

⁵³ Special Report of the Commissioner for 2025.

⁵⁴ Krstić and Milanović, *Research on the perception of women in 2024*.

women's leadership capacities have significantly greater support, with 61% of men agreeing that soft skills such as empathy and cooperation are important for a good leader, and 68% of men agreeing that gender-balanced leadership teams are more successful.

2.8. Special measures to achieve equality

Special measures are temporary measures that bridge the gap in practice between formal equality before the law and real equality in access to resources and opportunities. Support for special measures is a particularly sensitive indicator of the general culture of equality and shows the extent to which respondents accept that formally equal regulations are not sufficient in themselves and that active instruments are needed for real equality.

At the universal level, the normative basis for special measures is found in Article 4 of CEDAW, according to which the adoption of temporary special measures aimed at accelerating the real equality of men and women does not constitute discrimination within the meaning of the Convention, but such measures may in no way lead to the maintenance of unequal or separate standards and shall cease to apply when the objectives of equal opportunities and treatment have been achieved. General Recommendation No. 25 of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women from 2004 provides the most precise interpretation of this institution, distinguishing temporary special measures from permanent policies, and requiring that temporary measures be targeted, proportionate and limited in time. The general recommendation recognises several types of measures, including information and promotion, training and development, target numbers, quotas and preferential treatment in selection.

In European Union law, the basis for special measures is Article 157 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, according to which the principle of equal treatment shall not prevent Member States from maintaining or adopting measures providing for specific advantages for the under-represented sex in order to facilitate access to an occupation or to eliminate disadvantages in professional careers. The same principle is contained in Article 23 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union. Directive 2022/2381 on gender balance among directors of listed companies is one of the most elaborate examples of special measures in secondary EU law, as it sets specific gender balance objectives, requires transparent selection procedures and introduces reporting obligations.

In domestic law, Article 21 of the Constitution of the Republic of Serbia explicitly allows for special measures in favour of persons or groups of persons who are in a substantially unequal position, in order to achieve full equality. The Law on Gender Equality, in Article 10, defines special measures as activities, measures, criteria and practices in accordance with the principle of equal opportunities, which ensure equal participation and representation of women and men, especially members of vulnerable social groups, in all spheres of social life and equal opportunities for the exercise of rights and freedoms. Article 11 of this law distinguishes between measures to be determined and implemented in cases of significantly unbalanced gender representation, incentive measures and programme measures, while Article 16 prescribes the obligations of public authorities and employers with more than 50 employees and engaged persons to determine and implement special measures within the framework of their work plans or programmes. The Law on the Prohibition of Discrimination in Article 14 also provides for special measures as an instrument for achieving full equality, protection and advancement of persons or groups of persons who are in an unequal position.

Several research questions arise from this normative and analytical framework. The first concerns general support for special measures when a group is in an unequal position. This question represents an abstract normative test and shows the extent to which respondents in principle accept the legitimacy of corrective state intervention. The second question concerns support for special measures to improve the position of women in Serbia. Comparing the general attitude towards special measures with the attitude towards measures that specifically concern women allows us to determine whether there is a difference between abstract support for equality and support for its implementation in the field of gender equality. Finally, the question arises in which domains respondents most easily accept corrective measures, and in which there is the greatest resistance to their implementation.

Obligations of the state

Since real equality remains unachieved in numerous areas, the state is obliged to implement special measures when formally equal rules do not lead to a truly equal position for women and men. For their effectiveness, legal certainty and social acceptance, specific measures should be evidence-based, targeted at clearly identified inequalities, proportionate to the objective sought to be achieved and accompanied by a justification of their purpose, timeframe and link to addressing real inequalities. In this way, the gap between declarative support for equality and support for the concrete instruments needed to achieve equality in practice is narrowed.

At the national level, a survey conducted in 2024 by the Commissioner for the Protection of Equality documents that 56.4% of respondents support quotas to increase the representation of women in politics, that there is high support for measures to reconcile work and family, protect pregnant women, and sanction discrimination, but that the qualitative component of focus groups simultaneously records a pronounced reservation towards measures that are perceived as imposing equality.⁵⁵

2.9. Multiple discrimination and women at increased risk

The concept of multiple and intersectional discrimination encompasses situations in which sex or gender intersects with other personal characteristics, such as ethnic origin, disability, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, religious belief, residence, migration status or property status.⁵⁶ The significance of these concepts is that they show that discrimination against women is not always the same for all women and that the position of women from different social groups cannot be explained by simply adding up individual grounds of discrimination. When multiple personal

⁵⁵ Krstić and Milanović, *Research on the perception of women in 2024*.

⁵⁶ Multiple discrimination refers to discrimination based on two or more personal characteristics, where the impact of the individual grounds of discrimination can be separated. Intersectional discrimination refers to a situation in which multiple personal characteristics intersect and produce a specific form of disadvantage that cannot be reduced to the sum of discrimination on each individual ground.

characteristics intersect, specific forms of inequality arise that are qualitatively different from discrimination based on each individual ground. It is precisely such forms of discrimination that are referred to as multiple and intersectional discrimination and require special recognition and protection.

At the universal level, General Recommendation No. 28 of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women explicitly recognises intersectional discrimination as a fundamental concept for understanding States' obligations under Article 2 of CEDAW. The Committee stresses that discrimination against women on the basis of sex and gender is inextricably linked to other factors that affect their situation, including race, ethnic origin, religion or belief, health, age, class, sexual orientation and gender identity. General Recommendation No. 35 further emphasises that gender-based violence affects certain groups of women to a greater extent or in specific ways, including women from ethnic and religious minorities, women with disabilities, women in a migrant situation, older women and women in rural areas. The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, in Article 6, specifically recognises that women and girls with disabilities are subject to multiple discrimination and obliges states to take measures to ensure their full and equal enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

At the European level, the relevance of the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, Protocol No. 12 to the Convention and Article 21 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union for understanding multiple and intersectional discrimination stems from the fact that these instruments prohibit discrimination on a wide range of grounds.⁵⁷ Such a framework allows the situation of women to be analysed not only in relation to sex or gender, but also in relation to other personal characteristics that intersect with them, such as ethnic origin, disability, age, sexual orientation, religious belief, migration status or property.

In domestic law, the Law on the Prohibition of Discrimination in Article 13 recognises discrimination against a person on the basis of two or more personal characteristics as a serious form of discrimination, regardless of whether the impact of individual personal characteristics can be delimited as multiple discrimination or cannot be delimited as intersectional discrimination. The Law on Gender Equality in Article 4 also defines multiple and intersectional discrimination, and in Article 6 recognises vulnerable social groups, including rural women, victims of violence and groups of persons who are in an unequal position due to social origin, nationality, property status, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, disability, living in an underdeveloped area or other characteristics. This framework is important because it allows the position of women to be viewed not only through sex or gender, but also through other circumstances that affect the actual availability of rights, services and protection.

In analytical terms, it is particularly important for this research to distinguish between general recognition of discrimination against women and recognition of the specific position of women belonging to groups at increased risk of discrimination. Aggregate data on women often conceal differences between different groups of women, while data on individual groups, if not cross-referenced with gender, may conceal the specific position of women within those groups. Therefore, in order to understand gender equality, it is necessary to monitor not only the position

⁵⁷ European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, 4 November 1950, ETS; Protocol No. 12 to the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, 4 November 2000, ETS No. 177, Art. 1.

of women in general, but also the position of Roma women, women with disabilities, older women, women living in rural areas, women in poverty, single mothers, women belonging to sexual minorities, migrants, refugees and other women who are at the intersection of multiple grounds of inequality. In order to examine men's perceptions of the position of different groups of women, the question addressed by this research concerns which groups of women are recognised by the public as most exposed to discrimination in Serbia.

Obligations of the state

Since multiple and intersectional discrimination can remain invisible when data, policies and protection measures are based only on general categories, the state is obliged to recognise the specific position of women from groups at increased risk of discrimination in the planning, implementation and monitoring of public policies. This obligation includes collecting and analysing data that provides insight into the intersection of gender with other personal characteristics, assessing the effects of regulations and measures on different groups of women, developing targeted and accessible support and protection services, as well as removing linguistic, spatial, economic, cultural and institutional barriers that make it difficult for women exposed to multiple and intersectional discrimination to access their rights. The state is also obliged to increase the visibility of women who are at the intersection of multiple grounds of discrimination through education, public campaigns and institutional practice and to prevent their position from remaining hidden within general indicators about women or individual minority groups.

At the national level, a survey conducted in 2024 by the Commissioner for the Protection of Equality on a sample of women in Serbia represents the most direct comparable source for this area, as it examined women's perceptions of the groups most exposed to discrimination. According to this survey, respondents most often identify Roma women (49%), single mothers (36.6%), and poor and homeless women (35.5%). A significant share of respondents also identify women living in rural areas (33.1%), women with disabilities (30.1%), and older women (28.1%), while women who are victims of gender-based violence, women belonging to sexual minorities, young women, migrants and refugees, women belonging to national minorities, and women belonging to religious minorities are mentioned less frequently.⁵⁸ The Special Report of the Commissioner for the Protection of Equality on Discrimination against Women for the period 2015–2025 further documents that discrimination against women is not manifested equally in all groups and that Roma women, women with disabilities, LBT+ women, migrants, refugees, women living in rural areas, older women and poor women are exposed to specific and often cumulative obstacles in accessing education, work, health and social protection, legal protection and security.⁵⁹ The Concluding Observations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women on the fourth periodic report of the Republic of Serbia from 2019 also indicate the need for Serbia to pay special attention to women who experience multiple and intersectional forms of discrimination, including Roma women, older women, poor women, women with

⁵⁸ Krstić and Milanović, *Research on the perception of women in 2024*.

⁵⁹ Special Report of the Commissioner 2025, pp. 40–82.

disabilities, refugees, internally displaced women and women who are single-parent households.⁶⁰

3. Subject-matter, objective and research questions

The subject-matter of this research is the perception of men in the Republic of Serbia on gender equality. The research includes men's views on the normative meaning of gender equality, their assessment of the degree of achievement of equality in Serbia, recognition of discrimination against women in individual areas of social life, as well as views on measures aimed at eliminating structural inequalities.

The starting point of the research is that gender equality is not only a question of the formal existence of equal rights, but also a question of real opportunities, social norms, the distribution of power, family practices and institutional responses to inequality. Therefore, men's attitudes are seen as one of the important indicators of the way in which gender equality is understood, accepted, contested or selectively applied in everyday life. The research, therefore, does not replace legal, institutional and statistical indicators of gender equality, but complements them with insight into value orientations, patterns of justification and resistance that can influence the implementation of laws and public policies.

Thematically, the research subject follows the areas established by the legal and analytical framework: general notions of gender equality and unequal treatment; gender stereotypes, norms and roles; unpaid work and parenthood; economic equality and position in the labour market; equality in inheritance; violence, control and recognition of unacceptable behaviour; political participation and leadership; support for special measures; as well as recognition of multiple and intersectional discrimination against women who are at increased risk of discrimination. Of particular importance within the research is the area of inheritance rights and inheritance practices. Although the right to inheritance is formally regulated equally, family expectations, customary norms, pressures to renounce inheritance and different valuation of the contributions of sons and daughters can lead to unequal property outcomes. Therefore, this topic is analysed as part of the broader issue of women's economic independence and their ability to exercise other rights, including the right to a life free from violence and control.

The main goal of the research is to provide systematic and previously missing data on how men in the Republic of Serbia understand and assess gender equality, in which areas they recognise

⁶⁰ Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, Concluding observations on the fourth periodic report of Serbia, UN Doc. CEDAW/C/SRB/CO/4, 14 March 2019.

inequality, where there is the greatest support for change, and where ambivalence, resistance or normalisation of unequal practices occur. The goal is also to analytically process the obtained data in a way that allows their use in the work of the Commissioner for the Protection of Equality, in the preparation of recommendations, reports, public policies, educational and communication activities, as well as possible initiatives to improve the normative and institutional framework.

Three objectives arise from this goal. The first is to determine the extent to which men in Serbia accept the principle of gender equality and how they interpret it when it is translated into concrete relationships in the family, at work, in inheritance, politics and public life. The second is to compare the results with the findings of previous research, especially with research that documented women's attitudes and experiences in 2024, in order to determine the gap in perception between women and men. The third is to compare the obtained findings with relevant European standards and indicators.

The research is structured around the following research questions:

1. To what extent do men in Serbia believe that gender equality has been achieved and in which areas of social life do they most often recognise the existence of unequal treatment of women and men?
2. How do men understand gender equality?
3. How widespread are attitudes based on gender stereotypes about the roles of women and men in the family, in the labour market, in public space, and in decision-making processes among men?
4. To what extent do men recognise the unequal distribution of unpaid housework, childcare, and care for household members, and what is the relationship between their principled views on equality and actual patterns of division of household responsibilities?
5. How do men assess economic equality between women and men, including equal employment opportunities, advancement, equal pay, protection from discrimination at work, and measures that encourage greater representation of women in leadership positions?
6. What are men's attitudes towards equal inheritance between sons and daughters, towards family and customary expectations in the distribution of property, as well as towards pressures for women to renounce inheritance?
7. To what extent do men recognise different forms of violence against women, including economic control, partner control, harassment, and unacceptable behaviours in private and public spaces?
8. How do men perceive women's political participation, women's leadership, and measures to increase women's representation in political, public, and organisational decision-making?
9. To what extent do men support special measures to promote equality and do they recognise them as a legitimate instrument for eliminating structural inequality or as an unnecessary, imposed or unfair advantage?
10. To what extent do men recognise that women are not a homogeneous group and that certain groups of women are exposed to multiple and intersectional forms of discrimination?

Across all research questions, it is particularly important to examine whether there is a difference between the principled acceptance of gender equality and support for concrete changes that alter the established distribution of roles, responsibilities, resources and power. Therefore, one of the central analytical lines of the research is precisely the relationship between formal support for equality and the willingness to implement equality in specific family, property, economic, political and institutional situations.

4. Methodology

The research used a mixed methodological approach, combining quantitative and qualitative research methods.

The quantitative part of the research was conducted as a field survey during March 2026. Interviews were conducted using the face-to-face technique, with trained interviewers speaking with respondents in their households or at other pre-defined locations suitable for conducting the research. The research was conducted on a sample of 1,201 male respondents from the territory of the Republic of Serbia. A random representative sample was used, defined on the basis of a sampling frame that includes the population of the Republic of Serbia aged 18 and over. The sample structure was aligned with relevant demographic characteristics of the population, in order to ensure the representativeness of the results obtained.

The data collection instrument contained 45 questions of various types, including closed questions, attitude assessment scales and sets of statements. Data collection was carried out using a standardised questionnaire. The average duration of the interview was 45 to 60 minutes. The reliability of the research was assessed based on the sample size and the method of its formation. The marginal error of the estimate for the total sample is $\pm 3\%$ at a confidence level of 95%, which allows a high degree of reliability of the results and their generalisation to the population of adult men in the Republic of Serbia.

The instrument was developed to measure attitudes, norms, perceptions and partly practices that are relevant to understanding gender equality in Serbia from the perspective of men. The instrument is designed to also enable:

- Comparison with previous research on women's perceptions;
- Comparison with selected European indicators and attitude batteries;
- Analysis of findings by age, education, type of settlement, parental status and other relevant characteristics;
- Translating findings into recommendations for public policies, institutional actions and communication interventions.

The research used a multi-stage stratified random sample. In the first phase, the population of the Republic of Serbia was divided into strata according to relevant geographical and demographic characteristics, such as region and type of settlement. Stratification ensured that all significant subgroups of the population were adequately represented in the sample. After the formation of

the strata, the selection of respondents was carried out in several stages. In the first stage, settlements and survey points were selected on the territory of the Republic of Serbia, with the number of survey points determined proportionally to the size of the population within the corresponding regions and types of settlements.

In the second stage, households were randomly selected within the selected survey points, using predefined random selection procedures and household selection rules. In this way, each household within the defined sampling frame was given a known and non-zero probability of entering the sample.

In the third stage, within the selected household, respondents were selected according to pre-determined criteria. Only adult males (18 years and older) could be included in the study. If there were more than one male living in the household who met the participation criteria, the selection of respondents was carried out using the last birthday method. During the fieldwork, regular quality checks of the collected data were carried out, including field supervision and subsequent telephone checks of part of the interviews conducted.

The qualitative component of the research was implemented through four focus group discussions with men of different socio-demographic characteristics. The focus groups were organised with the aim of providing a deeper understanding of the patterns of opinion identified in the quantitative part of the research, as well as to enable the interpretation of findings that require additional context and explanation.

A detailed, structured moderator's guide was developed for the focus groups, covering key thematic areas of the research. Special attention was paid to creating a supportive discussion environment, so that participants could openly talk about their personal experiences and views, as well as comment on broader social norms and cultural patterns that shape their views on gender equality. The focus groups were moderated by experienced researchers, using standard procedures for conducting group discussions and recording data.

Between four and eight men participated in each focus group, which ensured a balance between diversity of opinions and the opportunity for each participant to actively contribute to the discussion.

The sample of 4 groups was constructed to maximise variation in the dimensions that were shown to be significant predictive variables in the quantitative part, age, type of settlement, and belonging to groups at risk of multiple discrimination. Composition of groups:

- Focus group 1: Men from urban areas, larger cities, 25–40 years old;
- Focus group 2: Men from urban areas, larger cities, 45–65 years old;
- Focus group 3: Men from rural areas, 25–65 years old;
- Focus group 4: Men from groups at risk of multiple discrimination, 25–65 years old.

Focus group participants were recruited through purposive sampling, based on predefined criteria relevant to the research subject. The selection took into account the age of the respondents and the type of settlement in which they live, in order to represent different social and life circumstances that may influence the formation of attitudes about gender equality.

Participant recruitment was conducted according to defined profiles for each focus group, with the aim of ensuring heterogeneity of experiences and attitudes within the research population. The research included adult men who met the criteria for belonging to a particular group and who voluntarily agreed to participate.

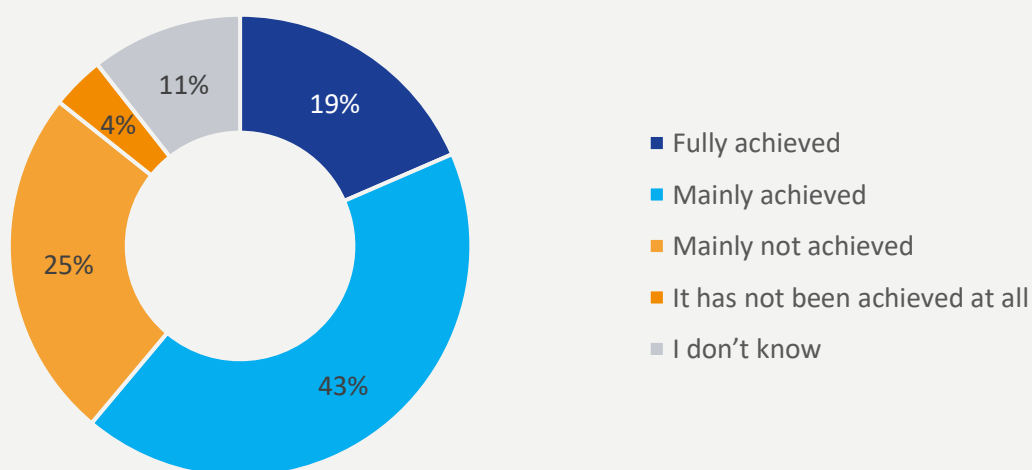
5. Survey results

5.1. General idea of gender equality and unequal treatment

An analysis of the responses to the question about the general assessment of gender equality shows that 61% of men believe that gender equality has been achieved in Serbia. Of these, 18.5% believe that it has been achieved in full, and 42.5% that it has been achieved in most respects. In contrast, 28.2% of men believe that gender equality has not been achieved, while 10.6% have no opinion.

Figure 1. To what extent do you think gender equality has been achieved in Serbia?

Response structure (%), n=1201



Compared to the 2024 survey of the Commissioner for the Protection of Equality, conducted on a sample of women, a pronounced gender gap is observed in the perception of the achievement of gender equality. While 61% of men believe that equality has been achieved, 41.7% of women have the same opinion. At the same time, 45.9% of women believe that equality has not been achieved, compared to 28.2% of men. These data show that men are more likely to assess that gender equality has already been achieved.

When viewed according to sociodemographic characteristics, differences in the assessment of gender equality occur according to ethnicity, disability or long-term illness, type of settlement, region, education and age. These data show that men's attitudes towards gender equality cannot be seen as the attitude of a homogeneous group, but depend on social status, life experience and local context. The most pronounced differences occur among men who identify as members of the Roma national minority. In this group, 21.3% believe that gender equality has been achieved, while 58% believe that it has not. A similar pattern is observed among men with disabilities or long-term illness: 39.7% of them believe that equality has been achieved, while 47% believe that it has not. These findings suggest that personal experience of social barriers, exclusion, or unequal treatment may increase sensitivity to recognising gender inequality.

Differences are also visible by type of settlement. 47.7% of men from suburban settlements believe that gender equality has been achieved, 61.6% of men from rural areas and 63.5% of men from larger cities. Regional differences are also significant: the highest share of men who believe that gender equality has been achieved is recorded in Šumadija and Western Serbia, where 73% of respondents hold such an opinion, while the lowest is in Vojvodina, where 47.7% of men believe that equality has been achieved. These data are important for planning local activities, and indicate the need to adapt activities and communication to different environments.

Differences by education also indicate uneven perceptions. Among men with primary school education, 42.2% believe that gender equality has been achieved, while 39% believe that it has not, compared to 66.8% with secondary school education who believe that equality has been achieved and 62.4% of respondents with higher or higher education.

Age differences are less pronounced and do not follow a simple division into younger and older men. 58.5% of men under 24 years of age, 55.7% of men aged 25–34, 67.7% in the 35–44 age group, 60.1% in the 45–54 age group, 67.4% in the 55–64 age group and 56.9% of respondents over 65 years of age believe that gender equality has been achieved. These data show that generational differences exist, but that younger men do not necessarily show a higher level of recognition of gender inequality than older men.

Overall, sociodemographic data show that men in Serbia assess the state of gender equality differently depending on their social position and life context. This is important for public policies, because measures and communication on gender equality cannot be directed at men as a single group. A more effective approach involves adapting messages to different groups of men, especially those whose personal experience of social vulnerability already influences a different understanding of inequality.

A separate set of questions related to the assessment of the degree of achievement of gender equality in specific areas of social life. In all areas observed, the share of men who believe that gender equality has been largely or not achieved at all ranges within a relatively narrow range, from 28.8% in the area of work to 35.8% in the area of raising children and caring for family members. This means that no area deviates significantly from the others, but family care stands out as the domain in which men most often recognise that equality has not been achieved.

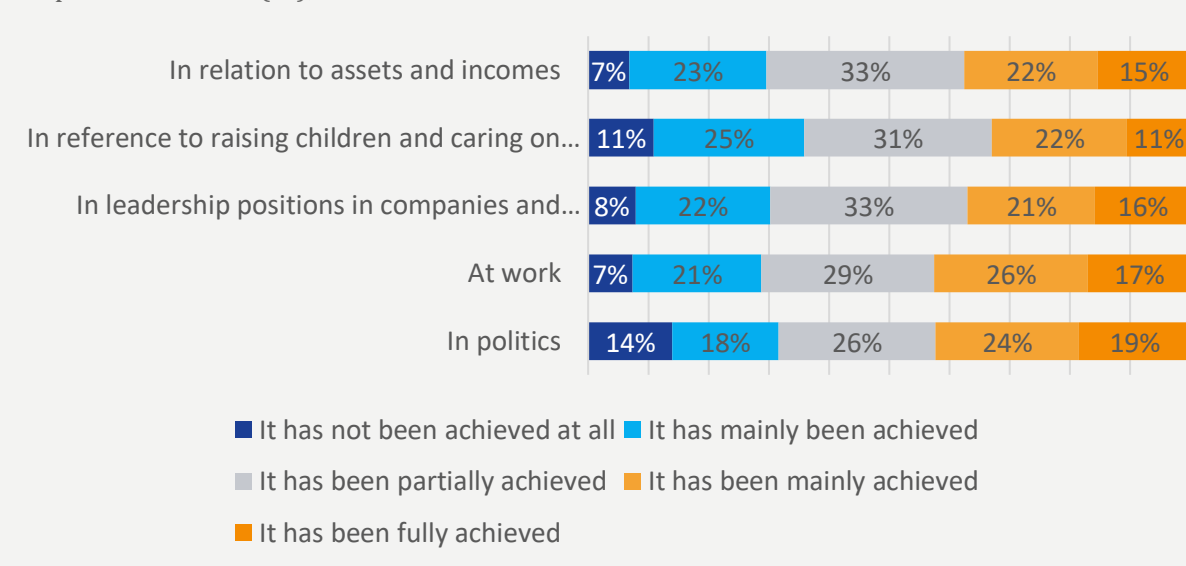
In the area of raising children and caring for family members, 35.8% of men believe that gender equality has been largely or not achieved at all, 31.2% believe that it has been partially achieved, and 32.9% that it has been largely or completely achieved. This finding shows that the distribution of family responsibilities and unpaid work is the area in which men's assessment is least favourable, but also that the sample in this area is highly divided.

In the area of politics, 31.7% of men believe that gender equality has been largely or not achieved at all, 26.1% that it has been partially achieved, and 42.3% that it has been largely or completely achieved. A similar distribution is visible in leadership positions in companies and other organisations: 30.2% of men believe that equality has not been achieved, 32.8% that it has been partially achieved, and 37% that it has been achieved.

In relation to wealth and income, 29.6% of men believe that gender equality has been largely or not achieved at all, 32.8% that it has been partially achieved, and 37.5% that it has been largely or fully achieved. When it comes to equality at work, 28.8% believe that equality has not been achieved, while 28.7% believe that it has been partially achieved, and 42.6% that it has been largely or fully achieved.

Figure 2. Please rate the extent to which gender equality has been achieved in Serbia in the following areas on a scale of 1–5, where 1 means not at all, and 5 means completely achieved.

Response structure (%), n=1201

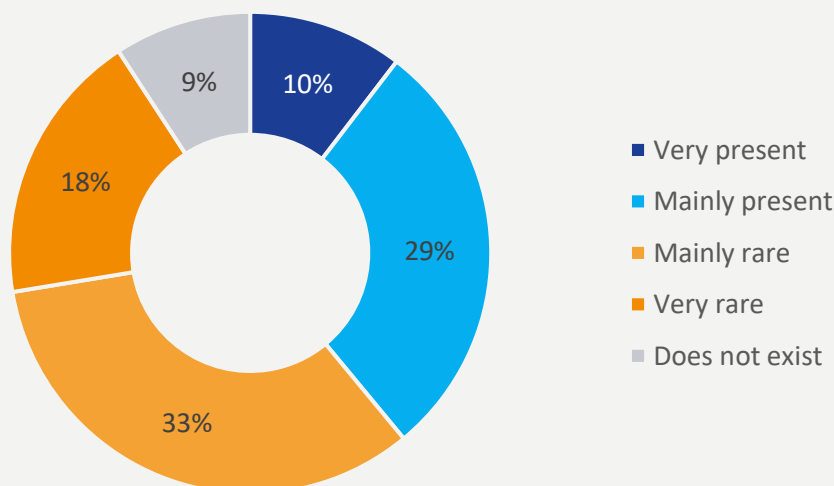


Compared to the findings of the 2024 survey on a sample of women, both women and men identify raising children and caring for family members as the area where the greatest differences exist. However, the intensity of recognising inequality among women is higher: 45.6% of women believe that equality has not been achieved in this area. Women then single out property and income, where 41.1% believe that equality has not been achieved, then leadership positions, with 34%, while slightly more than 30% of women also point to the area of work and politics.

Regarding the prevalence of discrimination against women, 39% of men believe that discrimination is very or mostly present in Serbian society. More than half of men, 51.8%, believe that discrimination is mostly or very rare, while 9.2% state that discrimination does not exist because women are equal. These data show that the majority of men do not see discrimination against women as a widespread social problem.

Figure 3. In your opinion, how prevalent is discrimination against women in our society?

Response structure (%), n=1201



Compared to the 2024 survey of the Commissioner for the Protection of Equality among women, the difference in perception is pronounced. While 39% of men believe that discrimination is very or mostly present, 56.1% of women hold the same view. This finding shows that gender is not a secondary factor in shaping attitudes about discrimination. On the contrary, the data indicate that men are less likely to recognise discrimination against women as a systemic or widespread problem.

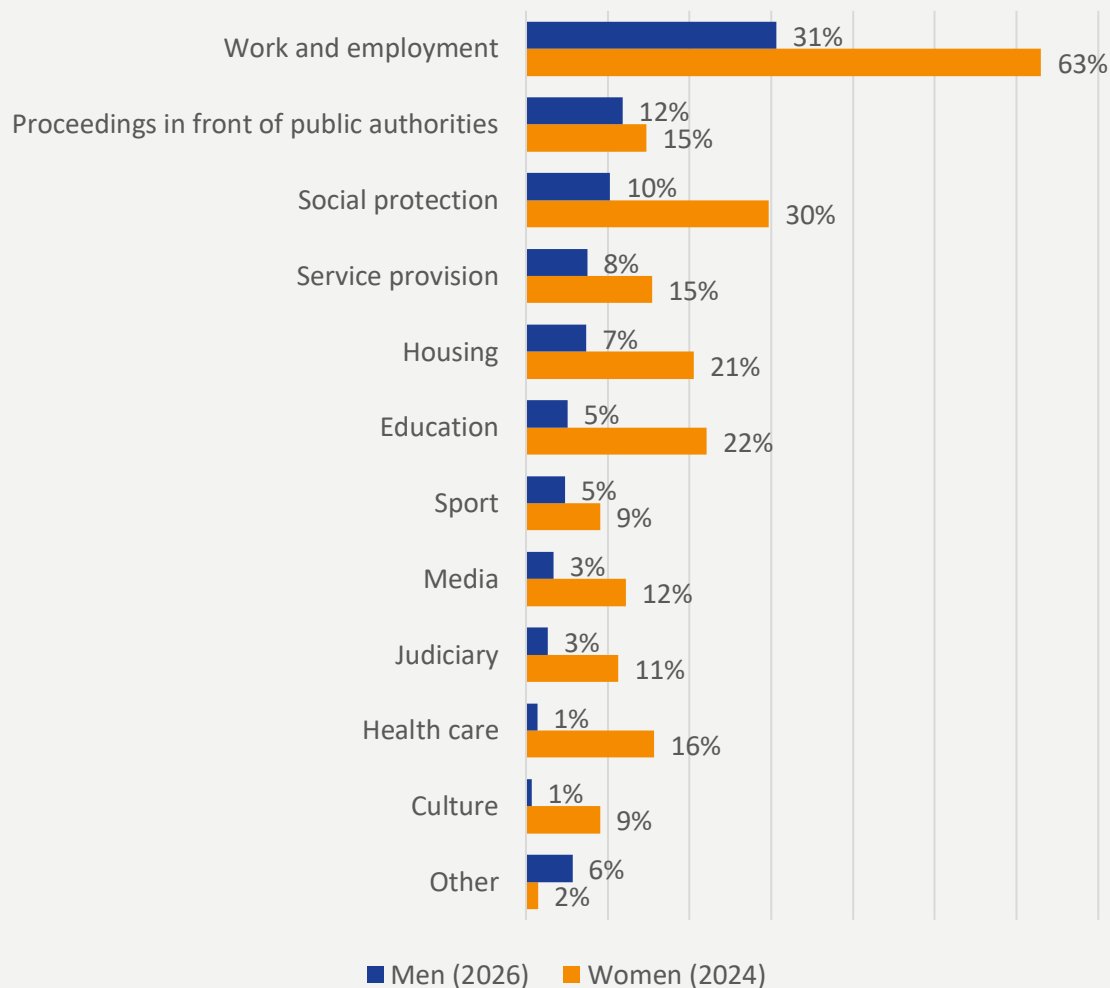
A particularly informative question concerns the specific areas in which men perceive that women are most often exposed to discrimination. The most frequently identified area is work and employment, cited by 30.6% of men. This area stands out because it is cited by almost three times as many respondents as the next most frequently cited area. Work and employment are followed by dealings with public authorities, with 11.8%, social protection, with 10.3%, provision of services, with 7.5%, and housing, with 7.4%.

Compared to the findings of a survey of women from 2024, where 63% of women cited work and employment as the area in which women are most often exposed to discrimination, an almost twofold difference in the frequency of recognising discrimination in this area is visible. Thus, work and employment are the most recognizable areas of discrimination for both men and women, but the level of recognition is significantly lower for men.

In addition, the low prevalence of recognition of discrimination in the justice sector, reported by 2.7% of men, healthcare, with 1.4%, and culture, with 0.7%, shows that legal and institutional protection in these areas remains outside the focus of most male respondents.

Figure 4. In which areas are women most often exposed to discrimination?

Response structure (%), n=1201



The question of who is in a more favourable position in Serbian society, men or women, directly measures the attitude towards the asymmetry of gender position. Slightly less than a third of men, 31.8%, believe that men are in a more favourable position. At the same time, 28.6% believe that women and men are generally in the same position, while 25.5% believe that the position depends on the area. Although this is a minority share, 11.3% of respondents believe that women are in a more favourable position. This finding indicates that a significant part of men does not recognise the clear structural advantage of men in society or relativises it through the attitude that the position depends on the area. It is particularly important that more than one tenth of respondents believe that women are in a more favourable position. Such an attitude can influence resistance to gender equality measures, especially if they are perceived as measures that favour one group, rather than as instruments for eliminating existing inequalities. Therefore, it is necessary to communicate objective, structural inequalities between men and women more actively and concretely in public discourse and the media space.

In line with these findings, when men were asked an open-ended question about what else could be done to achieve gender equality in Serbia, 56.4% of participants did not provide a specific suggestion, while 43.6% of the sample provided a specific suggestion. Among these responses, the

most frequently mentioned were stricter laws and sanctions (7%), education and training in schools and from a young age (5.2%), media campaigns and changes in public discourse (3.5%), changes in awareness and mutual respect between men and women (3.1%), measures in the field of work and employment (2.9%), a more equal division of family and household responsibilities (1.6%), quotas and greater participation of women in leadership positions (1.1%), protection from violence (0.7%), and improving women's participation in politics (0.4%). The remaining 17.8% of responses could not be classified into a larger thematic whole.

This distribution shows that, when men formulate a specific proposal at all, they more often mention indirect instruments, such as laws, education and media campaigns, than measures that directly change the distribution of power, positions and responsibilities. Quotas, greater participation of women in leadership positions, improvement of women's political participation and a more equal division of family responsibilities appear in significantly smaller proportions. This indicates that support for gender equality is more acceptable when it is formulated as a general normative goal, but is weaker when it implies specific changes in political representation, management positions, the labour market or family life.

A minority of men explicitly admit that they are bothered by changes related to the advancement of gender equality. 22.3% of men say that there is something in modern demands and changes in the field of gender equality that they disagree with or that bothers them, while almost twice as many (41.2%) say that nothing bothers them. One third, 33.4%, have no formed opinion, while 3.1% do not want to answer.

However, the data show that the actual extent of resistance is much greater than directly acknowledged. When respondents were presented with a list of specific demands and changes, 83.5% of participants marked at least one item as a hindrance. This is almost four times the share of those who indicated that something bothered them in the previous question. This finding is particularly important because it shows that resistance to gender equality is not always visible at the level of general issues, but rather emerges more clearly when equality is translated into specific demands.

The objections are relatively evenly distributed across seven aspects, with shares between 22% and 29%, meaning that there is not just one dominant sphere of resistance. However, the most common resistance is to the view that women should be more represented in politics, which is cited as an objection by 28.5% of men. This is followed by the way gender equality is discussed in the media (28%), the insistence on a greater representation of women in leadership positions (27.6%), and the insistence on an equal division of household chores and childcare (26.9%). A similar percentage disagrees with the view that women do not have to have children if they do not want to (26.1%), and the view that women should have a career equal to that of men (22%). Significantly less resistance is recorded with the claim about equal rights in inheritance, which is cited as an objection by 12.9% of respondents.

Major findings

1. Men and women in Serbia have different assessments of the state of gender equality. The majority of men, 61%, believe that gender equality has been achieved in Serbia, while 41.7% of women hold the same view. At the same time, 45.9% of women believe that equality has not been achieved, compared to 28.2% of men.
2. Men predominantly believe that discrimination against women is not significant. Namely, only 39% of men believe that discrimination against women is very or mostly present,

while 56.1% of women hold this view. This indicates limited recognition of structural inequality, both among men and women.

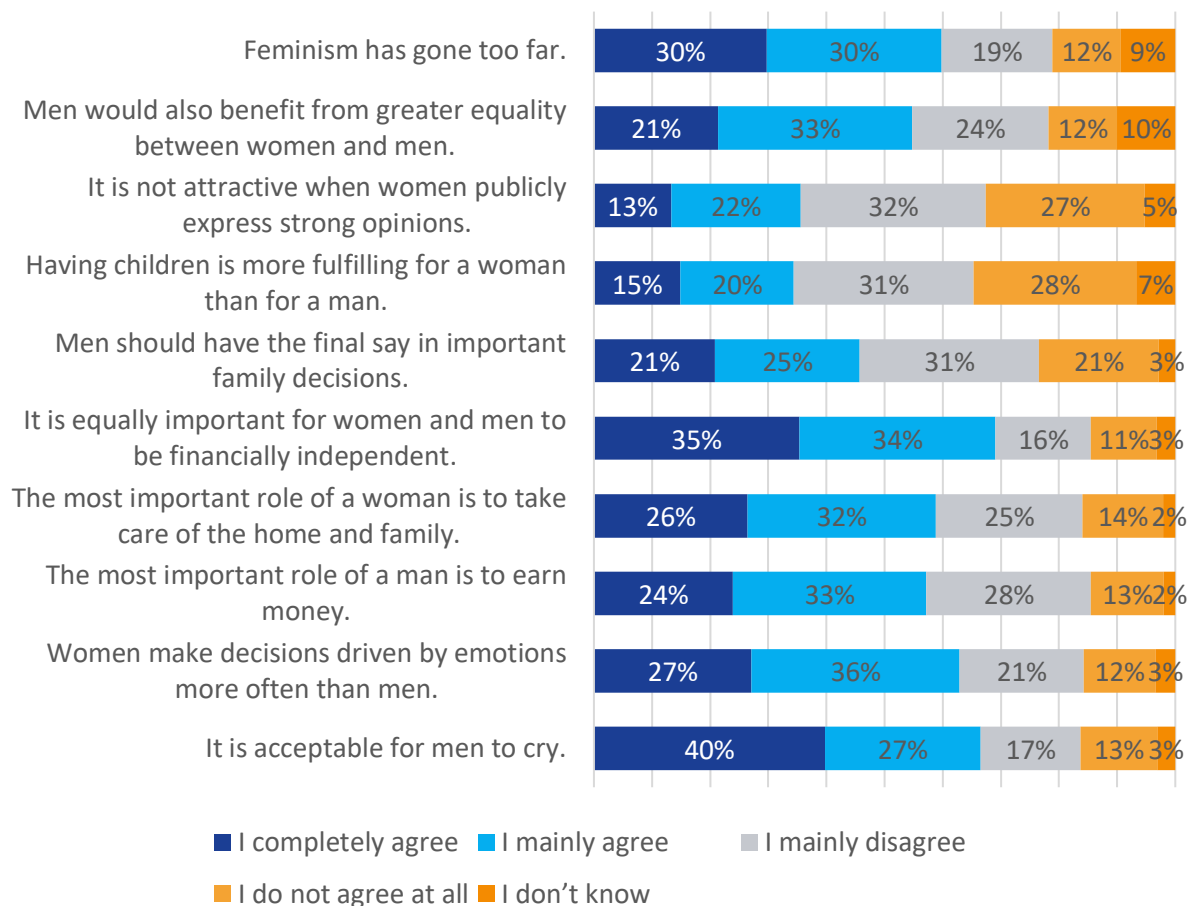
3. Work and employment are the areas in which men most often recognise that discrimination exists, with 30.6% stating this, while 63% of women state the same. So, even when men recognise the problem, they recognise it to a significantly narrower extent than women.
4. Abstract support for gender equality does not necessarily translate into support for concrete changes. Only 22.3% of men say that something bothers them about contemporary demands for gender equality. However, when offered specific measures and positions, 83.5% identify at least one area as controversial.
5. Resistance is most pronounced where gender equality implies a redistribution of power, visibility and roles. The most common obstacles relate to the greater representation of women in politics, the way gender equality is discussed in the media, the greater representation of women in leadership positions and a more equal division of household chores and childcare. In contrast, the least resistance exists with equal inheritance rights, which shows that formal and legal forms of equality are more accepted than changes that intrude on the everyday distribution of power and responsibilities.
6. Men are not a homogeneous group. Perceptions vary significantly by ethnicity, disability, education, region, type of settlement and age. In particular, Roma men and men with disabilities or long-term illnesses are more likely to recognise that equality has not been achieved. This suggests that personal exposure to inequality and social vulnerability can increase sensitivity to gender inequality.

5.2 Attitudes about gender roles and norms

Attitudes about gender roles show a distinctly ambivalent pattern. Men in Serbia largely accept certain egalitarian attitudes, but at the same time, they retain traditional notions about family roles, decision-making, and feminism to a high degree. The highest level of agreement is recorded with the statement that “it is equally important for women and men to be financially independent,” with which 69.1% of respondents agree. Similarly, 66.5% of respondents accept the statement that “it is acceptable for men to cry,” while 54.7% of men believe that men would also benefit from greater equality between women and men.

Figure 5. Now I will read you several statements and please rate from 1 to 4 how much you agree with each of these statements, where 1 means that you completely agree, 2 that you mostly agree, 3 that you mostly disagree, and 4 that you completely disagree.

Response structure (%), n=1201



Although the majority of men in Serbia accept these egalitarian claims, a comparison with Eurobarometer 545 shows that the level of support in Serbia is significantly lower than the European Union average. At the EU level, 89% of men believe that it is equally important for women and men to be financially independent. Similarly, in the EU, 83% of men believe that it is acceptable for men to cry, compared to 66.5% of men in Serbia. The difference is also significant when it comes to the claim that men benefit from gender equality: 73% of men in the EU hold this view, while 54.7% of men in Serbia do. This shows that basic egalitarian views are accepted by the majority in Serbia, but that they have not been adopted to the extent that they have been adopted at the EU level.

At the same time, support for traditional and stereotypical claims remains high. The claim that women make decisions driven by emotions more often than men is accepted by 62.9% of men in Serbia. This finding is almost identical to the EU average, where 62% of men agree with the same claim. This indicates that the stereotype of “female emotionality” is not specific only to Serbia, but is one of the most widespread gender stereotypes in the broader European context. Compared to the previous research on a sample of women, where 51.7% of women accepted this claim, a gender gap of 11.2% is visible, as well as the fact that this stereotype is largely internalised among women as well.

A significantly more pronounced deviation from the EU average is shown by statements related to the traditional division of roles in the family and work. 57.2% of men in Serbia believe that the most important role of a man is to earn money, while 45% in the EU believe the same. An even clearer difference occurs with the statement that the most important role of a woman is to take care of the home and family: 58.7% of men in Serbia agree with this, compared to 40% of men at the EU level.

A comparison with previous research on a sample of women shows a significant gender gap in these attitudes. The statement that the most important role of a man is to earn money is accepted by 32.9% of women, which is a difference of 24.3%, and the statement that the most important role of a woman is to take care of the home and family is accepted by 38.6% of women, which is a difference of 20.1%. This indicates that men are significantly more likely than women to maintain the traditional division of paid and unpaid work, precisely in the areas where gender inequalities are most concretely reproduced.

A particularly important finding relates to family decision-making. 45.7% of men in Serbia agree with the statement that men should have the final say in important family decisions, while 51.3% disagree. Although the majority reject this statement, almost half of men still believe that their decisions are more important than women's opinions. Compared to EU-level data, this finding represents one of the most pronounced deviations, with an average of 24% of men in the EU agreeing with the same statement.

The statement that "having children is more fulfilling for a woman than for a man" is not accepted by 58.9% of men, while 34.4% agree. This finding shows that the majority of men do not accept the idea that parenthood is primarily fulfilling for women, which is a better result than in the EU, where 41% of men agree with the same statement. In contrast, when it comes to the statement that "it is not attractive when women publicly express strong opinions", Serbia shows a more unfavourable pattern — 35.6% of men in Serbia agree with this statement, compared to 24% in the EU. Although the majority of men in Serbia, 59.2%, reject this statement, the share of those who accept the negative evaluation of women who publicly express strong opinions is significantly higher than in the EU.

When viewed according to sociodemographic characteristics, the data show that men in Serbia are not a homogeneous group in terms of attitudes towards gender roles. The differences are most pronounced in statements related to the traditional division of roles, decision-making in the family, and acceptance of women who publicly express strong opinions.

The clearest generational pattern is seen in the traditional role of men as breadwinners. 34.4% of men aged 25 to 34 agree that the most important role of men is to earn money, while this share rises to 77.4% for men aged 65 and over. A similar, although less pronounced, pattern exists for the statement that the most important role of women is to take care of the home and family: around 49% of men in the age groups up to 24 and 25 to 34 agree with this, compared to 69.3% of men aged 65 and over. These data show that the traditional division of paid and unpaid work is most strongly retained among the oldest respondents. However, age does not produce a simple pattern in which younger men are always more egalitarian. For example, the statement that it is okay for a man to cry is most commonly agreed upon by men in middle age groups, especially among men aged 45 to 54, where 73.4% agree with this statement, while it is lower among the youngest (57.1%) and the oldest (57.8%). Also, 47.6% of men under 24 agree with the statement that a man should have the final say in important family decisions, which is more than in the 25 to 64 age group, but significantly less than among men over 65, where the agreement is 64.7%.

This indicates that there is an ambivalent pattern among the youngest men — they do not accept all traditional attitudes to the same extent, but some hierarchical family norms remain present.

Education is the strongest differentiating factor. Men with higher and higher education are significantly more likely to accept egalitarian statements and less likely to support explicitly traditional views. It is acceptable for a man to cry, according to 48.0% of men with primary or incomplete primary school, compared to 77.6% of men with higher or higher education. Similarly, the view that it is equally important for women and men to be financially independent is accepted by 47.6% of men with the lowest education, compared to 74.1% of men with higher or higher education. The view that men would also benefit from greater equality between women and men is accepted by 34.6% of men with the lowest education, compared to 63.4% of men with higher or higher education. At the same time, education reduces support for specific views that establish a hierarchy between men and women. The statement that men should have the final say in important family decisions is agreed by 57.3% of men with primary or incomplete primary school, compared to 28.5% of men with higher or higher education. The statement that a man's most important role is to earn money is accepted by 66.9% of men with the lowest education and 42.1% of men with higher or higher education. Also, the view that it is not attractive when women publicly express strong opinions is accepted by 42.3% of men with the lowest education, compared to 21.8% of men with higher or higher education. This shows that education has the greatest effect precisely on attitudes related to women's power, authority and public visibility.

However, the view that feminism has “gone too far” is not limited to less educated men. 59.5% of men with primary or incomplete primary education agree with this statement, 61.9% of men with secondary school and 55.7% of men with higher or higher education. This means that education reduces support for certain gender stereotypes, but does not completely eliminate resistance to feminism as a broader political and symbolic framework.

Regional differences are also pronounced. Belgrade has the lowest level of agreement with several traditional statements: that the most important role of a man is to earn money is agreed by 47.3% of men in Belgrade, compared to 68.0% in Southern and Eastern Serbia; that the most important role of a woman is to take care of the home and family is agreed by 48.2% in Belgrade, compared to 67.4% in Šumadija and Western Serbia. The statement that a man should have the final say in important family decisions is agreed by 32.0% of men in Belgrade, 39.6% in Vojvodina, 54.2% in Šumadija and Western Serbia, and 56.9% in Southern and Eastern Serbia. The largest regional difference occurs in the view that it is not attractive when women publicly express strong opinions. This statement is agreed by 20.8% of men in Belgrade, 27.3% in Vojvodina, 40.0% in Southern and Eastern Serbia, and 53.1% in Šumadija and Western Serbia. This finding is important because it shows that resistance is not only directed at family roles, but also at the public visibility of women. At the same time, Šumadija and Western Serbia also record the highest level of agreement with the statement that it is equally important for women and men to be financially independent, 79.7%, as well as with the statement that men would also benefit from greater equality between women and men, 66.2%. This finding shows that egalitarian and traditional attitudes can occur simultaneously in the same environments.

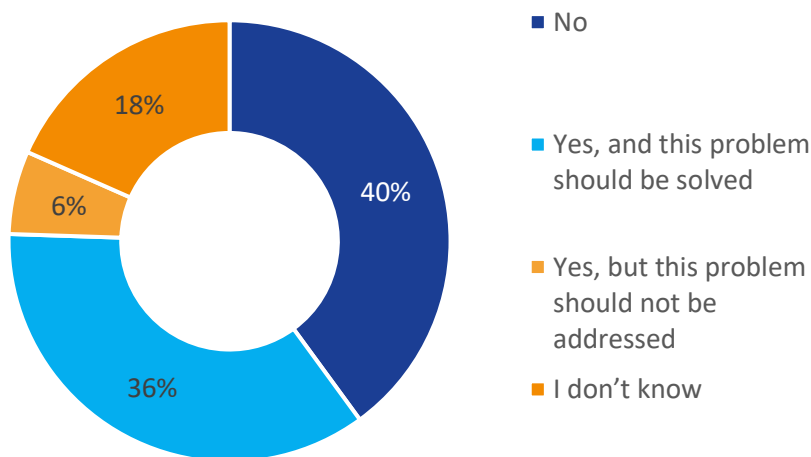
While the view that feminism has gone too far is low in relation to education, there are significant regional differences. The lowest level of agreement is recorded in Vojvodina, 47.3%, while the highest is in Southern and Eastern Serbia, 71.1%. In Belgrade, 59.3% of men agree with this statement, and in Šumadija and Western Serbia, 63%. This shows that resistance to feminism is not limited to one type of environment, but is significantly more pronounced in certain regions.

According to the size of the settlement, the differences are smaller than in the case of education and region, but they are important in the issues of family power and women's public speaking. The statement that men should have the final say in important family decisions is agreed by 38.1% of men from cities, 59.2% from suburban settlements and 57.0% from rural areas. The view that it is not attractive when women publicly express strong opinions is accepted by 27.8% of men from cities, 40.1% from suburban settlements and 48.6% of men from rural areas.

The data shows that 41.7% of men believe that there is a problem with the way women are represented in the media and advertising in Serbia, and 35.6% believe that this problem should be solved, while 6.1% recognise the problem but do not believe that it should be solved. In contrast, 40.0% of men believe that the problem does not exist, and 18.4% do not have a formed opinion.

Figure 6. Do you think there is a problem with the way women are represented in the media and advertising in Serbia?

Response structure (%), n=1201



This finding shows that men's perception of problematic media portrayals of women is divided.

Compared to the 2024 survey of the Commissioner for the Protection of Equality among women, the difference is not that women are dramatically more likely to seek a solution to this problem, but that men are more likely to deny its existence. In the survey of women, 38.4% of respondents believed that there is a problem with the way women are represented in the media and advertising and that it needs to be solved, while this share was 35.6% among men. The difference in support for solving the problem is 2.8 percentage points. However, 40.0% of men believe that the problem does not exist, compared to 27.4% of women.

When it comes to the representation of men in the media and advertising, 32.6% of respondents believe that there is a problem. Of these, 26.6% believe that the problem should be solved, while 6.0% believe that the problem exists but that it should not be solved. Almost half of men, 49.5%, believe that the problem does not exist, while 17.9% have no opinion. This finding shows that media and advertising content, although it can reproduce gender stereotypes about both women and men, is not widely recognised as an area in which intervention is needed.

Major findings

1. Men's views on gender roles are extremely ambivalent. The majority accept certain egalitarian views: 69.1% believe that it is equally important for women and men to be financially independent, 66.5% believe that it is acceptable for men to cry, and 54.7% believe that men would also benefit from greater equality between women and men.
2. However, the traditional division of family roles remains strongly present. 57.2% of men believe that the most important role of a man is to earn money, while 58.7% believe that the most important role of a woman is to take care of the home and family. In both cases, support for these views is significantly higher than among women, where the same views are accepted by 32.9% and 38.6% of respondents, respectively.
3. Family decision-making remains an important point of hierarchical gender norms. 45.7% of men agree with the statement that men should have the final say in important family decisions. Although the majority disagree with this view, the fact that almost every second man accepts it shows that male advantage in family decision-making is not a marginal view.
4. The stereotype of female emotionality is one of the most widespread. The claim that women make decisions driven by emotions more often than men is accepted by 62.9% of men. In a previous study on a sample of women, the same attitude was accepted by 51.7% of respondents, which indicates that this stereotype is also present among women, but is more pronounced among men.
5. Men with higher and college education are more likely to adopt egalitarian attitudes and less likely to support hierarchical norms. For example, 42.3% of men with primary or incomplete primary education agree with the statement that it is not attractive when women publicly express strong opinions, compared to 21.8% of men with higher or college education.
6. The traditional role of men as breadwinners is most pronounced among the oldest, but some hierarchical norms remain present among the youngest, with 47.6% of men under the age of 24 agreeing with the statement that men should have the final say in important family decisions.
7. 41.7% of men believe that there is a problem with the way women are represented in the media and advertising, of which 35.6% believe that this problem should be solved. In contrast, 40% of men believe that there is no problem, which is significantly more than among women, where 27.4% of respondents hold this view.

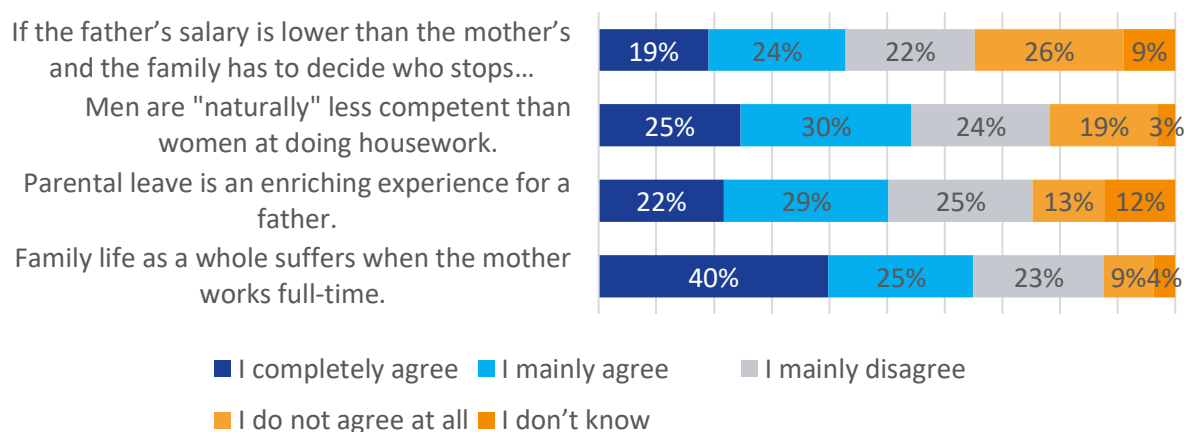
5.3 Unpaid work and parenthood

Unpaid household work, childcare and caring for other family members are some of the key areas in which gender equality is manifested in everyday life. The data show that men's attitudes towards unpaid work and parenthood are highly ambivalent. On the one hand, half of the respondents recognise fatherhood as an active parental role, with 50.3% of men agreeing that parental leave is an enriching experience for the father. On the other hand, 64.9% of men believe that family life as a whole suffers when the mother works full-time. Together, both findings indicate that fatherhood is partly recognised as a valuable and important experience, but that the idea of the mother as the primary caregiver is still strongly present. The stereotype of men being

less competent in housework is also very widespread. 54.3% of men agree with the statement that men are “naturally” less competent than women in performing housework, while 42.7% disagree, and 3% have no opinion. This finding is important because it does not only speak to an assessment of ability, but also to the justification of the existing division of labour. If housework is interpreted as an area for which women are “naturally” more competent, then the unequal division of labour is more easily accepted as natural, rather than as a consequence of social expectations and habits. Opinions are most divided on the question of whether, in a situation where the father’s salary is lower than the mother’s salary and when the family has to decide who stops working to take care of the children, the father should be the one to stop working. 42.8% of men agree with this statement, while 48.2% disagree, and 9.0% have no opinion. This finding shows that even when economic logic suggests that the father could take over childcare, almost half of men do not accept such a solution.

Figure 7. Now I will read you several statements related to economic equality and please rate from 1 to 4 how much you agree with each of these statements, where 1 means that you completely agree and 4 means that you completely disagree.

Response structure (%), n=1201

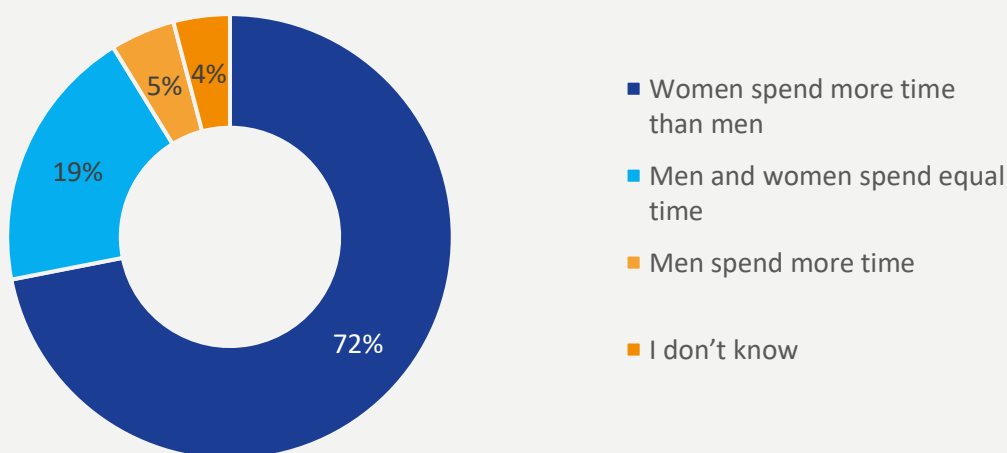


The comparison with Eurobarometer 545 is particularly significant. In Serbia, 64.9% of men agree with the statement that family life suffers when the mother works full-time, while in the EU the average agreement is 52% among men. This means that in Serbia the traditional expectation that the mother should be primarily available to the family is more pronounced than in the European Union average. At the same time, the statement that parental leave is an enriching experience for the father is accepted by 50.3% of men in Serbia, while in the EU this share is 79% among men. This difference shows that the active paternal role is significantly less normalised in Serbia than in the EU. In the EU, 48% of men agree with the statement that men are naturally less competent than women in housework, compared to 54.3% in Serbia, which shows that this stereotype is not specific only to Serbia, but is somewhat more pronounced in Serbia than among men in the EU. The claim that, in a situation where the father's salary is lower than the mother's and the family have to decide who stops working, the father should be the one to do so is agreed by 50% of men in the EU and 42.8% in Serbia. Acceptance of this model is lower in Serbia, but in both contexts, more than half of men do not accept that the father should take on the primary role in caring for the child, even when economic logic suggests it, which indicates that the stereotype of the breadwinner is maintained even beyond a rational assessment of the household's interests.

Although men largely retain traditional views on motherhood and housework, most still recognise that women today bear a greater burden of unpaid work. A total of 72.0% of men believe that women spend more time than men doing housework and caring for household members. Only 19.3% believe that men and women spend equal time on these activities, while 4.7% believe that men spend more time than women. Another 4.1% have no opinion. However, this finding should be interpreted in conjunction with the previous opinions. Recognising that women do more housework does not necessarily mean rejecting the norms that maintain such a distribution. This is precisely why the difference between the perception of the situation and the willingness to change it is important.

Figure 8. Which of the following statements, regarding the division of household chores and care for household members, in your opinion best describes the current situation?

Response structure (%), n=1201



A comparison with the 2024 survey of the Commissioner for the Protection of Equality on a sample of women shows a high degree of agreement in the assessment of the actual distribution of unpaid work. In that survey, 76.6% of women believed that women spend more time than men doing housework and caring for household members, while in this survey, 72.0% of men expressed the same opinion. This indicates that men and women in Serbia largely share the insight that unpaid work is unevenly distributed.

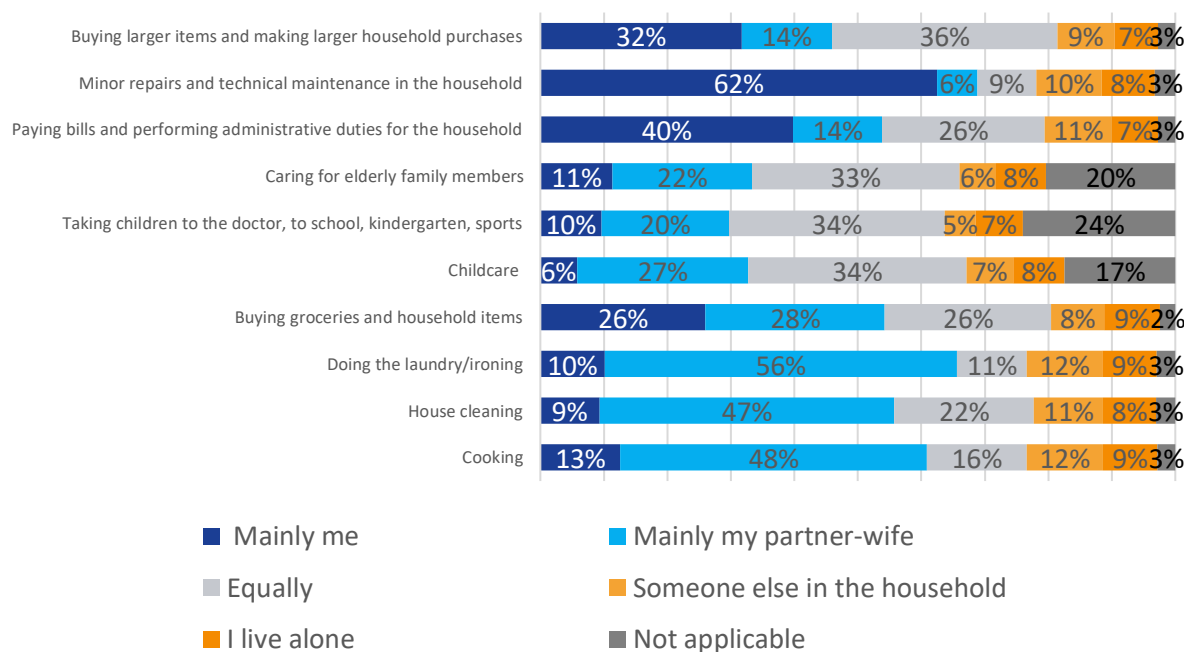
This finding is important for public policy because it shows that the underlying problem is not just that men do not see the unequal division of labour. On the contrary, most do. The problem is that recognising inequality does not necessarily lead to a change in practice, especially if there are also beliefs that women are “naturally” more competent at housework or that family life suffers when mothers work full-time.

Data on the specific division of household activities show a clear pattern, with women, i.e., the partners and wives of the respondents, most often taking on daily and time-consuming household chores, while men more often take on technical, administrative and larger purchasing activities. The greatest asymmetry occurs in laundry and ironing. A total of 55.5% of men report that this work is mainly done by their partner or wife, while 10.1% report that it is mainly done by them, and 11.0% that the work is divided equally. A similar pattern exists in cooking, where 48.2% of respondents report that their partner or wife mostly cooks, 12.6% that they mostly cook, and

15.7% that the work is divided equally. When it comes to cleaning the house, 46.5% of men say that the work is mostly done by their partner or wife, 9.3% by themselves, and 22% by both. These data show that routine household chores that are repeated daily or several times a week are still predominantly women's responsibilities. This is particularly important because it is precisely this type of work that produces a "second shift": an invisible, continuous, and time-consuming obligation that continues after paid work and that most directly affects available time, vacation time, and the possibility of professional engagement.

Figure 9. Who in the household mainly performs certain household chores and care activities?

Response structure (%), n=1201



The opposite pattern occurs with technical and administrative activities. Minor repairs and technical maintenance in the home are mostly carried out by the respondent himself in 62.4% of cases, while 6.4% state that this is mostly done by the partner or spouse, and 9.2% that the work is shared equally. Paying bills and performing administrative duties for the household are mostly carried out by 39.8% of respondents, while 14% state that this is mostly done by the partner or spouse, and 25.6% that this duty is shared equally. When it comes to purchasing larger necessities and major household purchases, 31.7% of respondents state that this is mostly done by them, 14.2% that this is mostly done by the partner or spouse, and 35.5% that the work is shared equally. This pattern shows that men more often take on jobs that are periodic, related to the technical and financial-administrative control of the household. In contrast, women more often take on jobs that are routine and time-intensive.

When it comes to buying groceries and household items, the division is somewhat more balanced, but not completely. A total of 28.2% of men report that this task is mostly done by their partner or wife, 26.0% that it is mostly done by them, and 26.2% that the work is shared equally. When it comes to childcare, 34.4% of men report that this obligation is shared equally, while 26.9% report that it is mostly done by their partner or wife, and 5.8% that it is mostly done by them. When it

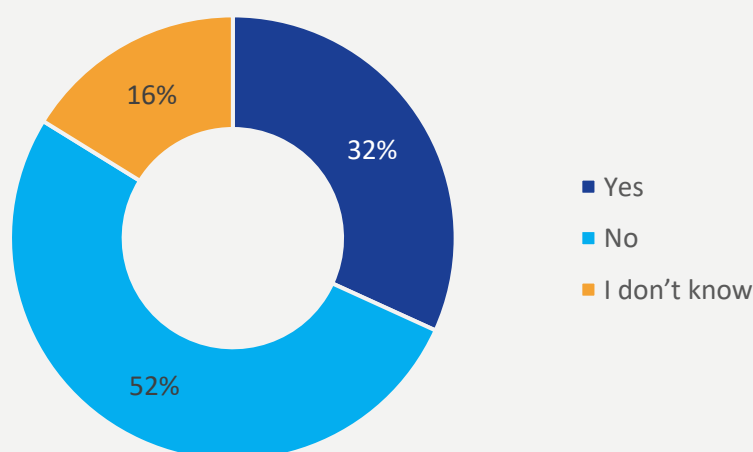
comes to taking children to the doctor, to school, kindergarten, or to sports, 33.9% of respondents report an equal division, 20.1% report that it is mostly done by their partner or wife, and 9.6% report that it is mostly done by them.

When it comes to caring for elderly family members, 32.7% of respondents report an equal division, 21.9% say that this responsibility is mostly performed by their partner or spouse, and 11.4% say that it is mostly performed by them. Here too, the share of “not applicable” responses is high, 20.4%, which means that the result refers to a specific life situation, and not to the entire sample to the same extent.

Data on attitudes towards parental leave show a clear gap between moderate support for the idea of active fatherhood and personal willingness to take longer leave to care for a child. When asked whether they would personally use, or have used, parental leave to care for a child for at least two months, 31.8% of men answered affirmatively. More than half, 52.0%, answered that they would not use or have not used such leave, while 16.2% had no opinion.

Figure 10. Would you personally use, or have you used, parental leave to care for a child for at least two months?

Response structure (%), n=1201



If we compare this with the previously obtained data, although 50.3% of men consider parental leave to be an enriching experience for the father, only 31.8% state that they personally would benefit or have benefited from leave of at least two months. The difference between general attitude and personal readiness shows that accepting active fatherhood at the level of values does not necessarily mean willingness to undertake specific practices that involve taking time off from work and taking on primary care of the child.

Major findings

1. Most men recognise that women carry a greater burden of unpaid work. A total of 72% of men believe that women spend more time than men on housework and caring for household members. Only 19.3% believe that men and women spend equal time on these activities, while 4.7% believe that men spend more time than women.

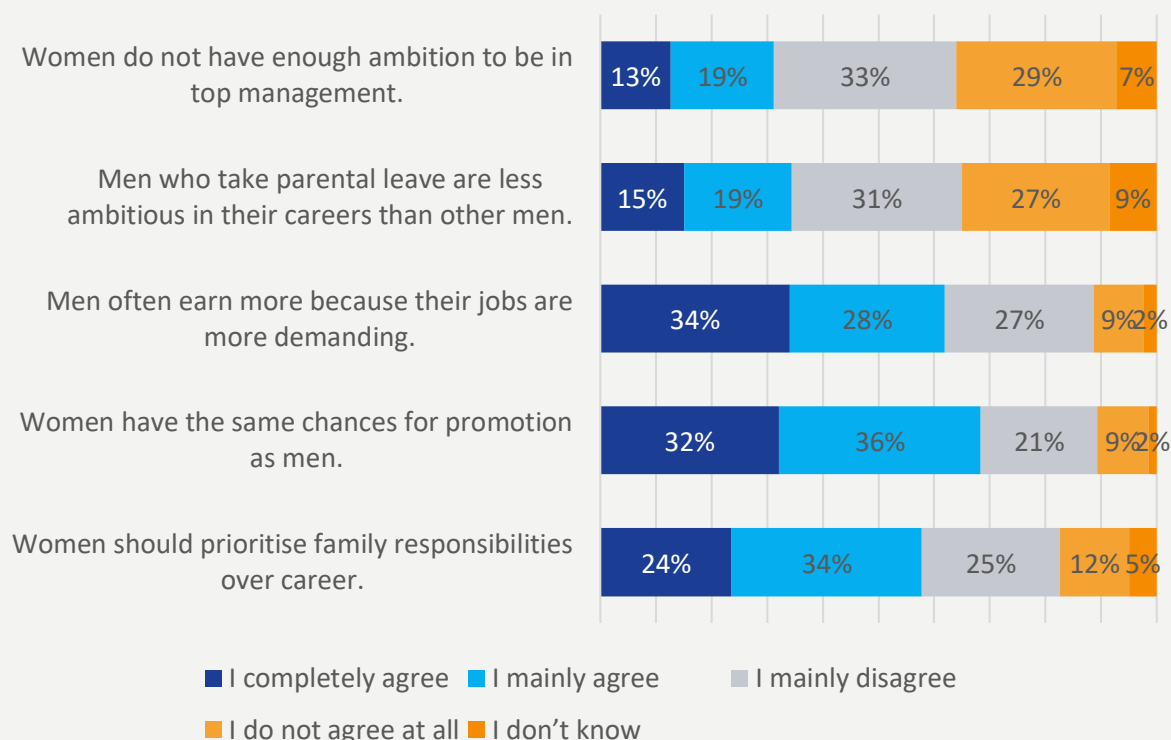
2. Men and women largely share the assessment that unpaid work is unevenly distributed, with 76.6% of women holding this view.
3. 64.9% of men in Serbia agree with the statement that family life as a whole suffers when the mother works full-time, which is significantly higher than the EU average (52%).
4. Active fatherhood is partly accepted as a value, but much less so as a personal practice. 50.3% of men in Serbia consider parental leave to be an enriching experience for fathers, compared to 79% of men in the EU. However, only 31.8% of men in Serbia say that they would personally use or have used parental leave for at least two months.
5. The actual division of household chores shows a clear gender specialisation. Women, i.e., the partners and wives of the respondents, most often take on routine and time-consuming tasks: washing and ironing is mainly done by the partner or wife in 55.5% of cases, cooking in 48.2%, and cleaning the house in 46.5% of cases. In contrast, men more often take on technical and occasional activities: minor repairs and technical maintenance are mainly done by the respondent himself in 62.4% of cases.
6. Childcare is somewhat more balanced than traditional household chores, but it is still not equally distributed. When it comes to childcare, 34.4% of men say that this responsibility is shared equally, 26.9% say that it is mostly done by their partner or wife, and only 5.8% say that it is mostly done by them.

5.4. Economic equality and the labour market

The data show that men in Serbia have divided views on economic equality between women and men. On the one hand, 68.4% of men believe that women have the same chances for advancement as men. On the other hand, 57.8% believe that women should prioritise family responsibilities over career, and 61.9% believe that men often earn more because their jobs are more demanding. These data show that the formal notion of equal opportunities coexists with views that justify or normalise inequalities in careers and earnings.

Figure 11. Now I will read you several statements related to economic equality and please rate from 1 to 4 how much you agree with each of these statements, where 1 means that you completely agree and 4 means that you completely disagree:

Response structure (%), n=1201



The most pronounced traditional view concerns the relationship between family and career. A total of 57.8% of men agree with the statement that women should prioritise family responsibilities over career, while 37.2% disagree and 5% have no opinion. This finding is important because it shows that economic inequality is not only shaped in the workplace, but also through expectations about what a woman's primary role is. If women are expected to prioritise family responsibilities over career, then unequal opportunities for advancement can arise even without overt discrimination, through the assumption that women will be less available or less committed. A comparison with Eurobarometer 545 shows that this view is significantly more pronounced in Serbia than in the European Union average. In the EU, 36% of men agree with the statement that women should prioritise family responsibilities over career, which is significantly lower than in Serbia.

At the same time, 68.4% of men believe that women have the same chances for promotion as men, while 30.1% disagree and 1.5% have no opinion. This predominantly positive perception of equality in the labour market may reduce the visibility of structural barriers. Compared to Eurobarometer 545, the share of men who accept the statement about equal opportunities is higher in Serbia than in the EU, with 57% of men in the EU agreeing with the statement that women have the same chances for promotion as men.

61.9% of men agree with the statement that men often earn more because their jobs are more demanding, while 35.8% disagree and 2.3% have no opinion. This data shows that the majority of men accept the explanation for the gender pay gap that links the difference in income to the allegedly greater demands of men's jobs. A comparison with data at the EU level shows that this

view is significantly more pronounced in Serbia. In the EU, 46% of men agree with the statement that men often earn more because their jobs are more demanding. This indicates that men in Serbia more often than men in the EU interpret the gender pay gap as a consequence of job characteristics, rather than as a consequence of structural inequality.

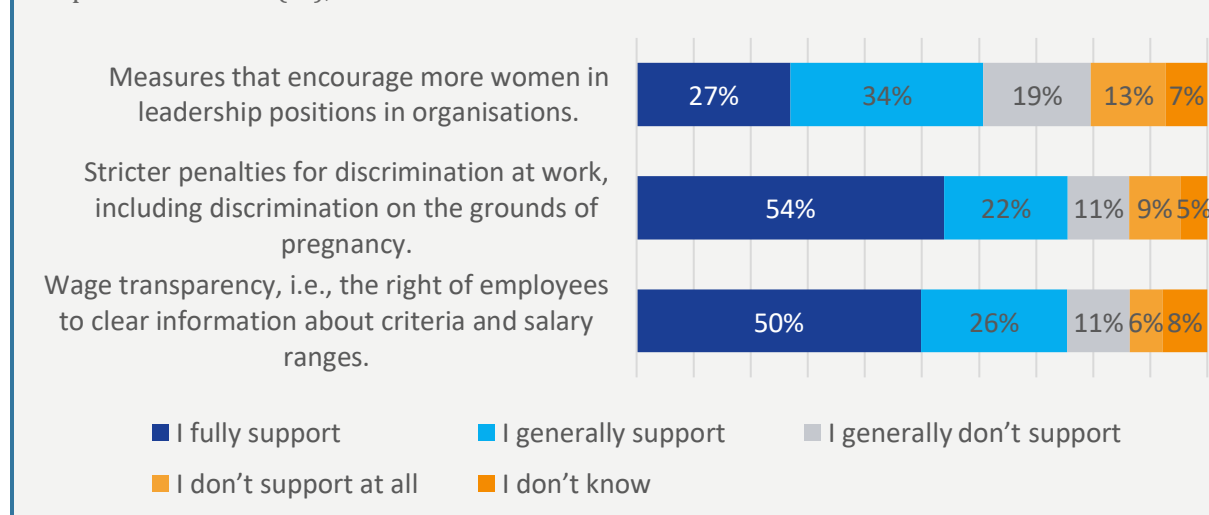
Attitudes towards taking parental leave show majority support for active fatherhood: 57% of men reject the claim that men who take parental leave are less ambitious in their careers than others, while 34.5% agree with this statement, and 8.5% have no opinion. Therefore, most men do not associate taking paternity leave with reduced career ambition. Compared to the EU, where 21% of men agree with the same statement, the share in Serbia is higher, which shows that the stigma of paternity leave in Serbia is more pronounced than in the EU, but it is not the majority view.

31.2% of respondents agree with the statement that women do not have enough ambition to be in top management, while 61.8% disagree, and 7.1% have no opinion. This finding shows that the majority of men do not attribute the underrepresentation of women in top management to a lack of ambition. However, the share of 31.2% is not negligible. In the EU, 23% of men agree with this statement, which means that the stereotype about women not having enough ambition for top management positions is more pronounced in Serbia.

Data on support for measures to improve gender equality in the labour market show that men in Serbia mostly accept specific interventions in the field of labour, but that support is stronger when it comes to transparency and sanctioning discrimination than when measures relate to greater representation of women in management positions.

Figure 11. Now I will read you several statements related to economic equality and please rate from 1 to 4 how much you agree with each of these statements, where 1 means that you completely agree and 4 means that you completely disagree:

Response structure (%), n=1201



The highest support is for wage transparency and stricter penalties for discrimination at work. Wage transparency, i.e., the right of employees to clear information about criteria and salary ranges, is supported by 75.4% of men. Of these, 49.8% fully support this measure, and 25.6% mostly support it. 16.7% of men do not support the measure, while 7.9% have no opinion. Similarly, stricter penalties for discrimination at work, including discrimination on the grounds of pregnancy, are supported by 75.6% of men. 53.9% fully support this measure, and 21.7% mostly

support it. 19.8% of men do not support the measure, while 4.7% have no opinion. The finding indicates that the majority of men largely support sanctioning discrimination at work.

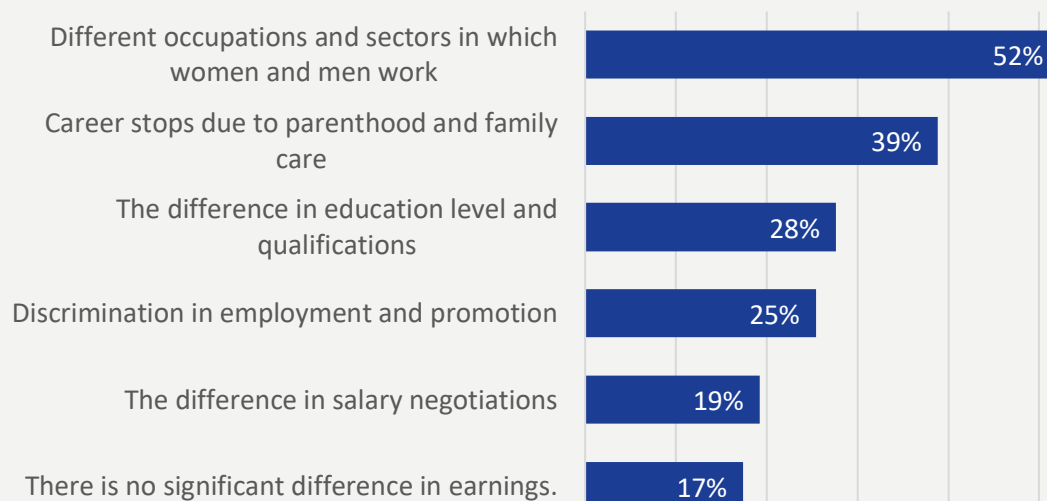
Support for measures that encourage greater participation of women in leadership positions is also majority, but weaker. These measures are supported by 60.8% of men, of which 27% fully support them, and 33.8% mostly. 32% of men do not support the measure, while 7.3% have no opinion.

This pattern is consistent with previous findings from the report: measures that act as procedural, legal or corrective measures, such as pay transparency and sanctions, are more acceptable than measures that directly change the structure of representation in senior positions. The difference is particularly noticeable in the share of full support: pay transparency is fully supported by 49.8% of men, stricter penalties by 53.9%, and measures for more women in management positions by 27.0%.

The question about the causes of the wage gap between women and men shows that men in Serbia most often recognise structural differences in occupations and sectors, but much less often direct discrimination in employment and promotion.

Figure 12. In your opinion, the difference in earnings between women and men in Serbia is primarily a consequence of (choose a maximum of 2 answers)

Response structure (%), n=1201



The most frequently cited reason is the different occupations and sectors in which women and men work, cited by 52.2% of respondents. This finding indicates that more than half of men recognise horizontal segregation of the labour market as a factor in the difference in earnings. The second most common reason is career breaks due to parenthood and family care, cited by 38.8% of men.

The difference in the level of education and qualifications is cited as the cause of the difference in earnings by 27.6% of men, while discrimination in employment and promotion is cited by 25.4%. The difference in salary negotiations is cited by 19.2% of men.

The existence of a gender pay gap is not recognised by 17.4% of men. This indicates that the fact of the existence of the gap is less controversial than the question of its causes, which suggests that public policies should focus on explaining the causes, rather than proving the gap itself.

Major findings

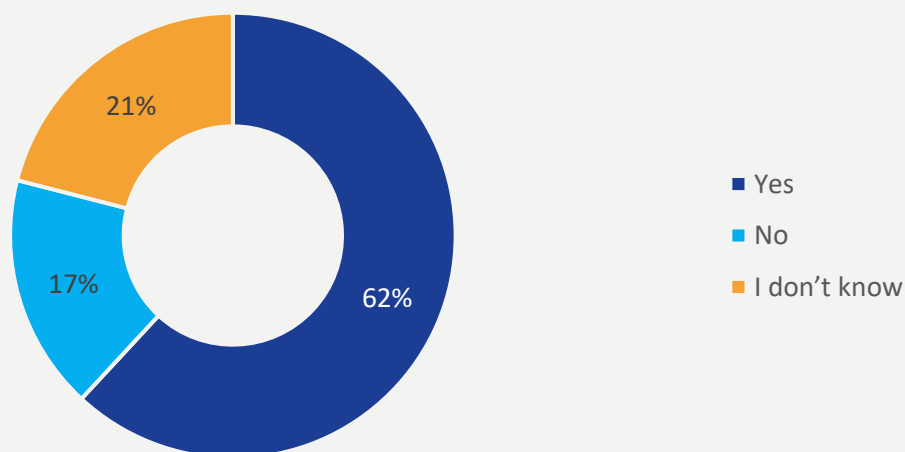
1. The majority of men, 68.4%, believe that women have the same chances for promotion as men. However, at the same time, 57.8% believe that women should prioritise family responsibilities over career, and 61.9% believe that men often earn more because their jobs are more demanding.
2. 31.2% of men agree with the statement that women do not have enough ambition to be in top management, while 61.8% disagree, which indicates that the majority of men in Serbia do not accept this stereotype.
3. Pay transparency is supported by 75.4% of men, and stricter penalties for discrimination at work, including pregnancy discrimination, are supported by 75.6%. This shows that there is broad support for measures that are presented as ensuring clear rules, fairness and sanctioning injustice.
4. Support declines when measures directly change the distribution of power in organisations.
Measures to increase the participation of women in management positions are supported by 60.8% of men, while 32% do not support them. The difference is particularly visible in terms of full support: salary transparency is fully supported by 49.8%, stricter penalties by 53.9%, and measures to increase the number of women in management positions by 27%.
5. Men selectively identify the causes of the gender pay gap. The most commonly identified cause is the different occupations and sectors in which women and men work, cited by 52.2% of men. Career breaks due to parenthood and family care are cited by 38.8%, differences in education and qualifications by 27.6%, discrimination in hiring and promotion by 25.4%, and differences in salary negotiations by 19.2%.
6. 17.4% of men believe that the gender pay gap does not exist.

5.5 Property and equality in inheritance

The data show that 61.9% of men believe that the laws in Serbia prescribe equal rights for men and women in terms of inheritance, 17.1% believe that the laws do not prescribe equal rights, while 21% do not know the answer. This finding shows that the majority of men recognise formal legal equality in inheritance, but also that more than one third of respondents, 38.1%, either have an incorrect idea about the law or do not have a formed opinion.

Figure 13. In your opinion, do the laws in Serbia provide for equal rights for men and women regarding inheritance?

Response structure (%), n=1201



When viewed according to sociodemographic characteristics, differences in knowledge of legal inheritance rights are significant according to education, age group, type of settlement and region. The clearest pattern is seen according to age group. 52.4% of men under 24 years of age believe that men and women have equal rights in terms of inheritance, 58.3% in the 25–34 age group, 60.0% in the 35–44 age group, 55.3% in the 45–54 age group, 72.0% in the 55–64 age group and 65.5% of men over 65 years of age. The key finding is not that younger men are more likely to have the wrong view, but that they are significantly more uncertain: in the group up to 24 years old, 34.4% do not know whether the law prescribes equal inheritance rights, while this share is 12.1% in the group 55–64 years old and 15.6% among men older than 65 years. By type of settlement, the data do not show a simple gap between urban and rural areas. On the contrary, men from cities and villages have a similar level of recognition of formal equality: 63.4% of men from cities and 64.6% of men from villages believe that the law prescribes equal inheritance rights. The lowest share is recorded in suburban settlements, where 43.2% of men have such a view. At the same time, in suburban areas, 33.5% of men believe that the laws do not provide for equal rights, which is significantly more than in cities, 16.4%, and in rural areas, 14.1%.

The highest share of men who believe that the laws provide for equal inheritance rights is recorded in Šumadija and Western Serbia, 68.3%, and in Southern and Eastern Serbia, 64.9%. Lower values are found in Vojvodina, 58.0%, and Belgrade, 56.1%.

A total of 52.1% of men reported that they were very well or mostly well informed about the rules of inheritance procedure, while 47.8% reported that they were mostly poorly, very poorly or not at all informed. This shows that practical knowledge about the procedure is limited. Additionally, 54.2% of men reported that they had once participated in inheritance procedure, while 41.1% had not, and 4.6% could not remember. Overall, the information data show that there is room for

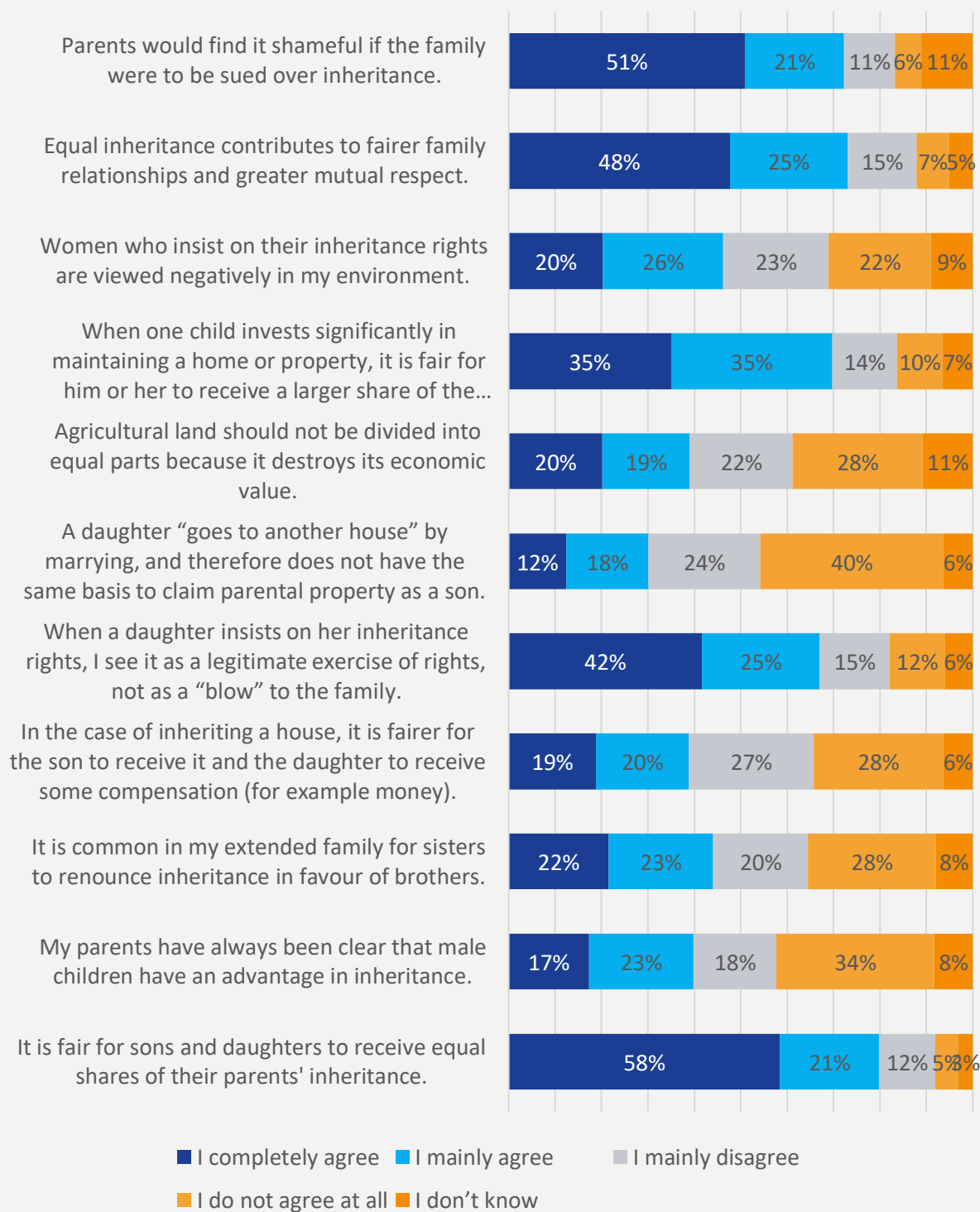
strengthening legal literacy in the area of inheritance. 57.2% of men with primary or incomplete primary education, 64.6% of men with secondary school and 59.4% of men with higher or higher education believe that the law prescribes equal inheritance rights.

At the level of a general principle, support for equal inheritance is high. 79.7% of men agree with the statement that it is fair for sons and daughters to receive equal shares of their parents' inheritance, while 17.1% disagree and 3.1% have no opinion. This shows that the majority of men accept equal inheritance as a principle of fairness. Similarly, 73.1% of men agree with the statement that equal inheritance contributes to fairer family relations and greater mutual respect.

However, the data show that despite the high value of equality in inheritance, it often happens that women renounce their inheritance. Thus, 44.1% of men agree that it is common in their extended family for sisters to renounce their inheritance in favour of their brothers. 39.9% of men agree with the statement that their parents have always been clear that male children have an advantage in inheritance, while 51.9% disagree, and 8.3% have no opinion. The view that a daughter "goes to another house" by marrying, and therefore does not have the same basis to claim parental property as a son, is accepted by 30.1% of men, while 63.5% disagree. This finding is relatively favourable because the majority rejects one of the classic patriarchal arguments against daughters' inheritance rights. However, the share of 30.1% shows that this pattern is not marginal. A similar pattern is visible in the claim that, in the case of inheriting a house, it is fairer for the son to receive it and the daughter to receive some compensation, for example money. 38.8% of men agree with this claim, while 54.8% disagree, and 6.4% have no opinion. This shows that the majority does not accept the direct advantage of the son in inheriting the house, but that a significant part of the respondents still believe that a male child is a more suitable bearer of the family property, with compensation for the daughters. Opinions are also divided on agricultural land. 39% of men agree with the claim that agricultural land should not be divided into equal parts because it destroys its economic value, while 50.2% disagree, and 10.8% have no opinion. This finding shows that the argument of economic rationality can be an important channel through which equal inheritance rights are called into question. At the same time, 69.8% of men agree that it is fair for a child who invests significantly in maintaining a home or property to receive a larger share of the inheritance, regardless of gender.

Figure 14. Now I will read you several statements related to economic equality and please rate from 1 to 4 how much you agree with each of these statements, where 1 means that you completely agree and 4 means that you completely disagree:

Response structure (%), n=1201



72.3% of men agree with the statement that parents would find it shameful if the family were to go to court over inheritance, while 16.6% disagree and 11.1% have no opinion. This data shows

that avoiding family conflict is a very strong norm. In practice, it can act as an obstacle to exercising rights, especially for women who, by insisting on an inheritance, could be presented as people who disrupt family relations.

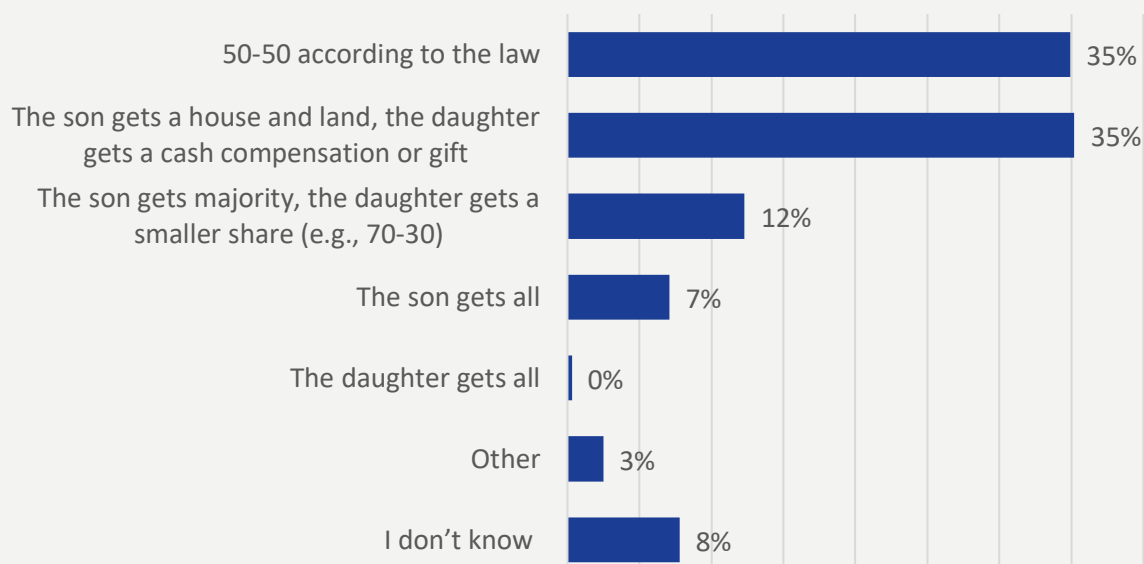
Likewise, 46.2% of men believe that women who insist on their inheritance rights are viewed negatively in their environment. 44.7% disagree with this statement, while 9.0% have no opinion. Therefore, although the majority supports equal inheritance rights in principle, almost half of the respondents recognise that a woman who exercises these rights may be exposed to a negative reaction from her environment and family. This indicates significant social pressure that maintains traditional values in inheritance. Attitudes overall show a two-fold pattern. In principle, equal inheritance has high support. However, within the framework of family norms and social expectations, mechanisms operate that limit the application of this principle.

Responses to specific family scenarios show that principled support for equal inheritance decreases significantly when respondents are faced with realistic situations in which one child lives with the parents, works on the property, or takes care of them on a daily basis.

In the first scenario, the family has one house and agricultural land, the son lives with his parents and works on the farm, while the daughter lives in the city with her family. In this situation, 34.9% of men believe that the property should be divided 50/50 by law. Almost the same share, 35.2%, believes that the son should receive the house and land, and the daughter a monetary compensation or gift. Another 12.3% believe that the son should receive the majority, and the daughter a smaller share, while 7.1% believe that the son should receive everything. A very small share, 0.3%, believes that the daughter should receive everything, 2.5% give some other answer, and 7.8% do not know.

Figure 15. A family has one house and agricultural land. They have two children: the son lives with his parents and works on the farm; the daughter lives in the city with her family. How do you think the property should be divided?

Response structure (%), n=1201

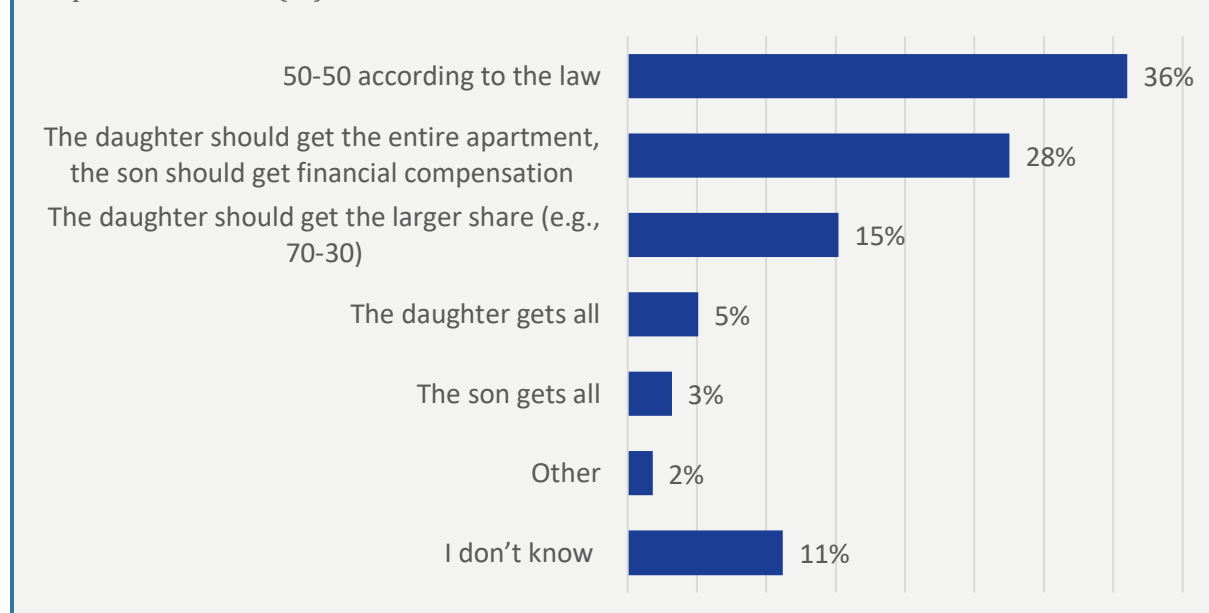


When the options in which the son receives a house and land with compensation for the daughter, the majority of the property or the entire property are added together, 54.6% of respondents are obtained.

In the second scenario, the family has one apartment in the city, the daughter lives close to her husband and visits her parents every day, while the son lives abroad and rarely comes. In this situation, 36.0% of men believe that the apartment should be divided 50/50 by law. A total of 27.5% believe that the daughter should get the entire apartment and the son a monetary compensation, 15.2% believe that the daughter should get a larger share, and 5.1% that the daughter should get everything. At the same time, 3.2% believe that the son should get everything, 1.8% give some other answer, and 11.2% do not know.

Figure 16. A family has one house and agricultural land. They have two children: the son lives with his parents and works on the farm; the daughter lives in the city with her family. How do you think the property should be divided?

Response structure (%), n=1201



In this case too, the 50/50 division is the most common individual response, but it is not the majority view. When the options in which the daughter receives the entire apartment with compensation for the son, a larger part of the apartment or the entire apartment are added together, 47.8% of respondents are obtained. This shows that a significant proportion of men recognise the daily care of their parents as a relevant basis for deviating from equal division. Therefore, the criterion of care also applies when the carrier of that care is the daughter.

The responses to two specific scenarios show that support for equal inheritance in principle decreases when the issue of property division is placed in a realistic family context. In both scenarios, approximately one third of men choose a legal 50/50 division: 34.9% in the case of the house and land and 36.0% in the case of the apartment. This shows that, when circumstances such as working on the estate, living with parents or daily caring for them are introduced, a significant proportion of respondents turn to the criterion of contribution rather than strictly equal shares. However, there is a slight asymmetry in favour of the son. In the scenario in which the son lives with the parents and works on the estate, 54.6% of respondents choose a model that gives the son

an advantage. In the scenario in which the daughter visits the parents daily, 47.8% of respondents choose a model that gives the daughter an advantage.

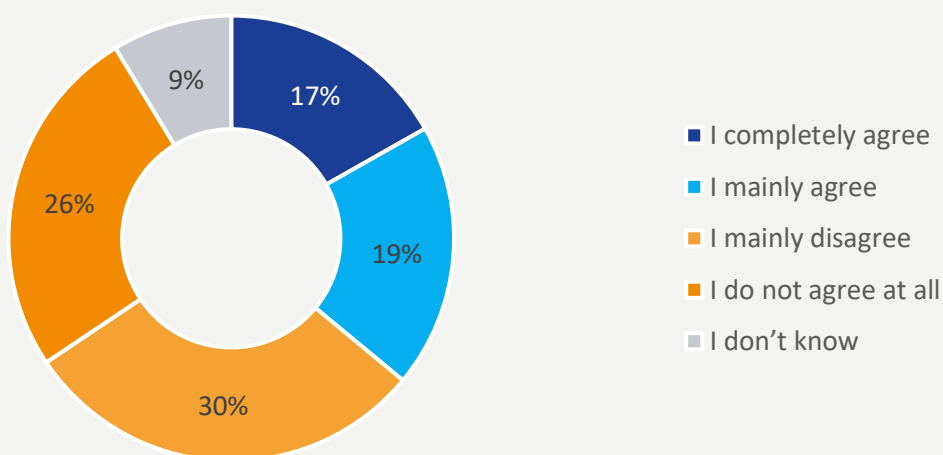
Major findings

1. A total of 61.9% of men believe that the laws in Serbia prescribe equal rights for men and women in terms of inheritance, but at the same time, 17.1% believe that the laws do not prescribe equal rights, and 21% do not know the answer. This means that 38.1% of men either have an incorrect idea about the law or do not have certain knowledge about the basic rule of equal inheritance rights.
2. Support for equal inheritance in principle is high. 79.7% of men agree that it is fair for sons and daughters to receive equal shares of their parents' inheritance. Also, 73.1% believe that equal inheritance contributes to fairer family relationships and greater mutual respect.
3. Formal support for equality exists alongside customary practices that limit it. A total of 44.1% of men state that it is common in their extended family for sisters to renounce inheritance in favour of brothers. 39.9% of men agree with the statement that parents have always been clear that male children have an advantage in inheritance.
4. The strongest social pressure is related to avoiding family disputes. 72.3% of men agree with the statement that parents would find it shameful if the family were to be sued over inheritance.
5. Almost half of men recognise a negative reaction from their environment towards women who insist on inheritance rights. A total of 46.2% of men believe that women who insist on their inheritance rights are viewed negatively in their environment, while 44.7% disagree. This shows that social sanctions against women who demand their share are very present, even when equal inheritance is supported in principle.

5.6 Violence, control and recognition of unacceptable behaviour

36% of men agree with the statement that women often make up or exaggerate allegations of abuse or sexual violence, of which 16.8% completely agree and 19.2% mostly agree. 55.3% of respondents disagree with this statement, while 8.7% have no opinion.

Figure 17. Women often make up or exaggerate allegations of abuse or sexual violence
Response structure (%), n=1201

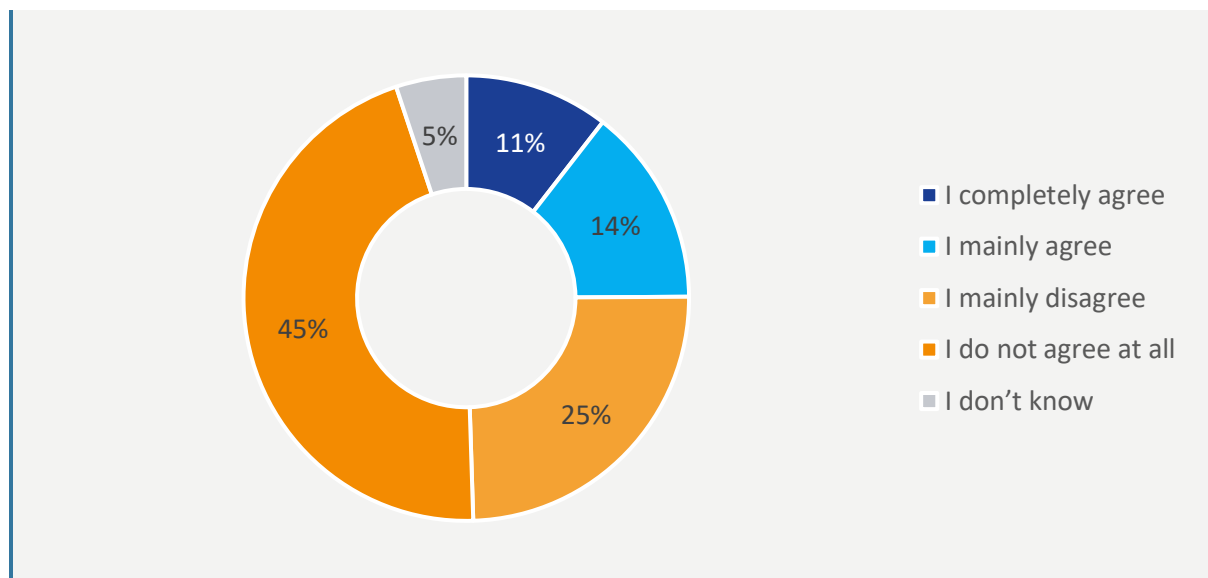


This finding shows that most men do not accept the view that questions the credibility of women who speak out about abuse or sexual violence. However, the share of 36% who agree with this statement is not negligible. Such a view can lead to women's experiences being viewed with suspicion in advance, making it difficult to recognise violence, support victims and trust in protection mechanisms.

The second view shows a more favourable pattern. 24.8% of men agree with the statement that domestic violence is a private matter and should be resolved within the family, while 70% disagree. Of these, 45.4% disagree completely, which shows that a significant proportion of men clearly reject the idea that domestic violence should be left within the family. Another 5.1% have no opinion.

Figure 18. Domestic violence is a private matter and should be addressed within the family.

Response structure (%), n=1201



This finding shows that most men do not view domestic violence as an exclusively private issue. However, almost a quarter of respondents accept the view that it is resolved within the family. This proportion is important for public policies because it shows that there is still a segment of men who may be sceptical about institutional response, reporting, or involving third parties.

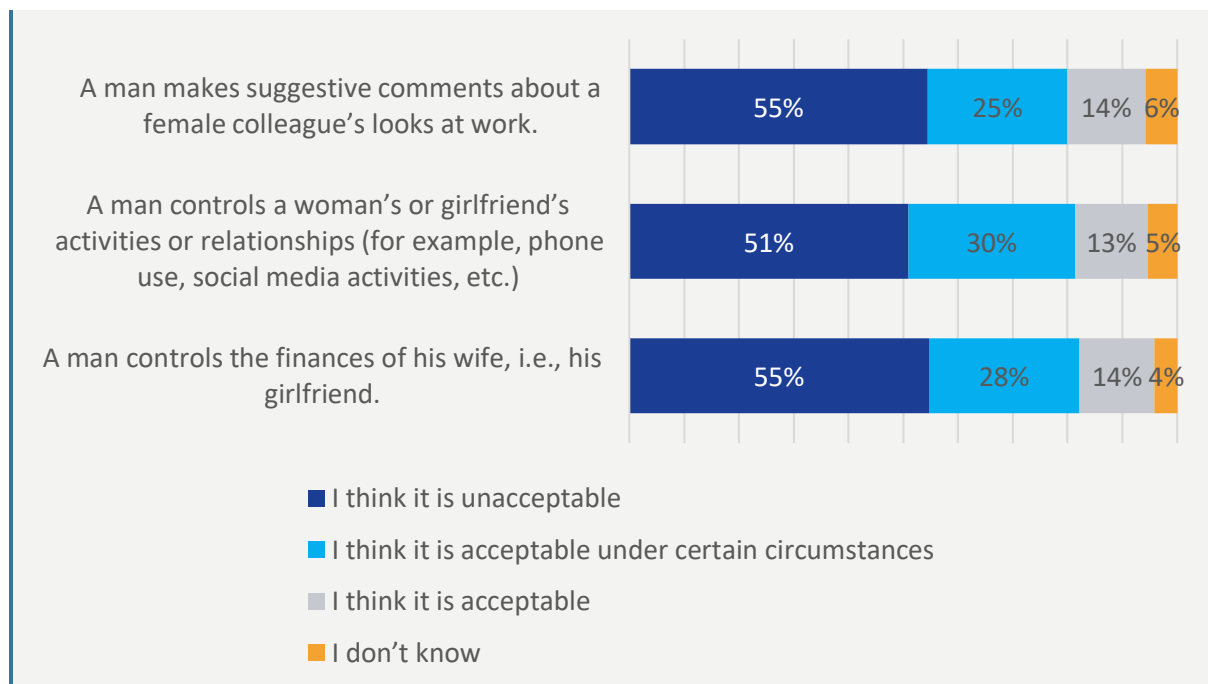
A comparison of these two attitudes shows that most men do not accept the view that domestic violence is a private matter, but rather a view that questions women's claims of abuse or sexual violence. In other words, support for an institutional approach to domestic violence is relatively high, but doubt about the credibility of women who speak out about violence remains a significant obstacle.

When respondents rated specific situations, the majority of men labelled controlling and harassing behaviour as unacceptable. However, in each of the three situations, about two-fifths of respondents considered the behaviour to be acceptable or acceptable under certain circumstances.

Financial control of a woman or girl is considered unacceptable by 54.6% of men. At the same time, 27.5% believe that such behaviour is acceptable under certain circumstances, and 13.7% that it is acceptable. Overall, 41.2% of respondents do not reject financial control unequivocally, but see it as acceptable or conditionally acceptable. Another 4.1% do not know or do not want to answer.

Figure 19. What do you think about the following situations? For each situation, select one of the following options:

Response structure (%), n=1201



A similar pattern is seen in controlling a woman's or girl's activities or relationships, including phone use and social media activity. This behaviour is considered unacceptable by 51% of men. However, 30.4% consider it acceptable under certain circumstances, and 13.4% consider it acceptable. This means that 43.8% of respondents accept or conditionally accept this form of control, while 5.3% have no clear position.

In a situation where a man makes suggestive comments about a female colleague's appearance at work, 54.5% of respondents believe that this is unacceptable. On the other hand, 25.4% believe that it is acceptable under certain circumstances, and 14.3% that it is acceptable. In total, 39.7% of respondents do not reject this behaviour unequivocally, while 5.8% do not know or do not want to answer.

Overall, these findings indicate that more than half of men recognise that financial control, activity control, and suggestive comments at work are unacceptable. However, in each situation, between 39.7% and 43.8% of respondents believe that such behaviour is acceptable or acceptable under certain circumstances. This means that work is needed not only to condemn violence in the narrowest sense, but also to recognise early, everyday, and normalised forms of control and harassing behaviour.

Analysis of demographic issues shows that attitudes about violence, control, and disruptive behaviour are not evenly distributed. The clearest differences occur by education, type of settlement, region, and age group.

Men with higher and higher education are more likely to reject problematic attitudes and more clearly recognise the unacceptability of controlling behaviour. 53.4% of men with primary or incomplete primary school agree with the statement that women often invent or exaggerate allegations of abuse or sexual violence, 35.3% of men with secondary school and 20.7% of men with higher or higher education. The difference is even clearer with the statement that domestic violence is a private matter — this statement is accepted by 43.7% of men with the lowest education, 22.9% with secondary education and 12.3% with higher or higher education.

A similar pattern is seen in specific situations. Controlling a woman's activities or relationships is considered unacceptable by 30.2% of men with primary or incomplete primary school, compared to 61.8% of men with higher or higher education. Financial control is considered unacceptable by 43.4% of men with primary or incomplete primary school and 61.5% of men with higher or higher education. Suggestive comments about a female colleague's appearance at work are considered unacceptable by 41.2% of men with primary or incomplete primary school, and 59% of men with higher or higher education.

By type of settlement, urban men are more likely than others to rate controlling and harassing behaviour as unacceptable. Financial control is rated as unacceptable by 56.9% of urban men, 52.8% of rural men, and 45.2% of suburban men. Control of activities and relationships is rated as unacceptable by 58.0% of urban men, 44.1% of rural men, and 25.7% of suburban men. On the other hand, control of a woman's activities or relationships is rated as acceptable or acceptable under certain circumstances by 66.3% of suburban men, compared to 36.7% of urban men. Suggestive comments about a female colleague's appearance are considered unacceptable by 60% of urban men, 47.6% of rural men, and 41.3% of suburban men. 58.2% of suburban men agree that women often make up or exaggerate allegations of abuse or sexual violence, compared to 32.4% of urban men and 37.9% of rural men.

Regional differences are also visible. Men in Belgrade more often than others rate controlling behaviours as unacceptable. Financial control is rated as unacceptable by 69.3% of men in Belgrade and 42.5% of men in Southern and Eastern Serbia. Control of activities and relationships is rated as unacceptable by 62.4% of men in Belgrade and 31.5% of men in Southern and Eastern Serbia. Suggestive comments about a female colleague's appearance are rated as unacceptable by 62.7% of men in Belgrade, 56.9% of men in Šumadija and Western Serbia, 50% of men in Vojvodina and 47.5% of men in Southern and Eastern Serbia.

Financial control is assessed as acceptable or acceptable under certain circumstances by 55.6% of men in Southern and Eastern Serbia, and control of a woman's or girl's activities and relationships is assessed in the same way by 63.1% of men in Southern and Eastern Serbia. 43.2% of men in Šumadija and Western Serbia and 31.2% of men in Vojvodina agree with the statement that women make up or exaggerate allegations of abuse or sexual violence. 16.9% of men in Vojvodina, 25.3% of men in Southern and Eastern Serbia, 28.2% of men in Šumadija and Western Serbia and 29.1% of men in Belgrade agree with the statement that domestic violence is a private matter.

By age group, there is no simple pattern in which younger men are always more sensitive and older men are always more traditional. Control over activities and relationships is rated as unacceptable by 39.8% of men in the age group up to 24 years, 61.2% of men aged 25–34 years, 58.5% of men aged 35–44 years, and 42.0% of men aged 65 and over. Financial control is rated as unacceptable by 50.3% of men under 24 years of age, 59.3% of men aged 25–34 years, 64.0% of men aged 35–44 years, 62.8% of men aged 45–54 years, 47.9% of men aged 55–64 years, and 46.1% of men aged 65 and over.

Suggestive comments about a female colleague's appearance are considered unacceptable by 53.3% of men under 24, 54.5% of men aged 25–34, 63.3% of men aged 35–44, 57.0% of men aged 45–54, 56.1% of men aged 55–64 and 45.8% of men aged 65 and over. 48.6% of men aged 65 and over, 29.1% of men aged 24 and under and 25.0% of men aged 35–44 agree with the statement that women often make up or exaggerate allegations of abuse or sexual violence.

33.7% of men aged 65 and over, 31.6% of men aged up to 24, 18.8% of men aged 35–44 and 16.9% of men aged 55–64 agree with the view that domestic violence is a private matter.

Major findings

1. Most men reject the view that domestic violence is a private matter, but almost a quarter still accept such a view. 70% of men disagree with the statement that domestic violence is a private matter and should be resolved within the family, while 24.8% agree, and 5.1% have no opinion.
2. Doubts about the credibility of women who speak out about abuse or sexual violence remain a significant obstacle. 36% of men agree with the statement that women often make up or exaggerate allegations of abuse or sexual violence, while 55.3% disagree, and 8.7% have no opinion.
3. Controlling and harassing behaviours are rated as unacceptable by most men, but with a relatively high share of those who consider them acceptable or conditionally acceptable. Financial control by a partner is considered unacceptable by 54.6% of men, suggestive comments about a colleague's appearance by 54.5%, and control of a partner's activities, relationships, and communication by 51%.
4. At the same time, 41.2% of men rate financial control of their partner as acceptable or acceptable under certain circumstances, 43.8% rate control of activities, relationships and communication, and 39.7% rate suggestive comments about their colleague's appearance.
5. Compared to the European Union, men in Serbia are significantly less likely to recognise these behaviours as unacceptable. Controlling a partner's activities or relationships is considered unacceptable by 79% of respondents in the EU compared to 51% in Serbia, suggestive comments about a colleague's appearance by 78% compared to 54.5%, and financial control by 63% compared to 54.6%. The gap is largest in controlling activities and communication, where the gap is 28 percentage points.
6. The differences are particularly pronounced in relation to education. 53.4% of men with primary or incomplete primary education agree with the statement that women often make up or exaggerate allegations of abuse or sexual violence, compared to 20.7% of men with higher or higher education. The view that domestic violence is a private matter is accepted by 43.7% of men with the lowest education and 12.3% of men with higher or higher education.
7. By type of settlement, control over a woman's activities and relationships is most often assessed as unacceptable among men from cities, 58%, followed by men from rural areas, 44.1%, while this share is lowest in suburban settlements, 25.7%.
8. Age differences are not one-sided. The view that domestic violence is a private matter is most often accepted by men older than 65 years, 33.7%, but also by 31.6% of the youngest men, up to 24 years of age.

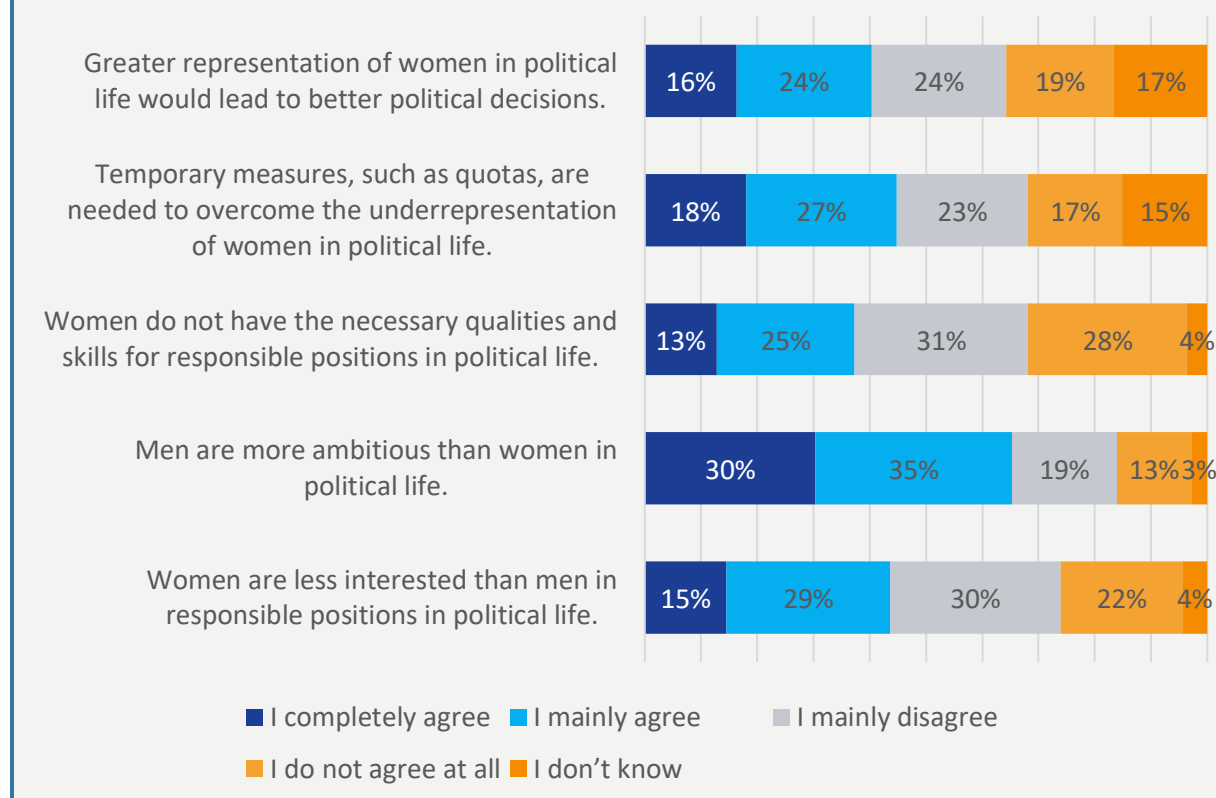
5.7 Political participation and leadership

The data show that men in Serbia often accept stereotypes about women's political ambition and competence. Thus, 65.3% of respondents agree with the view that men are more ambitious than

women in political life. Of these, 30.4% completely agree, and 34.9% mostly agree. 31.9% disagree with this statement, while 2.9% have no opinion.

Figure 20. Now I will read you several statements and please rate from 1 to 4 how much you agree with each of these statements, where 1 means that you completely agree, 2 that you mostly agree, 3 that you mostly disagree, and 4 that you completely disagree.

Response structure (%), n=1201



The stereotype of men's greater political ambition does not directly relate to women's formal right to participate in politics, but rather to explaining why women are less represented. If the lower representation of women is interpreted as a consequence of less ambition, then structural obstacles are pushed into the background. 43.6% of men agree with the statement that women are less interested than men in responsible positions in political life, while 52% disagree and 4.4% have no opinion. Here, the majority rejects the stereotype, but the share of those who accept it is still high. This means that almost half of men can interpret the lower representation of women in politics as a consequence of women's own lower interest, and not as a consequence of the way the political system and parties distribute power and opportunities.

A similar, but somewhat more favourable pattern occurs with the statement that women do not have the necessary qualities and skills for responsible positions in political life. 37.3% of men agree with this statement, while 59.1% disagree, and 3.6% have no opinion.

A comparison with Eurobarometer 545 shows that these stereotypes are more pronounced among men in Serbia than among men in the European Union. In the EU, 36% of men agree with the statement that women are less interested than men in responsible positions in politics, and an even more pronounced difference occurs with the view that men are more ambitious than women

in politics, where 48% of men in the EU hold this view compared to 65.3% in Serbia. The difference is also significant with the statement that women do not have the necessary qualities and skills for responsible political positions, with 22% of men in the EU and 37.3% of men in Serbia holding this view.

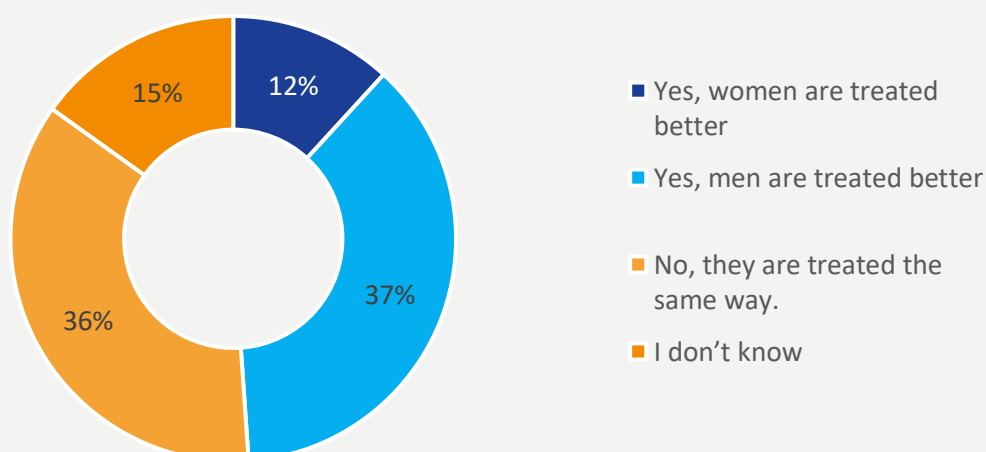
44.8% of men in Serbia agree with the statement that temporary measures are needed to overcome the underrepresentation of women in political life. 40.1% disagree with this statement, while 15.1% have no opinion. This finding shows that the sample is divided — support for quotas exists, but it is not strong enough to be described as a clear majority acceptance of corrective measures. Support is even weaker for the statement that greater representation of women in political life would lead to better political decisions. 40.3% of men agree with this statement, while 43.1% disagree, and 16.6% have no opinion. This shows that men do not sufficiently recognise the connection between gender balance and the quality of political decision-making. In other words, for some respondents, greater representation of women may be acceptable as a matter of formal equality, but not as a factor that improves political outcomes.

A comparison with Eurobarometer 545 shows that support for these views is slightly lower in Serbia than among men in the EU, where 50% of men believe that temporary measures, including quotas, are needed to overcome the underrepresentation of women in politics, while in Serbia this share is 44.8%. A larger difference is visible in the claim that greater representation of women in politics leads to better political decisions: in the EU this view is held by 52% of men, and in Serbia by 40.3%.

When the question is asked as an assessment of the current treatment of women and men in politics in Serbia, 37.1% of men believe that men are treated better, 36.0% believe that women and men are treated the same way, and 11.8% believe that women are treated better.

Figure 21. In your opinion, is there a difference in how women and men are treated in politics in Serbia?

Response structure (%), n=1201



The largest individual share recognises that men are in a more favourable position in politics, but this view does not have majority support. Almost the same share believes that women and men are treated the same. When added to this are 11.8% of those who believe that women are treated

better and 15.1% who are undecided, it is clear that a large proportion of men do not clearly recognise the asymmetry of political power and treatment.

In the EU, 54% of respondents believe that men are treated better in politics, 37% that women and men are treated the same, and 6% that women are treated better, indicating that men in Serbia are less likely to recognise that men are treated better in politics. This pattern suggests that recognition of political inequality is limited. If the position of women and men in politics is perceived as the same, or even more favourable for women, then quotas and other measures are more easily interpreted as unnecessary or as favouritism.

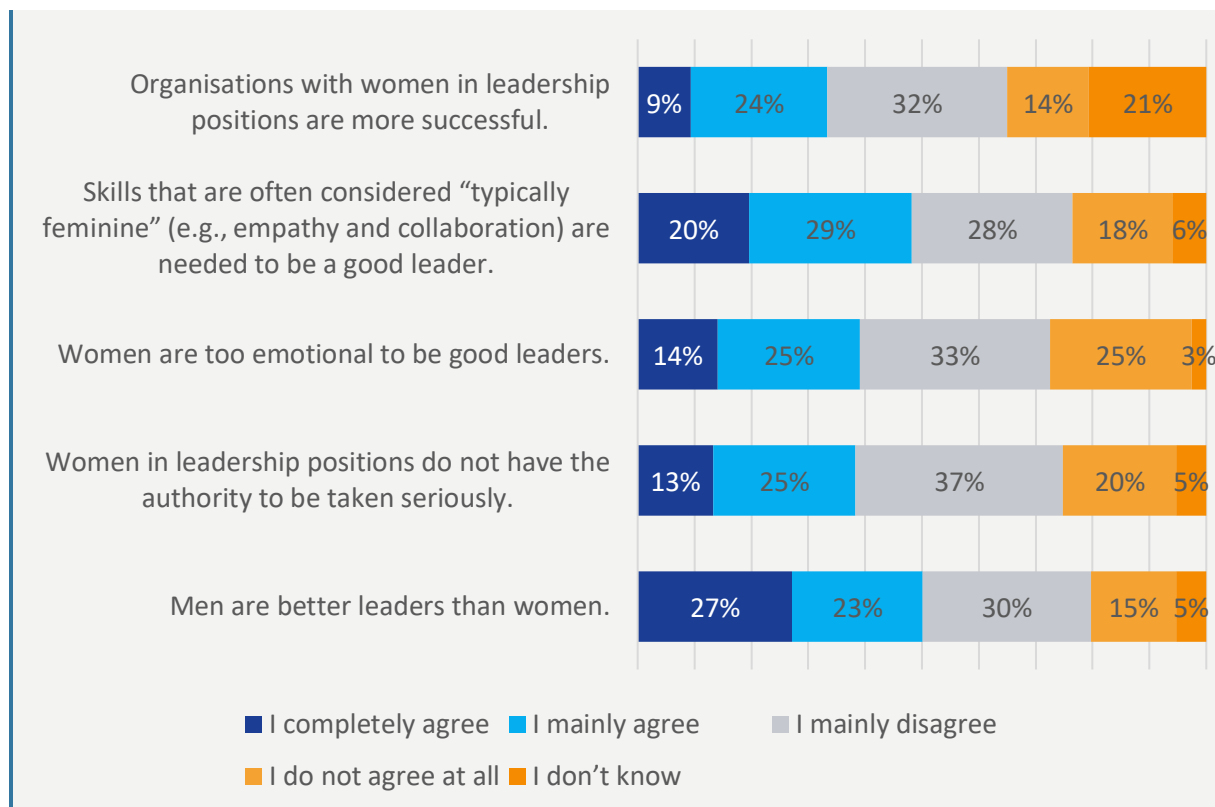
When the question is formulated directly, i.e. whether quotas are necessary to achieve equal participation of women in political life, 36.6% of men believe that quotas contribute to greater participation of women in political life. An additional 22.7% believe that quotas have contributed to women's political participation, but that they should now be abolished. On the other hand, 24.5% believe that quotas in political life for women were not necessary, and 13% believe that they lead to further stigmatisation of women. Another 3.1% give another answer.

This suggests a perception that quotas have partial legitimacy as an instrument that may have had an effect, but lack stable support as a currently needed measure. This is an important finding because it shows the difference between accepting the results of quotas and accepting the logic of temporary special measures. Some men may accept that quotas have increased women's participation, but not that they are still needed as long as there is no real balance in political influence.

Attitudes about leadership show even more pronounced ambivalence than attitudes about political participation. 50.1% of men agree with the statement that men are better leaders than women, while 44.6% disagree and 5.3% have no opinion.

Figure 22. Now I will read you several statements related to leadership. Please rate from 1 to 4 how much you agree with each of these statements, where 1 means that you completely agree, 2 that you mostly disagree, 3 that you mostly disagree, and 4 that you completely disagree.

Response structure (%), n=1201



The statement that women in leadership positions do not have the authority to be taken seriously is agreed by 38.3% of men, while 56.5% disagree and 5.3% have no opinion. A similar pattern exists with the statement that women are too emotional to be good leaders: 39.1% of men agree with it, while 58.3% disagree and 2.6% have no opinion. In both cases, the majority rejects the stereotype, but approximately two-fifths of respondents accept it.

The lowest support in this area is for the statement that organisations with women in leadership positions are more successful. 33.3% of men agree with this statement, 46% disagree, and 20.7% have no opinion.

A comparison with Eurobarometer 545 shows that stereotypes about women in leadership positions are significantly more pronounced in Serbia than among men in the EU. In the EU, 31% of men agree with the statement that men are better leaders than women, while in Serbia this share is 50.1%. The statement that women in leadership positions do not have the necessary authority is agreed with by 26% of men in the EU, compared to 38.3% in Serbia, and the statement that women are too emotional to be good leaders is agreed with by 26% of men in the EU, compared to 39.1% in Serbia. The statement that skills that are often considered "typically female", such as empathy and cooperation, are needed to be a good leader is agreed with by 48.1% of men in Serbia, while in the EU 61% of men agree with a similar statement. Overall, the findings on leadership show that men in Serbia not only more often accept negative stereotypes about women in leadership positions, but also less often recognise the positive effects of gender balance in leadership.

Major findings

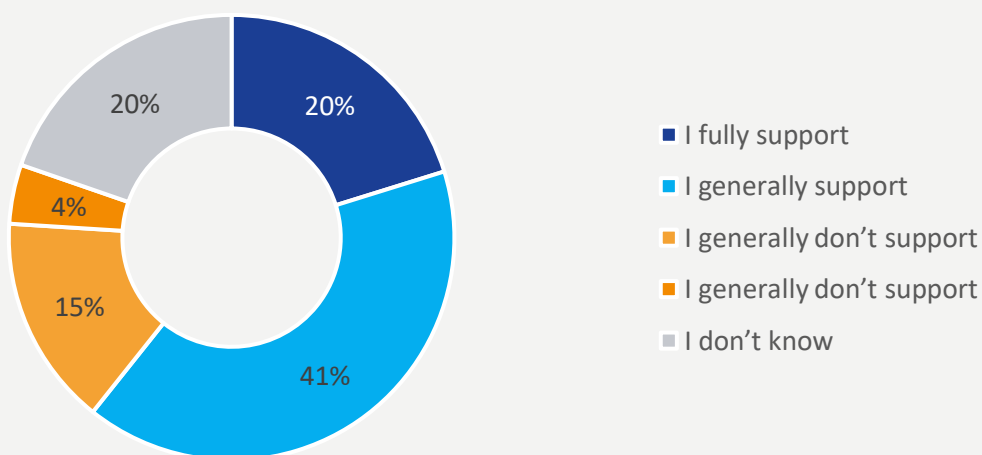
1. The most pronounced political stereotype relates to women's ambition to engage in politics, so 65.3% of men in Serbia agree with the statement that men are more ambitious than women in political life, while 48% of men in the EU hold the same view.
2. 43.6% of men agree with the statement that women are less interested than men in responsible positions in political life, while 52% disagree, while in the EU 36% of men agree with the same statement.
3. 44.8% of men agree with the statement that special measures, such as quotas, are needed to overcome the underrepresentation of women in political life, while 40.1% disagree and 15.1% have no opinion.
4. The perception of the unequal treatment of women and men in politics is divided. 37.1% of men believe that men are treated better in politics, 36% believe that women and men are treated the same, 11.8% believe that women are treated better, while 15.1% do not know.
5. 50.1% of men in Serbia agree with the statement that men are better leaders than women, while 44.6% disagree. In the EU, 31% of men hold the same view.

5.8 Support for special measures to promote equality

Special measures are one of the key instruments for eliminating inequality when formally equal rights are not sufficient to ensure a truly equal position. The data show that 60.7% of men support the introduction of special measures when a group is in an unequal position. Of these, 20.2% fully support such measures, and 40.5% mostly support them. On the other hand, 19.6% of respondents do not support special measures, of which 15.3% mostly do not support them, and 4.3% do not support them at all. The share of undecided people is also significant: 19.7% of men have no formed opinion.

Figure 23. To what extent do you generally support the introduction of special measures when a group is in an unequal position?

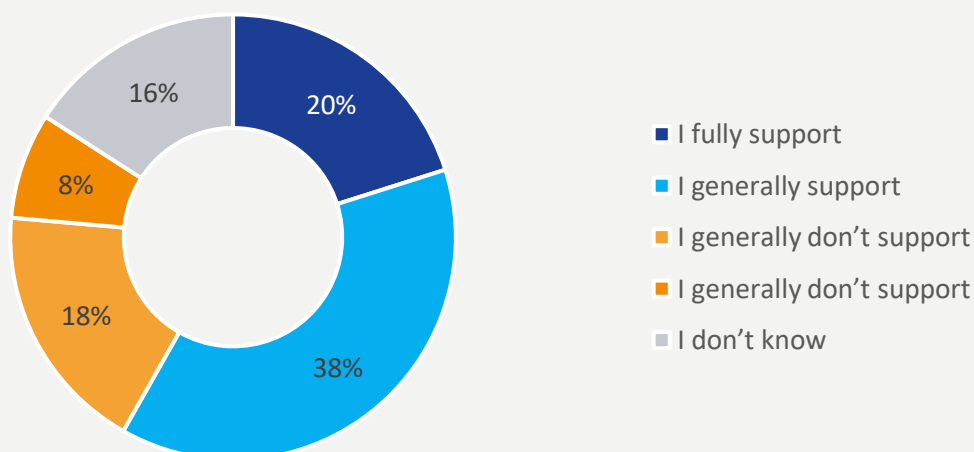
Response structure (%), n=1201



This finding shows that special measures have majority support among men. When the same question is made more specific and refers to the introduction of special measures to improve the position of women in Serbia, such measures are supported by 58.2% of men, of which 20.1% fully support them, and 38.1% mostly. 25.9% of respondents do not support them, while 15.9% have no opinion.

Figure 24. To what extent do you support the introduction of special measures aimed at improving the position of women in Serbia?

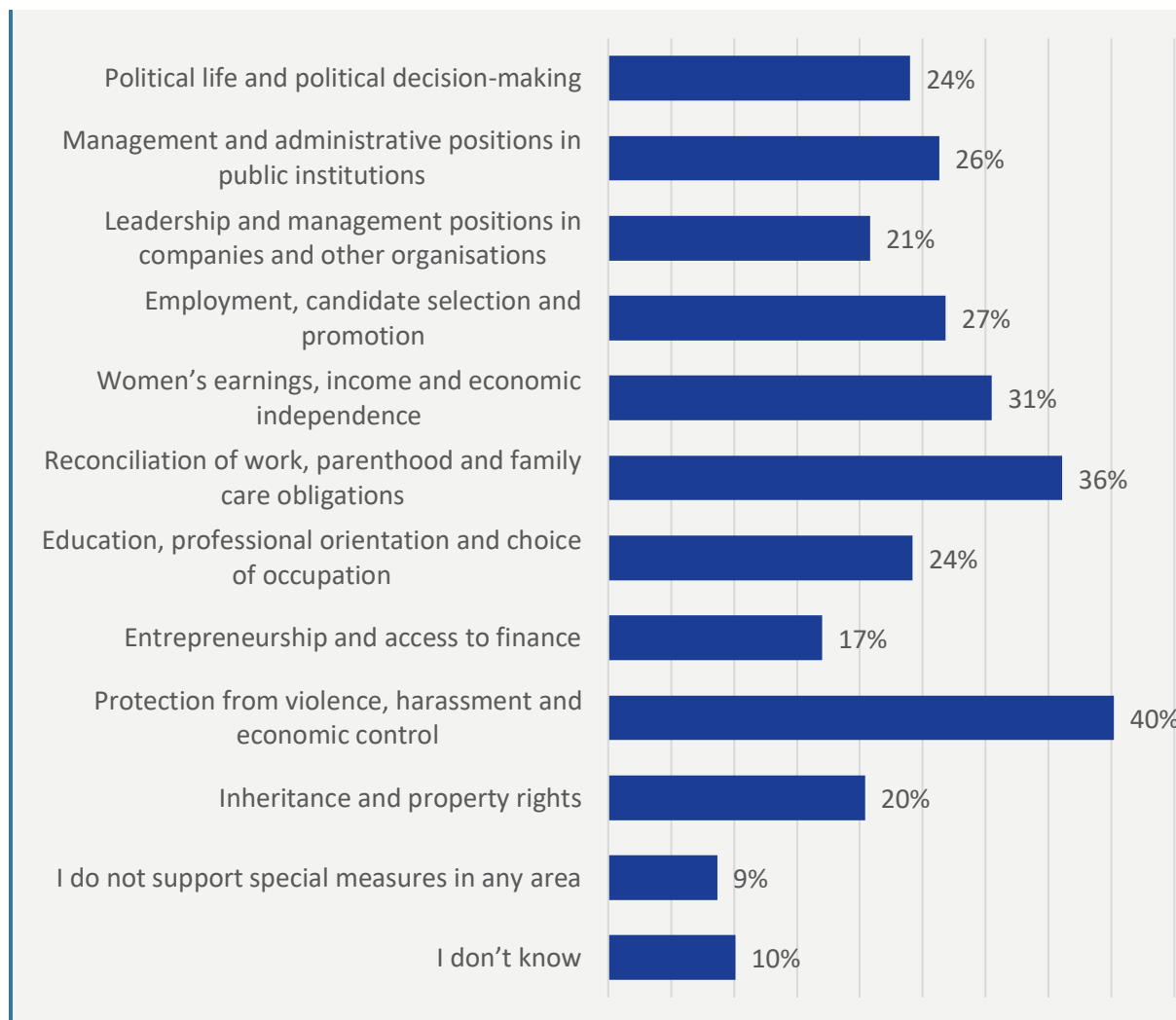
Response structure (%), n=1201



When respondents are offered a number of areas in which special measures could be taken to improve the position of women, the highest support is in the areas of protection from violence, harassment and economic control. This area is mentioned by 40.2% of men. This is the highest share in the entire list and shows that protection from violence is most easily recognised as a legitimate area for special measures.

Figure 25. In which areas do you think it is important to have special measures to improve the position of women?

Response structure (%), n=1201



The second most frequently mentioned area is the reconciliation of work, parenthood and family care obligations, mentioned by 36.1% of men. This finding is important because it directly builds on previous findings on unpaid work and parenthood. Men significantly recognise that the area of care, parenthood and family responsibilities is one of those in which women need additional support measures. The third most frequently mentioned area is women's earnings, income and economic independence, mentioned by 30.5% of respondents. This shows that some men recognise economic equality as an area in which special measures are justified. Slightly lower levels of support are found for employment, candidate selection and promotion, cited by 26.8% of men, leadership and management positions in public institutions, with 26.3%, education, professional orientation and choice of occupation, with 24.2%, and political life and political decision-making, with 24%. These data show that measures in the institutional, educational and political areas are recognised, but not as the highest priorities.

The lowest support is recorded for leadership and management positions in companies and other organisations, cited by 20.8% of men, inheritance and property rights, with 20.4%, and entrepreneurship and access to finance, with 17.0%.

Major findings

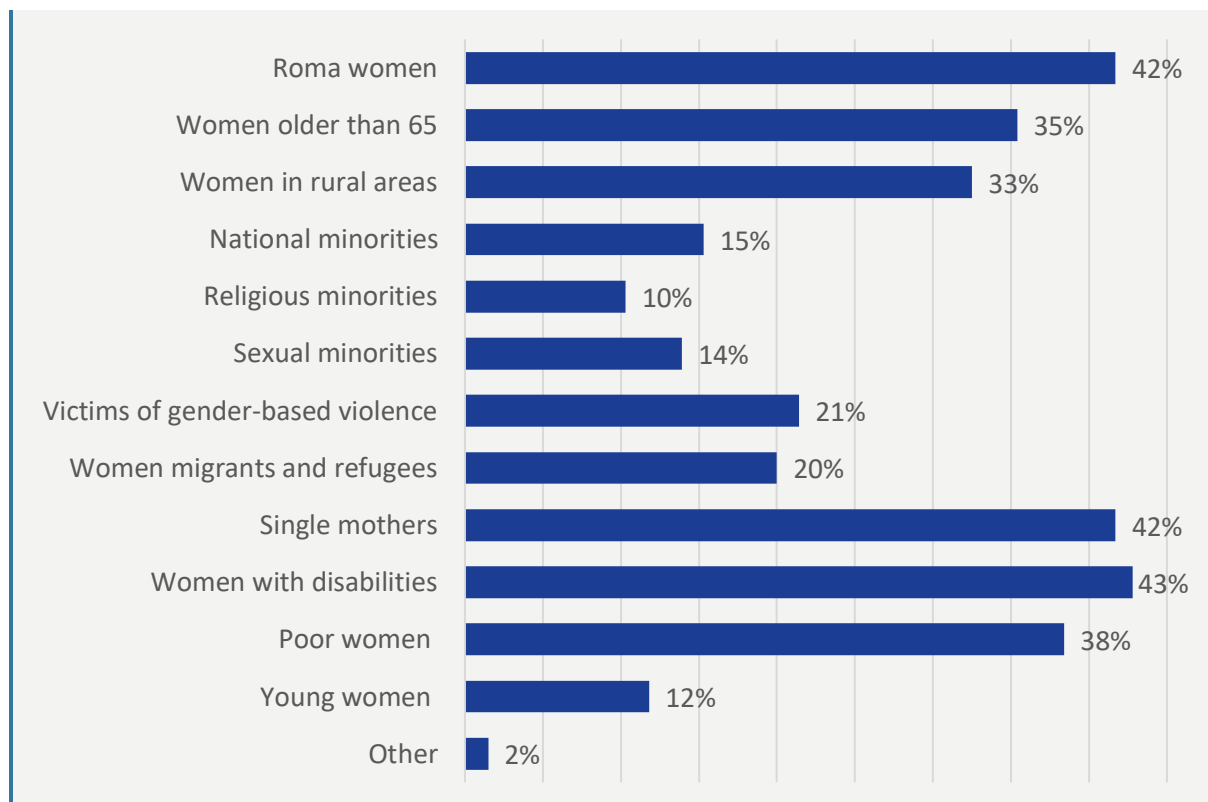
1. Introducing special measures when a group is in an unequal position is supported by 60.7% of men, which is a similar level of support when special measures specifically relate to women (58.2%).
2. The most supported measures are in the areas of protection from violence, harassment and economic control, which are cited as important by 40.2% of men. The second most frequently cited area is the reconciliation of work, parenthood and family care obligations, with 36.1%, while measures in the areas of wages, income and economic independence of women are cited by 30.5% of men.
3. Measures in the field of employment, candidate selection and promotion are mentioned by 26.8% of men, managerial and executive positions in public institutions by 26.3%, education, professional orientation and choice of occupation by 24.2%, and political life and political decision-making by 24.0%.
4. Measures that infringe on ownership, capital and management power receive the lowest support. Management and executive positions in companies and other organisations are cited as areas for special measures by 20.8% of men, inheritance and property rights by 20.4%, and entrepreneurship and access to finance by 17.0%.

5.9 Multiple discrimination and women at increased risk

Multiple and intersectional discrimination refers to situations in which sex or gender intersects with other grounds of inequality, such as ethnic origin, disability, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, religious affiliation, place of residence, migration status, or economic status. In this survey, respondents were asked which groups of women they believed were most exposed to discrimination.

Figure 26. In which areas do you think it is important to have special measures to improve the position of women?

Response structure (%), n=1201



The data show that men most often identify women with disabilities, Roma women, single mothers and poor women as groups at greatest risk of discrimination. The highest number of respondents mention women with disabilities, 42.8%, followed by Roma women and single mothers, mentioned by 41.7% of men, and poor women (38.4%). These are groups where risk is often associated with material insecurity, more difficult access to services, greater dependence on institutional support and exposure to prejudice. In this sense, men's perception follows the legally and strategically recognised groups of women at increased risk. Older women aged 65 and over are mentioned by 35.4% of men, and rural women by 32.5%. These data show that age and place of residence are recognised as important factors of increased exposure to discrimination, but somewhat weaker than disability, poverty, Roma identity and single motherhood.

Victims of gender-based violence are cited as the group at greatest risk by 21.4% of men, migrants and refugees by 20%, women from national minorities by 15.3%, members of sexual minorities by 13.9%, young women by 11.8%, and women from religious minorities by 10.3%. Only 1.5% cite another group.

Major findings

1. Women with disabilities are cited as the group most exposed to discrimination by 42.8% of men, Roma women by 41.7%, single mothers by 41.7%, and poor and homeless women by 38.4%. These groups constitute the most visible circle of women at increased risk.
2. Older women aged 65 and over are mentioned by 35.4% of men, and rural women by 32.5%. This shows that the generational and spatial dimensions of discrimination are recognised, but in men's perception they are ranked lower than disability, poverty, Roma affiliation and single parenthood.

3. Although protection from violence is recognised as an important topic in other parts of the survey, only 21.4% of men cite women who are victims of gender-based violence as the group at greatest risk of discrimination. This indicates that violence is more often recognised as a safety or family problem, but not always as part of a broader pattern of discrimination and social exclusion.

6. Qualitative research findings

This chapter presents the findings of the qualitative part of the research, conducted through focus groups with men in the Republic of Serbia. The aim of this chapter is to complement and deepen the findings of the quantitative research, as well as to offer explanations of how men of different ages and from different types of settlements construct and justify their beliefs about gender equality and how they relate them to their own life experiences.

Focus group participants do not, for the most part, reject gender equality as a general principle. On the contrary, it is often accepted as something that is important, desirable, or already achieved. However, the way equality is understood is mostly reduced to the formal-legal level: that women have the same rights, that they can be educated, employed, apply for jobs, and participate in public life.

"As for rights, I haven't noticed that there are any rights that stick out so much, that they create some injustice. I think they have all the rights today. [...] I got jobs many times, it depended on my skills, not on whether I was male or female."

FG1, I1

"I think it's fair that they have equal opportunities, jobs, salaries, employment opportunities."

FG3, I3

Statements like these show that gender equality is often recognised as a matter of equal formal opportunities, but outcomes are less often analysed. This is where the difference between formal acceptance and understanding equality as a process that involves questioning traditional roles and norms can be seen.

One of the significant topics in the discussions is the distinction between equality and equity. Some participants accept that women and men should be equal, but at the same time emphasise that they are "not equal." This distinction functions precisely as a way to set a limit to the scope of equality: women and men may have the same rights, but they should not be expected to have the same roles, the same ambitions, or the same representation in all areas.

"The first thing that comes to mind is the unreasonableness of the term, because I think people are asking a lot for it to be equal, but it can't be equal because we're not equal and people are asking for something they don't understand. I don't think women would want something that men do, something that is the responsibility of men, and some jobs where men are mostly represented, just as men wouldn't want the opposite. I think equality and equity are different

terms and that they get mixed up a lot. We're not equal, we're different, which is great on both sides, and we need to use our strengths."

FG1, I4

Here, the differences between men and women are presented as natural, desirable, and complementary. Such a stance is not expressed as a direct opposition to women's rights, but in practice it can justify divisions into "male" and "female" spheres. When it is said that men and women are "not equal," it is used not only as a description of biological or individual differences, but also as an argument that certain social roles, professions, or positions are not equally "natural" for women and men.

This way of thinking is important because it allows for the simultaneous acceptance and limitation of equality. Equality is accepted as an equal right, but the unequal distribution of roles and power is explained by differences in the nature, inclinations, interests, or "talents" of women and men. The position of one participant that "the division into male and female jobs is super-established" goes in the same direction (FG1, I3). Such statements indicate that the existing distribution of roles is often not questioned, but is normalised as something that arises from the nature of the sexes.

To justify fundamental inequality, participants often explain the position of women and men in terms of individual factors: ability, effort, knowledge, ambition, character, or personal choice. This is an important finding because it shows how structural inequalities can be made invisible. If it is assumed that everyone has the same rights and the same opportunities, then differences in position are more easily interpreted as a consequence of personal abilities, rather than as a result of social barriers.

"You don't look at the name, the surname, just the result, who brought what and you decide based on that."

FG3, I1

"Both women and men have the same chances in every field, it just depends on ability, nothing else."

FG3, I5

Participants do not necessarily claim that women are less capable; on the contrary, many recognise that women are educated, successful, and present in different professions. However, precisely because they assume that social systems are fundamentally neutral, they are less aware of the barriers that operate before formal competition, during selection, in the process of promotion, or in relation to parenthood and family responsibilities. This pattern is particularly important for understanding resistance to special measures. If the system is perceived as fair, then measures that are intended to reduce inequality are easily interpreted as unfair advantage. Participants therefore often accept the principle that everyone should have equal rights, but are much more reserved when it comes to quotas, incentives, or other mechanisms that are intended to influence the actual distribution of power and positions.

Although the dominant framework is formal and legal, there are also statements in the focus groups that clearly recognise inequality. They most often occur when participants talk about specific examples.

"Equality in pay is important, men and women should be paid equally for equal work. This has not been achieved, women are always paid less and it is visible. There is some data from the SORS."

FG1, I5

"We have a legal framework that looks great on paper, but in practice we are clashing with deep-rooted patriarchy, and like everything else in our country, everything is just 'on paper'."

FG2, I6

These statements show that there is also a capacity among participants to recognise institutional and social obstacles. However, such an attitude was held by a smaller number of focus group participants, and is more often expressed through isolated statements, while the general assessment still returns to the view that women "have rights", that "enough has been done" and that the problem lies in individual situations rather than structural barriers.

It is particularly important that resistance does not occur equally in all areas. Participants are more accepting of women in education, health, the judiciary, service industries or in "regular" workplaces. Greater ambivalence and resistance occur when it comes to positions of power, governance and symbolic authority: politics, the military, the police, management positions and local leadership.

"It makes me laugh when I see a woman in an olive-green uniform and with a rifle slung around her shoulder. [...] I can't imagine a woman going to defend our homeland. I think it's being forced, the police, the army."

FG1, I2

"What the mayor says, I don't see a woman. There is no woman who has the ambition to become something in the village. [...] Every woman is thrilled as soon as she gets pregnant because she won't be working for two years."

FG1, I3

This quote also indicates that the unequal representation of women in positions of power is not interpreted as a consequence of limitations, environmental expectations, or gender barriers, but as a lack of female ambition. At the same time, pregnancy and motherhood are presented as a reason why women move away from work and public roles.

One of the significant findings of the focus groups also relates to the separation of gender equality and feminism. Equality is presented in most conversations as an acceptable, understandable and legitimate goal, while feminism is often described as something radical, imposed, aggressive, associated with NGOs, the media and the influence of interest groups.

"Feminism has gone too far. That means it has become very radical. [...] Feminism crosses certain boundaries and demands certain rights, and I think that is some kind of cover to get some grants."

FG1, I5

"Feminism is a bad thing, and gender equality is good, as long as it's about equality, not equality."

FG1, I4

"Gender equality is a well-known fact. I am the first in favour of gender equality. What does that mean? That a wife should be represented, respected, hardworking, that she is a mother [...] that she should have everything a woman should have. And that she should be respected. There is no such thing, the husband comes drunk and beats her. [...] I think a lot has been done on that issue. And I don't see the space that feminism has now become involved in all of that. There is no need, there is no place for including

that."

FG3, I2

This statement shows how equality is accepted only within the framework of existing gender roles. Women should be respected, but in describing their social role, the role of wife and mother is given central place. In this way, equality is not understood as a re-examination of gender roles, but as a decent and non-violent attitude towards women within the existing order. The following quote illustrates how resistance arises when equality begins to mean a change in gender roles, a re-examination of male "dominance" or the abandonment of the idea that there is a natural hierarchy between men and women.

"Children go [to kindergarten] to be oppressed, especially boys. By nature, men are dominant. And that is physically, I don't mean intellectually, physically they are stronger, dominant, and it has been that way through time and centuries, through history. Now we are coming to a situation where we, the stronger sex, are holding that back and giving importance to girls."

FG3, I2

Participants often challenge not only the content of the demands for equality, but also the way they are discussed. In public discourse, the media and on social networks, they recognise "noise", "shouting", "scolding", "forcing", "extreme" and "aggressiveness". This finding is in line with survey data showing that the way in which gender equality is discussed in public provokes resistance among some men.

"I think there has been too much aggressiveness in communication, too much brash and aggressive, charged communication [...] everything has become too unnatural."

FG2, I6

"The media is a disaster. I don't think they're well represented. I think the extremes are represented and they're the loudest."

FG1, I4

These views indicate that resistance is often not formulated as a direct opposition to equality, but as a critique of the style, tone and manner of communication. In this way, the debate shifts from the question of whether inequality exists to the question of whether it is being talked about "too much", "too loudly" or "in the wrong way". This is an important mechanism because it allows demands for equality to be delegitimised as aggressive or unnatural, without necessarily entering into a discussion of the content of inequality itself. At the same time, some statements show that behind the criticism of "aggressiveness" there is often a deeper resistance to changing gender roles. In this sense, the critique of the manner of communication is not only a commentary on public discourse, but also a way to limit the legitimacy of demands for substantive equality.

The focus group findings also largely reinforce the quantitative finding that most men recognise that women carry a greater burden of unpaid work and show how this unequal division is explained and justified in everyday life. Participants often do not deny that women do more housework, but they present this difference as a result of spontaneous agreement, different demands of the jobs they perform, the man's higher income, personal preferences, or the role of mother.

In the group that primarily included men from the countryside, the division of household chores was most often described through a clear separation of women's and men's responsibilities.

"The wife prepares lunch, does the laundry, and irons. I do the men's chores around the house, and that's it. As for the children, everything depends on the shift, on the job, so it's by agreement. [...] The wife prepares the clothes, irons everything completely. I'm there as a father to take the child to kindergarten and that's it. Okay, that's the division. I wouldn't change anything."

FG3, I5

"In my family, it's mostly men, me and my father, we do men's work, my mother is in charge of the housework, she does the washing, ironing, cooking. If something is needed, we help out, of course."

FG3, I3

These statements show that the division of labour is not necessarily perceived as unfair, even when it is clearly gendered. On the contrary, it is understood as customary, functional, and acceptable. The language of "helping" by men is particularly significant. The man "helps" when needed, but does not present himself as an equal bearer of responsibility for household chores. This means that the primary responsibility remains with the woman, while the man's contribution is often described as additional, supportive, or occasional help.

"What a woman does is take care of the children, the house, I help. [...] I leave in the morning at 7 and come back at 5, the care of the children cannot be equally divided. [...] It's just known, the mother prepares lunch, dinner, helps in the evening with bathing, cleaning."

FG3, I2

The length of the working day, absence from home, and financial contribution are used as arguments for the fact that the majority of care and housework falls on women. In the continuation of the same statement, the participant further connects equality with financial contribution.

"One important factor is that I earn three times more than my wife, so that is also a factor of some stability. [...] I agree that there should be gender equality, but in the financial part. So, whatever I bring in, my wife should bring in as well."

FG3, I2

Such a view ignores the fact that unpaid work, while not directly generating income, enables the functioning of the household and often allows men to be more available for paid work. In this way, financial contribution is used as a justification for the unequal distribution of household work, while the value of unpaid work is diminished.

In groups made up of men from cities, different models of distribution are present. Gender roles are still visible in some statements, but they are more often presented as a "spontaneous" division, created in accordance with time, habits, or practical circumstances.

"My wife cooks, does the laundry. When the children were small, I took them to school. I manage the purchases and take care of the payments. [...] The decision came spontaneously."

FG2, I1

"In our family, cooking is divided equally. The wife does the washing and ironing. [...] Maintaining the house, the vehicle, paying bills and obligations, taking out the trash, and the like are men's jobs. The division didn't happen, it just happened without a plan."

FG2, I6

This statement reflects a pattern that is also present in the quantitative data: women are more likely to take on routine and repetitive tasks, while men are more likely to take on purchasing, payments and logistics activities. The description “the decision arose spontaneously” is important because it shows that the gender division of labour is often not experienced as a consequence of social expectations, but as the natural course of things. However, this very “spontaneity” can be the way in which gender norms are reproduced without explicit agreement or overt imposition. However, there are also statements in the focus groups that show a more equal division of responsibilities.

“The division is equal, when someone arrives, they cook, they take the children to training, to school. We complement each other and that's it. [...] When the wife doesn't arrive, I do the laundry. It's completely equal.”

FG2, I3

“We both work, and we're pretty complementary, we do everything equally. It's like who gets there when. I can watch the NBA and iron the laundry at the same time.”

FG1, I5

These statements show that more egalitarian models exist, especially in households where both partners work and where men do not perceive housework as something outside their role. However, even in examples of a more egalitarian division, there is a representation of the mother as the key figure in raising children.

“I work from home 80% of the time. [...] My wife is employed and travels to work. So, I usually do a good part of the housework, while I work in parallel. And as for lunch, laundry and everything else. As for the children, I am there to drive them, bring them, help with tidying up, bathing, but the children need their mother more.”

FG3, I1

This statement indicates that even when a man takes on a significant part of the housework, he simultaneously emphasises that “children need a mother more”. This shows that a change in practice does not necessarily mean a change in gender beliefs. The sentence “a mother is a mother” is one of the most important motifs that points to stereotypes that are still maintained. It appears as a generally accepted, almost undisputed formulation and shows how the unequal division of care can be justified by the emotional and cultural meaning of motherhood.

“In my house, it's really quite divided between the father and the mother in terms of chores. [...] And as for my parents and their care for me as a child, it's the same. But the mother takes more care. A mother is a mother.”

FG3, I4

This sentence summarises a broader pattern: even when the division is described as “fairly divided” or “equal,” the mother stands out as the one who “cares more.” It is here that we see how the cultural idea of motherhood produces an additional, often invisible responsibility. If “mother is mother,” the question arises as to why fatherhood is not understood in the same way as constant and irreplaceable care. This pattern is particularly evident in the discussion of parental absence.

It's not realistic. Why would I take it? If the wife has the opportunity to take it, and of course she is the mother, the children need her more. [...] The child needs to be with the mother during that period of development. A mother's love and care is incomparable. What should I do? The mother has to be there.”

FG3, I2

"I wouldn't, if I were left alone with the kids I certainly wouldn't. I would take it, if she stays home too."

FG1, I3

This statement shows that parental leave is not just a matter of law or work organisation, but also a matter of deeply rooted beliefs. The father is not necessarily presented as unimportant, but his role is secondary to that of the mother. Such an understanding makes it difficult to normalise fathers as equal beneficiaries of parental leave.

Inheritance is one of the topics where the difference between formally recognised law and family practice is evident. Participants generally know or assume that the law implies equal inheritance shares, but also that inheritance in general is almost a taboo topic in our society.

In this sense, the issue of inheritance is cited in all focus groups as a topic that is postponed and not discussed because it is associated with death, discomfort, and possible conflict.

"Most people wait until they die, then the heirs can divide it. In my family, we don't talk about inheritance at all, because we don't talk about death. I don't think most people talk about it."

FG1, I5

"I have a younger brother. It's a closed topic and we don't really talk about it here. [...] Everyone is waiting for something, waiting for death."

FG1, I4

"It wasn't discussed at all. It was never imposed on us as a topic. [...] In any case, it would primarily be a normal human agreement."

FG3, I1

Some focus group participants talk about expected traditional practices of property division, in which the son receives a house or larger property, and cite the marriage of the daughter as the main argument for such division.

"My father is a little more difficult to cooperate with, if he could, he would dictate everything to me. My sister is married, and my father was never in favour of that marriage."

FG1, I2

"I have a sister, she got married before and everything should go to the man's side, and now, everything is a matter of agreement so that there is no conflict."

FG3, I3

These statements show that a daughter's marriage and leaving the parental home remain important criteria in thinking about property. Even when participants emphasise "agreement", the starting assumption is often that the male side has more rights to inheritance. This does not always have to be formulated as a position that the daughter does not have a right, but her right is relativised through the idea that she "married", "left", "managed" or "has her own family". Namely, the discussion of specific examples of inheritance, which were also used in the quantitative research, indicates that the arguments are not always overtly gendered, but that when making decisions, respondents often refer to work, investment, life on the estate and economic logic. However, since the house and land are culturally strongly associated with the male heir, this criterion easily maintains the traditional advantage of the son.

"I hesitated between different options. Still, the son lives with his parents, it's not fair, he participates in everyday life, he invests, and it wouldn't be fair for it to be 50/50."

FG1, I2

"If someone works on the land, that's their job. And then you take their field, you've destroyed it. [...] When someone lives on the land, cultivates it, and so on, it's normal that they will inherit it. And the other heirs should have compensation, whether they're male or female, it doesn't matter."

FG2, I5

"A son who lives with his parents invests in that house, in maintenance, in helping his parents, and in the land that he has been cultivating for 15 years. [...] The house and land in this case should remain with the son."

FG3, I1

These statements show that "fair" is not about legal equality, but rather about the assessment of contributions. Participants most often do not say that a daughter should be left with nothing, but rather that she should receive a monetary allowance, a smaller share, or some other form of compensation. This is an important shift from the open exclusion of women, but it does not eliminate the issue of de facto inequality: if a son receives real estate, land, and the family home, and a daughter receives a "compensation" that is often not precisely defined or immediately payable, then formal equality remains limited.

On the other hand, in a scenario where the daughter takes care of the parents on a daily basis, some participants apply the same logic of contribution and believe that the daughter should receive a larger share or even the entire estate. This shows that the contribution criterion is not necessarily gender-neutral. When the daughter is the one who is "there", who visits, helps, organises, and cares, her work can be recognised as the basis for a larger inheritance share.

"The daughter took care of her parents, and no amount of money can replace that. [...] It's fair 70/30."

FG1, I2

"She's dealing with them, it's not just medicine and doctors, it's take it, bring it. She needs to get more."

FG2, I4

"I ruled out the 50/50 option, because it's not realistic. [...] There's someone here, there's someone making sacrifices, there's someone driving, there's someone listening to stories, there's someone doing it every day."

FG3, I4

These statements are important because they show that caring for parents can also be recognised as support that is often provided by women.

Litigation over inheritance is almost unanimously perceived by participants as undesirable and shameful. However, this strong pressure to avoid litigation can have different consequences for women and men. If a woman is the one who has to insist on her legal part, she may be perceived as disturbing the family peace.

"That would be a big minus for the family, honestly. It wouldn't be acceptable. God forbid."

FG1, I2

"It's devastating how many lawsuits and bad family relationships there are because of that damned property. [...] The parent needs to resolve it while they're alive."

FG3, I2

Here we see that "family peace" has a dual function. On the one hand, participants speak of an understandable desire to avoid long-term conflicts. On the other hand, it can become a mechanism for putting pressure on those who want their share.

Overall, the focus groups show that participants do not reject equal inheritance rights as a principle. However, when specific family situations are set, legal equality competes with criteria of contribution, life in the home, economic logic, care for parents, relationships between children, and avoidance of family conflict. It is in this space that the risks arise that women formally have the right, but find it more difficult to exercise it in practice.

In the field of work and employment, participants most often assume that women and men have the same formal opportunities. In this sense, as with the general understanding of equality, the dominant belief is that the system is fundamentally neutral, and that success depends on effort, results, abilities, recommendations, ambition or resourcefulness. This is particularly pronounced in the group of men living in rural areas, where it is repeatedly emphasised that the result is decisive.

"In the private sector, which I have been in for many years, a lot of things are based on merit. They don't look at the name, the surname, just the result, who brought what and they are determined based on that."

FG3, I1

"Same chances, it just depends on ability, nothing else."

FG3, I5

This framework allows participants to support equal opportunities, but at the same time reduces the visibility of structural barriers. If performance is the only criterion, then there is less concern about who has more time for paid work, who bears a greater burden of care, who is exposed to employers' expectations regarding pregnancy, and who enters informal promotion networks more easily.

Despite this, it is more often recognised in urban groups that women and men do not advance at the same rate and that men are disproportionately present at the top of institutions, even when women are more numerous in the profession.

"Men certainly advance more easily."

FG1, I2

"Healthcare and the judiciary are predominantly female professions, but if we look at who the heads of departments are, who the court presidents are, there are disproportionately more men. [...] There may be more women judges and prosecutors, but men are at the top."

FG1, I6

"The reason is that there is still a stereotype among us that men are the ones who bring, who can and should carry more on their shoulders."

FG2, I6

These statements introduce an important distinction between the presence of women in a profession and their power within the profession. Even when women are numerically in the majority, this does not mean that they are equally represented in positions of management, decision-making, and symbolic authority.

The participants explain the differences in earnings in different ways. Some do not recognise them as discrimination, but as a consequence of different occupations, sectors, physically demanding jobs, mining, construction, sports or management positions. This argument is not necessarily incorrect, but it is incomplete: it explains part of the difference in earnings, but does not open the question of why some professions are paid less, why men are more often in better-paid positions and why women have career breaks.

"It is not the case that in the same profession, men have a higher salary than women. [...] Maybe some professions are paid more where men are more present. Maybe in medicine, the positions that are better paid are mostly occupied by men."

FG2, I5

"There are professions that are simply female. For example, caring for the elderly. [...] In those jobs where it is thought that men or women do something better."

FG2, I2

The clearest and least controversial form of discrimination in the field of employment is discrimination against women due to pregnancy, family planning or maternity leave. In all three groups, participants generally described this practice as unfair, illegal or unacceptable.

"If an employer doesn't want to hire a woman who wants to get pregnant, that's pure discrimination."

FG1, I5

"That's idiotic to me. [...] We should encourage women to have children. That's discrimination."

FG1, I1

"I have the worst opinion of employers who do not want to hire a woman on the pretext that she wants to start a family, and I believe that such people should be legally punished and banned from doing business."

FG2, I6

"I've heard that in job interviews they ask questions about whether a woman will get pregnant again, which I think is a disaster. It's her personal matter."

FG3, I1

However, in the same area, there are also statements that show ambivalence. Some participants understand that maternity leave is a burden for the employer, especially in small companies, or cite examples of abuse of sick leave. This does not mean that they justify discrimination, but it shows that women's rights at work are often analysed through the cost to the employer and the

organisation of work. However, this ambivalence concerns the cost and organisation of work, and not the right to motherhood itself, which is perceived as inviolable, which suggests that it is understood, even if unconsciously, as a woman's primary and most important role.

It is particularly interesting that men who would take longer parental leave in urban groups are more often described positively, while at the same time recognising that a strong stereotype about this still exists in Serbia. In contrast, in the group that included men living in rural areas, the belief that the mother is irreplaceable in the first months dominates.

Overall, the focus groups show that participants accept equal rights at work and condemn the most obvious forms of discrimination, especially those related to pregnancy. However, they are less willing to interpret unequal outcomes in earnings and advancement as a result of structural barriers. Differences are more often explained by sector, type of job, ability, personal choice, nepotism or natural inclinations, which means that economic equality is recognised as a value, but not always as a matter of systemic barriers.

The topic of control in partner relationships shows that participants largely recognise negative behaviours, but at the same time leave room for their conditional justification. Financial control and monitoring of movements or communication are most often labelled as control, not care. However, when circumstances such as irresponsible spending, addiction, jealousy, earnings, or "protecting the family" are introduced, some participants soften their judgment. In the case of financial control, some participants clearly say that it is about control.

"Control. It shouldn't be about who earns more, because it's all shared money."

FG2, 14

"It's control. If the other party doesn't ask, that's it."

FG1, 14

"To me, that's control. A pure example of control. [...] For basic things, for someone to keep money with them and then distribute it, that's pure control."

FG3, 11

These statements show that there is an understanding that money in a partnership is not just a technical issue of budget management, but also a question of power. However, conditional justifications also arise. Financial control can be presented as a concern when one partner has an addiction problem, when they spend "irresponsibly" or when they want to "keep money in the family".

"I think there can also be a concern, when it comes to irrational spending of money, like alcohol or gambling, to keep the money in the family. Not as a form of control, but more to keep it in the family."

FG1, 15

"Of course it's control, but maybe when someone is irresponsible and does things they shouldn't. [...] It's actually care, because that's how she saved the family."

FG2, 15

If there is a clear and exceptional reason, such as addiction or a serious threat to the family budget, a temporary restriction can be understood as protection. However, in everyday relationships, this

logic can be abused, where the partner who has more money or more power can present their control as responsibility, rationality, and care.

In the group of men living in the countryside, a more traditional understanding of financial management is emerging, in which the man “runs the house”, and decisions are made in agreement with the woman.

“There can be care and control, but let there be care. [...] It is known that in our country, the man runs the house. He decides in agreement with the woman, he decides everything.”

FG3, 15

This statement shows how patriarchal hierarchy can be presented as a compromise. The woman is included in the conversation, but the man is described as the one who “runs the house” and has the responsibility. This understanding may seem moderate, because it does not exclude the woman completely, but it still implies an asymmetrical distribution of power.

When it comes to monitoring a partner's movements, contacts, or communication, participants more often and more clearly say that it is about control. Trust emerges as a key boundary: if there is no trust, the relationship is called into question.

“I think it's control. In my opinion, there should be respect and trust.”

FG2, 13

“Control. If they don't trust each other, then they're simply not for marriage.”

FG2, 15

“That control is mentally taxing. [...] Obsessive control speaks of insecurity. Control, to me, is a sign of weakness.”

FG1, 11

However, here too there are conditional justifications. Participants say that “it depends on what comes before”, that suspicion of fraud may be a reason for checking or that some people are “bad influences”. In this sense, control is not always recognised as unacceptable in principle, but is assessed through the context, intention and moral judgment of the partner's behaviour. When talking about domestic violence, most participants clearly reject the view that it is a private matter that should remain at home. In all three groups, statements appear that institutions should react and that violence should not be left to the partners to “solve” it themselves.

“Violence is never a private, family matter.”

FG2, 16

“It shouldn't remain a private matter, institutions should get involved. It shouldn't remain private.”

FG1, 16

“When that happens, it has to be resolved through institutions.”

FG3, 12

However, another line of thought emerges in the conversation – the suspicion that women can abuse institutions, especially in the context of divorce, custody and partner conflicts. One

participant expresses the view that “women are trusted with everything” and that institutions can be used as a means of pressure. This shows that acceptance of the institutional response to violence can coexist with distrust of women who report violence or seek protection. This finding is important for understanding the ambivalence in the area of violence. Participants do not want violence to remain in the home, but some of them are also afraid of “false reports”, revenge or abuse. Therefore, public policies and communication on violence should emphasise both the protection of victims and the fairness of the procedure, but without relativising the fact that domestic and partner violence is a social problem that requires an institutional response.

The issue of political participation and special measures is the most resistant. Participants generally do not dispute that women can be in politics, in leadership positions or in public life. However, when it comes to quotas, mandatory percentages or measures to accelerate equality, arguments arise about merit, ability, “forcing”, the unnecessaryness of the measures and the risk of insufficiently qualified people taking up positions.

In the first and third groups, resistance to quotas is often based on the belief that the system is already open enough and that women do not face structural barriers. In this context, quotas are seen as a violation of equality, rather than a means of achieving it.

“I don't see the point in that! If he's good at his job, then he'll get the job.”

FG1, I1

“I don't think they're necessary. I think it's completely open to everyone to do whatever they want, whatever they want, and whatever they have the means to do. [...] Women are not that vulnerable group for those things.”

FG3, I1

“As for politics, I'm absolutely against it. I believe that everyone should fight for themselves, so according to their merit.”

FG3, I2

These statements clearly show how the merit argument functions as a basis for resistance. It appears neutral and fair, because it insists on quality and ability. The problem, however, is that it assumes that everyone starts from the same position, that the rules are equally accessible, and that there are no informal barriers to selection, advancement, time allocation, networking, and political influence.

In the second, older urban group, the attitude towards special measures is somewhat more positive. Participants more often accept that measures can have an effect, especially in the areas of female entrepreneurship, agriculture, support for families, single mothers and vulnerable groups.

“These quotas have an impact, of course, provided that those who participate in these quotas take care to use them in the right way. In terms of agriculture and women's ownership, that's where the effect is seen.”

FG2, I5

“I agree that there should be quotas for a higher percentage of women in politics.”

FG2, I4

"Measures need to be introduced for all these sensitive categories. We need to work on some kind of incentive."

FG2, 15

These statements show that support for special measures depends on how the measures are presented and in which area they are applied. In all groups, special measures for people with disabilities are more easily accepted than measures for women as a group. This shows that participants most easily recognise vulnerability when it is associated with a visible physical or social obstacle. In contrast, gender inequality is often not seen as a sufficiently clear basis for special measures, as women already have rights, education, employment and a presence in public life.

"I agree with affirmative action in certain areas, not specifically for women, but for people with disabilities."

FG3, 12

"I think it's justified for people with disabilities, but again, in certain places."

FG3, 11

It is important to note here that support for one group does not necessarily imply a developed understanding of structural discrimination in general. Participants may support people with disabilities but at the same time reject the need for measures for women, Roma, or other groups.

The most important findings:

1. 1. Focus group participants generally do not reject equality as a principle, but most often understand it as the existence of the same legal rights. However, when equality is linked to issues of power, advancement, leadership positions, gender roles or special measures, significantly more ambivalence and resistance emerge. This shows that support for equality often remains at the level of formal acceptance, while there is less understanding of equality as a process of eliminating deeper social inequalities. Accordingly, differences in the position of women and men are often explained through ability, effort, ambition, personal choice or "natural" differences between the sexes.
2. 2. Although gender equality is often accepted as a general principle, feminism is often described in focus groups as something radical, imposed, aggressive, "forced" or associated with NGOs and the media. In this sense, some men do not necessarily challenge the idea of equality itself, but the way it is discussed in public. In this way, resistance shifts from the content of inequality to the tone, style and actors who talk about equality. This shows that communication about gender equality is not a secondary issue, but one of the key mechanisms for advancing equality.
3. 3. Participants recognise that women bear a greater burden of housework and care, but this inequality is often normalised. The unequal division is rarely presented as an overt injustice. It is more often described as "spontaneous," "practical," "negotiated," or conditioned by working hours and wages. When participants say that they "help" with children or housework, they are often unconsciously confirming that the primary responsibility is not theirs, but the woman's.
4. 4. Motherhood is described as a natural, emotionally irreplaceable and primary role, while fatherhood is less often formulated in the same way. This is particularly evident in the responses on parental leave, where some participants do not reject fatherhood as

important, but they reject the possibility of the father taking over primary care of the child. Even in households where men cook, wash, iron and take the children to school, the assumption remains that the mother is more needed by the children or that women's responsibility for care is more natural, thus implicitly confirming childcare as the primary and most important role of women.

5. Inheritance is a largely silent topic in the participants' families. Participants often state that property is not discussed while the parents are alive, because talking about inheritance is associated with death, conflict, and the disruption of family relationships. At the same time, almost everyone recognises that it is precisely the postponement of the discussion that produces disputes, long-term disagreements, and family breakdowns.
6. Although there is support in principle for equal inheritance rights, decisions about the actual distribution of property in specific situations often depend on the quality of the relationship or on criteria of contribution (e.g., care of the property and investment in the house or care for the parents). This logic is not in itself gender-exclusive, as it can also favour the daughter who cares for the parents. However, when it comes to the house and land, the advantage of the son is more easily justified by tradition, work on the property, and the idea that he "stayed at home".
7. Focus groups, as well as quantitative data, indicate a negative attitude towards resolving inheritance rights through the courts. Therefore, a woman who insists on legal action may be formally right, but may also face condemnation from her family.
8. In the field of work and employment, participants most often talk about women and men being formally equal, but it is also recognised that men often advance faster, even in sectors where women are more represented in numbers. Differences in salaries and advancement are often explained by sector, type of job, skills, negotiation, personal performance or nepotism, while structural discrimination is less often perceived as a cause.
9. Control in partner relationships is generally recognised as a problem, especially when it comes to monitoring movements, relationships and communication. However, financial control is often conditionally justified as "care" when it is associated with protecting the family budget, preventing unreasonable spending or addiction. Thus, the boundary between care and control shifts depending on the assessment of the partner's character, income and "responsibility". Most participants reject the view that domestic violence is a private matter, but some statements express suspicion of abuse of institutions and distrust of women's reports.
10. Special measures and quotas are most resisted when they apply to women in politics and leadership positions. Participants often use the argument that everyone can and should advance based on ability, not because they are a woman or a man.

7. Conclusions and recommendations

7.1. Conclusions

The research findings show that men in Serbia are significantly more likely than women to believe that gender equality has already been achieved, but that this assessment changes significantly when moving from a general level to specific areas of social life. A total of 61.0% of men believe that gender equality has been achieved in Serbia, while 41.7% of women hold the same view, indicating a gender gap of 19.3 percentage points in the positive assessment of the situation. This gap is not only a difference in the assessment of progress, but also indicates a different position from which men and women interpret the same social reality: men more often assume that formal rights have already been secured, while women are more likely to recognise obstacles to their actual realisation. The findings of the focus groups further explain this pattern: participants generally do not reject equality as a principle, but most often reduce it to the existence of the same legal rights and equal formal opportunities. Unequal outcomes are therefore often explained through effort, ability, ambition, personal choice, or “natural” differences between women and men, while structural barriers are less often recognised as part of the problem.

Men's support for gender equality is most stable when it is viewed as a matter of formal rights and equal treatment in principle, while it becomes significantly more ambivalent when equality implies substantive changes in the distribution of power, unpaid work, leadership positions and public representation. When asked directly, in principle, 22.3% of men state that something bothers them about contemporary demands for gender equality. However, when offered individual and practical examples, 83.5% of respondents mark at least one specific item as controversial. This difference shows that resistance is not always articulated as opposition to equality, but rather emerges when equality is translated into concrete demands that change established relations in the family, the labour market, politics and public space.

The highest level of resistance is found in issues that challenge the traditional distribution of roles and social power: greater representation of women in politics, greater representation of women in leadership positions, the way gender equality is discussed in the media, and the insistence on a more equal division of family responsibilities. On the other hand, the lowest resistance is recorded in the domain of formal-legal equality, such as equal inheritance rights. This difference is analytically important because it indicates that men accept equality more easily when it does not challenge the existing distribution of power, time, and authority, and much more difficult when it requires a re-examination of traditional gender roles.

Qualitative findings further show that resistance to equality is often not formulated as resistance to women's rights, but as resistance to “forcing”, “imposing”, feminism, quotas, media discourse or special measures. In this way, resistance shifts from inequality itself to the way it is talked about and to the actors seeking change. Focus group participants generally accept that women should have rights, respect and the opportunity to participate, but show more reservations when equality

is linked to advancement, political and economic power, the deconstruction of gender roles or measures that are intended to correct unequal outcomes. This is precisely where the limitation of the formal understanding of equality can be seen: it allows equality to be accepted as a principle, but at the same time preserves social expectations that keep women and men in different positions.

Unpaid work and parenthood are areas where the line between recognising inequality and being willing to actually challenge it is most clearly visible. Men largely see women as bearing a greater burden of housework and care, but this inequality is often not interpreted as an unfair division of labour, but as a consequence of “natural” differences, motherhood, working hours, earnings, or the practical organisation of the household. This is precisely why unpaid work is not a secondary family issue, but one of the central sites of the reproduction of gender inequality — it determines who has more time, who has greater availability for paid work, who advances more easily, and who bears responsibility for the functioning of the family in everyday life.

The data show that the unequal distribution of unpaid work is highly visible. A total of 72.0% of men believe that women spend more time than men on housework and caring for household members, which is close to the findings of the women's survey, where 76.6% of respondents hold the same view. However, at the same time, 54.3% of men believe that men are “naturally” less competent at housework, and 64.9% believe that family life as a whole suffers when the mother works full-time. These data show that the problem is not that men do not see the unequal division of labour, but that a large proportion of them accept explanations that normalise this division. If women's responsibility for the home and care is presented as natural, and men's participation as help, then inequality can be recognised without being questioned.

The actual division of labour in the household confirms that routine, time-consuming and repetitive tasks are still predominantly women's responsibilities. The partners or wives of the respondents most often take on laundry and ironing, which are precisely the tasks that produce the “second shift”: everyday, low-visibility and continuous work that continues after paid work and that directly affects women's leisure time, professional development, social life and economic independence. In contrast, male participation is more often associated with occasional, technical or less routine tasks, which perpetuates the gender specialisation of labour within the household.

Qualitative findings further show that a key mechanism for maintaining this inequality is the language of “help”. When men say they “help” with children or the house, they do not necessarily refuse to participate in family life. On the contrary, they often see themselves as involved fathers and partners. But the word “help” itself reveals that the primary responsibility is still attributed to the woman. The father is present as a support, a complement, a driver, a financial supporter or someone who takes on certain tasks, while the mother is the one who is understood as the bearer of care and housework. This means that a more equal division of unpaid work does not just require men to “do more at home”, but to change the assumption about who is primarily responsible for the house, children and family care.

The same pattern is evident in attitudes towards parental leave. Half of the men, 50.3%, believe that parental leave is an enriching experience for a father, but only 31.8% state that they would personally benefit from it or have benefited from it. This shows that active fatherhood is partly accepted as a value, but much less so as a practice that involves actually taking over primary care of the child. Focus groups further indicate that motherhood is still often understood as an emotionally and biologically irreplaceable role, especially in the early years of the child, while fatherhood is less often formulated as an equally primary parental responsibility.

These findings suggest that unpaid work is not just an area where women “work more”, but an area where a broader system of unequal distribution of time, opportunities and power is maintained on a daily basis. As long as women's work in the home is assumed, men's participation is described as help, and motherhood is positioned as the natural centre of family care, formal equality will not lead to real equality in family life, nor to equal opportunities for women and men in the labour market and in public life.

Economic equality and the labour market show how a formal notion of equal opportunities can coexist with attitudes that normalise unequal outcomes. Most men accept that women and men have equal opportunities to work and advance in principle, but differences in earnings, career development, and access to leadership positions are often explained by the type of work, family obligations, ambition, personal choice, or merit, thereby translating gender stereotypes into seemingly neutral explanations of ability, performance, and professional commitment.

On the one hand, 68.4% of men believe that women have the same chances for advancement as men. On the other hand, 57.8% believe that women should prioritise family responsibilities over career, and 61.9% believe that men often earn more because their jobs are more demanding. This means that equal opportunities are often understood in a narrow, formal sense: as the possibility for a woman to apply, work and advance, but not necessarily as an equal position from which to enter professional competition. If women are simultaneously expected to be more family-friendly, and men's higher earnings are explained by the demands of their jobs, then inequality in the labour market does not have to be openly justified as discrimination; it is enough to present it as a consequence of “real” life choices and the organisation of work.

This pattern is particularly important because it links economic inequality to previous findings on unpaid work. Women's greater responsibility for housework, childcare, and family care does not remain within the private sphere, but directly affects their position in the labour market. It reduces the time for professional development, networking, changing jobs, and accepting leadership positions. Therefore, the view that women should prioritise family responsibilities is not only a view about the family, but also a view that has economic consequences – it legitimises women's slower advancement and their lower presence in better-paid and senior positions.

Qualitative findings further explain this mechanism. In focus groups, work and advancement are often interpreted through the language of meritocracy: results, effort, ability, recommendation, ambition, and resourcefulness. Participants do not necessarily claim that women are less capable, but the very assumption that the system is fundamentally neutral reduces the visibility of obstacles that operate before the competition itself, during selection, in the promotion process, or in the attitude of employers towards pregnancy, parenthood, and family obligations. If success is explained solely by results, then the question of who has more time for paid work, who bears a greater burden of unpaid care, who enters informal networks more easily, and whose professional continuity is taken for granted is less asked.

Support for measures in the field of work confirms this difference. Men largely support interventions that can be understood as introducing clear rules and sanctioning injustice: 75.4% support wage transparency, and 75.6% of men support stricter penalties for discrimination at work, including pregnancy discrimination. Support is also overwhelming, but weaker, when measures more directly affect the distribution of power in organisations: 60.8% support measures that encourage greater participation of women in management positions, while 32.0% do not support them. The difference in full support is particularly significant: 49.8% fully support wage transparency, 53.9% support stricter penalties, and 27.0% of men support measures for

more women in management positions. The findings of this part of the research indicate that economic equality in Serbia is not limited to the question of whether women can formally work and advance, but rather to how their work, time, family obligations and professional ambitions are valued. While inequalities in earnings and advancement are interpreted mainly as a consequence of occupational choice, job demands, family priorities or individual abilities, the structural mechanisms of the labour market remain partially invisible.

In the area of property and inheritance, unlike some other areas, support for equality in principle is high here, with most men accepting that sons and daughters should have equal inheritance rights. However, this very area shows that the existence of a right is not enough if its exercise in the family is interpreted as a violation of relationships, disrespect for parents, or a deviation from customs.

The data show that 61.9% of men know that the laws in Serbia prescribe equal rights for men and women in terms of inheritance, but at the same time 17.1% believe that the laws do not prescribe equal rights, while 21.0% do not know the answer. This means that more than a third of men do not have accurate or certain knowledge about the basic rule of equal inheritance rights. On the other hand, support for equal inheritance as a principle is significantly higher: 79.7% of men agree that it is fair for sons and daughters to receive equal shares of the parental inheritance, and 73.1% believe that equal inheritance contributes to fairer family relations and greater mutual respect.

The most important finding is that formal support for equality coexists with strong customary norms that constrain it. A total of 44.1% of men report that it is common in their extended family for sisters to renounce their inheritance in favour of their brothers, and 39.9% say that their parents have always been clear that male children have an inheritance priority. Although most men do not accept the overt patriarchal justification that a daughter “goes to another house” by marrying and therefore does not have the same basis to claim parental property as a son, this view is still accepted by 30.1% of respondents. Similarly, 38.8% of men agree that, when inheriting a house, it is fairer for the son to receive it and the daughter to receive some compensation, such as money. These data show that inequality in inheritance does not persist only through ignorance of the law, but also through a family logic in which the son is more often attributed with the continuity of the family, house, land, and “family line”.

It is particularly important that the son's advantage rarely has to be expressed as an overt disenfranchisement of the daughter. It is often produced through seemingly neutral criteria: who lives with the parents, who works on the property, who invests in the house, who “continues” the household, and what is economically rational. These attitudes are not necessarily gender-inequal in themselves, but in a context where the house, land, and remaining in the parental household are culturally more strongly associated with the son, the criterion of “contribution” easily becomes a mechanism through which the traditional male heir advantage is restored.

Qualitative findings further demonstrate why women's inheritance rights are difficult to exercise even when formally recognised. In the focus groups, inheritance is often described as a topic that is not discussed, as it is associated with death, discomfort, and possible family conflict. This silence has consequences: if inheritance is not discussed openly, then formal rights more easily give way to custom, expectations, and pressure to “settle everything by agreement.” The problem is that this agreement is not always a relationship of equals. When there is an expectation that a sister will disown her, that a daughter will not resent her, or that the family peace will not be disturbed, then “agreement” can become a socially acceptable form of pressure.

The strongest pressure mechanism is not necessarily a direct prohibition, but rather the fear of family sanctions. 72.3% of men agree with the statement that parents would experience it as a shame if the family were to be sued over inheritance, while 46.2% believe that a woman who insists on her inheritance rights is viewed negatively in their environment. These findings show that a woman who claims her inheritance share does not only act as a rights holder, but also as someone who risks being labelled as selfish, conflicted, or “anti-family.” Thus, the legal issue is transformed into a moral test of loyalty to the family, with the burden of preserving family relationships being disproportionately shifted to women. All of this makes inheritance one of the areas in which it is most clearly seen how formal equality can be maintained alongside women’s real economic inequality.

Violence, control and recognition of unacceptable behaviour show that among men there is a relatively strong principled condemnation of domestic violence, but a significantly weaker recognition of those behaviours that precede, enable or sustain violence. In other words, the problem is not only whether violence as such is condemned, but also where the line is drawn between family relationships, care, jealousy, jokes, agreements and control. It is in this zone that space is created for the relativisation of behaviours that violate women’s autonomy, dignity and safety.

The data show that 70.0% disagree with the view that domestic violence is a private matter and should be resolved within the family, while 24.8% agree with this view, and 5.1% have no opinion. This is an important finding because it indicates that the institutional approach to domestic violence is to a great extent accepted. However, the fact that almost every fourth man still believes that domestic violence should remain within the family shows that the privatisation of violence has not been overcome. It is particularly important because it can affect the willingness of the environment to react, the victim’s decision to report violence, and social support for institutional action.

At the same time, an even more pronounced problem is the doubt about the credibility of women who speak out about violence. 36.0% of men agree with the statement that women often make up or exaggerate allegations of abuse or sexual violence, while 55.3% disagree, and 8.7% have no opinion. This finding shows that violence can be recognised as a problem in principle, but that a specific woman who speaks out about violence can still be viewed with suspicion, which is one of the key mechanisms for minimising violence. Such an attitude weakens trust in victims, makes it difficult to recognise violence, and shifts the focus from the behaviour of the perpetrator to the credibility of the woman who speaks out about violence.

Controlling behaviours represent the most sensitive part of the findings, because it is precisely here that we see that condemning violence does not always mean recognising control mechanisms. Financial control by a partner is considered unacceptable by 54.6% of men, control of a partner’s activities, relationships and communication by 51.0%, and suggestive comments about a colleague’s appearance by 54.5%. At the same time, financial control is considered acceptable or acceptable under certain circumstances by 41.2% of men, control of activities, relationships and communication by 43.8%, and suggestive comments about a colleague’s appearance by 39.7%. These data show that a significant proportion of men do not necessarily approve of control unconditionally, but leave room for it to be justified by context, family budget, jealousy, protection, distrust, “irresponsible” behaviour by a partner, or norms of work communication.

Qualitative findings help to understand this mechanism more precisely. In focus groups, participants often recognise financial control and monitoring of movements or communications as control, not as care. However, when specific circumstances are introduced, addiction, irresponsible spending, jealousy, higher earnings of one partner, or “protecting the family,” the condemnation softens and justifications appear. This shows that the problem is not a complete failure to recognise control, but rather that control is easily translated into the language of care, rational money management, the partner’s right to information, or the protection of family interests.

Sexual harassment in the workplace also exists in a space of insufficiently clear boundaries. The fact that 39.7% of men consider suggestive comments about a female colleague’s appearance acceptable or acceptable under certain circumstances shows that the dignity and safety of the workplace are not always recognised as a central criterion. Such comments can easily be normalised as a joke, a compliment or “harmless” communication, although in a professional context they can produce discomfort, pressure and a sense of insecurity. This indicates that the recognition of sexual harassment depends not only on a legal definition, but also on a change in workplace culture and a clear understanding that the professional space is not a space in which a woman’s body and appearance can be treated as an object of comment.

Political participation and leadership are areas where it is clear that women’s formal right to participate in public life is not the same as recognition of their full political legitimacy. Men generally do not question women’s right to vote, be elected or hold public office, but a significant proportion of them interpret women’s lower representation in politics through the ambition, interest, authority and leadership abilities of women themselves. In this way, political inequality is explained not as a consequence of the way in which parties, institutions and public space allocate power, but as a consequence of supposedly different personal preferences of women and men.

The most pronounced finding relates to political ambition: 65.3% of men agree with the statement that men are more ambitious than women in political life. 43.6% of men agree with the statement that women are less interested than men in responsible positions in political life, while 37.3% agree that women do not have the necessary qualities and skills for responsible positions in political life. These data show that resistance to greater representation of women does not always have to appear as a direct statement that women “should not” be in politics. It more often appears as an explanation that women themselves are less willing, less ambitious or are not sufficiently prepared for decision-making positions.

At the same time, men do not clearly recognise the connection between greater representation of women and the quality of political decision-making. Only 40.3% of men believe that greater representation of women in political life would lead to better political decisions. This indicates that political equality is often understood as a question of formal fairness or numerical presence, but not as a question of the quality of democracy. If gender-balanced decision-making is not recognised as a way for institutions to better encompass the diverse experiences, needs and interests of citizens, then greater participation of women is more easily presented as a symbolic or imposed measure, rather than as a democratic resource.

The findings on leadership further show that political and managerial power is still largely conceptualised through a male model of authority. 50.1% of men agree with the statement that men are better leaders than women, while 38.3% agree that women in leadership positions do not have the authority to be taken seriously, and 39.1% agree that women are too emotional to be

good leaders. This shows that leadership is not just a position, but also a set of gender-specific expectations: decisiveness, control, strength and authority are more often associated with masculinity, while women are assessed through stereotypes of emotionality, moderation or “appropriate” behaviour. The consequence is that a woman in a position of power often has to prove both competence and legitimacy at the same time, while male authority is more easily assumed.

Support for quotas shows the same kind of ambivalence as in other areas where equality requires corrective intervention. 44.8% of men agree with the statement that temporary measures, such as quotas, are needed to overcome the underrepresentation of women in political life, while 40.1% disagree and 15.1% have no opinion. This split shows that the underrepresentation of women is partially recognised, but that there is no stable consensus that an institutional measure is needed to correct it. If the lower representation of women is interpreted as a consequence of less ambition, interest or leadership skills, then quotas can easily be perceived as “forcing” or distorting merit, rather than as a mechanism to correct unequal starting conditions.

Qualitative findings help to understand this pattern. In focus groups, the increased participation of women in politics and leadership positions is often not rejected in principle, but is questioned when presented as the result of quotas, political pressure, media emphasis, or “pushing” women into positions. This shows that resistance is not necessarily directed at women themselves as political actors, but at the mechanisms that are supposed to correct the imbalance of power.

These findings indicate that women’s political equality in Serbia cannot be reduced to the number of women in institutions or to the formal right to participate. The key issue is whether women have real access to positions of influence, whether their authority is recognised as legitimate, and whether their participation is understood as a prerequisite for better democratic decision-making.

Special measures represent one of the most sensitive tests of understanding gender equality, because they ask respondents not only to accept equal rights, but also to accept the need for corrective intervention where formal equality does not produce real equal outcomes. This is precisely why the findings in this area confirm the basic pattern of the entire research: men overwhelmingly support equality and special measures at the principle level, but support is weaker and more selective when the measures relate to the concrete redistribution of power, resources, and access to decision-making positions.

The general principle of special measures has majority support. A total of 60.7% of men support the introduction of special measures when a group is in an unequal position, and when the same issue is specified and relates to the improvement of the position of women in Serbia, support remains majority, but is slightly lower, with special measures supported by 58.2% of men. The order of areas in which men believe that special measures are necessary shows that they are most easily accepted when they are associated with protection from obvious injustice or vulnerability. The greatest support is in the area of protection from violence, harassment and economic control, which is mentioned by 40.2% of men. This is followed by the reconciliation of work, parenthood and family care obligations, with 36.1%, then earnings, income and economic independence of women, with 30.5%. These findings show that men are relatively more likely to recognise the need for special measures in areas where inequality is visible as risk, protection, family burden, or economic dependence, while somewhat lower support is found in areas that more directly raise the issue of access to power, career advancement, and institutional influence.

Qualitative findings further explain why support for special measures remains ambivalent. In focus groups, special measures are often not rejected outright, but are questioned when they apply to women as a group. Participants are more likely to accept measures for people with disabilities or other groups whose vulnerability is perceived as obvious, while measures for women are more often seen as “forced”, “imposed”, a departure from merit or a distortion of “natural competition”. This shows that support for special measures depends on whether respondents recognise structural inequality as real and relevant. Where women’s position is interpreted in terms of personal choice, ambition, family priorities or individual ability, the need for special measures seems less justified.

Multiple discrimination and the position of women at increased risk of discrimination show that men are relatively good at recognising those forms of inequality that are socially visible, but are significantly less able to recognise those that are stigmatised, institutionally mediated, or less present in public discourse.

The data show that men most often identify women with disabilities, Roma women, single mothers and poor women as groups at greatest risk of discrimination. Women with disabilities are mentioned by 42.8% of men, Roma women and single mothers by 41.7% each, and poor women by 38.4%. These are the groups for which the risk is most easily associated with visible social vulnerability: material insecurity, more difficult access to services, greater dependence on institutional support, prejudice and limited resources. Older women aged 65 and over are mentioned by 35.4% of men, and rural women by 32.5%. These data show that age and place of residence are also recognised as factors of increased risk, but weaker than disability, poverty, Roma identity and single parenthood.

Victims of gender-based violence are cited as the group at greatest risk by 21.4% of men, migrants and refugees by 20.0%, women from national minorities by 15.3%, members of sexual minorities by 13.9%, young women by 11.8%, and women from religious minorities by 10.3%. This distribution shows that discrimination is less recognised when it is not visible as a classic social vulnerability or when it is associated with topics about which there is less public knowledge, more stigma, or less direct contact.

7.2. Recommendations

Based on the research findings, the recommendations are focused on areas where the greatest gap is evident between the formal acceptance of gender equality and its actual implementation. The recommendations are formulated in such a way that they can serve as a basis for future activities of the Commissioner for the Protection of Equality, public authorities, local self-government units, educational institutions, employers, the media and civil society organisations. Of particular importance in the implementation of all recommendations is the active involvement of men and youth as equal participants in changing social patterns that limit both women and men.

1. Strengthen the understanding of gender equality as real, not just formal, equality.

The Commissioner for the Protection of Equality, public authorities, educational institutions, the media and civil society organisations should consistently explain the difference between equal rights in law and equal opportunities in practice in their public activities. Particular attention should be paid to areas where gender equality is often considered to have been achieved, although

data indicate persistent inequalities: unpaid work, career advancement, political participation, inheritance and protection from violence. Communication should be based on data, concrete real-life examples and a clear explanation that equality does not mean a loss of rights for men.

2. Develop communication approaches that include men as allies in achieving equality.

Future campaigns and educational activities should focus not only on changing attitudes about women, but also on re-examining societal expectations of men. Instead of messages that portray men as responsible for inequality, it is necessary to develop messages that show how more equal relationships contribute to better family life, better parenting, healthier partnerships and a fairer distribution of responsibilities. It is particularly important to work with younger men and boys, as findings suggest that younger generations do not necessarily hold more equal attitudes in all areas.

3. Systematically introduce content on gender stereotypes, equal relationships, and non-violent communication into education.

The Ministry of Education, the Institute for the Improvement of Education, schools, higher education institutions and institutions responsible for the professional development of education employees should ensure that content on gender equality, non-stereotypical roles of women and men, respect for personal boundaries, non-violent conflict resolution, recognition of harassment and equal distribution of family responsibilities is included in the curriculum and extracurricular programmes. This content should be age-appropriate, practical and related to situations from the daily lives of students, and not reduced to formal information about rights.

4. Encourage a more equal distribution of unpaid work and a more active paternal role.

Relevant ministries, local government units, employers and civil society organisations should, in accordance with their competences, develop measures that encourage men to take on an equal share in caring for children, the elderly, people in need of support, household chores and other family responsibilities. It is particularly important to promote fatherhood as a full parental responsibility, not as an aid to the mother, to encourage employers to enable both women and men to exercise the rights associated with parenthood without negative consequences for employment, earnings and advancement, and to develop accessible community-based care services that reduce the burden of unpaid work within the family.

5. Promote women's economic equality through transparency, protection from discrimination, and equal opportunities for advancement.

Ministries responsible for labour, economy and gender equality, inspection bodies, employers, trade unions and equality bodies should strengthen the implementation of rules prohibiting discrimination at work, in particular in relation to pregnancy, maternity, parenthood, wages and promotion. More transparent criteria for wages, promotion and selection for management positions should be encouraged, as should regular monitoring of gender gaps in wages, sectoral distribution, access to training and promotion. Particular attention should be paid to identifying seemingly neutral practices that disadvantage women due to the greater burden of unpaid work and the expectations associated with caring for family members.

6. Strengthen legal certainty and public awareness about equal inheritance.

The Ministry of Justice, judicial authorities, notaries, social work centres, local government units, the Commissioner for the Protection of Equality and civil society organisations should carry out activities aimed at informing citizens about the equal inheritance rights of sons and daughters and about the consequences of renouncing inheritance under family or social pressure. It is particularly important to develop clear and accessible information that the request for equal inheritance is not a family conflict, but the exercise of a legally guaranteed right. In practice, the role of notaries and other relevant actors should be strengthened in recognising possible pressures, providing understandable information to the parties and referring them to available legal assistance.

7. Improve recognition of violence and sexual harassment.

Competent institutions, employers, educational institutions, media and civil society organisations should implement activities that clearly distinguish partner support, agreement and care from control, surveillance, financial conditioning, movement restrictions, communication monitoring, isolation and other forms of controlling behaviour. It is particularly important that in work and educational environments, sexual harassment, suggestive remarks about appearance and unwanted attention are not relativised as jokes or compliments, but are recognised as behaviours that violate the dignity, autonomy and equal participation of women.

8. Strengthen the effective participation of women in political life and in decision-making positions.

Political parties, the National Assembly, public authorities, local self-government units, public institutions, employers and the media should actively contribute to the greater representation of women in decision-making positions and the strengthening of their public authority. It is necessary to ensure that women's participation is not reduced to a formal presence, but rather implies access to real influence, resources, visibility and decision-making. Political parties and institutions should develop support programmes for women to take on leadership roles, prevent gender-based delegitimisation of women in public discourse and present quotas and other special measures as mechanisms for correcting unequal initial conditions.

9. Continue implementing and explaining special measures to achieve real equality.

Public authorities, the Commissioner for the Protection of Equality, institutions and employers should consistently link special measures to concrete evidence of unequal status and to a clear objective that the measure seeks to achieve. It is necessary to explain to the public that special measures are not a privilege, but a temporary and targeted instrument for removing structural obstacles. Where resistance is most pronounced, especially in the areas of political decision-making, leadership positions, ownership, property and access to finance, the measures should be accompanied by transparent data, public justification and regular assessment of the effects.

10. Introduce an intersectional approach to all measures to advance gender equality.

Gender equality policies and measures should recognise that women are not a homogeneous group and that sex and gender often intersect with disability, nationality, poverty, age, place of residence, migration status, sexual orientation and other grounds of inequality. Measures should be based on data disaggregated by sex and other relevant personal characteristics, with the participation of women from these groups in planning, implementation and evaluation of effects.

11. Establish regular monitoring of men's attitudes and the effects of gender equality measures.

The Commissioner for the Protection of Equality, the Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia, relevant ministries, academia and civil society organisations should continue to periodically monitor the attitudes of men and women on gender equality, with a particular focus on areas where the greatest perception gap and ambivalence occur. Future research should enable comparisons over time, monitoring generational changes, regional differences and the positions of different groups of men and women. Research findings should be regularly used in annual and special reports, public campaigns, recommendations to public authorities, training programmes and policy impact assessments.

The implementation of these recommendations requires coordinated action by institutions, local communities, the education system, employers, the media and civil society. Of particular importance is the continued inclusion of men and boys in the conversation about gender equality, not as passive observers or sole bearers of problems, but as participants in changing social patterns that limit both women and men. Equality between women and men should therefore be seen as a common public interest, as a prerequisite for a dignified life, fairer family relations, economic security and democratic decision-making.