

Gender and corruption

*research for the Republic
of North Macedonia*



GENDER AND CORRUPTION

SURVEY REPORT
ON THE PERCEPTION
OF GENDER FORMS OF
CORRUPTION IN THE REPUBLIC
OF NORTH MACEDONIA

June 2021, Skopje

REPORT
ON THE QUALITATIVE SURVEY
ON THE PERCEPTION OF
THE TYPES OF GENDER
CORRUPTION IN NORTH MACEDONIA

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SURVEY REPORT ON THE PERCEPTION OF GENDER FORMS OF CORRUPTION IN THE REPUBLIC OF NORTH MACEDONIA



June 2021, Skopje

SUMMARY

In order to conduct a more detailed quantitative examination of the situation regarding gender forms of corruption in the Republic of North Macedonia (RNM), in the period from 02.06.2021 to 09.06.2021, the research agency TIM Institute conducted a public opinion poll on a representative sample of 1013 respondents aged 18 and older living in households on the territory of RNM.

The findings indicated that seven out of ten women detect major widespread problems related to corruption in the country.

The research put special emphasis on the sexual extortion (sextortion) by public sector employees in exchange for provision of a public service, as a gender-specific form of corruption. Therefore, **78% of the respondents** recognized sextortion by public sector employees in exchange for provision of a public service as a form of corruption. Only one in ten respondents did not consider sextortion by public sector employees in exchange for provision of a public service to constitute a form of corruption.

More than half of the respondents indicated that public office holders and authorized officials who were in a position of power tended to request sexual services instead of money/bribes in order to provide the public service that they are legally obliged to provide in accordance with the Law. The fact that 21.5% of the respondents stated that this happens **very often** is a cause for concern.

Extortion is not only present in the public, but also in the private sector, according to two thirds of the respondents. The most common situations when people in positions of power seek sexual services in exchange for performing a public service they are legally obliged to provide are related to **employment and promotion**.

Another finding indicates that 63% of the respondents **would neither report their own nor anyone else's experience** with this form of corruption. One quarter of the respondents indicated that they had no personal experience but knew someone who had been subject to this form of corruption, whereas 5.4% of the respondents had **personally** experienced and had dealt with the consequences of sextortion. Out of these 54 respondents (5.4%), only 20 expressed willingness to **report** this act of pressure and face the challenge of disclosing the experience.

When the respondents were asked whether they would report if something similar happened to them again in the future, hypothetically, the respondents' tendency not to report sextortion gradually declined. Half of the total of 95% who had previous experiences of sextortion stated that they would summon up the courage to report the crime, but the fact that 15% of the respondents stated that they would keep it to themselves is worrying. The main reason for this is the lack of trust in the system and the belief that reporting the crime would **have no effect**.

The most frequently mentioned institution where most of the respondents would report sextortion to was the **police**.

Linking the level of corruption in the country to the appointment of women to managerial positions was also a topic of interest. Over half of the respondents (53.5%) believe that the level of corruption in the country would decrease if more women were elected/appointed to higher managerial positions.

The majority of the respondents (over 70%) believe that sextortion as a specific form of corruption is not sufficiently known and recognized among the public – in the discussions, policies and laws and regulations in the country. This is a clear signal that mechanisms need to be put in place to promote discussion, monitor the situation and inform the public on the issue of sextortion. According to one quarter of the respondents, sextortion as a form of corruption is completely unknown in the country, which shows that the gender aspects of corruption are not recognized among the public.

METHODOLOGICAL REPORT

The research used a multi-level stratified sample representative of the female population in North Macedonia. The research was conducted on a total of 1013 respondents aged 18 and older living in households on the territory of RNM. The selection of a respondent in a household was based on the principle of first upcoming birthday (in case of more than one female members of the household). Households were distributed proportionally in urban and rural settlements within municipalities.

For the purposes of the research, telephone interviews were conducted.

SAMPLE DESIGN

Primarily, the population was stratified based on three variables: ethnicity, degree of urbanization and region. Categories were defined based on these three key variables

Next, each municipality in the region was divided into four subgroups: ethnic Macedonians and members of other ethnic communities in urban and rural settlements and ethnic Albanians in urban and rural settlements (according to the representation of the ethnic communities in the specific municipality).

Finally, the target number of interviews in each municipality was proportionally distributed according to the number of inhabitants in the municipality (population stratification). Actually, each cell is a function of the target number of interviews (predicted sample size), the total population in the municipality and the number of inhabitants in the respective subgroup.

SELECTION OF HOUSEHOLDS AND RESPONDENTS

Each interviewer had to make at least three attempts to establish contact with the selected household over the phone. If, after three attempts, no contact with the household had been established, another household was contacted according to the household selection procedure.

The interviewers recorded the results from all contact attempts in the so-called contact list. Only one selected person per household was eligible to be interviewed.

QUALITY CONTROL SYSTEM

Approximately 25% of the interviews conducted have been a subject to control.

NETWORK OF INTERVIEWERS AND SUPERVISORS

The research was conducted by a developed and experienced network of interviewers (telephone operators) in Macedonian and Albanian language.

20 experienced interviewers worked on this project.

RESEARCH DURATION

Prior to the start of the telephone survey, all interviewers received theoretical training on the methodology and work procedure, which included explanation of the meaning and implementation of the following procedures:

- ▲ Household selection
- ▲ Respondent selection
- ▲ Directions for filling out the program questionnaire

The research was conducted in the period from 02.06.2021 to 09.06.2021.

The interviewers were obligated to inform the project manager on the progress of the project on a daily basis, the potential difficulties they might have faced and the possible reasons for potential participants rejecting the survey

Professional statistical data processing software SPSS for Windows was used to process and analyse the data collected.

SPSS for Windows and Microsoft Office for Windows (Word and Excel) were used to prepare the report, graphs, and tables.

PERCENTAGE OF ESTABLISHED CONTACTS AND REJECTIONS

Number of contacts	1450
Total number of interviews conducted	1013
Percentage of interviews conducted	69.86 %

According to the feedback from the interviewers acceptance and general interest among the respondents could be assessed as relatively good.

A high level of contact was achieved. Although the interviewers faced rejections, the expectations were met, as in most public opinion polls.

Refusals to participate in the survey were mostly explained with “I don’t have the time”, while the rest were “unwilling to provide answers” or “had recently participated in a survey”.

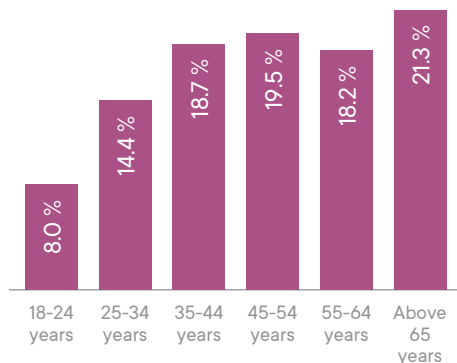
DEMOGRAPHIC STRUCTURE OF THE RESPONDENTS

GENDER



Women

AGE



EDUCATION

Primary



20.2%

Secondary



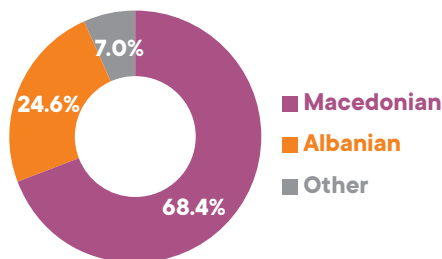
55.8%

Higher

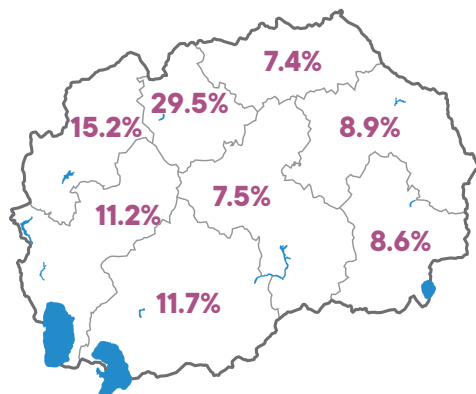


24%

NATIONALITY



REGION



SETTLEMENT



Urban
58.8%



Rural
41.2%

EMPLOYMENT STATUS

Employed in the private sector **28.9%**

Housewife **17.7%**

Unemployed **15.2%**

Employed in the public sector **15.1%**

Retired **11.8%**

Pupil, student **6.4%**

Farmer **1.7%**

Business owner **1.7%**

Freelancer **1.5%**

MONTHLY FAMILY INCOME

Over 60,001 denars **2.9%**

48,001 - 60,000 denars **7.7%**

36,001 - 48,000 denars **17.3%**

24,001 - 36,000 denars **20.7%**

12,001 - 24,000 denars **16.9%**

Less than 12,000 denars **4.6%**

Refuses to answer **19.5%**

Doesn't know **10.4%**

1. CORRUPTION AS A PROBLEM

The first set of questions in the survey refers to the respondents' perception of the prevalence of corruption. The extent to which they perceive corruption as a problem, especially in their everyday life, the municipality, and the country they live in is shown in the following graph.

It can be noticed that most respondents perceive corruption as a major problem in all three areas covered.

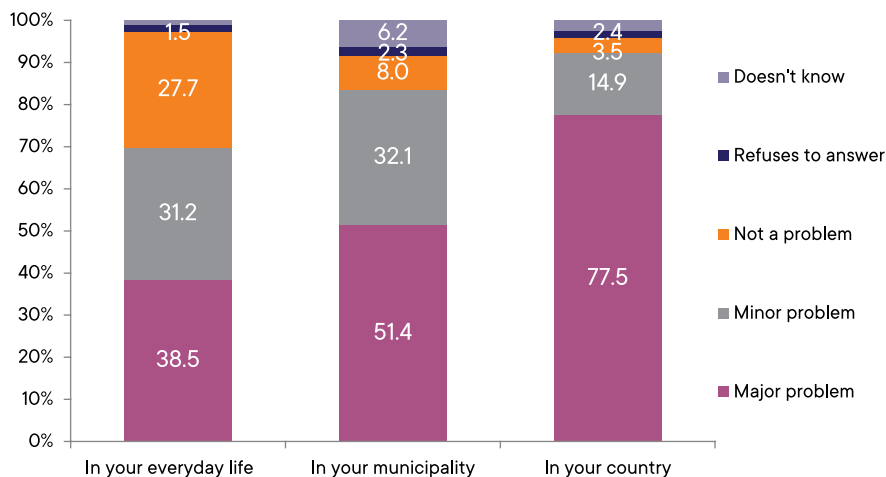
With regard to their everyday life, 37% of the respondents stated that corruption was a major problem, 31% perceived it as a minor problem, while for 28% of the respondents, corruption did not pose a problem in their everyday lives. Regarding corruption in their municipality, there is a noticeable increase in the number of respondents who identified it as a major problem. Over half (51%) of the respondents stated that it was a major problem, around one third (32%) that it was a minor problem, while only 8% said that corruption was not a problem in their municipality. Seven out of ten respondents agree that corruption is a major problem in the country (77%).

Additional analysis of the data show that corruption as a major problem in **everyday life** is more often mentioned by respondents aged 45–54, more than twice as often by Albanian as opposed to Macedonian women (70% vs. 28%), and more often by the unemployed or those employed in the public sector and by those with lower monthly incomes.

Corruption as a major problem in the **municipality** is more often mentioned by respondents aged 45–54, by Albanian as opposed to Macedonian women, housewives and public sector employees and those with lower monthly incomes.

Corruption as a major problem in the **country** is more often mentioned by respondents aged 25–34 and 45–54, respondents with higher education, public sector employees and those with personal monthly incomes between 24,000 and 36,000 denars.

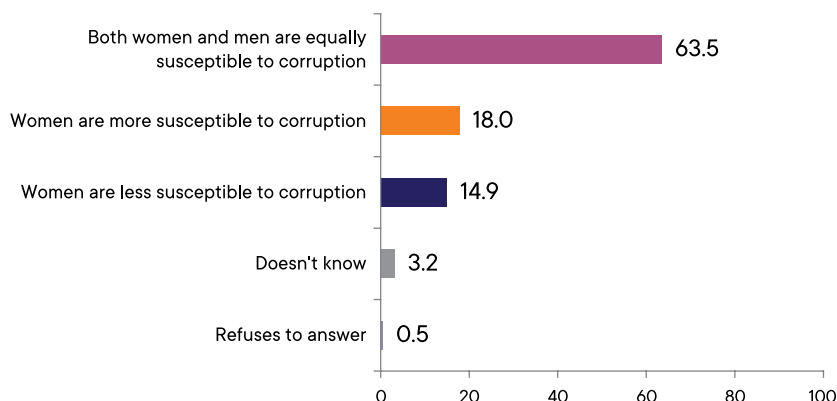
Graph 1. In your opinion, is corruption a major problem, a minor problem or not a problem at all?



2. SUSCEPTIBILITY TO CORRUPTION

Susceptibility to corruption viewed through the prism of the respondents' answers shows that it affects both genders. Around two thirds stated that they didn't recognize gender aspects of corruption, i.e. that both men and women were equally susceptible to corruption. Around 15% of the respondents believe that women are less susceptible to corruption as opposed to men, while 18% think quite the opposite, that women are more susceptible to corruption as opposed to men.

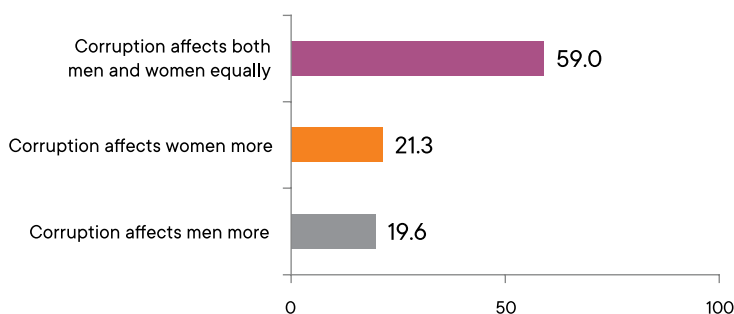
Graph 2. In your opinion, are women equally susceptible to corruption as men (who is more corrupt)?



The respondents that stated that women are more susceptible to corruption are more often representatives of the youngest age group, up to 24 years old, with secondary education, university students and mostly Macedonian (twice as many as the Albanian women).

Six out of ten respondents agree that corruption affects both men and women equally. One fifth of the respondents believe that women are more affected by corruption, with the equal proportion of respondents stating that corruption affects men more. This fifth of the respondents (216 in total) mostly belong to the youngest age group – up to 24 years of age.

Graph 3. Would you say that corruption affects both men and women equally?



3. **SEXTORTION**

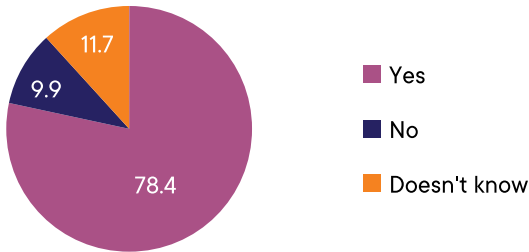
Forms of corruption include prohibited conduct related to bribery in the performance of public office. This term means abuse of the position or power for unethical or illegal purposes for the achievement of personal gain. Corruption as a socio-pathological phenomenon is a specific phenomenon that involves specific people. Hence, sextortion by public sector employees in exchange for provision of a public service as a **form** of corruption is recognized by 78% of the respondents.

North Macedonia's Criminal code does not recognize sextortion as a form of corruption. Sexual services are mentioned in the sections related to mediation in prostitution, sexual exploitation, and sexual violence in the area of crimes against humanity, sexual slavery in the area of war crimes against civilians, sexual exploitation in human trafficking, but not sextortion from a position of power.¹

¹ <https://jorm.gov.mk/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/%D0%B7%D0%B0%D0%BA%D0%BE%D0%BD%D0%B8%D0%BA-%D0%BF%D1%80%D0%B5%D1%87%D0%B8%D1%81%D1%82%D0%B5%D0%BD-%D1%82%D0%B5%D0%BA%D1%81%D1%82.pdf>

Only one in ten respondents believe that sextortion by public sector employees in exchange for provision of a public service **does not** constitute a form of corruption, while 12% expressed the inability to recognize corruption in sextortion.

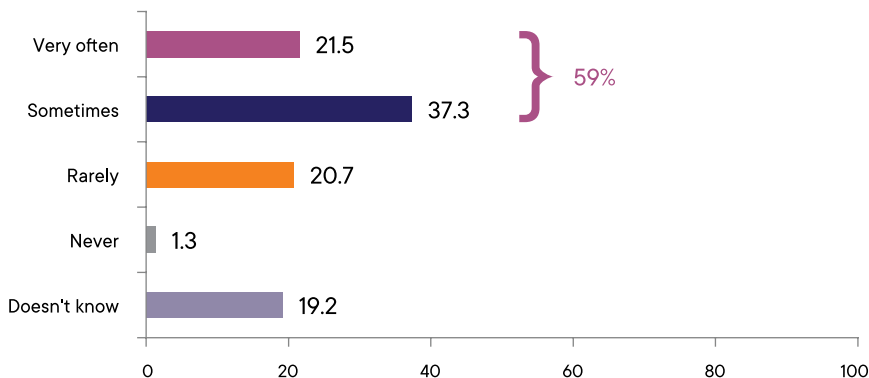
Graph 4. Do you think that sextortion by public sector employees in exchange for provision of a public service is a form of corruption?



Respondents who think that sextortion by public sector employees in exchange for provision of a public service is a form of corruption are mainly Macedonian, with higher education and belonging to the 25–34 age group.

Around 59% of the respondents believe that holders of public office and authorized officials who are in a position of power are likely to seek sexual services instead of money/bribe in exchange for a public service they were legally obliged to provide, of which 21.5% stated that it happened very often.

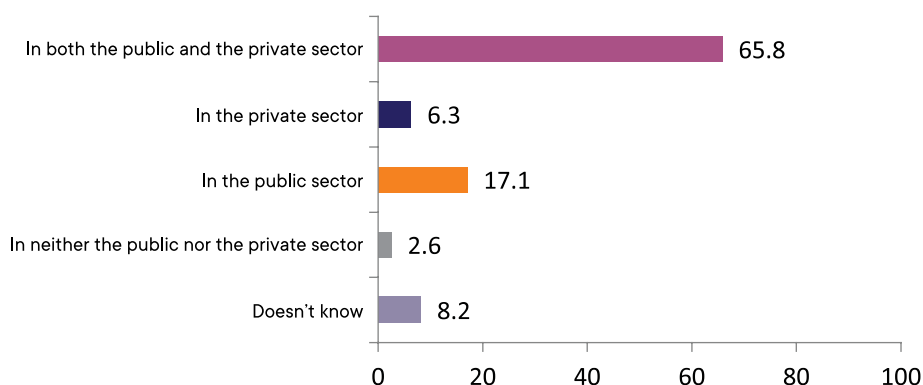
Graph 5. In some cases, persons in positions of power, such as holders of public office and authorized or public administration employees, seek sexual services instead of money/bribe in exchange for performing a public service they are legally obliged to provide. How often do you think this happens in the country?



Two thirds of the respondents believe that sextortion in exchange for provision of a public service occurs in both the public and the private sector.

17% of the respondents think that this form of coercion is more common in the public sector. These respondents are mainly aged 45 to 54, with higher education, employed in both the public and the private sector.

Graph 6. Would you say that sextortion in exchange for provision of a public service occurs or is more likely to occur in the public or the private sector?



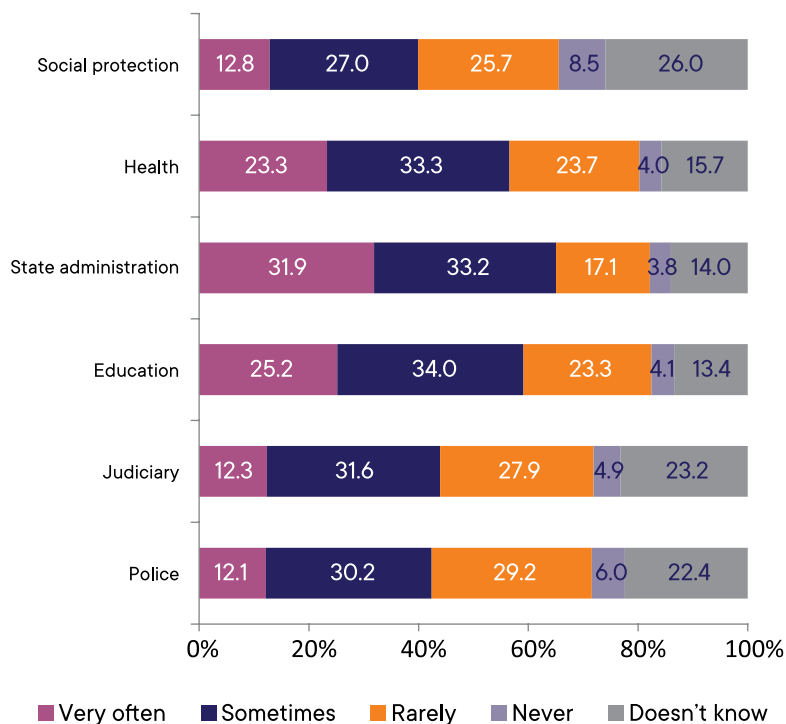
4. PRESENCE OF SEXTORTION IN INSTITUTIONS

The institution in which the respondents believe that sextortion as a form of corruption is most common is the state administration (at the central and local level). Aggregate responses of “very often” and “sometimes” make up two thirds of the respondents in the Republic of North Macedonia who detect abuse of public office or authority in order to obtain sexual services in the state administration. These respondents are mainly highly educated and employed in the public sector, but there is a noticeable statistically significant difference between their answers viewed through the prism of ethnicity and age.

Other institutions where more than half of the respondents are of opinion that sextortion as a form of corruption does occur are within the education and healthcare sector (aggregate responses of “very often” and “sometimes” in education 59.2% and 56.6% in healthcare).

One area where one quarter of the respondents believe that no sextortion occurs are the social protection institutions.

Graph 7. If you are already familiar with sextortion as a form of corruption, how often do you think it occurs in the institutions within the sectors listed below?



In addition to the offered institutions in six sectors for which the respondents were asked to say whether they thought there were cases of sextortion, they detected other institutions in which they suspected that this form of coercion is very common:

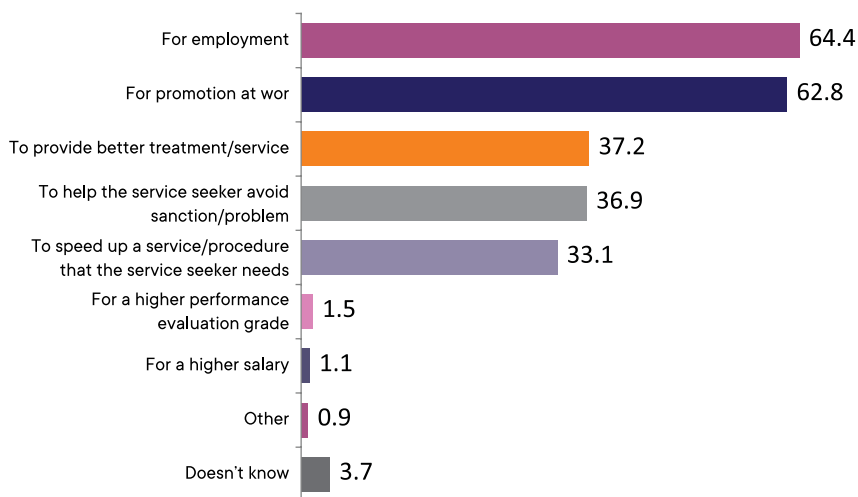
Private enterprises (77 respondents)

Notaries, attorneys (16 respondents)

The most common situations when people in a position of power would seek sexual services in exchange for a public service they are legally obliged to provide are shown in the graph on the following page. Over 60% of the respondents believe that those are mainly related to employment (64%) and promotion at work (63%).

The next most common situations in which respondents believe such behaviour occurs are, in exchange for requesting a better service, and to avoid a sanction or resolve a problem (both 37%).

Graph 8. In which situations would you say that people in a position of power most frequently seek sexual services in exchange for performing a public service they are legally obliged to provide?



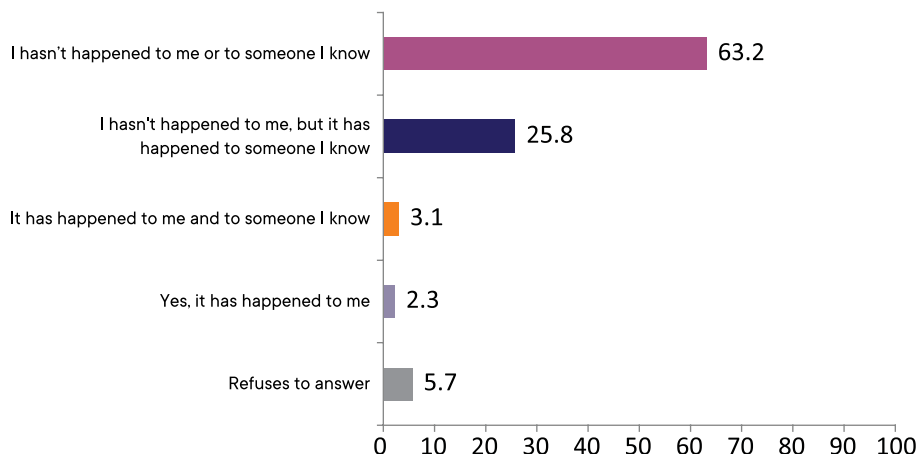
5. PERSONAL EXPERIENCE

The next question detects the experience of the respondents in relation to sextortion, whether personal or of someone they know. It is notable that over 63% of the respondents would not report personal or someone else's experience related to this form of corruption, but it should certainly be taken into account that reporting sextortion leaves room for social stigma and discomfort that could affect the woman's life more broadly.

One quarter of the respondents stated that they had no personal experience but know someone who had been subject to this form of corruption, while 5.4% of the respondents had personally experienced and dealt with the consequences of sextortion.

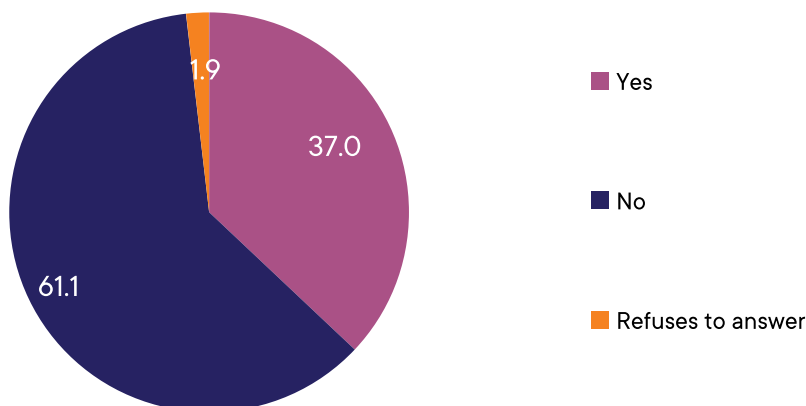
Of these 54 respondents (5.4%), only 20 respondents expressed readiness to report this form of coercion and face the challenge of disclosing the experience (37%).

Graph 9. Have you personally or has someone you know had experience with extortion of sexual services instead of money/bribes as a form of corruption (in seeking public services)?



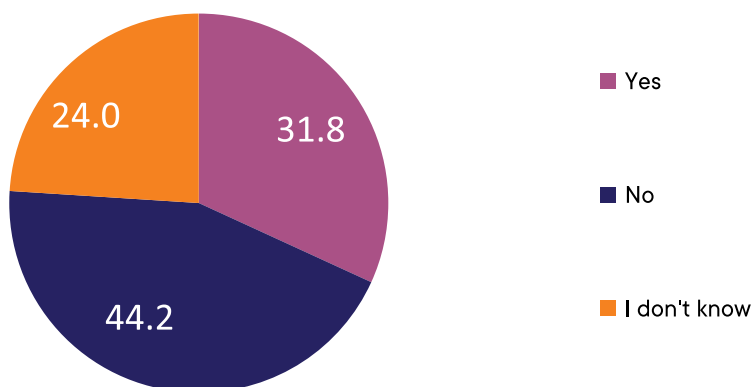
The graph shows the answers of the 54 respondents (as 100%) who had personal experience with sextortion. Thus, 61.1% did not report (33 respondents), while 37% (20 respondents) reported the extortion.

Graph 9.1. Have you reported the experience with extortion of sexual services instead of money/bribes as a form of corruption (in seeking public services)?



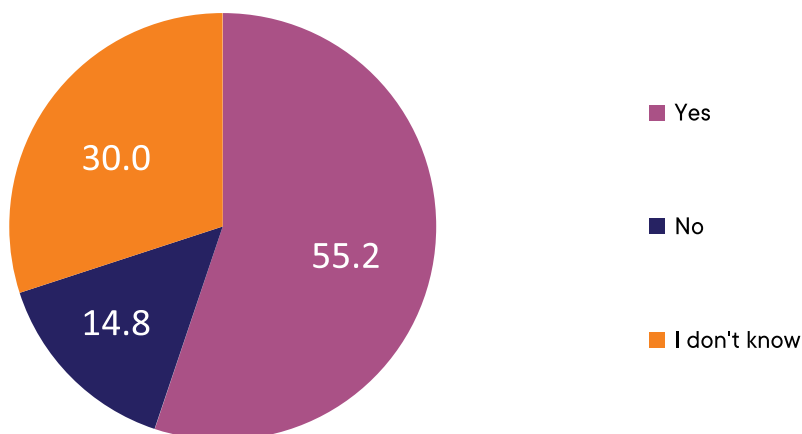
Of the total of 28.9% or 292 respondents who know someone who had been subjected to sextortion, around one third (93 respondents) know that the victim had reported the crime.

Graph 9.2. Has someone you know reported the experience with extortion of sexual services instead of money/bribe as a form of corruption (in seeking public services)?



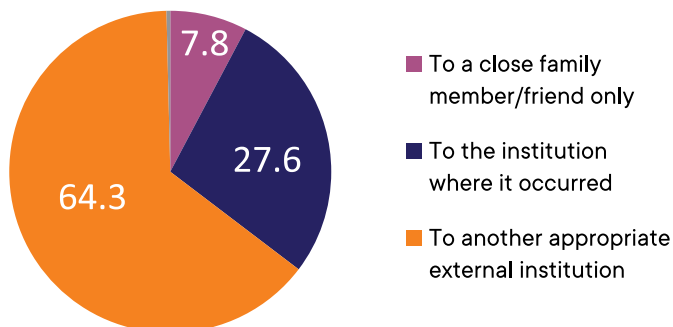
When the respondents were asked whether they would report if something similar happened to them again in the future, hypothetically, the respondents' tendency not to report sextortion gradually declined. This question was only posed to the respondents who had already had previous experience with sextortion but did not report it. Half of the total of 95% stated that they would pluck up the courage to report the crime, but the fact that 15% of the respondents stated that they would keep it to themselves is worrying. One third of the respondents expressed inability to image a hypothetical situation of sextortion which they would report.

Graph 10. If something similar happened to you, would you disclose/report it?

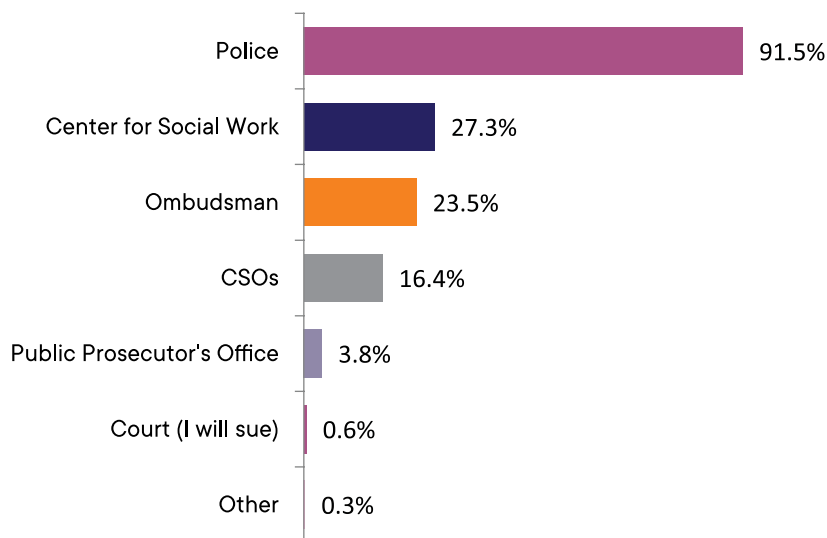


Of the half of the respondents (529) who stated that they would report any case of sextortion they might witness in the future, around two thirds (340) would report the case to another relevant institution outside the institution where it occurred. Around 28% of the respondents (146) would report the case to the institution where it occurred, but 7,8% or 41 respondents would only disclose their experience to family and friends.

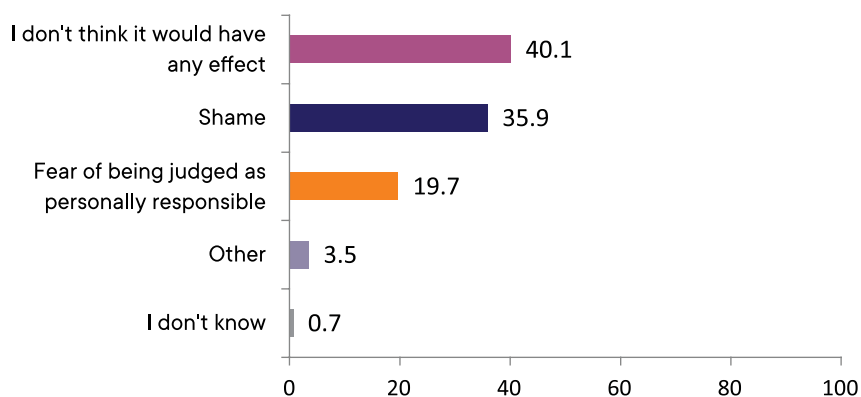
Graph 11. If you decide to disclose/report sextortion, who would you disclose it to?



The most frequently mentioned institution that the respondents would report a case of sextortion to is the police. Of the total of 340 respondents, over 90% stated that they would report the case to the police. This was a multiple-choice question, and some of the respondents also mentioned other institutions that they would report sextortion to. However, all of the respondents who stated that they would report the crime, chose the police alongside other institutions.

Graph 12. Where would you report sextortion? (a multiple-choice question)

As previously mentioned, social stigma, prejudice, labelling and taboos come to light through the answers of the respondents who would not report sextortion. Of the total of 142 respondents, 40% or 57 express a lack of trust in the system by answering that reporting it would have no effect. For 36% or 51 respondents, shame and judgement from the environment would prevent them from reporting, while 20% or 28 respondents would not report it out of fear of being judged that they are themselves responsible and have brought sextortion on themselves.

Graph 13. Why wouldn't you report sextortion?

These data show that society needs to commit itself to creating policies that will reinstate trust in the system.

Resolving the consequences that burden the life of the victim of sextortion are, certainly, an obligation of the state as well.

6. WOMEN ON MANAGERIAL POSITIONS

The presence of gender inequality in the appointment of women to managerial positions has been observed in the country.

The inclusion of both men and women in the decision-making bodies in North Macedonia is regulated by law. The Law on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men² contains provisions on the participation of both men and women in commissions and boards, i.e. decision-making bodies, which, at the national and local level, should not be less than 40%. The Electoral Code envisages an affirmative measure which provides for participation of both genders in the work of the councils (the same provision applies to the election of MPs), i.e. it warrants that both genders will be represented in the municipal councils with at least 30%.³

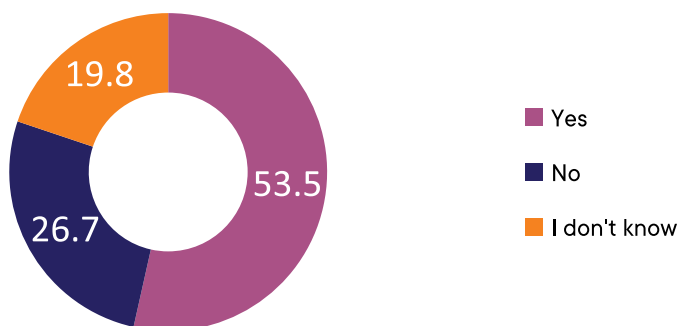
Linking the level of corruption in the country with the appointment of women to managerial positions is a topic of interest in the next question. Over half of the respondents (53.3%) believe that the level of corruption in the country would decrease if more women were elected/appointed to higher managerial positions. These respondents have mainly higher education, higher monthly incomes and belong to the age group 35–44.

One quarter of the respondents do not think that there is a link between the level of corruption in the country and the appointment of women to higher managerial functions. These respondents have mainly a lower level of education and are homemakers.

² <https://www.mtsp.gov.mk/WBStorage/Files/ZEM%205%2009%202011%20L.pdf>

³ https://www.mtsp.gov.mk/WBStorage/Files/informacija%20za%20analiza_lokalna%20samouprava.pdf

Graph 14. Do you think that the level of corruption in the country would decrease if more women were elected/appointed to higher managerial positions?

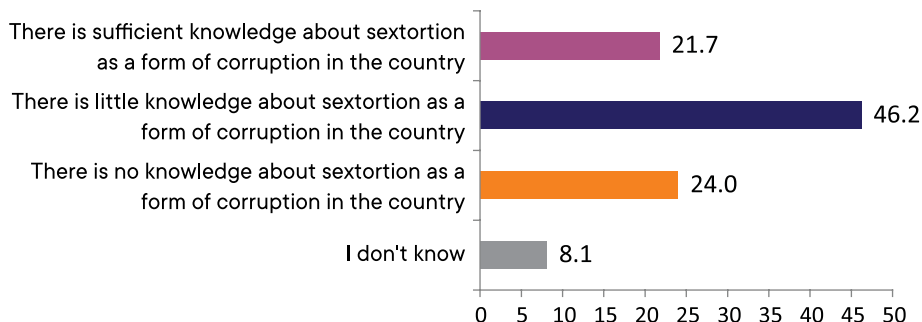


7. RECOGNIZING SPECIFIC FORMS OF CORRUPTION

The majority of the respondents think that sextortion as a form of corruption is not sufficiently known and recognized among the public - in the discussions, policies and laws and regulations in the country. Namely, aggregate data that “little” or “not at all” is known about this subject represent over 70% of the respondents’ answers, which is a clear signal that mechanisms need to be put in place to promote discussion, monitor the situation, and inform the public on the issue of sextortion. The answers of one quarter of the respondents that sextortion as a form of corruption is completely unknown in the country shows that the gender aspects of corruption are not recognized among the public.

Around one fifth of the respondents who think that sextortion is sufficiently known and recognized among the public as a form of corruption have higher levels of education and are employed in the public sector.

Graph 15. Do you think that the specific forms of corruption such as sextortion in exchange for provision of public services is known and recognized among the public – the discussions, policies and laws and regulations in the country?



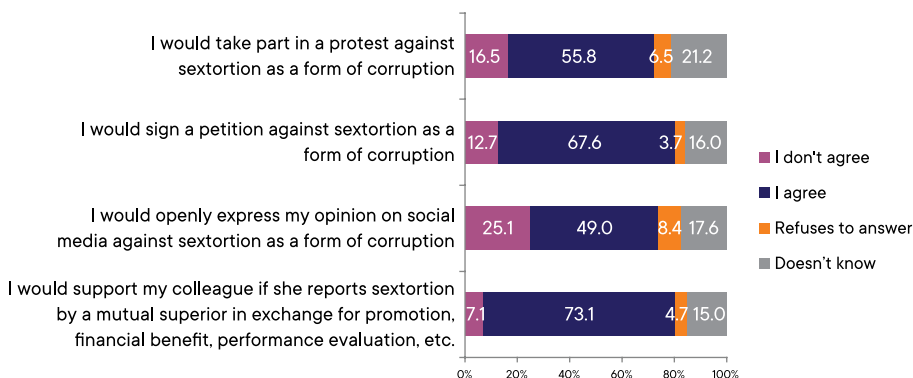
Declarative statements related to specific activities for combating sextortion as a form of corruption are given below.

Of all offered situations, most of the respondents chose that they would give support to a colleague who would report sextortion by a mutual superior. Over 73% agree with this statement and those are mainly respondents with a higher level of education and are employed in the public sector.

Two thirds of the respondents would sign a petition against sextortion as a form of corruption, but only half would speak openly about sextortion on social networks.

56% of the respondents would take part in a protest against sextortion as a form of corruption. These are often younger respondents, Macedonian and students.

Graph 16. Do you agree or disagree with these statements?



KEY FINDINGS

In the three areas covered in the survey, most of the respondents detect corruption as a major problem.

- ▲ In their **everyday lives**, 38% of the respondents (women in North Macedonia) stated that it was a major problem, 31% stated that corruption is a minor problem, while for 28% of the respondents corruption did not pose a problem in their everyday lives.
- ▲ In the **municipality** where they live, over half (51%) of the respondents stated that it was a major problem, around one third (32%) that it was a minor problem, while only 8% state that there was no corruption in their municipality.
- ▲ Seven out of ten respondents (77%) agree that corruption is a major problem in the country.
- ▲ Around two thirds of the respondents stated that they did not recognize gender aspects of corruption i.e. that both men and women are equally **susceptible to corruption**. Around 15% of the respondents believe that women are less susceptible to corruption as opposed to men, while 18% think quite the opposite, that women are more susceptible to corruption as opposed to men.
- ▲ Six out of ten respondents agree that corruption affects both men and women equally. One fifth of the respondents believe that women are more affected by corruption, with an equal proportion of respondents stating that corruption affects men more.
- ▲ Sextortion by public sector employees in exchange for provision of a public service as a **form** of corruption is recognized by 78% of the respondents. Only one in ten respondents believe that sextortion by public sector employees in exchange for provision of a public service **does not** constitute a form of corruption, while 12% expressed inability to recognize corruption in sextortion.
- ▲ Around 59% of the respondents believe that holders of public office and authority in positions of power are likely to seek sexual services instead of money/bribes in exchange for a public service they are legally obliged to provide, of which 21.5% stated that it happened very often.
- ▲ Two thirds of the respondents believe that sextortion in exchange for a provision of a public service occurs in **both the public and the private sector**.

- ▲ The institution in which the respondents believe that sextortion as a form of corruption is most common is the state administration (at the central and local level). Aggregate responses of “very often” and “sometimes” make up two thirds of the respondents in RNM who detect abuse of public office or authority in order to obtain sexual services in the state administration.
- ▲ The most common situations when people in a position of power would seek sexual services in exchange for a public service they are legally obliged to provide are employment (27%) and promotion at work (26%).
- ▲ Over 63% of the respondents **would not report personal or someone else’s experience** related to this form of corruption. One quarter of the respondents stated that they **had no personal experience but knew someone** who had been subject to this form of corruption, while 5.4% of the respondents had **personally** experienced and had dealt with the consequences of sextortion. Of these 54 respondents (5.4%), only 20 expressed readiness to report this form of coercion and face the challenge of disclosing the experience (37%).
- ▲ The most frequently mentioned institution where the respondents stated that they would report a case of sextortion to is the police. Of the total of 340 respondents, over 90% stated that they would report the case to the police.
- ▲ Over half of the respondents (53.3%) believe that the **level of corruption** in the country would decrease if more women were elected/appointed to higher managerial positions.
- ▲ Over 70% of the responses (aggregate data of “little” or “not at all”) by the respondents state that sextortion as a specific form of corruption **is not sufficiently known** and recognized among the public – in discussions, policies and laws and regulations in the country.
- ▲ Over 73% of the respondents would **support a colleague** in her decision to report sextortion from a mutual superior.
- ▲ Two thirds of the respondents would sign a **petition** against sextortion as a form of corruption, but only half would **speak openly** about sextortion on social networks.
- ▲ 56% of the respondents would take part in a protest against sextortion as a form of corruption.

REPORT ON THE QUALITATIVE SURVEY ON THE PERCEPTION OF THE TYPES OF GENDER CORRUPTION IN NORTH MACEDONIA



September 2021, Skopje

1. KEY FINDINGS OF THE SURVEY

The focus of this qualitative study was put on getting more detailed insight into women's perceptions of the types of gender corruption in Republic of North Macedonia.

The analysis of the two group discussions showed that all female participants recognize that corruption is present throughout all levels of society, especially in the state institutions. The corrupt conduct is deeply rooted in everyday life and it tends to become more acceptable and common code of conduct and performance. The majority of female participants deem that the sex does not determine the susceptibility to corruption, and that women and men are equally prone to corruption. Hence, they do not believe that the corruption level would decline if more women held higher positions.

All female participants in this qualitative survey deem the extortion of sexual favours in exchange of public service as corruption, pointing out that this is the worst type of corruption.

All female participants deem that the extortion of sexual favours happens frequently, in the public and the private sector as well, and that it is often imposed in exchange for employment, job promotions, doing an important favour for the woman-victim, and it is present in the higher educational institutions as well, for passing a certain exam. However, the dominant impression of all female participants is that women remain silent and the majority of them do not report such cases.

All female participants deem that gender corruption is not recognized enough in the public and not discussed as a topic in the policies and legal regulations in the country. Since the victims remain silent, the society remains silent too. Citizens deem that a fundamental and organized systemic approach is necessary to raise the awareness and education on gender corruption, whereby all affected institutions should take part. Limited media campaigns have a superficial and passing effect and, as such, they cannot cause any significant changes in the awareness of the citizens nor in the operation of the institutions when it comes to this problem.

None of the female participants, regardless of whether they have personally experienced gender corruption or known a woman who had had such experience, would have chosen the institutional way of solving this problem. The main reason for this is the low level of trust in institutions, and the perception that justice would never be served.

Apart from the institutional distrust, one of the main barriers for brave and public disclosure of cases of gender corruption is the strong stigmatization of women in society and the tendency to pass the guilt upon the woman, thus ruining her reputation and integrity in the society. This way, if a woman openly speaks about such cases, she is not only a victim of gender corruption, but also becomes even bigger victim of the system and the society finding her guilty based on no grounds whatsoever.

All female participants deem that such a complex problem should be approached via serious systemic and institutional changes. In this regard, they point out that the competent state institutions and ministries (Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Ministry of Justice, State Commission for Protection of Corruption, courts, police, etc.) must become functional, execute their jobs properly, and enforce the laws in order to regain the seriously disrupted trust of the citizens in their professional operation. Furthermore, female participants emphasize that the awareness of the citizens about this problem will be raised, as well as the trust in the institutions if serious penalties for the perpetrators of such acts are put in place, regardless of their level of power at the given moment and if the media communicate more about such cases and the perpetrators.

At the same time, female participants highlight the insufficient legal protection of the woman victim of gender corruption. Hence, the necessity arises for amending the laws with regards to this type of abuse of power by the holders of public functions.

This is the only way to encourage women-victims to speak publicly and report the case, which would contribute to reducing the level of gender corruption in the country.

2. SURVEY METHODOLOGY

For the purpose of more detailed insight into the results obtained from the national representative survey about the situation with the types of gender corruption in the Republic of North Macedonia conducted in the period from 02.06.2021 until 09.06.2021 on a representative sample of 1013 respondents at the age of 18 and above, living in households on the territory of the Republic of North Macedonia, an additional qualitative survey from two group discussions was also conducted.

A total of 15 women from eight different regions throughout country participated in this qualitative survey, who have had their own experience with gender corruption or who know a person who had had such experience and have witnessed such a case.

The groups were balanced in terms of nationality, age, education and professional status (public/private sector).

During the recruitment process, the nature and the goal of the study was explained to all participants in order to have a clear vision about the topic of discussion, as well as the expectations from them. Anonymity and personal data protection was guaranteed to all participants.

The group discussions were held via the Zoom application in the period 21–22.09.2021.

The findings from this qualitative study should be taken strictly as indicators for the opinions and conduct of the female participants in these group discussions, and they should not be accepted unconditionally as the representative opinion of all women living on the territory of Republic of North Macedonia.

3. PERCEPTION OF THE CORRUPTION IN THE COUNTRY

3.1 SPONTANEOUS CONNOTATIONS OF CORRUPTION

The usual connotations of the term “corruption” shared by the respondents in both group discussions were as follows:

- ▲ Extortion
- ▲ Favour in return for favour
- ▲ Abuse of official position
- ▲ Power, strength
- ▲ Bribery
- ▲ Politics
- ▲ State institutions

The majority of female participants felt anxious and uncomfortable at the thought of “corruption”.

3.2 WHERE IS CORRUPTION MOST PREVALENT?

The analysis of the group discussions showed that, according to the female participants, corruption is prevalent throughout society, and especially in the state institutions. The conviction that corruption is deeply rooted in the mentality of people should also be emphasized and, according to the majority of the female participants, corruption is a socially acceptable way of conduct and in many situations it is the “only or the fastest way to get a job done”.

Corruption can be seen everywhere, especially in the state and public institutions which are extremely corrupt. Not only the health sector, but our education sector is corrupt as well. If you want to get your job done fast, you must give something in order to get something in almost every institution. It is the practice in

the private sector as well. The only difference is that in the public sector corruption is too obvious. Woman, 25 years, Macedonian

Corruption comes naturally to us, like it is in our genes. If you are not prone to corruption as an individual, or if you do not make use of any small corruptive methods, you are obviously a fool and there is no way you can progress or get things done in this society. Woman, 36 years, Macedonian

In my opinion, our society i.e. the country, and especially the Balkan region, is very corrupt. Corruption is present everywhere. We not only give, but also accept bribe. Whether it is 100g coffee or dinner... there are countless reasons, not to wait so long in the clinic, or in any other place ...woman, 35 years, Macedonian

3.3 SUBJECTION TO CORRUPTION

A smaller number of the female participants in this qualitative survey deem that men are more corrupt than women, because men hold the majority of higher positions, have bigger power, and therefore they are more prone to corrupt practices. On the other hand, a woman is described as more compassionate, sensitive and moral compared to men.

I would say that we are not equal here. Men are more corrupt in our society, because they hold the majority of high positions, and due to the power such positions entail, men are more prone to corrupt practices. Woman, 28 years, Macedonian

I think that women are less corrupt and more careful, they have sense and are more sensitive and compassionate. If someone tries to treat a woman, even give her a small gift, she will immediately feel corrupted and uncomfortable, while this comes more naturally to men. Woman, 24 years, Macedonian

However, the majority of female participants deem that the sex does not play a significant role when it comes to corruption, and that women and men are equally prone to corruption. Hence, they do not believe that the corruption level would decline if more women held higher positions.

The position itself changes people. It does not make any difference whether it is a man or a woman. Even a woman on a higher position trying to prove herself that she is better than men - can actually become much worse than them. I don't think that corruption is related to sex. We all know what is right and what is wrong, but once we experience any position of power, it seems that these

rules no longer apply. People say: "Give a man/woman 5 minutes of power and you will see their true colours." A woman, trying to prove herself, becomes worse. Woman, 45 years, Macedonian

In my opinion, the sex most definitely does not play any role in the corrupt conduct. From all the things in the world, interest is constant. In terms of position of power and money, sex does not play any role, according to me. Women are equally prone to corruption as men; the only thing that prevents them from being corrupt in our society is that they are not holding high positions as much as men, and therefore they cannot be as exposed as men. I believe that there would be no difference; corruption won't be rooted out if women held higher positions. It would be the same and maybe even worse. Woman, 35 years, Macedonian

It should be pointed out that significant part of female participants deem that once a woman gets a hold of higher position and power, she could be even "worse" than men, as a reaction of long years of repressed feelings of oppression and inequality.

I don't think that in any case women are better than men; however, I do think that they could be much worse. I believe this is the case since they were oppressed for so long, and therefore they live in a world where they have the need to prove themselves that they are as worthy as men. They want revenge. I think women are more selfish and much worse than men in general. Woman, 44 years, Macedonian

I believe that, in due course, women will assume male traits. Moreover, the ones holding high positions, such as managers, already behave worse than men. I am employed and my superior is a woman, but I think it would have been much better if my superior was a man. You have a better understanding with a man than with a woman. We, women, become more selfish as time goes by. We tend to imitate men in many traits. Because we want to become more dominant. Woman, 53 years, Macedonian

4. PERCEPTION OF GENDER CORRUPTION IN THE COUNTRY

All female participants in this qualitative survey deem that the extortion of sexual favours in exchange of public service is corruption. Some of them pointed out that the extortion of sexual favours is the worst type of corruption, while for some, it is more than just a type of corruption – they define it as a serious mobbing and sexual harassment, which leaves serious psychological consequences upon the victim. Sextortion puts a woman in the role of victim and creates an entire spectrum of complex emotions for her, such as: fear for her own existence on one hand, and guilt and shaming by others on the other hand.

It is more than just corruption. I think, for a woman, money extortion would be much better than sextortion. And that rarely occurs as a direct corrupt practice; it consists of series of indirect signals which are quite obvious. Woman, 40 years, Albanian

I agree, and in my opinion sextortion is the most serious type of corruption. But, for a woman, it is quite difficult to report such case. The majority of the population does not define this as corruption, but as “favour in return for favour”. Therefore, most women remain silent and do not speak of such cases. As a result, we are stuck in an endless loop. Woman, 24 years, Macedonian

I see this type of conduct as corruption. If a woman refuses to report such case, then she is scared to lose her job, scared of the situation itself and her surroundings, scared of gossip... and that is why she remains silent and only a few people know about the case and understand her and know what actually happened... I deem that this is corruption and mobbing as well. Woman, 53 years, Macedonian

All female participants deem that the extortion of sexual favours happens quite often, in the public and in the private sector as well. Their personal impression about the frequency of this occurrence often derives from the information shared by their close friends or relatives who personally experienced gender corruption. Sextortion often occurs in exchange for employment, a job promotion, doing an important favour for the woman-victim, and it is also present in the higher educational institutions, for example for passing a particular exam/diploma dissertation. However, the dominant impression of all female participants is that women remain silent and the majority of them do not report such cases. Some of the female participants in the discussion were brave enough to confess that they have had such experience and to share it with the rest of the group.

I've heard about this in my surroundings. I was the initiator to speak about such case, but the woman did not want to report it. And that was because she did not trust the institutions. Women are not protected, and such a corrupt practice will not be proven. Five years of going to court will go to waste. Woman, 44 years, Macedonian

Sextortion exists. I have also heard about this from women close to me. You can also open any anonymous forum...people there have no reason to make up stories or lie. You can read a lot of terrible things there. I can say that I have also heard stories from the time when I was a student. Woman, 35 years, Macedonian

It is the same everywhere, regardless of the city or village - sextortion happens everywhere, but no one speaks about it. Woman, 38 years, Macedonian

I think that sextortion happens quite often, but not publicly. Women are too embarrassed to say anything. Woman, 34 years, Albanian

All female participants deem that gender corruption is not sufficiently recognized in the public and that there is a lack of discussions and debates in the media on this topic. At the same time, they deem that gender corruption is not present as a topic in the policies and the legal regulations in the country. Since the victims remain silent, the society remains silent too. For some of the female participants, limited campaigns cannot cause any significant changes in the consciousness of the citizens, nor in the operation of the institutions when it comes to this problem.

This topic is not at all present in our society. It is not discussed enough, as well. Even when discussed, I personally think that it is just for show, let everyone see that we are pro-European... I deem that it is done purely as a formality. All of it is quite misleading, obvious, cheap and unnatural. There is no point. There are no results. Woman, 35 years, Macedonian

We still fall behind on this topic. I think that this is not even discussed in public. First of all, any woman would be ashamed to report something like that, and second of all, everyone would immediately judge her and no one would even try to understand her. Furthermore, such case would be lost somewhere in the process, and the one who have done this terrible act would get away with it anyway. Woman, 48 years, Macedonian

You asked whether this topic is present in our society. Of course it is, in the society, but not in the media. I have not encountered any information about it, especially not about sexual corruption. Woman, 22 years, Macedonian

4.1 WAYS OF RAISING THE AWARENESS AND EDUCATING THE PUBLIC ABOUT GENDER CORRUPTION

The female participants deem that an intensive media campaign is necessary, wherein multiple segments will be included, state institutions, the media and the NGO sector, as well. In this campaign, apart from the educational part and raising the awareness about gender corruption, it would also be necessary to activate support centres that women would be able to access and receive free legal assistance, as well as clear instructions about where she can report the case

I think that this should be a campaign on the national level. And it should not involve only one or two ministries. It should be on the national level, because some things must change in this society. The Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, the Ministry of Justice, the State Commission for Prevention of Corruption,... a national campaign in the true sense of the word, including trainings, advertisements, information sharing, support centres, centres providing free legal services, because not everyone can afford consultation with a lawyer. Centres which would refer you to the competent legal institutions, so that you can file a complaint. But first and foremost, attention must be paid to the awareness. What is deemed as corruption or harassment – Everything that makes you uncomfortable! Woman, 40 years, Albanian

I think that the media should be involved as well. I just picture a logo with the words: STOP gender corruption. Women should be informed where to go in case it happens to them. Woman, 34 years, Albanian

The Ministry of Labour and Social Policy should be involved. They have campaigns for everything else, such as "Get Vaccinated!", so why not have a campaign for this too! For example - "Report sexual harassment". Such campaigns should be imposed and even forced in order to help those women who have been struggling and have no place to turn to. Woman, 48 years, Macedonian

Yes. There was a show, Croatian or Serbian I'm not sure. The woman's face was blurred out in order to protect her identity, and she was telling her story: her struggles, everything she has gone through, everything she has done. Therefore, I think that the media should be louder when it comes to this problem. Women should be braver and speak up as well. Woman, 53 years, Macedonian

In both group discussions, the female participants emphasized the need for early education of young people about gender equality, corrupt conduct and demystification of the word "victim", in order to remove the guilt and shame imposed on the person experiencing such events.

When speaking about the institutional level, I would involve the educational process; children would be educated early in their life about gender equality. The more you educate them, the more they learn that women and men are equal in the society, and this would lead to creating reasonable generations which would not repeat in the future the misconduct that exists today and is practiced by those toxic generations. Woman, 35 years, Macedonian

This should be introduced very early in the education of children. There are already various educations and lectures held on different topics, so why not being educated on this topic as well. Maybe education should start from here. Every young girl and future woman, and even men should be able and should know how to defend themselves. They should know their rights. They should know that there is a way to save themselves. To know where to go and report the case. To be aware that such conduct is not normal. They should be prepared from a very young age that something like that may happen to them in the world of grownups, and that there is no reason for them to be scared. Woman, 48 years, Macedonian

We must educate our daughters to be loud, to speak up and fight for their rights. And not to be afraid of anyone. Woman, 49 years, Macedonian

5. EXPERIENCES AND REACTIONS RELATED TO GENDER CORRUPTION

This qualitative survey included female participants who have personally experienced gender corruption or a person close to them who had such an experience and shared their story.

All female participants, regardless of whether they have personally experienced or know a woman who has experienced gender corruption, were quite furious and anxious while talking about this topic. Still, **none of them would choose to solve the problem by reporting such case to the competent institutions.** The main reason for this is the **low trust in institutions and the perception that justice would never be served.** Some of the female participants told their personal examples of gender corruption with faculty professors and assistants who still work there, without suffering any legal consequences and continue with their corrupt practices for decades, even after being reported by some of the students.

I fear that we do not live in a legal state. If I tell you that my assistant at the time when I was student is now the professor of another participant in the group, while he has been misconducting for 20 years, what could I expect from this country? Was I not the only one?!! Even if such a thing happens to me, I would have the courage to stand up for myself and would not care what anyone has to say about me, but I do not believe that this country would go all the way with the case. That is the fear. My fear. Woman, 40 years, Albanian

Institutions do not do their job. No one wants to put in any effort. I personally would not report such a case, not that I am afraid of being criticized, I just do not want to struggle in vain. I would rather post it on all social media. Will the case be solved? – I don't think so. It is obvious that the institutions are fine with people like that to exist in the society. Woman, 44 years, Macedonian

I agree, of course there is a woman, a brave woman who is stubborn enough to go all the way with such a case, but I do not trust the judiciary because I am convinced that they are corrupt as well. Why should I trouble myself when the court doesn't protect me? Woman, 22 years, Macedonian

No one has trust in the institutions. Even if I have the courage to report if something like that happens to me and even if I don't care what others would say, I would only spend endless time in courts with no effect. It would never be solved in court. We have the laws, but they are ineffective. Woman, 35 years, Macedonian

The majority of them said that they would share their experience with their family members and decide together about the next step. Some of them said that they would consult a lawyer.

I would share such an experience at home, with my husband. And we would make a plan together. I would not report such a case, because I don't think that the institutions would take any action. We would spend many years in vain without proving anything. Eventually, I would only be left financially damaged and mentally exhausted. Woman, 35 years, Macedonian

At the same time, some of the female participants said that even if they report such case, they do not know which institutions are competent and who is the right person to consult for such matters.

First of all, I don't know whom to turn to, in which institution. Should I go to the police, should I seek a lawyer, what type of lawyer... I think that the problem in general is that people don't know where to go. Woman, 38 years, Macedonian

I sincerely don't know and I wonder, same as the other participant, where would I go. I really don't know, I am not informed. But I would definitely share such experience with my family. Woman, 28 years, Macedonian

Apart from the institutional distrust, one of the main barriers for brave and public disclosure of cases of gender corruption is the mentality of people, **and there is also the strong stigmatization of women and the tendency to pass the responsibility onto the woman, thus making her face condemnation by her surroundings, by ruining her reputation and integrity in the society and making her feel guilty and ashamed of something for which she was not responsible.** In this way, if a woman openly speaks of such a case, she is not only a victim of gender corruption, but also becomes an even bigger victim of a system and society finding her guilty based on no grounds whatsoever.

If a society is more closed and conservative, it is easier to extort sexual favours as a way of corruption. In such a society, men hold the functions and power and women don't have a voice of their own. In closed societies, sextortion comes naturally to men because they know that a woman would remain silent, as she would be ashamed, condemned and scorned if she speaks up... If a woman gains the courage to speak up, people often say: "she was asking for it"... and other things. But that is not true at all, the society is simply plain and primitive. Woman, 45 years, Macedonian

Usually, women would not report such cases, because they are afraid of being condemned and laughed at. As someone said, they just want to forget about it as soon as possible. You could spend a lot of years on such a case, but justice will never be served. Mobbing is also hard to prove, but still it is much easier to prove than sextortion. Woman, 35 years, Macedonian

Is there a woman who will get this case all the way to the end in the country? First of all, she will be condemned if she speaks about it in public. There will be comments such as: "she was asking for it, look at the way she dresses like she wants to flirt", etc. And to make things worse, such comments would come first from other women, and then from men. Woman, 24 years, Macedonian

It is very difficult. First they will say that she is the one to blame, and that she caused it. I don't think that even her family would understand her and react calmly. Maybe even her family would say that she was asking for it. If she reports the case in any institution, it would only end up in some drawer. It is a very bad situation we live in. When it comes to this topic, the views of society are still quite primitive. It would all come down to any of us to deal with it wisely and not let things get worse. Woman, 48 years, Macedonian

Some of the female participants said that they knew women who survived gender corruption and in order to protect themselves from the person who sextorted them and from being condemned by the environment, they had to leave their family and move to another city or even outside the country. In some of the cases, the woman victim of gender corruption finds herself in a situation where she is afraid to share such a terrible experience at home, with her husband or parents, because she is afraid of their quick temper and aggressive reaction towards the perpetrator, and therefore she remains silent in order not to cause more serious consequences for her family. In most of the cases, the woman is left on her own, to protect herself and forget about the whole situation as soon as possible.

Only me and my mother knew what happened to the girl, but we were not able to do anything. We went to talk to this person, but we only made things worse, and eventually the girl decided to leave her job in order to protect herself and her father, because of his quick temper. It could have led to even bigger conflict. We know the person, but the case was not reported anywhere. No one reported the case. The girl simply left her job after two years because of this person, at the time when she should have signed an employment contract. And he continued to molest her on her phone. She had to change her number and right now she is abroad, so in a way she saved herself by leaving this country. Woman, 53 years, Macedonian

One thing that got me thinking was when I heard one of the participants who said "...If something like that happens to my daughter, I will confront him!". So, there it is, the moment when you want to protect your close ones, to make sure that they don't react aggressively if you decide to share something like that with them. I don't know. This is a complex matter and there is no right way to choose, there is no right answer. Seriously, nothing functions as it should in the country; we are left to decide on our own, depending on how we feel at that particular moment. Woman, 28 years, Macedonian

The female participants from the Albanian community pointed out that this is a quite frequent occurrence in their culture and everyday life and they said that if an Albanian woman experiences sextortion, in most cases she will not speak of it, not even to her family because of the fear of being condemned by her husband and children.

I would not report such a case, because I would be afraid. I would feel guilty and afraid to tell this to anyone. First of all, I would be ashamed to tell this to my children. This also depends on where you live. Life is different for us Albanians. It is different in our culture, I'm sorry I do not want to discriminate against anyone...but ours is different from the Macedonian culture. I personally do not have problem to report such a case, but my friends who have jobs, always say: "Be silent, it could be worse!" I understand them, but I don't know how to help them, how to make sure not to make them victims. Woman, 34 years, Albanian

To be honest, I am very disappointed. All of us have heard about the recordings "bombs" that the government disclosed to the public several years ago. In one of those recordings there was a vulgar conversation between one female politician and one male politician, and from what I have heard the context was sexual, but that is between them. What I like to point out is that: The woman is always the one to blame! In my opinion we live in a sexist society. The woman is always the victim. The female politician I have mentioned left her political career because of that recording, while the man continued with his career. In our society the guilt is always passed on the woman - she is the condemned one, and the man is the saint. So, I have not seen any positive example in the country. And that was very disappointing to me, in the sense of female empathy to the woman and for what happened to her. And the man, of course, remains respected and appreciated by the society. Her reputation and political career is over, not his. High is the price that a woman pays. Woman, 40 years, Albanian

However, some of the female participants said that they would find a way to retaliate, and while doing so they will not rely on the institutions. In that regard, they would use the social networks where they would post a recording from the conversation with the person who attempts to extort sexual favours from a woman and disclose his misconduct to the public.

We always hold our phones close to us. So, I would simply take my phone, record him and share it to the public. I would disclose his name and position. I would be ready to even lose my job and be criticized for a week or two, and even a month. But for the greater good, I would punish that person. I would leave him to face the condemnation of the public. That is what I would personally do. Without using any physical violence. Woman, 35 years, Macedonian

I would not report him, but I would make him known to the public. Maybe post on the social media, and I would even pay to put him on billboards so that everyone can see and know him for such stupidity. And be publicly condemned. Woman, 45 years, Macedonian

5.1 WHAT WOULD ENCOURAGE THEM TO ADDRESS THE INSTITUTIONS?

The majority of the female participants deem that such a complex problem must be approached via serious systemic and institutional changes. In that regard, they emphasize that the competent state institutions and ministries (Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Ministry of Justice, State Commission for Prevention of Corruption, courts, police, etc.) must become functional, do their job properly, enforce the laws in order to regain the seriously disrupted trust of the citizens in their professional operation.

Furthermore, the female participants emphasize that the awareness of the citizens about this problem will be raised, as well as the trust in the institutions if serious penalties for the perpetrators of such acts are put in place, regardless of their level of power at the given moment and if the media communicate more about such cases and perpetrators. This way, more of the women-victims of gender corruption would be encouraged to report the case.

The institutions must function. Especially the Centre for Social Care. They should do their job. People should know that anyone who addresses these institutions would be protected. Woman, 45 years, Macedonian

We should also know that anyone who attempts to practice such types of corruption will face serious penalties, thus making sure such types of misconduct never to happen again. Woman, 28 years, Macedonian

The judiciary should be more functional as well, to sanction those people and announce them in the media. There must be a positive example, so that people are encouraged to report other people. Woman, 45 years, Macedonian

Some of the female participants highlight the insufficient legal protection of the woman-victim of gender corruption and the way the police react to such types of reports. Hence, the necessity arises to amend the laws with regards to such types of harassment.

There is also the problem with the police; they only react if a crime is already committed. And they deem that crime is committed whenever there is damage. So, if a woman is not raped, then there is no crime. As long as the woman is not damaged, the person reported to the police is free to go. They do not take into consideration the suffered psychological damage. Woman, 45 years, Macedonian

As the previous participant mentioned, all saved SMS messages and recorded conversations should be considered and taken as evidence. That would be a good starting point. And the witnesses who are willing to testify. This way, more women would be encouraged to speak up, there would be more of us and we would not be taken for granted. And any person that misconducts must be reported. Woman, 35 years, Macedonian

I think that if a woman does not know whom to turn to, she would initially contact the police. Hopefully, they would refer her to the right place and tell her what to do next. If the institutions do their job as they should, more women would be encouraged to report gender corruption. Woman, 34 years, Macedonian

The knowledge that a woman is holding the managerial position in the institution where women-victims should report the case, will not necessarily encourage them to report the case. According to the female participants, the functionality of the institutions and the professionalism and integrity of the person holding the managerial position is more important than the fact that person is man or a woman.

I don't believe in the system, regardless of whether a man or a woman is managing the institution; there is no difference if we do not live in a legal state. It means nothing to me if a woman is the manager of the institution, it's not like she will show any empathy to me... It absolutely doesn't change anything. Woman, 35 years, Macedonian

What we need in such cases is professionalism; it doesn't matter if we are talking about man or a woman. Woman, 45 years, Macedonian

However, even if a woman is encouraged to report the case, the majority of participants stated that it would be easier for them to open up and tell in detail their experience if they talk to a woman.

I think that it would be easier for a woman to express herself and tell her story to a woman. That does not mean that the woman would help, but it would be easier in that moment to tell the experience to her. Woman, 34 years, Albanian

The approach would be more natural. The moment when you start to open up. Woman, 38 years, Macedonian

Yes, I think the same. If you tell your story to a woman, you won't feel uncomfortable like you would if you were telling the story to a man, you would not leave out details; I would personally feel free and would open up more if speaking with a woman. But the fact that a woman is holding managerial position doesn't change anything and I don't think that she could do more. Woman, 35 years, Macedonian

6. PROFILE OF GENDER CORRUPTION VICTIM

All participants in the discussion pointed out that gender corruption victims are often women who are financially poor, whose existence strictly depends on their job and who don't have strong male figure to support and protect them throughout their life (divorced women, single mothers or widows).

Women who are financially dependent, single mothers, divorced women, widows... the ones depending on their job, are more likely to be sextorted. They are often the victims. People perceive them as persons who are not protected. Woman, 49 years, Macedonian

In the country, if a woman has no male figure standing behind her, supporting and protecting her i.e. powerful father, brother, etc. could become potential victim. I speak from my own personal experience. It is not just about corruption, we speak about Internet harassment, when a woman who is all alone says "no", no one cares; it's the same as saying "yes". Woman, 40 years, Albanian

7. GENDER CORRUPTION RELATED ACTIVITY BY THE CITIZENS

All participants in this qualitative survey stated that they would openly express their opinion against sextortion on social media and that they would sign petition against sextortion as a type of corruption.

However, when it comes to going out on protests, some of the female participants have second thoughts, due to the fear of being criticized and the possible consequences, such as losing their job, especially for those employed in the public administration.

This will simply not give any results, because the fear persists. If women go out on protests, they would fear being sanctioned in some way. People are afraid of going out on protests in general, regardless of the problem: they do not want to be judged, sanctioned, get fired, condemned, etc. I think that many women would not be brave enough to go out to protest. This is because in our society protests are not allowed for people employed in the public sector, if the problem for which protests are being held is not suitable for the people in power. Woman, 49 years, Macedonian

We still live in a world where we care what others have to say about us. And people will say: "Why is she protesting now, surely she must be one of those who experienced corruption..." in that sense... we still care what others have to say. I think that this is the biggest mistake that is taking us backwards. Therefore, we are not able to express ourselves, tell our problem, and find a solution. We always fear, care and feel ashamed of what people have to say about us.

Woman, 34 years, Macedonian

At the same time, the female participants pointed out that, when it comes to petitions and public protests against sextortion as type of corruption, it should not become feminist movement; on the contrary, the support of men is needed in the entire process.

I think that the biggest problem here is the conviction that only women should protest on these topics. We have problem with the support. When men join the protest, women would be encouraged because they will be supported, because there will be someone who understands them and that not all men are the same, etc.

Woman, 45 years, Macedonian

There should be no false image that women protest against men. All men are not the same. The protest is held against the ones who dared to extort such sexual favours. I agree that men should join the protests as well, because this way the message of the protest would be stronger. Woman, 49 years, Macedonian

I always support any type of campaigns against violence against women. However, there is a small problem with all of this, since the entire campaign seems to be feminist. It turns out that only women support other women. Men should be also involved in these campaigns. This is because someday even they could be victims, not only women. That is why they should support this. The activities on social media will not have a great effect; it would only lead to bigger visibility from the likes and comments on such posts. They would change the public awareness, but not as much. It is not that anything would change. We are talking about an extremely traditional and conservative society. But some small steps could probably be taken. Woman, 24 years, Macedonian

The female participants also point out that it is important the organization of the protests to be independent and stay away from political influences and political parties.

Whenever we protest about something, the ruling political party always claims that such protests are organized by the opposing party. Hence, there are different pressures on people, about their job, threats to their children's safety... Woman, 49 years, Macedonian

I support and I am member of several NGOs. When a protest has a clear purpose, then it is ok. We do not want politics to be involved. Whenever any protest starts as it should, usually some political party tries to step in and give support and immediately everything changes. Woman, 24 years, Macedonian

However, in order to get results, the female participants pointed out that it is important such initiatives to be encouraged and led by persons who have enough power and authority in the society to make a positive change in the system with the support of the public.

Someone should be the initiator. Someone who has enough power and authority. So that we can be heard, but not like this... making efforts to no avail...it would all be in vain. Woman, 48 years, Macedonian

