

Survey on attitudes and perceptions of psychological violence against women and girls in family and intimate partner relationships

Report

July 2022



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Introduction

Intimate partner violence is one of the most common forms of violence against women and it includes physical, sexual and psychological abuse by an intimate partner.¹ Psychological, mental and emotional abuse includes acts such as preventing a woman from seeing family and friends, belittlement or humiliation, economic restrictions and control, threatening the victim or persons that are important to her, and other forms of controlling behaviours.² However, this is not an exhaustive definition, as there is no consensus on its full scope.


As there is no comprehensive definition of the concept, psychological violence often falls off the radar of official and other statistics, despite of how frequently it occurs, as to be documented in this report. Different countries use different definitions of violence, including psychological violence against women, and there are no adequate research on this topic that would provide for a comparative analysis. Official statistics very often turns out to be the only source of data, albeit particularly unsuitable for an issue such as psychological violence. Very often, the data do not come from research focused on the victim's perspective (the so-called victimological research), instead, attempts are made at describing the phenomenon indirectly, as derived from official statistics on the number of reports filed, the number of cases brought before court etc. This is additionally problematic in the case of Montenegro, as the official statistics is most often compiled as per the pre-defined criteria from the relevant law, e.g. the Criminal Code. However, the Criminal Code of Montenegro does not prescribe psychological violence as a separate criminal offense, instead, it largely falls under one of the following articles - Article 166a "Ill-treatment," Article 167 "Torture," Article 168 "Endangering safety," and Article 168a "Stalking."³ However, the definition of these offences encompasses other behaviours unrelated to psychological violence against women and girls, and therefore compiling administrative data on this particular phenomenon is for the most part not feasible.

Apart from the Criminal Code, the Law on Protection from Domestic Violence is also relevant for the issue of psychological violence, and violence is defined as "omission or commission by a family member in violating physical, psychological, sexual or economic integrity, mental health and peace of other family member, irrespective of where the incident of violence has occurred" (Article 2). As can be seen from the definition, the law also envisages other forms of violence, not only psychological. Under this law, a state authority or any other authority, education or health institution are under obligation to report to the police the incidence of violence that they learn of in the discharge of affairs within their authority or in conduct of their activities (Article 9). The law also envisages protective measures to be imposed on the perpetrator of violence, such as removal from place of residence or other premises, restraining order, prohibition of harassment and stalking, mandatory addiction treatment and/or mandatory psychosocial treatment. The law prescribes the misdemeanour liability of a family member who commits some form of violence or neglects a person entrusted to their care. It should be noted that the law also envisages the misdemeanour liability of a head of a state administration body, other state entity, a health care and educational institution, a health care and social care worker, teacher, pre-school teacher and other person for not reporting to the police an incidence of violence they learned of in the discharge of their affairs. Statistics on the number of cases brought before misdemeanour

¹ European Parliament, Violence against Women: Psychological violence and coercive control, 2020, link: chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2020/650336/IP_OL_STU(2020)650336_EN.pdf, accessed July 31st 2022

² Krantz, Gunilla, Garcia-Moreno, Claudia, „Violence against women“ in *Epidemiol Community Health*, 2005, 59:818-821.

³ This is not an exhaustive list.



courts under the Law on Protection from Domestic Violence are available and contained in the Annual Report on the Work of the Judicial Council and Total Balance in the Judiciary.⁴ Thus, the latest available data (for the year 2021) cite a total of 2,191 cases brought before misdemeanour courts under the Law on Protection from Domestic Violence, which make up 4.38% of all misdemeanour court cases.⁵ However, the percentages are not disaggregated as per the type of violence committed, so there is no way of knowing how many of those cases involved psychological abuse.

This research is not a victimological one. An adequate victimological research with proper methodology would require a sufficiently large sample that covers a number of victims that is workable from a statistical point of view. However, although it was not initially designed as a victimological research, but as a standard public opinion survey, the prevalence of this phenomenon as described and reported by the respondents has turned this research into a quasi-victimological one.

The report is divided into four sections. The first aims to describe how psychological violence towards girls and women is perceived by the general population in Montenegro, but also by some specific groups. For example, it probes into whether women and men, younger and older respondents etc. hold the same perception. On the one hand, the goal is to examine the perceptions of the prevalence of this phenomenon, but also to look into how the respondents perceive psychological violence against women and girls, and all the forms it can take.

The second section is closest to what we could describe as quasi-victimological research. It aims to examine the kind of experiences the respondents had with psychological violence, either personally, directly or indirectly, and how they reacted in those situations. Unfortunately, the data collected in this segment corroborate the initial hypothesis about the substantial prevalence of this phenomenon in Montenegrin society.

The third part of the report delves into how the respondents perceive the institutions whose competences involve psychological abuse cases, while the last section of the report examines how informed the respondents are about this subject matter. Namely, the number of respondents that find themselves lacking information about how to recognize and react in cases of psychological violence is somewhat surprisingly high.

The conclusion segment of the report provides a summary of key findings.

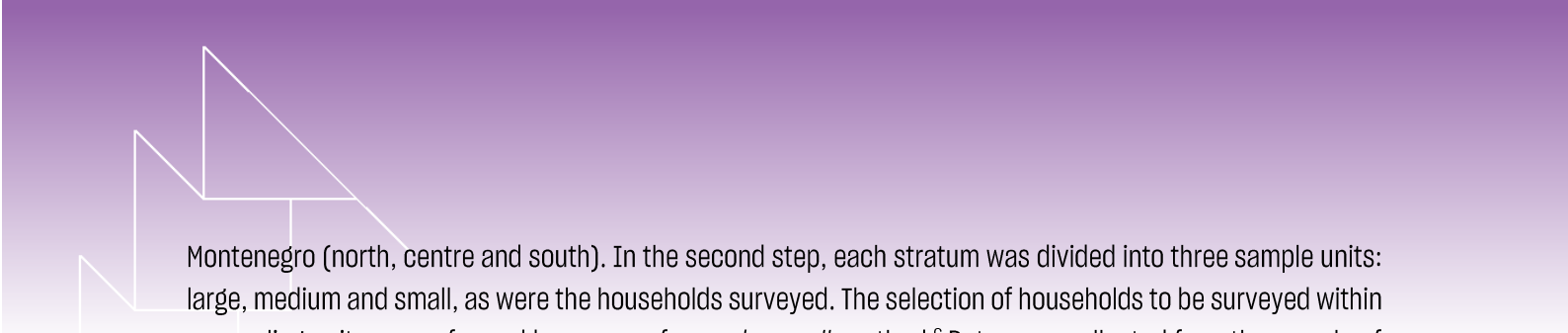
Method and data

This public opinion survey on perception of psychological violence in Montenegro was conducted on a representative sample of 1008 respondents over the age of 18. The sample structure has been defined by means of a multistage random sampling selection method, which guarantees a standard margin of error of +/- 3.1% with a 95% confidence interval for 50% distribution.

A two-step stratification was carried out during the sample definition process. In the first step, the general population of Montenegro was divided into three strata corresponding to the geographical regions in

⁴ Judicial Council, The 2021 Annual Report on the Work of the Judicial Council and Total Balance in the Judiciary

⁵ Judicial Council, The 2021 Annual Report on the Work of the Judicial Council and Total Balance in the Judiciary, p. 71



Montenegro (north, centre and south). In the second step, each stratum was divided into three sample units: large, medium and small, as were the households surveyed. The selection of households to be surveyed within a sampling unit was performed by means of a *random walk* method.⁶ Data were collected from the sample of respondents across 21 municipalities. Following data collection, post-stratification was performed as per the basic demographic characteristics of the population: gender, age and ethnicity, as recorded in the 2011 Census.

The survey was conducted using the CAPI (Computer Assisted Personal Interviewing) technique and face-to-face interviewing, with the use of tablet computers, except for sensitive questions, which the respondents were asked to fill in by themselves so as to protect their privacy. Data were collected between May 15 and July 12 2022.

Apart from distribution of responses, data analysis entailed cross-referencing of responses with variables that help identify subgroups. Only relevant and statistically significant cross-references are presented in the report. These are the following variables:

- Gender (male and female),
- Age, transformed into three categories - 18-34 "younger", 35-54 years "middle-aged" and 55+ - "older" respondents,
- Education, transformed into three categories - primary, secondary and higher education,
- Employment, transformed into the following categories - those employed (regardless of the type of employment), the unemployed, retirees and students,
- A place of residence, split into three categories - urban, suburban and rural settlements,
- The question meant to gauge the respondents' level of satisfaction with their financial situation was transformed into "satisfied", which includes those who are either very and somewhat satisfied and "dissatisfied", made up of those either very and somewhat dissatisfied,
- Household income, which was recoded into three categories with an equal number of respondents in each - 33.3% of those living in lowest-income households, 33.3% of those from middle-income households and 33.3% of those living in highest-income households,
- Personal income, which was recoded into three categories with an equal number of respondents in each - 33.3% of those with lowest personal income, 33.3% of those with medium and 33.3% of those with highest personal income.

⁶ The interviewer is to conduct a survey in every n-th household from the starting point

Perceptions of psychological violence against women/girls in family and intimate partner relationships

The respondents' answers to the first question confirm the hypothesis about the prevalence of psychological abuse in intimate and family relationships. Of the offered forms of violence against women and girls, the majority of respondents pinpoint psychological abuse as being the most prevalent (44.1%). However, it should be noted that almost one-third (31.7%) of the respondents believe physical violence to be the most common form of violence in intimate and family relationships.

Interestingly enough, women are somewhat more likely than men to cite psychological abuse as the most prevalent form of violence. Namely, 46.9% of women chose this answer option, as compared to men who identified this form of violence as the most prevalent one (41%). The big difference in percentages is also observed with the issue of financial abuse, as 12.8% of women and 20.2% of men identify it as the most prevalent form of violence. Interesting data are also recorded generation-wise. Namely, the younger (47%) and middle-aged (49.6%) respondents are more likely to label psychological abuse as the most prevalent form of violence than the older age cohort (35%). Psychological violence is also more often cited as the most prevalent form of violence by those employed (47.3%) or students (44.8%) as compared against those who are unemployed (40.2%) or retired (40.3%), as well as by urban (47.2%) and suburban dwellers (44.1%) as compared to those living in the countryside (35%). It is an interesting finding that those who live in highest-income households are more likely to acknowledge the presence of this phenomenon (46.7%), than those coming from medium (44.9%) and lowest-income households (41%).

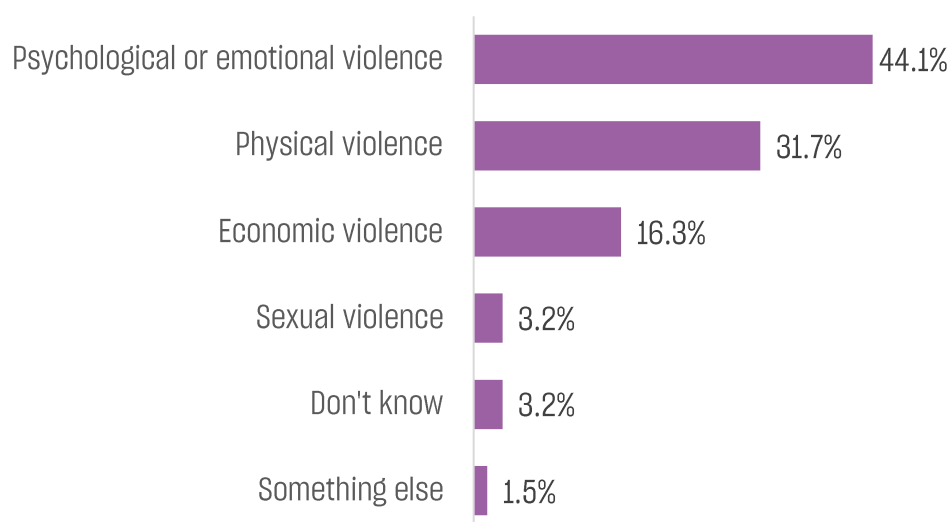


Figure 1: Speaking of different types of violence, what do you think, which type happens most often in emotional and family relations?

When specifically asked about psychological violence, as many as three-quarters (85%) of respondents say that psychological violence against women and girls is very common in Montenegro or that there are at least isolated cases. Of this number, 55.6% of them believe that it happens frequently, while an additional 30.7% believe that it happens in individual cases.

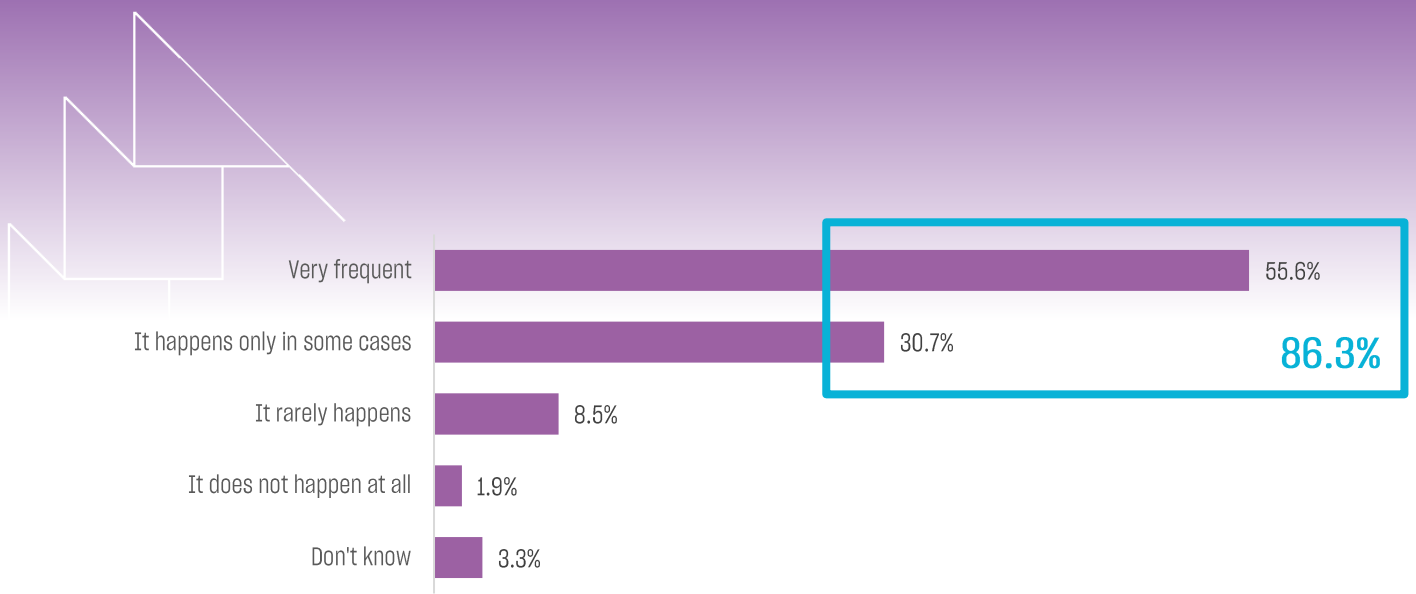


Figure 2: In your opinion, to what extent is psychological violence against women and girls present in Montenegro?

The next question was meant to look into what the respondents mean by psychological violence and what it entails. The open-ended question prompted them to list their first associations at the mention of psychological violence. Nearly half of them (48.4%) defined it as some form of humiliation and/or mistreatment. Other mentions include quarrels of different kinds, marital and family problems, jealousy, stalking, cursing, controlling behaviour and manipulation. Interestingly enough, fewer associations refer to an activity that both partners are actively engaged in – e.g. an argument or poor communication. Also, it is interesting that less than one percent of the respondents claim that psychological violence is a "normal" thing.

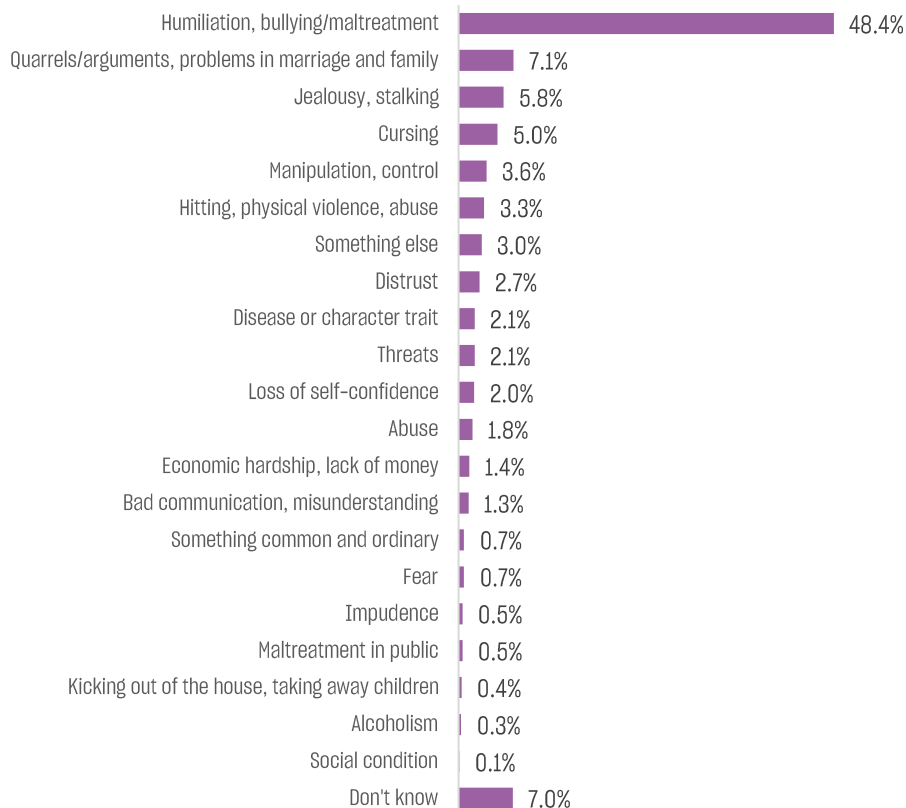


Figure 3: What is your first association when it comes to psychological violence?

Following the open-ended question, the respondents were provided with twenty-one hypothetical situations and asked to state whether a particular situation constitutes psychological violence. An exceedingly high percentage of respondents identified psychological violence in all of the situations listed. The highest level of agreement (in over 90% of responses) was recorded with situations involving threats of taking away children from their partners, assaults and intimidation, insults, curses and name-calling, humiliation and a woman/girl being subject to put-downs in front of other people. Although very few respondents listed these behaviours under the previous open-ended question, they recognized them as form of psychological violence once they were provided with these examples.

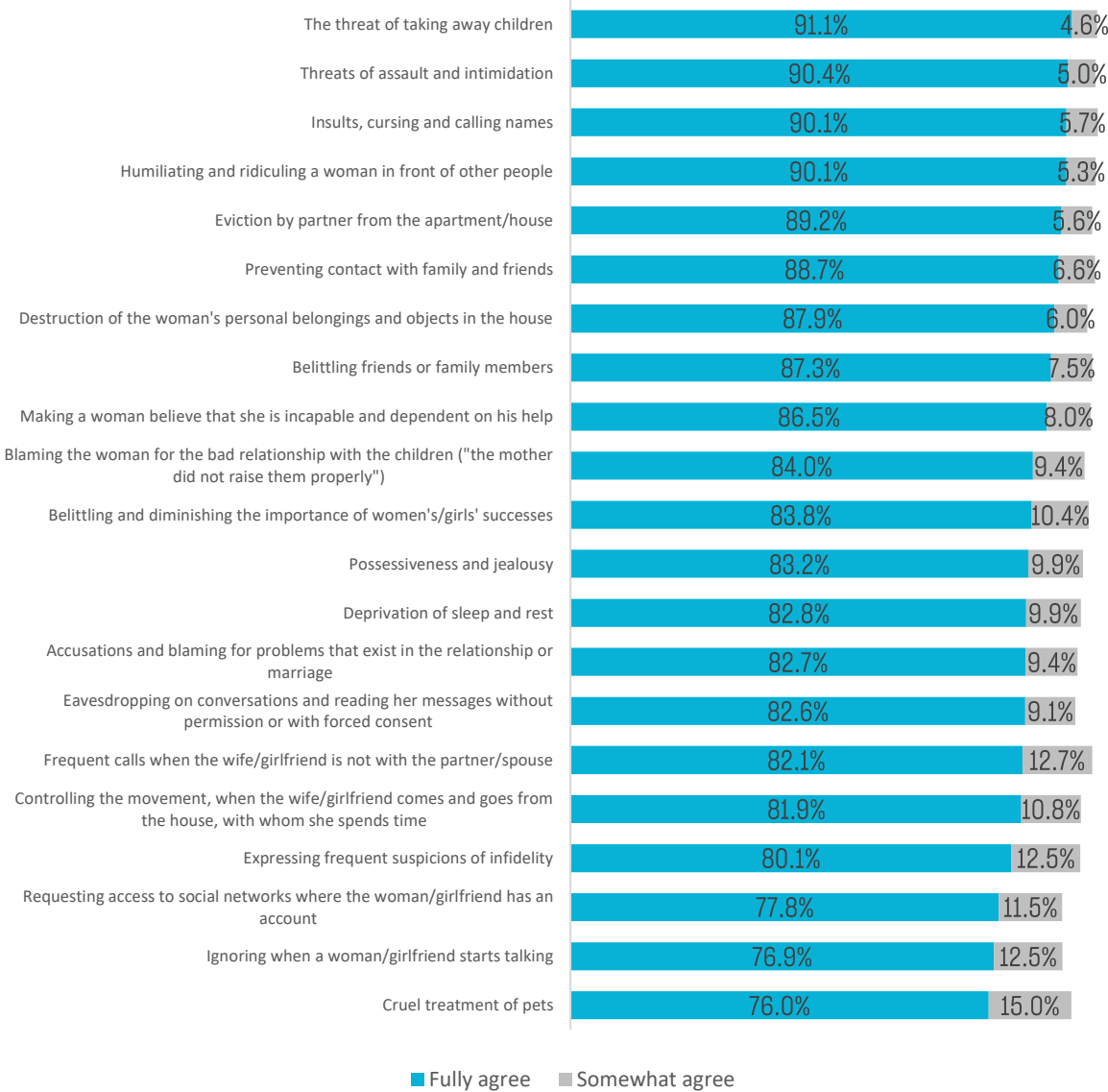


Figure 4: To what extent do you agree that each of these forms of behavior represent psychological violence?

The respondents believe that psychological violence most often occurs in the victim's intimate and private sphere, a place where victims should otherwise be feeling safe. Over 60% of respondents find that psychological violence most often occurs in marriages and with married couples living with extended families. Also, every tenth respondent believes that psychological violence most often occurs with unmarried couples.

Younger respondents are more likely than older cohorts to view intimate partner relationships as a setting where violence takes place (17.4%), while middle-aged respondents are more likely than others to perceive marriage as a setting where violence occurs (47%).

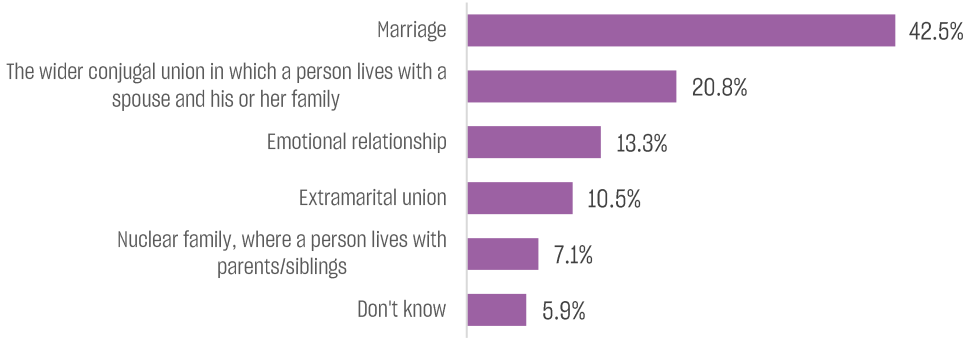


Figure 5: In what type of relationship do you think psychological violence occurs most often?

As can be seen from the previous graph, citizens rightly perceive the intimate sphere as the setting where psychological violence happens most often. This is also confirmed by responses provided to the following question, as over two thirds (72.8%) of respondents claim that violence against women and girls in the family and in intimate partner relationships is most often committed by the partner or spouse. This is by far the most frequently chosen answer option, followed by 9.4% of respondents that identify the spouses' family members and 6.1% of those that identify members of the extended family as abusers.

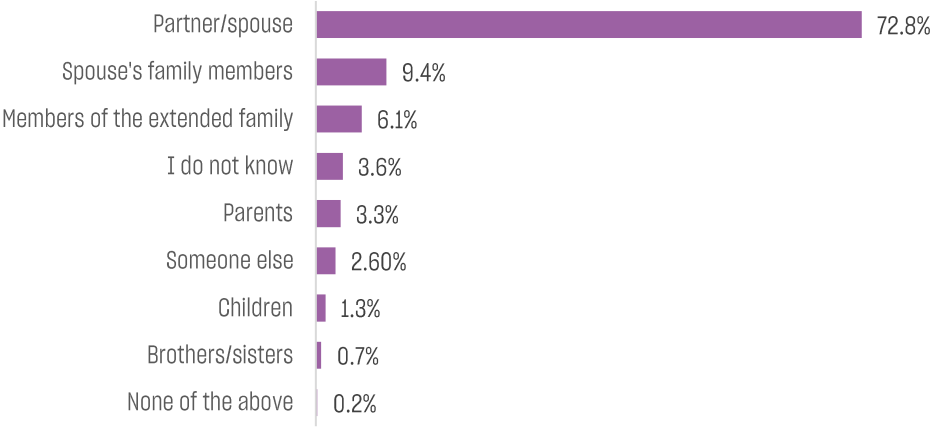


Figure 6: Who, are the most frequent perpetrators of violence in family and emotional relationships, in your opinion?

We asked the respondents about their take on situations where a partner or spouse reacts violently during an argument, accompanied with verbal aggression, whereby verbal aggression implies raising one's tone of voice, shouting and hurling insults. Almost half of the respondents (44.7%) believe that this is an unacceptable way of resolving disagreements and that this constitutes a violent behaviour. Women (48.6%) are way more likely than men (40.4%) to hold this view. Also, 23% of respondents perceive this as a misdemeanour that should be sanctioned. On the other hand, even as much as one quarter of the respondents - 25.6% believe that this is a

bad approach to resolving disagreements, but that it is acceptable if it happens occasionally. Men (28.4%) are more likely than women (23.2%) to share this view.

A small percentage of respondents (5.4%) believe this behaviour to be completely normal, with slightly more men (6.2%) than women (4.6%) among those that share this view. No statistically significant differences have been recorded between respondents from different age groups when this issue is concerned.

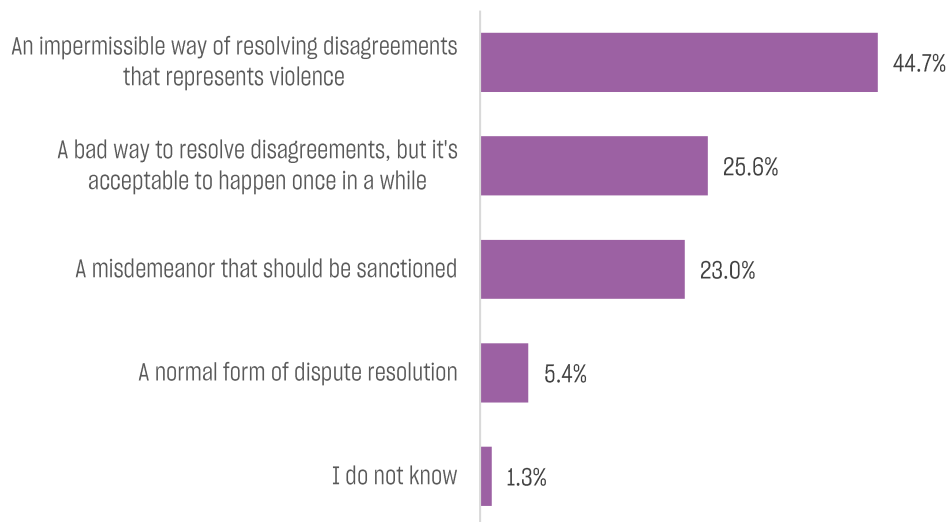


Figure 7: How do you view a situation in which a partner or spouse reacts violently during a discussion, with verbal aggression?

Male respondents are more likely than women to state that violent reaction of a partner or spouse during an argument, along with verbal aggression, is a normal way of resolving disagreements. Men make up as much as 55.6% of the total percentage of respondents who perceive this as a normal way of settling disagreements.

As many as 79% of respondents pick different types of vices as the main reason behind psychological violence in family and intimate partner relationships. The next-ranked reasons include households under financial distress (52%), followed by perpetrator's personality (43%), mental illness (35%) or even differences in attitudes and opinions (30%). Traditional gender roles imposed by the society come up as sixth-ranked, as quoted by less than one-third of the respondents. These findings are interesting given all the educational campaigns conducted in the previous period in order to raise public awareness about violence as stemming from sexist views and stereotypes and power imbalance between men and women.

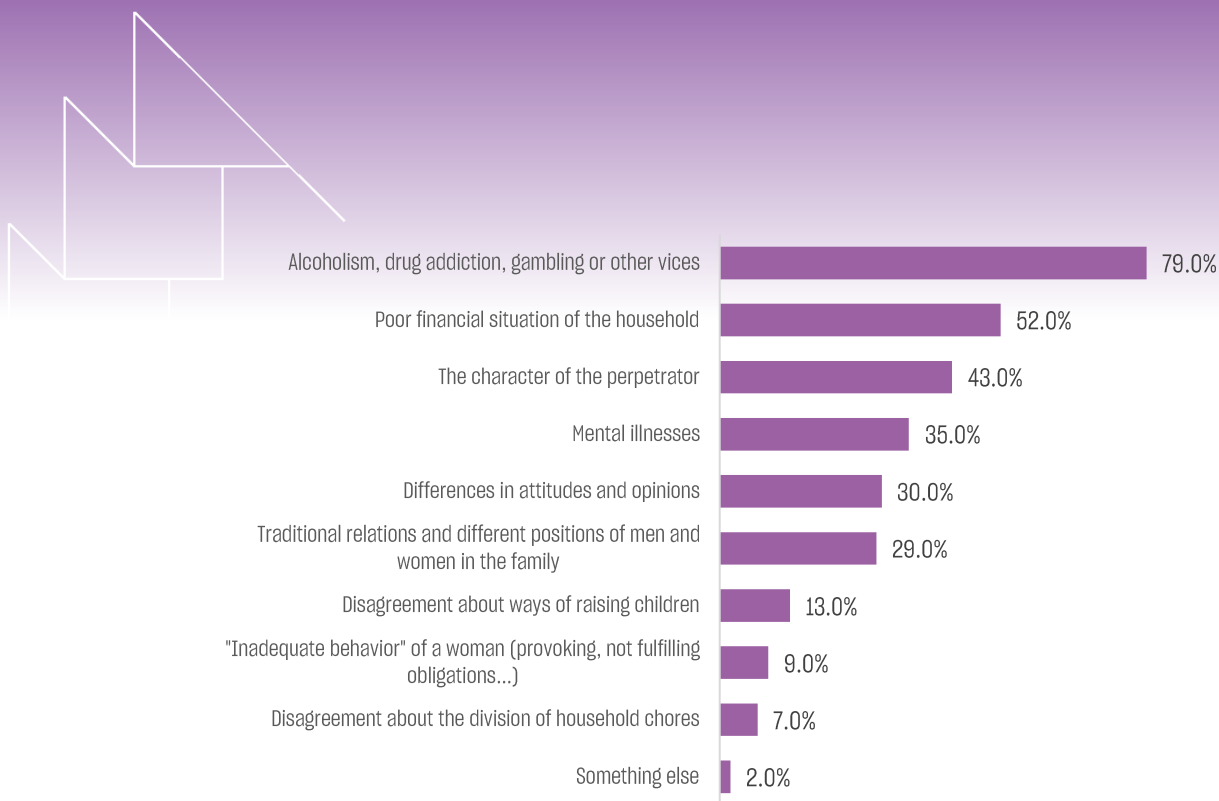


Figure 8: What, in your opinion, are the THREE main reasons for psychological violence in the family and partner relationships? (first+second+third)

When asked about the categories of girls and women that are most vulnerable to the risk of psychological violence, the respondents most often cite unemployed girls and women (55.2%), which indicates that they acknowledge the financial aspect of violence. This is further substantiated through a finding where single mothers come up as the second most frequently cited category across all of the three answer choices, perceived by 46.7% of the respondents as being at a particular risk from psychological violence. A quantitative survey with pre-specified answer options does not allow for the possibility to further explore the reasons why the respondents identified single mothers as the second most exposed category, but it would be interesting and important to understand whether this attitude stems from personal experience, a perception that a woman without a man in her life is more vulnerable, or even from a perception that single women are implicitly condemned by the society.

The third most mentioned category are girls and women in cohabiting unions or marriages with children (43%). It could be assumed that the respondents associate vulnerability to the presence of children and staying in abusive relationships for their sake. This finding corresponds with responses provided to the question presented in Graph 4: To what extent do you agree that each of the above forms of behaviour constitutes psychological violence? where the majority of respondents identified the threat of taking away children from one's partner as a form of psychological violence.

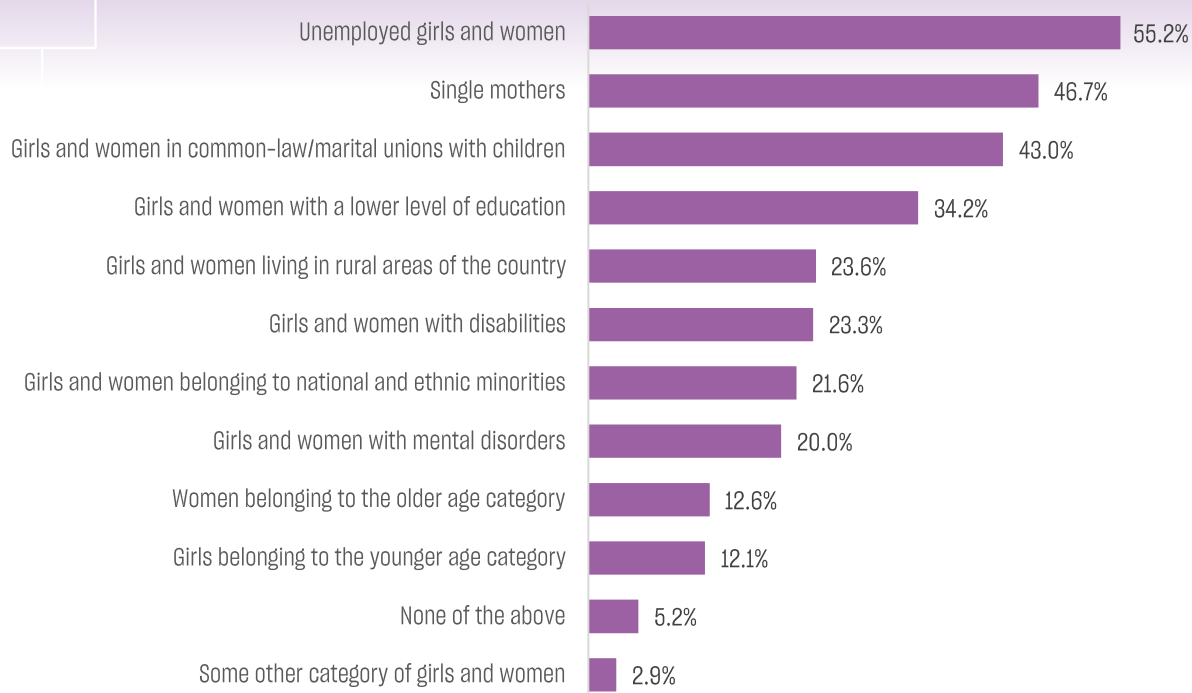


Figure 9: In your opinion, are there any categories of girls and women who are particularly exposed to the risk of psychological violence? Please rank the THREE most exposed categories from the above? (first+second+third)

The majority of respondents agree either fully or to some extent with the claim that the abuser is to be held responsible and sanctioned (over 91%), and 88.6% strongly or somewhat agree with the claim that psychological abuse is just as serious as other forms of violence.

However, only one-third of the respondents believe that Montenegro has an adequate education/legal system and a support system for victims of psychological abuse, whereas a slightly fewer percentage (roughly 31%) of the respondents find that psychological violence is a topic sufficiently addressed in the Montenegrin society. Younger, middle-aged, and respondents with higher education attainment level are more likely to say that this topic is underdiscussed than older citizens or those with lower education attainment. On average, the unemployed are more likely to think that the topic of violence is sufficiently addressed, as are those who live in suburban and rural settlements. Finally, the higher the personal income, the more likely a respondent is to express disagreement with the claim that there has been enough talk about topic.

It is concerning that even one third, i.e. 33.2% of the respondents, either completely or somewhat agree with the claim that women and girls make false allegations of psychological abuse just to draw attention to themselves, and that almost one-fifth believe that a man has the right to tell a woman/girl to be quiet if he is annoyed by her. Men (35.8%) are way more likely than women (26.8%) to say that women and girls make up claims of psychological abuse against themselves in order to draw attention (35.8%). Also, on average, those with lower (34.3%) and secondary education attainment level (33%) are more likely to share this opinion than those holding a college or university degree (24.5%).

A rather sizeable percentage (8.6%) has been recorded with those supporting the claim that a man has the right to insult a woman/girl if she is financially dependent on him.

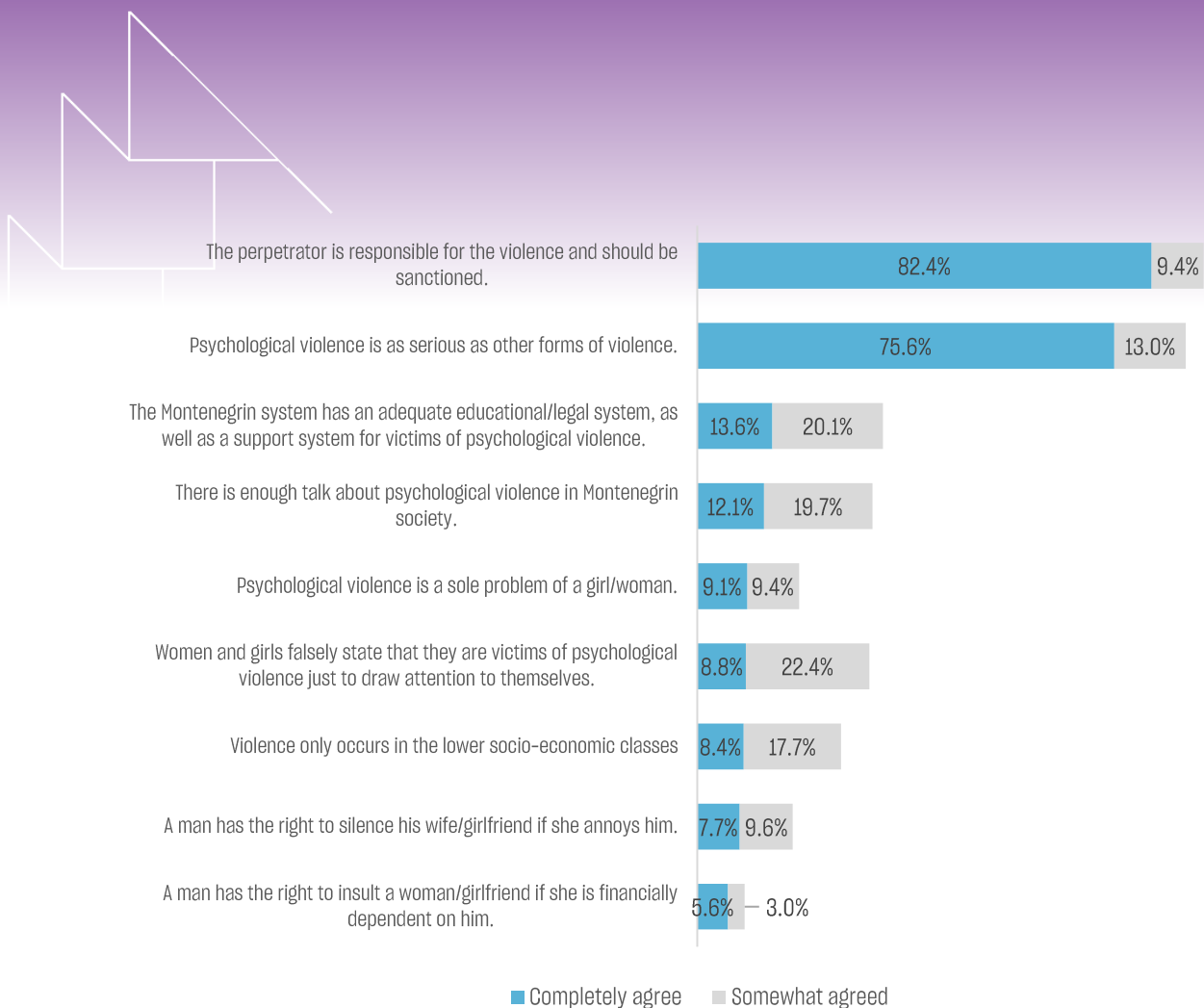


Figure 10: Please indicate to what extent you agree with the following claims?

The respondents' experience with cases of psychological violence

This section of the report is dedicated to the respondents' direct and indirect experiences with psychological violence. It is divided into two parts - the first covers situations where the respondents witnessed abuse, and in the second one, the respondents were asked if they were victims of abuse. The second part of the questionnaire was intended for women/girls only, and, in order to protect their privacy, they were asked to fill out this part of the questionnaire by themselves, without the presence of an interviewer.

The data point to a substantial prevalence of psychological violence in Montenegrin society. Almost half of the respondents (43.3%) claim to have, at some point, personally witnessed a situation where a man was insulting or shouting at his partner, sister, or mother. This means that almost half of the citizens had a direct experience with psychological violence, although they may not have been victims themselves. Such a high prevalence has adverse consequences not only for people witnessing an act of violence, but also in that it fosters a culture of violent behaviour that becomes perceived as normal or expected, and the patterns of violent behaviour get passed on from one generation to the next.

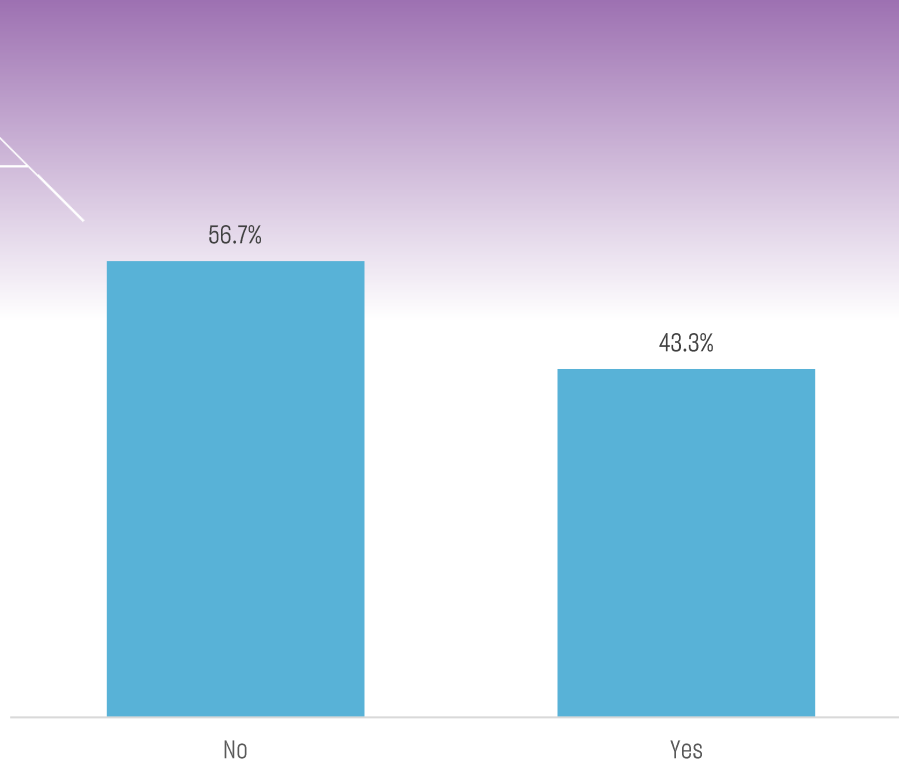


Figure 11: Have you ever PERSONALLY present in a situation where a man insulted or shouted at his partner, sister, mother, either in a public place such as a cafe, street or in the neighborhood?

When asked about how they reacted upon witnessing a violent behaviour, almost one-third (31%) of the respondents said that they did not react, while almost half of the respondents (45.7%) claimed to have approached the abuser and stopped the violent behaviour. One portion of the respondents claimed to have turned to a third party (14.1%), while only a minor share (only 6.1%) claimed to have called the police.

This question has generated a statistical difference between men and women. Namely, women are more likely than men to claim not having reacted towards the abuser (36.1% of women as opposed to 55.9% of men). On the other hand, women are more likely than men to contact a third party (20.9% of women as opposed to 6.4% of men) or the police (7.4% of women as opposed to 4.9% of men) and ask for help.

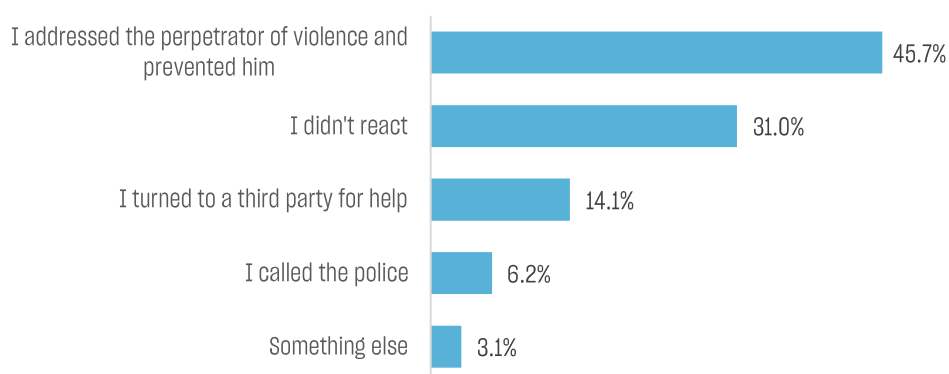


Figure 12: Did you react in that situation and if so, in what way?

The majority of those who did react would do the same if they were to witness a situation involving a more aggressive form of violence. As many as 80.6% of those who approached the abuser and stopped him, 70.5% of those who turned to a third party for help, and 72.7% of those who called the police would intervene again.

Of those who did not react in a situation involving psychological violence, 51.2% would also not react in an instance of physical violence, while 39.3% claim they would act differently in those circumstances.

When asked about how they would react if they were to witness a situation where verbal abuse escalates into physical violence, e.g. if the abuser was to hit or slap the victim, the majority of respondents (88.8%) claim they would take some action to stop him. As many as 43.2% would come up to the abuser and stop him, 32.7% would call the police, and 12.9% would turn to a third party for help. Therefore, although citizens recognize psychological abuse as a form of violence, it is only physical violence that almost doubles the chances of them interfering.

As expected, there are more men than women (65.1%) among those respondents who claim they would confront the perpetrator of physical violence in order to stop him.

Reasons cited as an explanation for lack of reaction are a sense of embarrassment from others, shock, not wanting to make the situation worse, believing that the victim cannot be helped, but also answers such as "I'd rather not interfere in other people's business" or "I have enough problems of my own" or "someone in charge should take care of this". The last three responses indicate that psychological abuse is seen as belonging to a private sphere that the respondents believe should not be invaded.

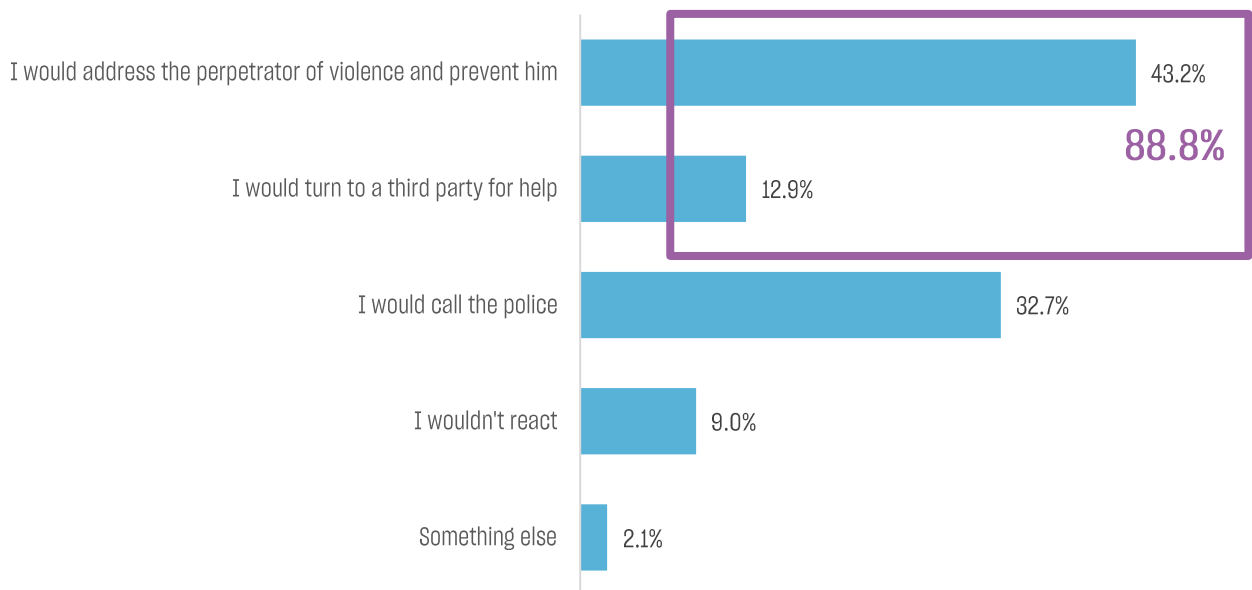


Figure 13: Would you react in a situation where verbal violence turned into physical violence, that is, when the perpetrator of violence hit or slapped the victim?

As many as 41.4% of respondents claim to personally know a female who experienced some form of psychological violence on at least one occasion. Different percentages have been recorded among men and women when this issue is concerned. Namely, 46% of women are familiar with such cases, as opposed to 36.3% of men, which suggests that these problems are often not discussed openly, but remain within confinements of women's circles of trust.

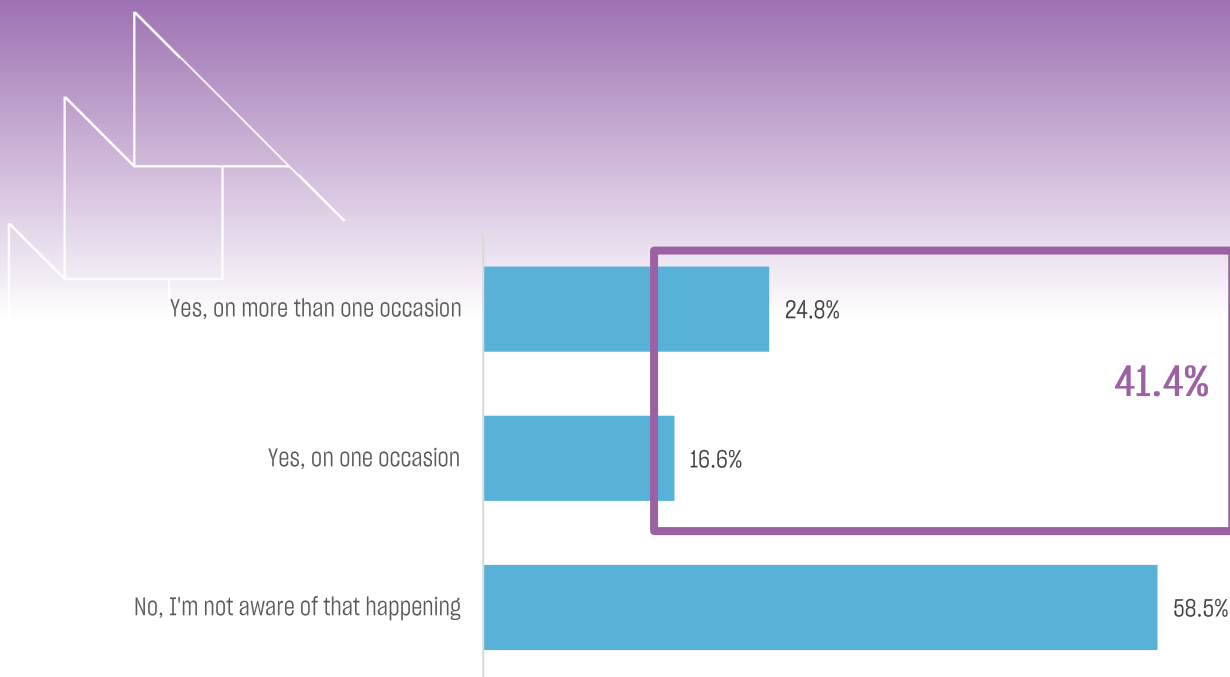


Figure 14: Do you personally know a female person from your environment (family member, friend, colleague) who has experienced some form of psychological violence?

Responses to the next question also indicate that this kind of information gets shared in circles of trust. Namely, when asked about how they found out about this person's experience, more than half of the respondents say that the victim told them this in confidence (51.5%), while almost one third (30.7%) heard about it from a family member, friend or acquaintance. Yet again, significant differences have been recorded between men and women. Women are more likely to hear about this straight from the victim (59.4%) than men (40.1%). Men, on the other hand, are more likely to hear about abuse from others, friends, acquaintances, family members (42.4%) as compared to women (22.2%).

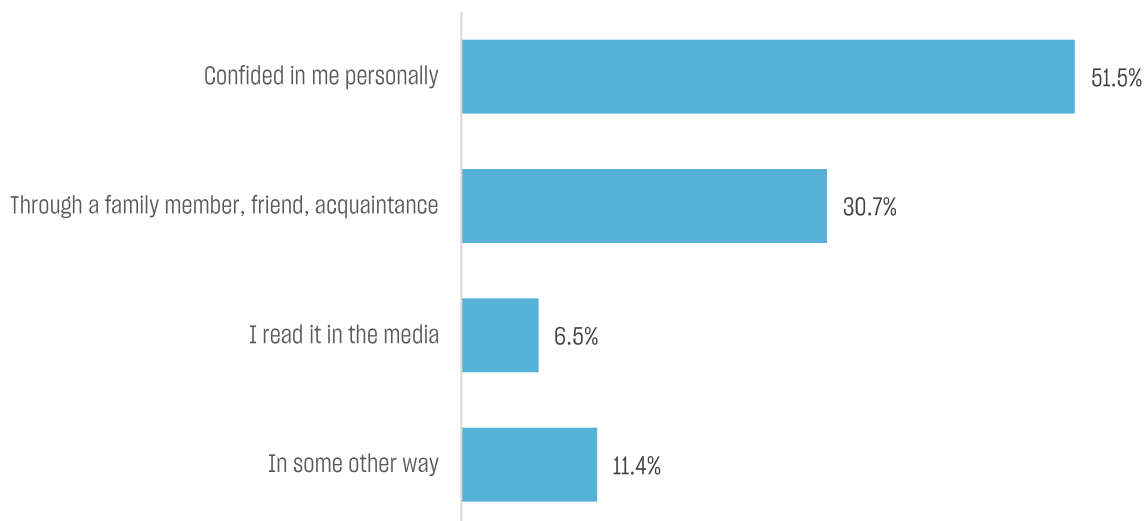


Figure 15: How did you find out about that person's experience?

A follow up open-ended question prompted the respondents to identify the form of violence that occurred in a particular case; for the most part, respondents said the victim was exposed to both psychological and physical violence. Below are some of the typical responses provided:

“Beatings, threats, her life was under threat. But she resolved this with the help of her family and friends, she remarried and now she is living happily with another man.”

“Physical abuse by her husband's family.”

“...he would keep calling her stupid and threaten to break her bones when he got home.”

“He kicked her and the children out of the house, he was drunk at the time.”

The following questions follow up on the specific experience mentioned by the respondents. Namely, when asked whether they had referred the victim to an institution that could assist her, almost one-third of the respondents answered in the negative. As many as 27.8% of respondents said they had advised the person who suffered psychological abuse to contact the police, while 19.9% referred them to family members, 10.0% to psychiatrists or psychologists and 3.6% to specialized non-governmental organizations. Interestingly, there are no statistically significant differences between men and women when the type of reaction is concerned.

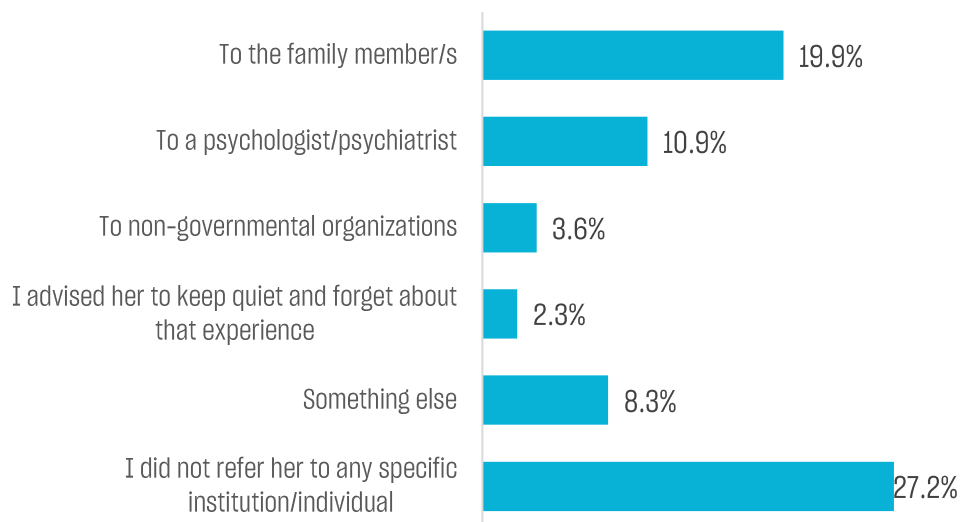


Figure 16: Have you referred a person from the environment who suffered psychological violence to an institution/individual that would help them?

More than half of the respondents (58.4%) say they did not offer any assistance to a person from their immediate environment after they learned she was a victim of violence, which corresponds to the data presented in the previous graph. Of those who did intervene to help, the majority cite having talked to the abuser or to both partners in an attempt to peacefully resolve the situation (13.9%) or having advised the victim to file for divorce or move out. These data were later confirmed in the part of the questionnaire that prompted the respondents to expand on any areas where they would like more information – the majority said they would like to have information and instructions on a proper course of action in these situations. The data indicate that, although men and women are able to recognize abuse, they do not know how to react to it. Also, the majority of respondents question the effectiveness of sanctions against perpetrators of violence, either by saying they do not know whether there are any such sanctions in place, or by explicitly voicing suspicions about whether they exist and whether they get implemented.

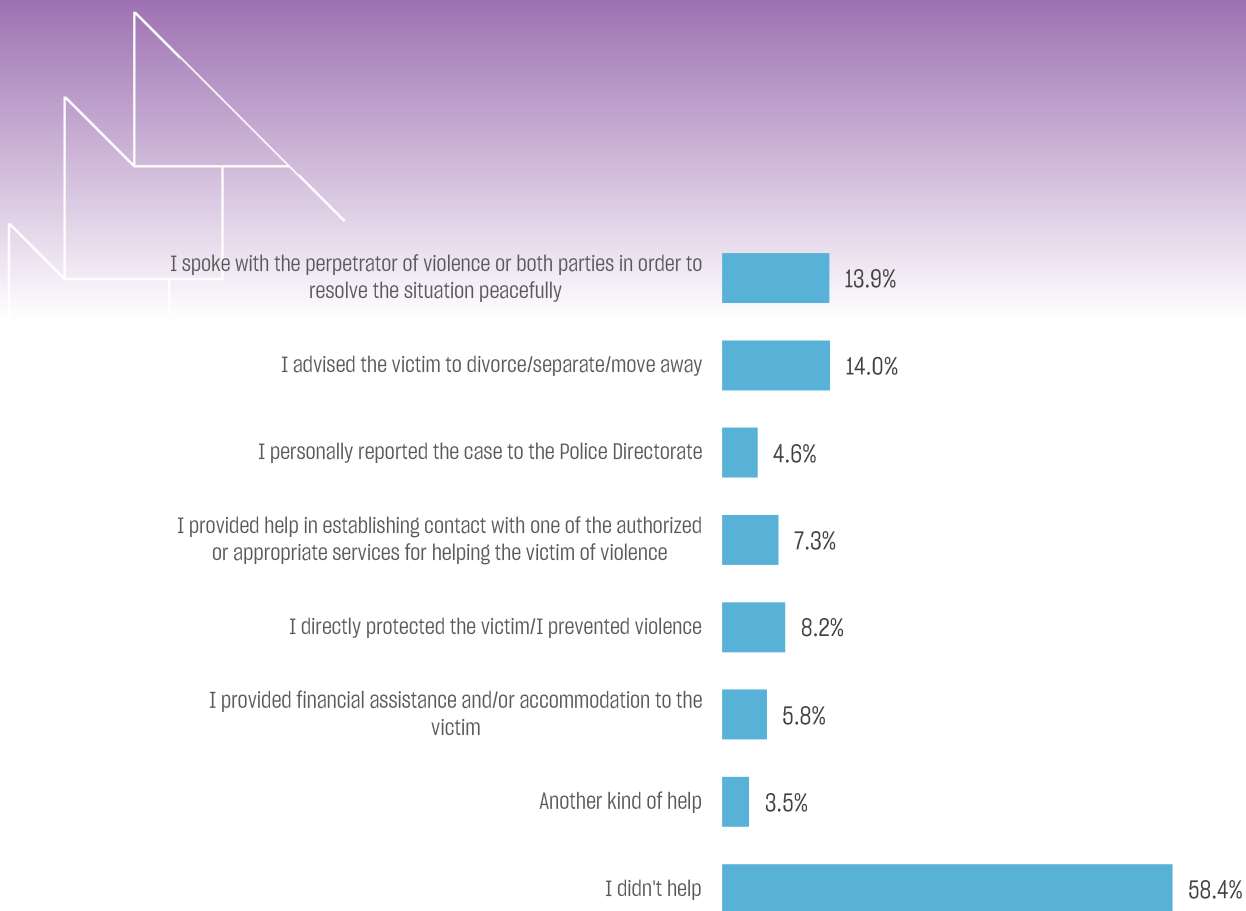


Figure 17: Have you tried to help the victim of violence in some way? Please indicate what specifically you took to help that person?

Answers provided to the following question back up previous claims of lack of appropriate response by citizens. Namely, those who claimed they had not provided any help at all, which is nearly 60% of the citizens surveyed, were asked to expand on reasons behind their lack of reaction. The majority of them say they thought that this talk of abuse was just rumours or that they were unable to help (29.1%). It is also concerning that more than one-fifth of respondents did not want to interfere, believing this to be a private matter, while nearly 16% believe that their reaction would not change anything or that it would even make things worse for the victim.

Male respondents are more likely to say that their lack of reaction comes from tendency to stay away from what they believe to be someone else's private affairs. One-quarter of men choose this answer option, as compared against only 15% of women.



Figure 18: What is the main reason why you did not react?

Respondents who claim they would not react, 58.4% of the entire surveyed sample, were asked how they would react in case of a "more serious" form of violence. The intention behind this question was to gauge whether non- reaction could be attributed to the type of violence, or to the respondent's personality. Namely, if their reaction is dependent on the type of violence, e.g. the respondent did not react because they consider psychological abuse to be a "milder" form of violence, we would expect them to say they would act differently in case of what they consider to be a "more serious" form of violence. On the other hand, if their reaction is not contingent on the type of violence, they can be expected to stick to their previous answer. The results are presented in Graph 19 - only one-third of the respondents would react only with certain types of violence, whereas two-thirds of the non-reactive respondents would also not react in any other circumstances. This is a meaningful finding, because it casts light on what could be the maximum outreach of a campaign aimed at raising public awareness on dangers and seriousness of psychological abuse. In an ideal scenario, such a campaign could stir into action only one third of those who would otherwise not react in a situation involving psychological violence.

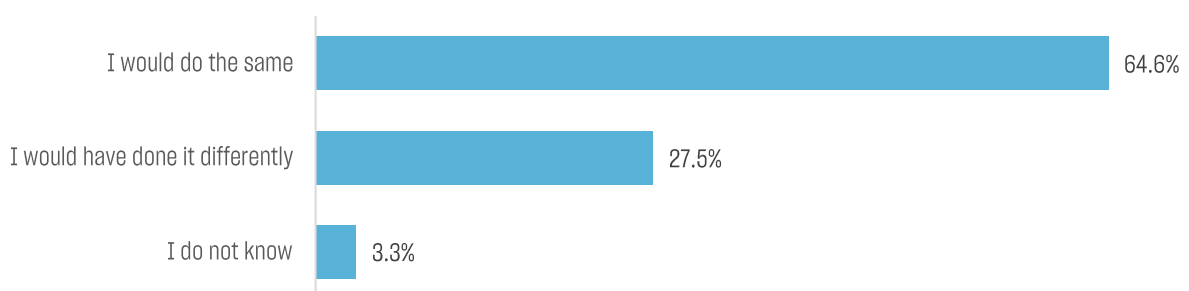


Figure 19: Would you react in the same way if you witnessed another, more serious form of violence?

The issue of adequate reaction is a recurring theme in responses provided in this survey. Citizens are obviously very unsure as to what an adequate reaction might be. Therefore, the question of where they would seek out information on how to help a victim is extremely relevant. The largest portion of respondents, one-third of them (33.2%), would turn to the Police Directorate to learn about how to help a person who has suffered psychological violence, while others would turn to the Centre for Social Work, friends and Women's Safe House. It is important to point out the relatively equal distribution of answers to this question (apart from the Police

Directorate answer option), which further confirms that respondents are confused and unsure about proper course of action.

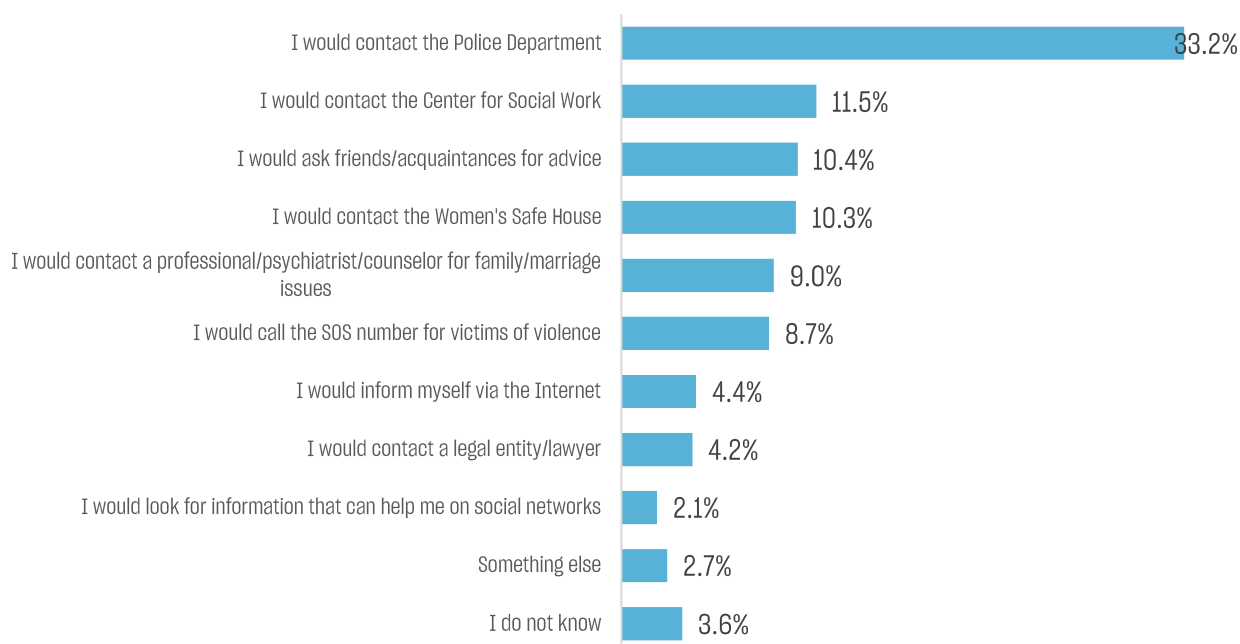


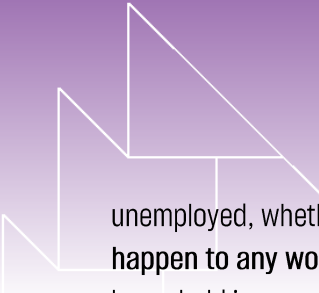
Figure 20: Where would you first look for information to help a person who has suffered psychological violence?

Women's personal experience with psychological violence

Given the sensitivity of topics covered by the next part of the questionnaire, the interviewers were instructed not to ask these questions directly, but to hand the tablet over to the female respondents so that they can fill out this part of the questionnaire on their own. The intention was to provide the respondents with as much privacy as possible when answering sensitive survey questions. This proved to be an effective tactic, as all of the 518 women who participated in the survey agreed to answer these questions.

In the first question, the respondents were directly asked about their personal experience with abuse. The respondents were presented with a list of different forms of psychological violence and asked to mark all those they had experienced personally. **The results are very concerning. As many as 183 of all the women, i.e. 35.3% of them, selected at least one answer option. According to the data obtained, over a third of women in Montenegro have experienced at least one form of psychological violence.** Given the sensitivity of the topic, we can safely assume that this is a rather conservative estimate and that the actual percentage must be higher, as some of the women probably felt uncomfortable responding to such questions, even with the said privacy safeguards in place. According to the interviewers who conducted the survey, there were other women who wanted to share their experience, and openly talked about them.

We cross-referenced the data on whether a woman or a girl experienced some form of psychological violence with all the relevant demographic variables, and found statistically relevant differences with only one of them – the level of household income. This means that the probability of a woman experiencing psychological violence remains the same regardless of whether she is younger or older, more or less educated, employed or



unemployed, whether she lives in the city or in the countryside. **In other words, psychological violence can happen to any woman.** The only variable that generates statistically significant differences among cohorts is household income (not personal income) - the lower the household income, the greater the probability for the woman living in that household to be exposed to psychological violence.

Almost one-fifth of the respondents (19%) report having encountered partner's possessive and jealous behaviour or being ignored in communication, a little under one-fifth of the respondents (18.1%) cite insults, swearing and name-calling. A total of 14.9% of the respondents report on experiences with partners controlling their movement, and 13.2% cite threats of attack and intimidation. As many as 9.8% of respondents claim they were kicked out of their house/apartment (i.e one in ten women in Montenegro), and 8.5% say that their partner destroyed their personal belongings and household items.

As for the statistically significant differences among respondents of different demographics, more than one-third (40.8%) of the respondents who experienced the threat of having their children taken away from them are unemployed. The unemployed women also record the highest percentage - 41.4% among respondents who report on having been humiliated and ridiculed on account of their personal traits, which yet again takes us back to the link between economic independence and violence.

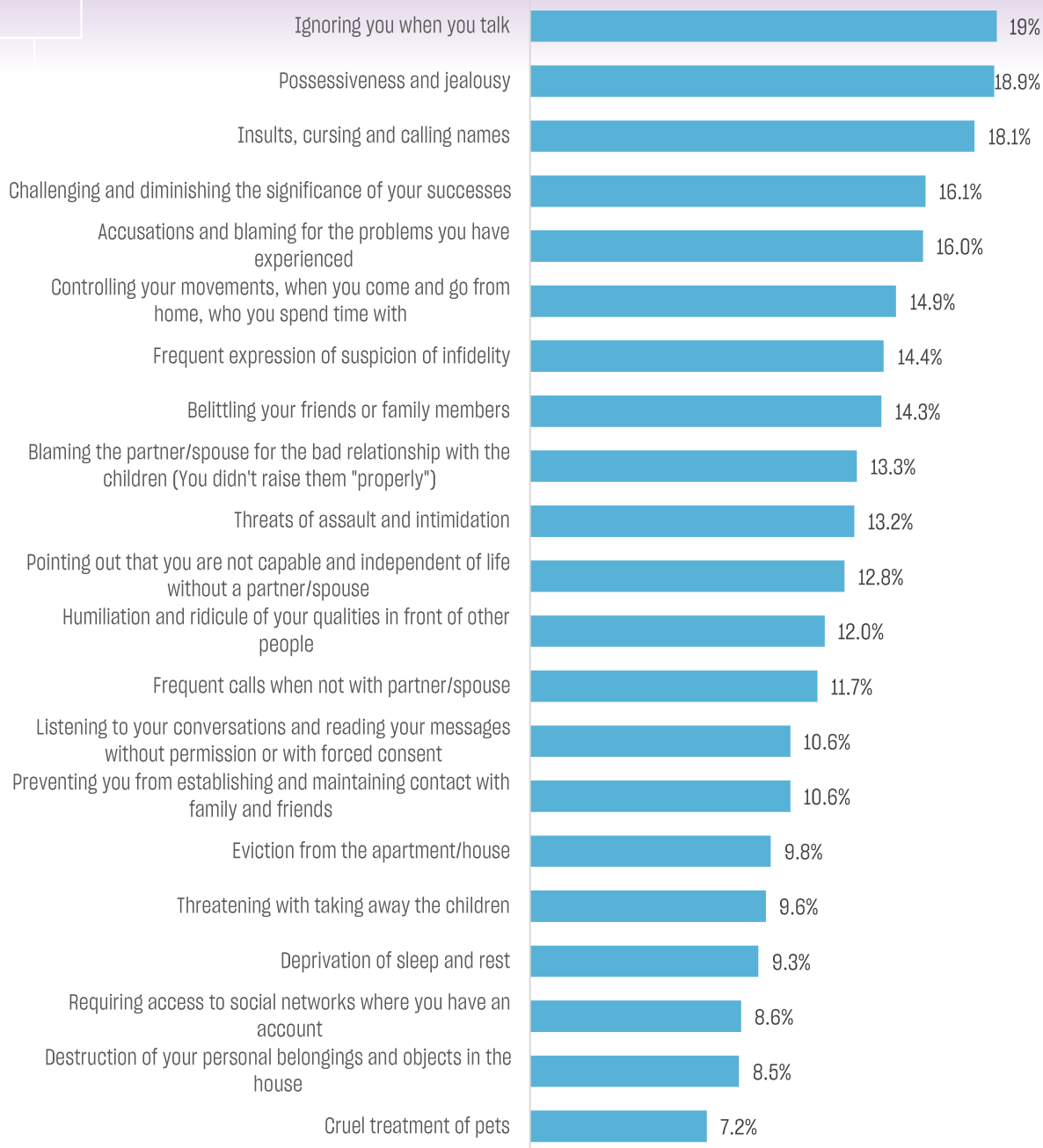


Figure 21: Please indicate whether any of the following have EVER happened to you at the hands of your partner or spouse

Even over half of the respondents who experienced some kind of psychological violence did not turn to anyone, while almost one-third (30%) turned to family and friends. A smaller percentage of women turned to official institutions and services, such as the Police Directorate (10.9%), the SOS hot line for women and children - victims of violence (8.2%) and centres for social work (7.1%).

When it comes to reaction to violence, no significant statistical differences have been recorded among respondents of different demographic profiles, which means that different courses of action, be it filing a police report or not reacting at all, are observed across all groups of female respondents, regardless of their demographic characteristics such as employment status, age, financial situation etc.

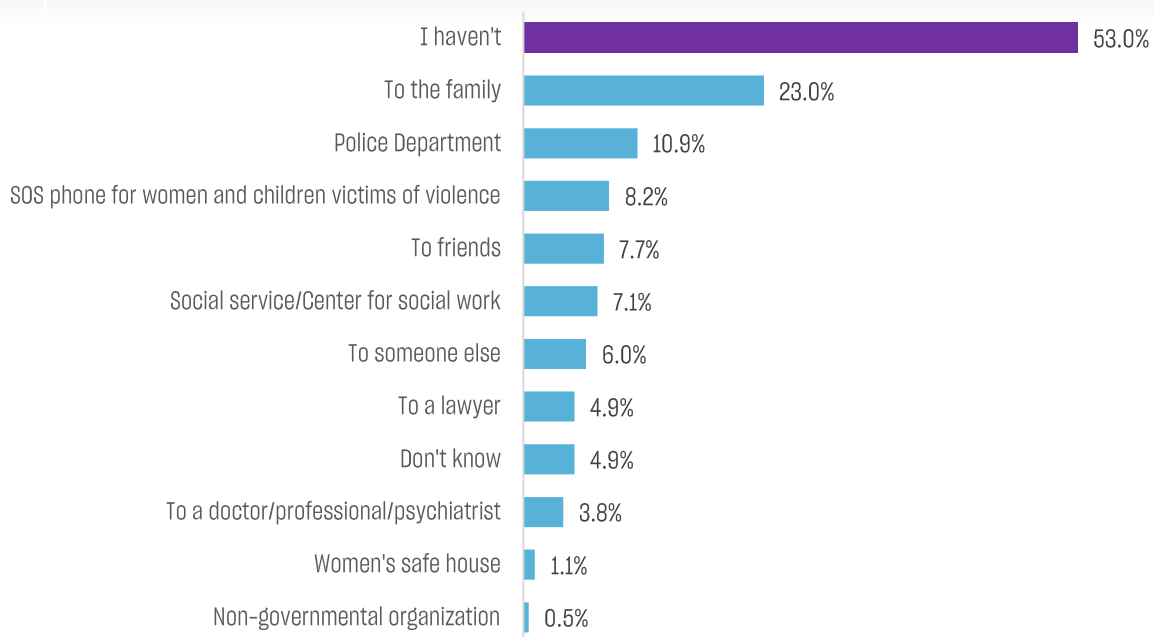


Figure 22: Did you turn to someone for help and if so, who?

We have highlighted the experiences of respondents who say that they reported the incident in question to the police. Their experiences range from very positive to very negative, most often due to mistrust and lack of evidence. These are some of the typical statements:

“I would have reported this vile man sooner if I had been sure from the start they’d react. The police responded only the third time when I came to file a report all bruised up. Then they referred me to other institutions.”

“The police wouldn’t believe me.”

“The police arrested the partner, and he was taken to court. Then they issued a restraining order and we got divorced.”

“It was of no use, there was no evidence.”

Those who claim to have consulted a health care worker or a professional (N=50) were asked about their subsequent reactions. According to the testimony of the respondents, in the majority of cases, the professionals would write up a report, provide advice or help, and only in 14.8% of cases did they file a report to the police. Therefore, only 14.8% of the competent authorities acted in accordance with the Law on Protection against Domestic Violence and reported abuse to the police.

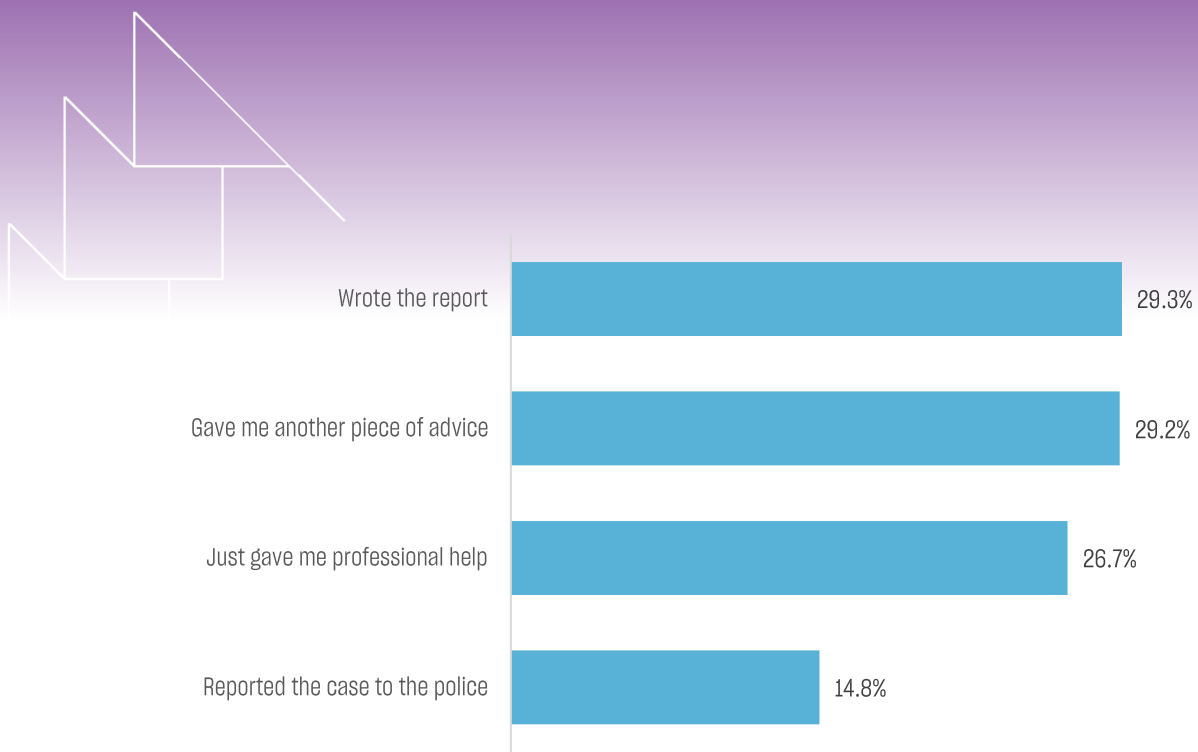


Figure 23: You stated that you turned to a health worker/professional regarding the case of psychological violence that you experienced. Please indicate how that person reacted? (N=50)

The majority of the respondents who did not report the violence they had personally experienced to state authorities/institutions did not do so because they solved the problem on their own (31%), they believed that it was not that big of a deal (12.9%), they were afraid that others would find out about it (11.8%), they believed that it would be difficult to prove the case (11.3%) or because they felt ashamed and embarrassed (9.4%). Over 7% of women thought that state authorities/institutions would not be able to take any concrete steps, while 8.8% did not know that they could report the case. Some women did not want to end the relationship with their partner under such circumstances or for him to get arrested, believing that what happened was their own fault.

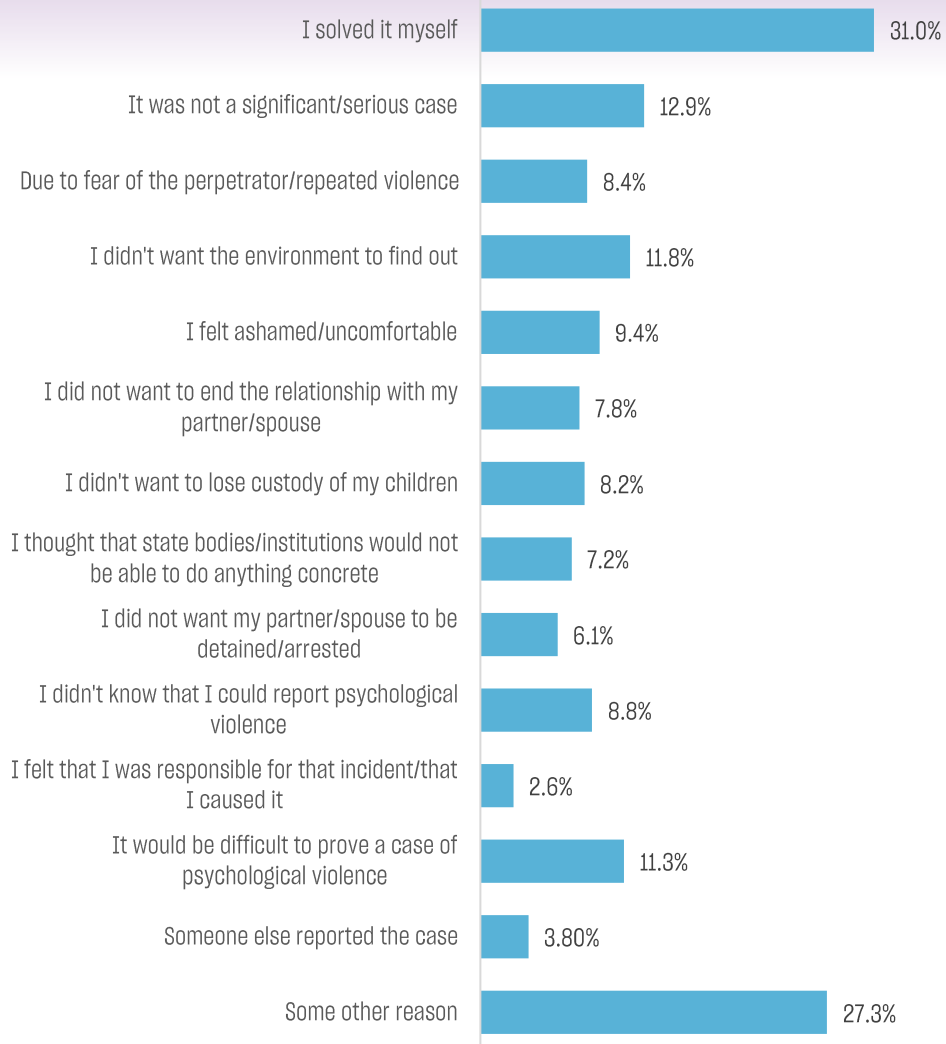


Figure 24: Please tell us why you did not report the case of psychological violence you experienced to the state authorities/institutions? (N=183)

Those respondents who say they did not turn to anyone for help, acted like this out of fear their family might get torn apart (10.6%), fear that no one would believe them (5.9%), patriarchal upbringing/tradition (4.8%) out of fear from the abuser (4.5%) or fear that society would be blaming her (4.1%).

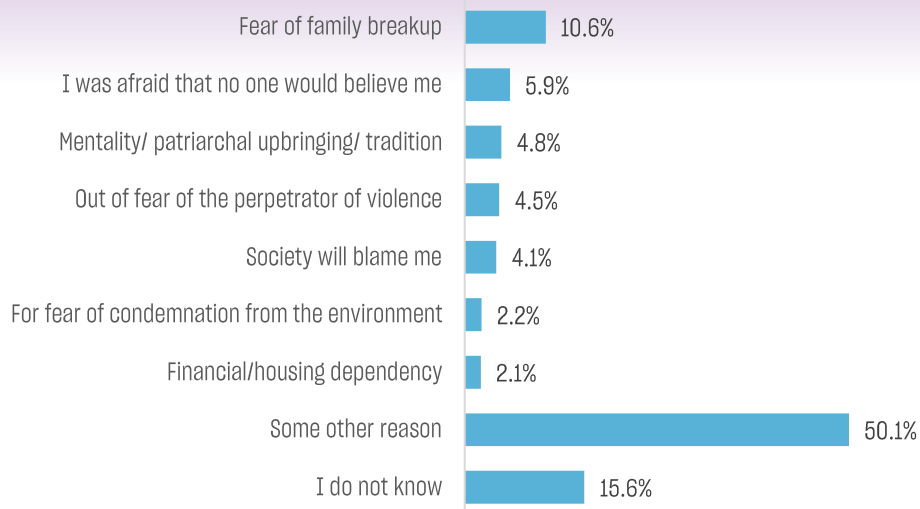


Figure 25: For what reason did you not turn to anyone for help after experiencing psychological violence?

Other most cited reasons are "it wasn't that bad" or "there was no need for that". The majority of those who claim to have solved the problem on their own, say that they broke up with their spouse (20.9%), left their family home temporarily (6.8%), or left home for good (3.7%).

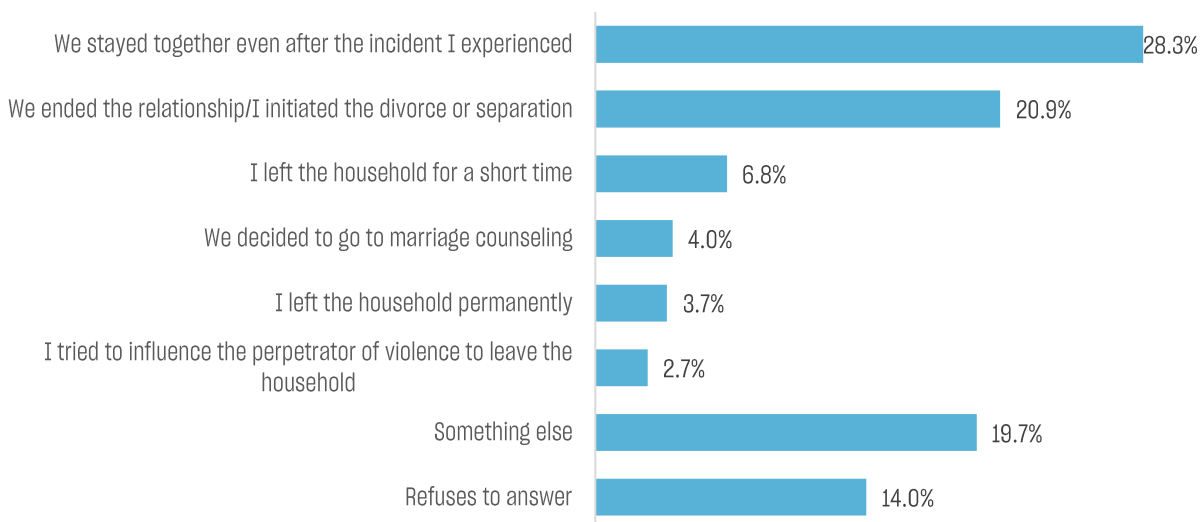


Figure 26: How did you resolve the relationship with your partner/spouse? (N=183)

Perception of institutions responsible for cases of psychological violence

The survey has shown that one of the most critical issues is that respondents do not know what to do when they notice psychological violence or when it happens to them. It is therefore important to see how they perceive the support system, especially the institutional support.

This segment of the survey starts off with the question about how much attention is given to the issue of psychological violence in Montenegro. The respondents were very critical in this regard. Namely, 76.7% of them believe that this problem is not sufficiently addressed in Montenegro. This particular opinion did not generate statistically significant differences between men and women, or older and younger respondents. The differences have come up education-wise, as those less educated are less likely to think that this issue is not given enough attention (15.3%). The higher the education attainment level, the more likely the respondents are to claim that this issue remains unaddressed.

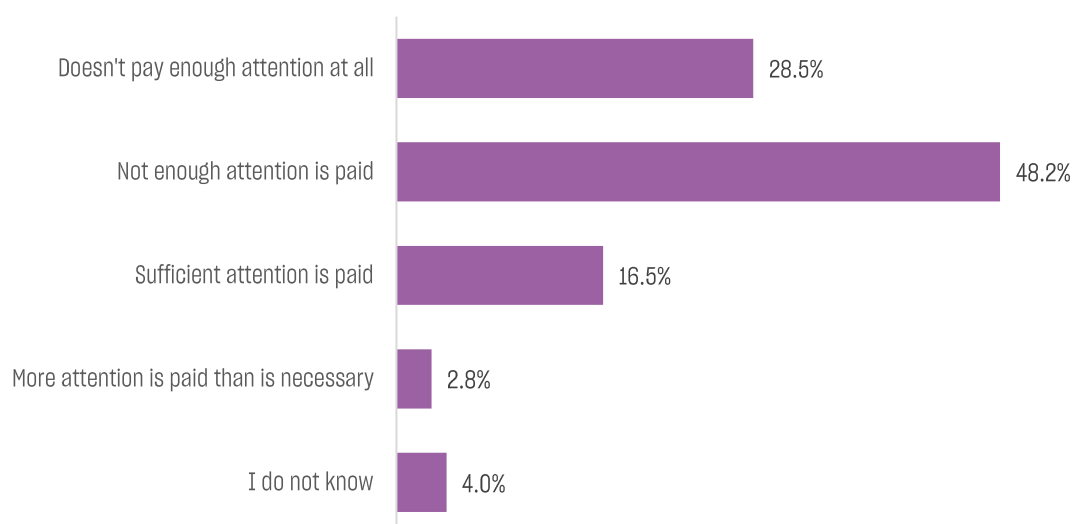


Figure 27: In your opinion, how much attention is paid to psychological violence as a problem in Montenegro?

We divided the responses about trust placed in specific institutions that have competence over cases of psychological violence into those given by the entire sample of 1001 respondents and those provided by 183 women identified as having experienced some form of psychological violence. The following graph contains a side-by-side comparison of the "I trust them fully" and "I trust them to some extent" answers obtained. On average, those who experienced some form of psychological violence tend to report a lower level of trust than the general population.

However, we can nevertheless conclude that the percentages are higher than might be expected from what the practice of victim support organizations has been showing. This data shows how the institutions are perceived by Montenegrin citizens, the majority of whom did not have any direct contact with the institutions listed, so it cannot serve as a reliable indicator of the quality of their work. The fact that the percentages of positive responses decrease with the sample of respondents who experienced violence, some of whom probably had direct experience with the said institutions, indicates that the ratings of institutions decrease among those who had direct encounter with them. It is an interesting finding that the highest level of trust in

non-governmental organizations has been recorded among women who have experienced psychological violence.

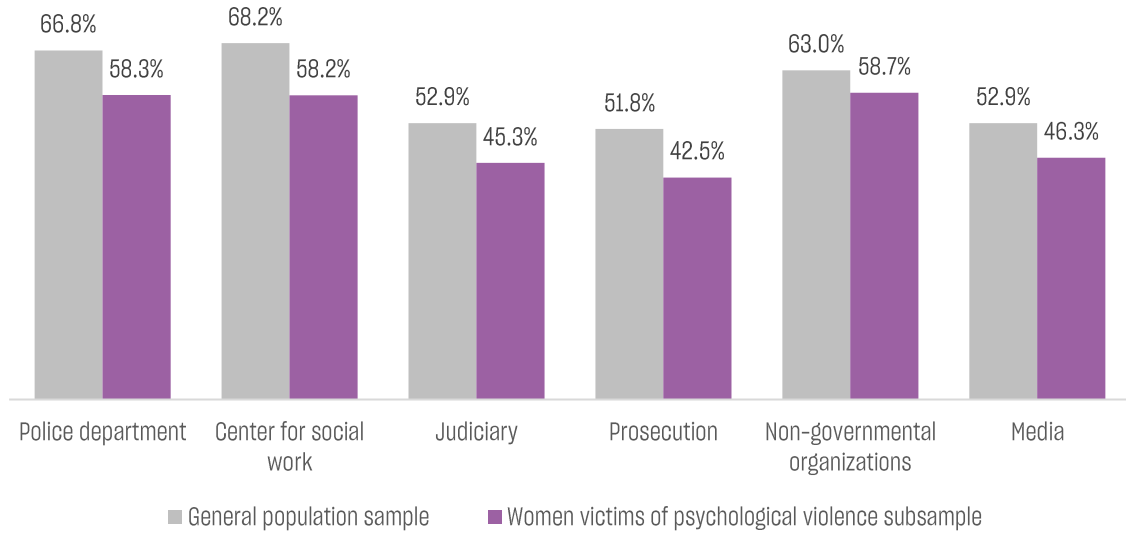


Figure 28: To what extent do you trust the following institutions, organizations or groups when it comes to dealing with cases of violence? General population sample (N=1001) and subsample of women who said that they experiences some sort of psychological violence (N=183)

Almost two thirds (60.4%) of the surveyed citizens believe that reporting cases of violence to competent institutions tends to lead to divorce, while more than one quarter (26.6%) of respondents believe that reporting violent incidents to competent institutions tends to prompt a change in the behaviour of the abuser. No statistically significant differences have been observed between men, women, respondents from different age groups and educational backgrounds when this question is concerned. However, upon comparing these data against the sub-sample of women who experienced psychological violence, we see that they are more prone to seeing divorce as a likely outcome than the general population.

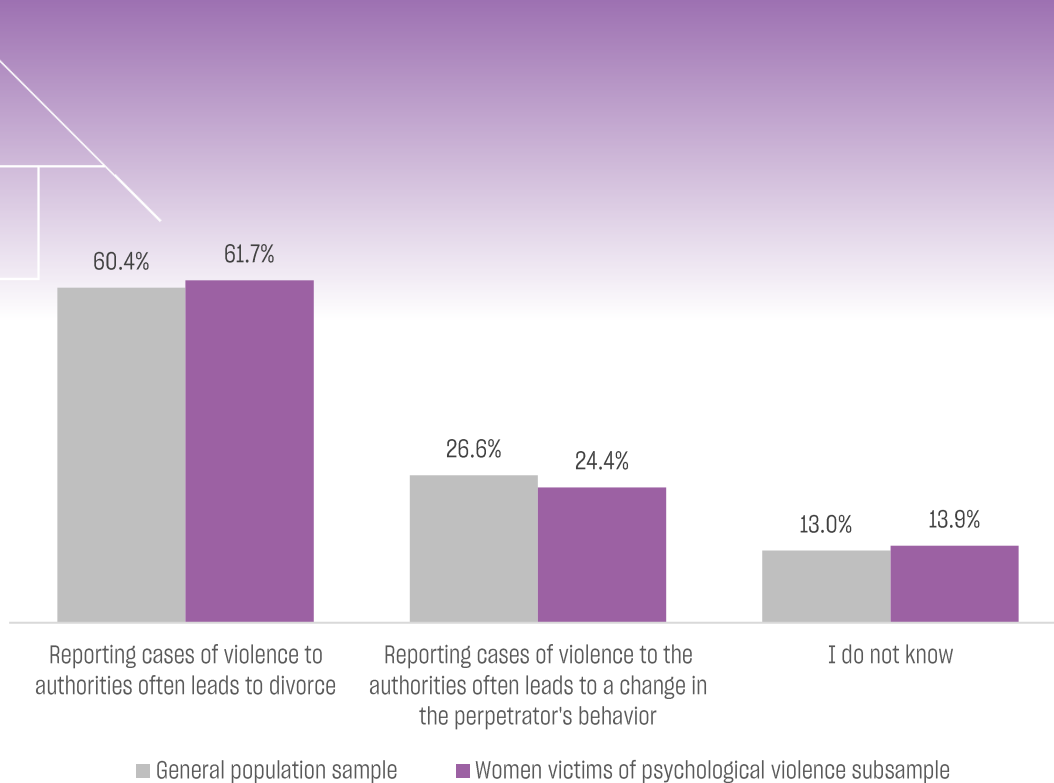


Figure 29: Please indicate which of the above statements do you agree with the most. General population sample (N=1001) and subsample of women who said that they experiences some sort of psychological violence (N=183)

In the next question, the respondents were asked to evaluate the performance of different institutions. As with the question related to trust, it is important to recall that the perception of performance is not based on direct experience, given that the majority of respondents probably did not have first-hand experience with these institutions and their way of functioning. This turned out to be a valid assumption, as the women who had experienced psychological violence, i.e., a group where the number of those who have come into contact with the institutions is probably higher than the general average, award significantly lower ratings to the said institutions compared to the general population.

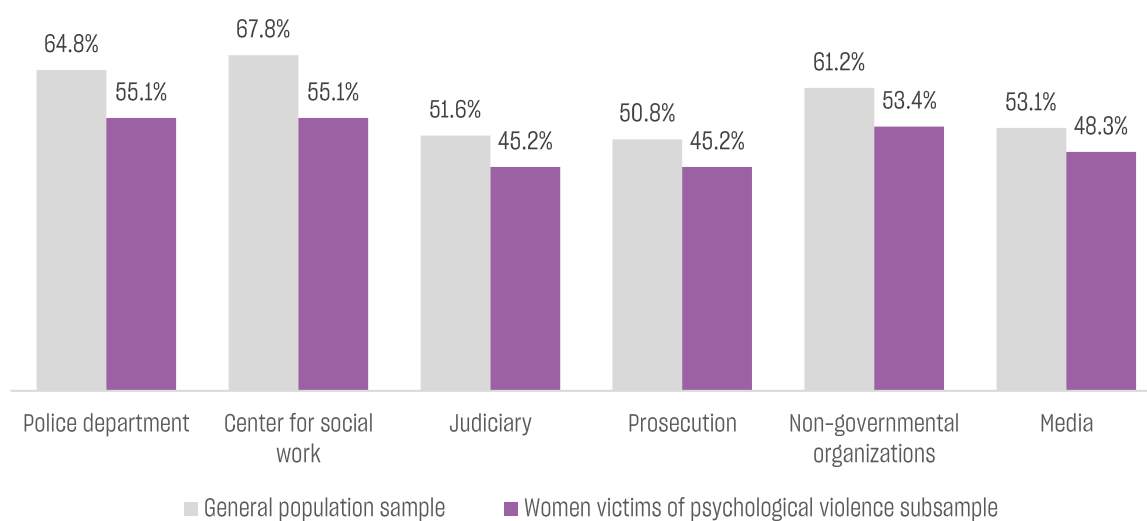


Figure 30: To what extent do you think that the following institutions, organizations or groups in Montenegro are SUCCESSFUL when it comes to the fight against psychological violence? General population sample (N=1001) and subsample of women who said that they experiences some sort of psychological violence (N=183)

When asked about whether they know if the national legislation prescribes sanctions for psychological violence against girls and women, almost two-fifths (39.9%) of the respondents answered affirmatively, while over 60% respondents said that there is no legal basis for sanctioning psychological violence or are unsure as to whether such provisions exist. It is an interesting finding that women who have experienced some form of psychological violence are more likely than average to say that there is no legal basis for imposing sanctions.

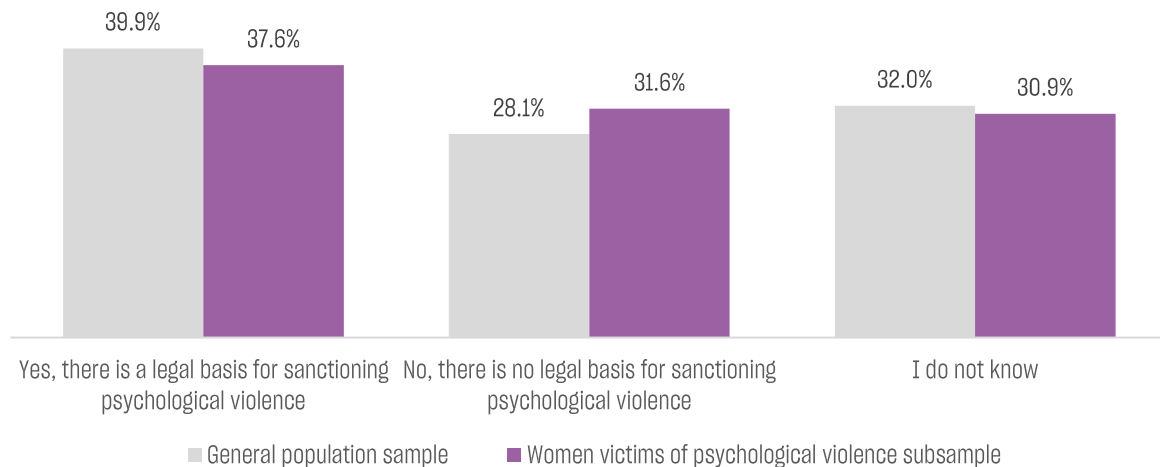


Figure 31: Do you know if there is a legal basis in Montenegro for sanctioning psychological violence against girls and women? General population sample (N=1001) and subsample of women who said that they experiences some sort of psychological violence (N=183)

The respondents were then asked about the epilogue of cases of psychological violence that they were aware of, i.e. whether the victim reported the incident to the competent institutions, and their answers can serve as the indicator of trust in institutions. Only 12.5% of respondents answered in the affirmative. The percentage of those who recall situations where the victim did not report violence increases sharply with women and girls who were victims of psychological violence themselves. Every other woman from this sub-group knows at least one person that experienced violence, but did not report it to the competent institutions.

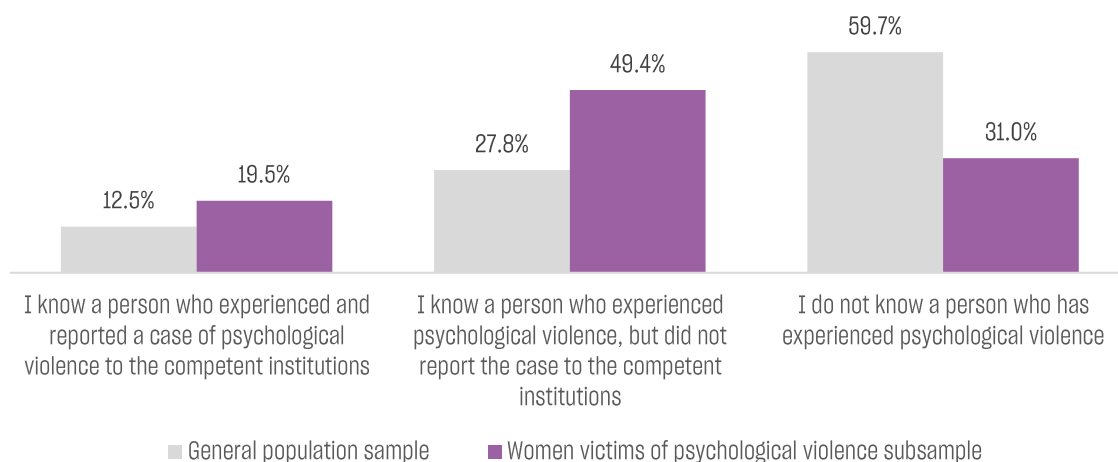



Figure 32: A your family, friends or colleagues, do you know a person who was exposed to psychological violence and reported the case to the authorities? General population sample (N=1001) and subsample of women who said that they experiences some sort of psychological violence (N=183)



The respondents who know someone who experienced psychological violence and reported it to the competent authorities were presented with an open-ended question prompting them to explain the outcome. Answers range from divorce to fines or other sanctions. It seems that, in providing answers to this question, the respondents were getting psychological and physical violence mixed up, as some of the sanctions they mention are generally imposed in cases of physical violence.

“The abuser was jailed for 30 days, got out and went back to abusing her, and she no longer dared to file a report.”

“[The way he was prosecuted was that] the prosecutor, who is a friend of the offender, and the offender himself, talked the victim into dropping the charges.”

“She got a temporary restraining order against her husband, but she filed the report after physical violence took place, i.e. after he beat her up. I don't think she had reported him before that.”

“It ended very quickly, because the wife dropped the charges.”

Information among the public regarding psychological violence

The last topic covered by the survey explores the level of being informed about psychological violence and recommendations for designing an information campaign for addressing this issue. Apart from gauging how informed the respondents are about this issue, the goal was also to obtain their recommendations for the content and delivery of the such information campaign.

The respondents' self-evaluation has shown that they are not familiar with measures for protection against psychological violence. Namely, 50% of respondents report being either completely or somewhat uninformed about mechanisms for protection from psychological violence, whereas only roughly 10% believe themselves to be fully informed. There are no statistically significant differences between men and women with this regard. When this information is cross-referenced with the question about whether there is a legal basis for sanctioning psychological violence against girls and women (graph 32), we find that 45.9% of those who claim to be informed also think that there is a legal basis for sanctioning psychological violence, whereas 26.2% believe the opposite and 27.9% are not sure as to whether psychological violence is punishable by law.

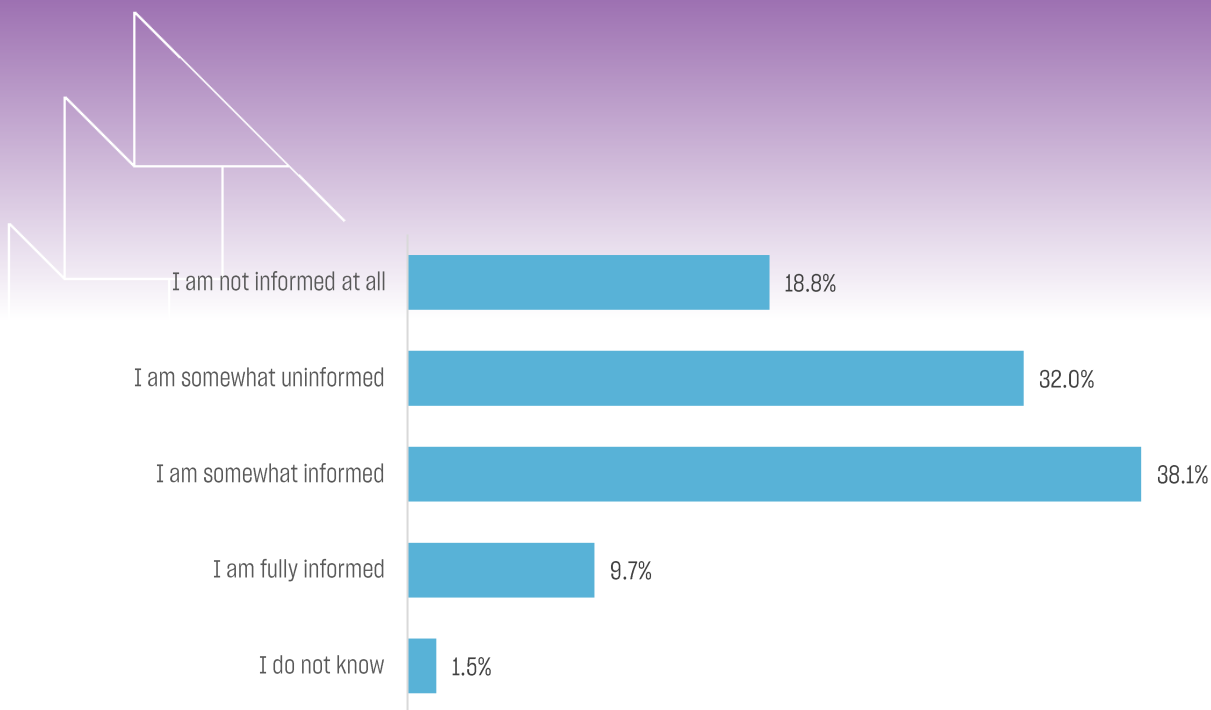


Figure 33: Do you think that you are sufficiently informed about ways to protect yourself from psychological violence?

Respondents were asked about which information would be of relevance to them. As many as 66.8% of respondents report lacking at least some piece of information. This is an extremely high percentage of answers to an open-ended question which, among other things, implies a genuine interest in the topic. The most frequently cited among missing information are those about who to turn to and what psychological violence

actually entails. Additional frequently mentioned questions are those about whether there are any sanctions in these cases and what would those be, as well as about ways of helping a victim.

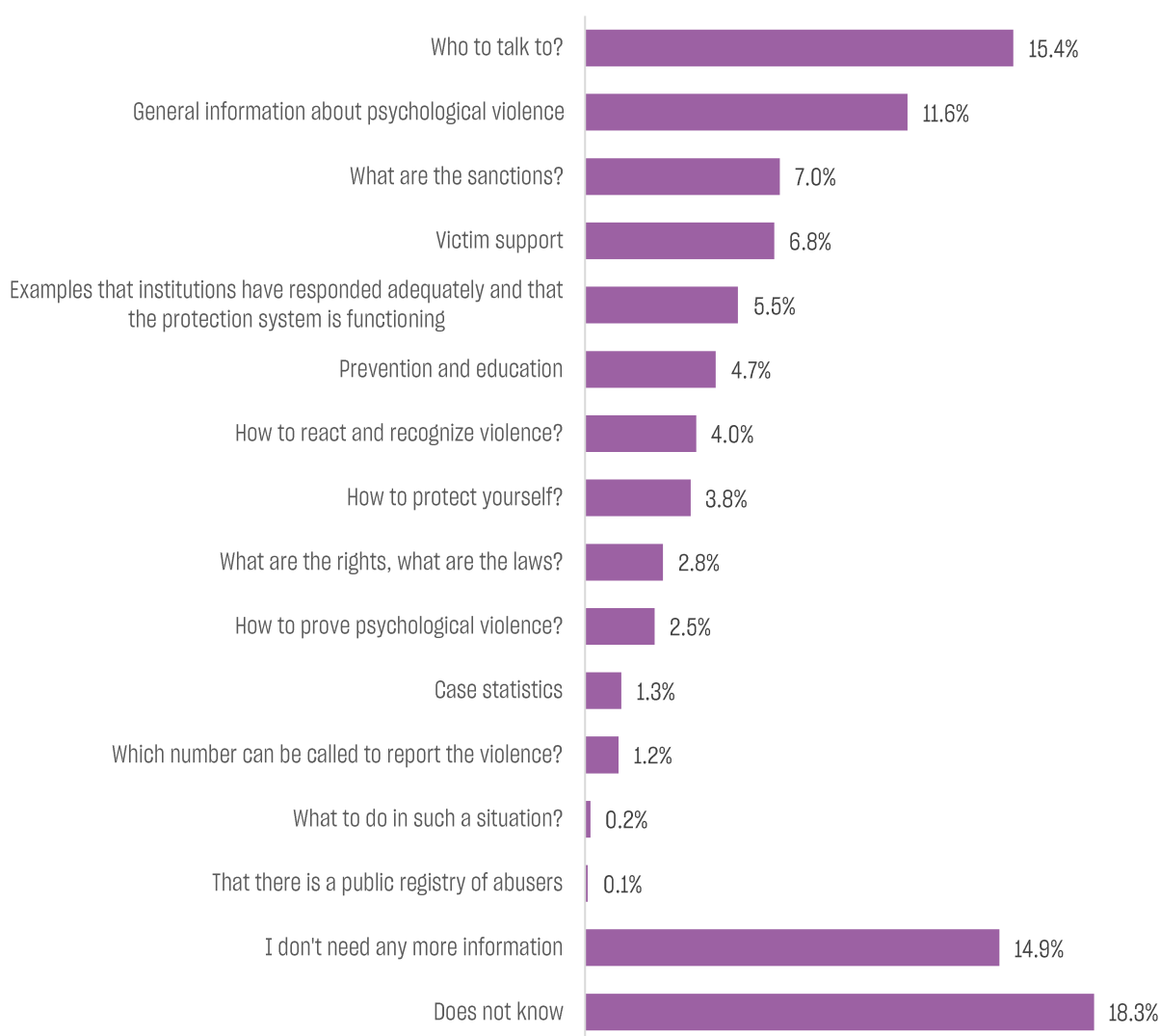


Figure 34: What specific information would be important for you to know?

The next question pertains to the type of information that respondents deem useful for women and girls who have experienced psychological violence. High percentages have been recorded with each of the answers provided, with no major difference between the ratings. Thus, 98.4% of respondents underline the importance of psychological help and support in the process of recovery from violence, 98.2% assign importance to measures for protection from further violence/harassment, 97.7% cite assistance in reporting psychological violence/ support with going through procedures undertaken by the police and other authorities in charge, 97.5% quote medical/professional assistance, 97.4% ascribe importance to free legal aid and representation in court proceedings as well as financial support, 97.2% highlight the importance of stable housing, 97.1 % underline moral support and 97.0% find the instruction from the police about further security measures to be undertaken as being either absolutely essential or somewhat important.

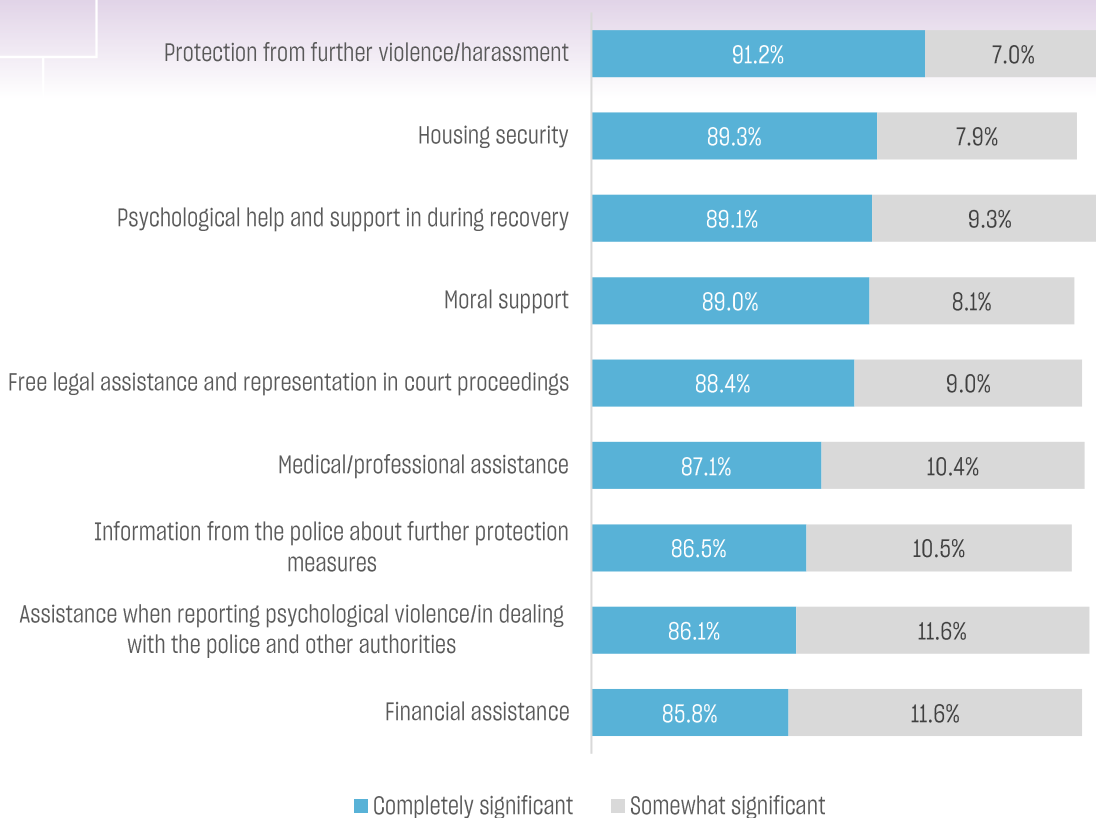


Figure 35: To what extent do you consider the following information, advice or forms of support important for girls or women who experience psychological violence?

Social media Facebook and Instagram are pinpointed as the best channels for informing citizens on this topic, with the exception of those over the age of 55. When compared against other age cohorts, those in the 55+ category are more likely than average to believe that social networks are not the most effective platform for informing citizens and raising awareness about psychological violence. Respondents from this age category find that informing the public on such topics would require a more serious approach, and cite television or newspapers, i.e., traditional media, as better channels for facilitating an informed public.

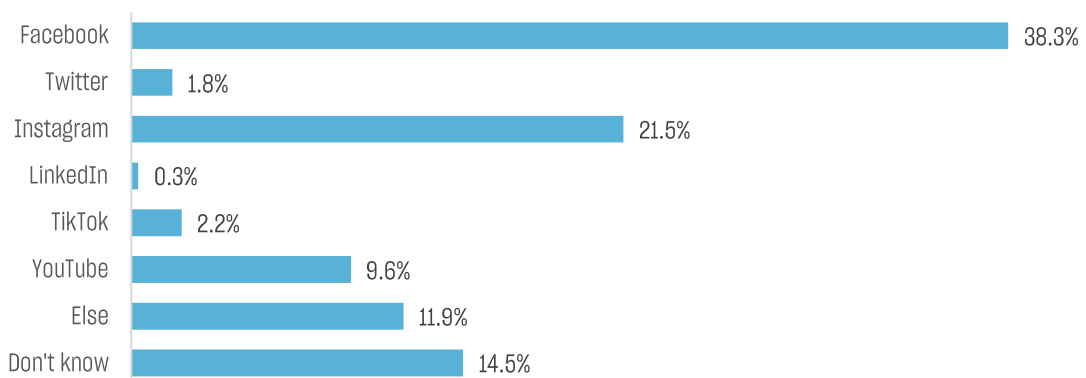


Figure 36 Which of the following social networks do you consider the most effective for informing citizens and raising awareness about psychological violence?

One-third of the respondents perceive the Police Directorate, and one-quarter see centres for social work, as most responsible for the prevention of psychological violence, although these are institutions that predominantly act from a reactive perspective. Men on average see Police department more responsible than women (32% of men in comparison to 26.1% of women), while there are no major differences when it comes to centers for social work. Family comes up as third-ranked (22.1% of men and 25.5% of women believe that it is the most responsible), followed by the judiciary (7% of men and 4.8% of women believe that it is the most responsible), although its role is not predominantly preventive. In total, less than 15% of respondents believe that responsibility for prevention lies with educational institutions (4.5% of men and 6.4% of women), media (4.5% of men and 5% of women) or non-governmental organizations (1.9% of men and 4.2% of women).

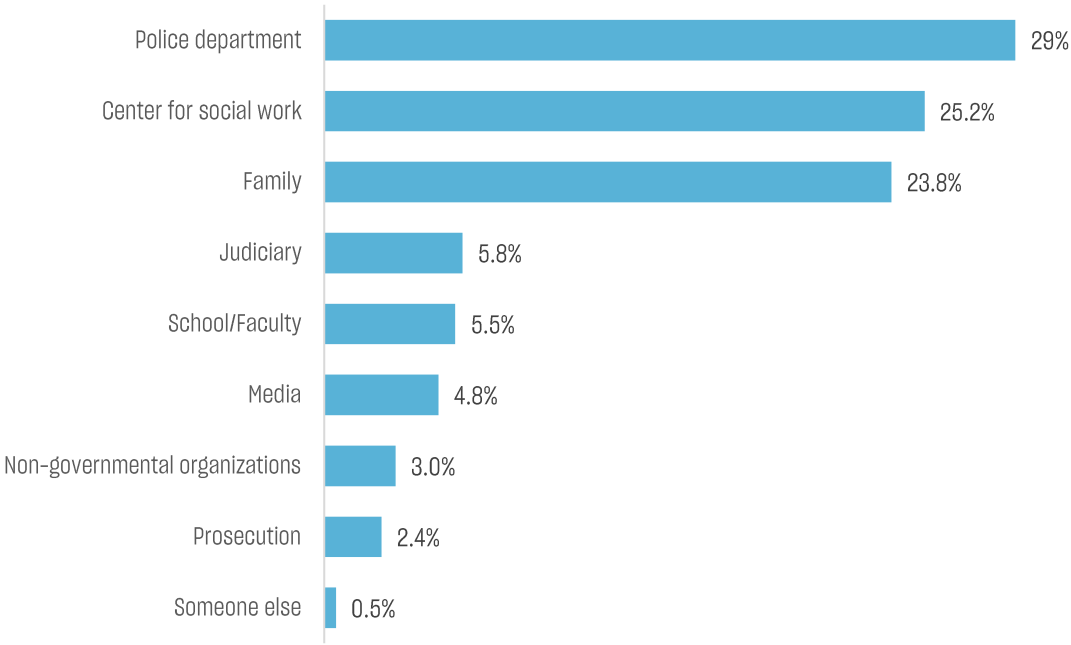


Figure 37: When it comes to psychological violence, which of the listed institutions, organizations and groups is, in your opinion, the most responsible for the prevention of psychological violence?

The respondents perceive the media and centres for social work as most responsible for providing information about psychological violence, as cited by one-quarter of the surveyed population. The Police Directorate comes up third-ranked, although informing the public is definitely not one of their primary tasks. Lower percentages are recorded with family, education institutions and non-governmental organizations.

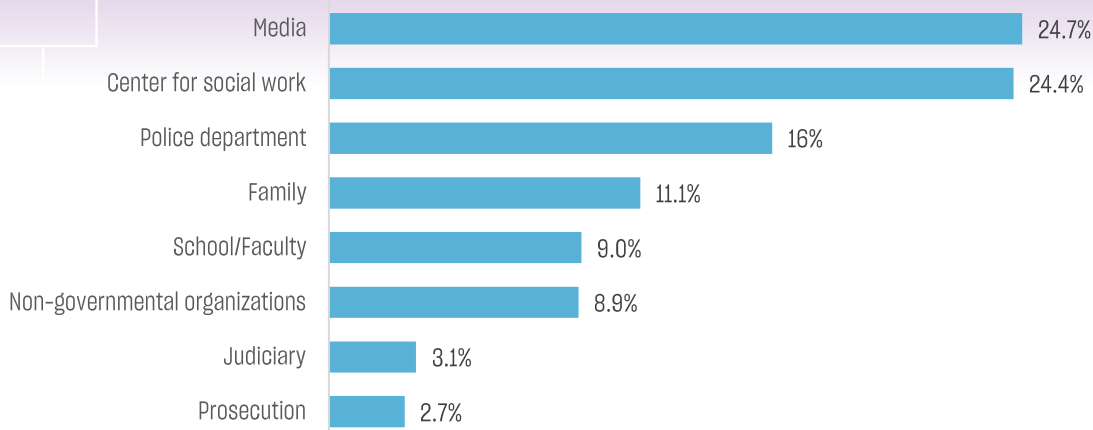


Figure 38: When it comes to psychological violence, which of the listed institutions, organizations and groups is, in your opinion, the most responsible for providing information about psychological violence?

The survey wraps up with the question prompting the respondents to rank media contents and public campaigns on violence against girls and women. Contrary to expectations, the content aired on television comes up as best-ranked. Also, the authority of those that convey a certain message plays a major role, so the content delivered by state institutions is the next most-cited response. The third highest-ranked option is multimedia content and social networks. Content posted by politicians or influencers received lowest rankings.

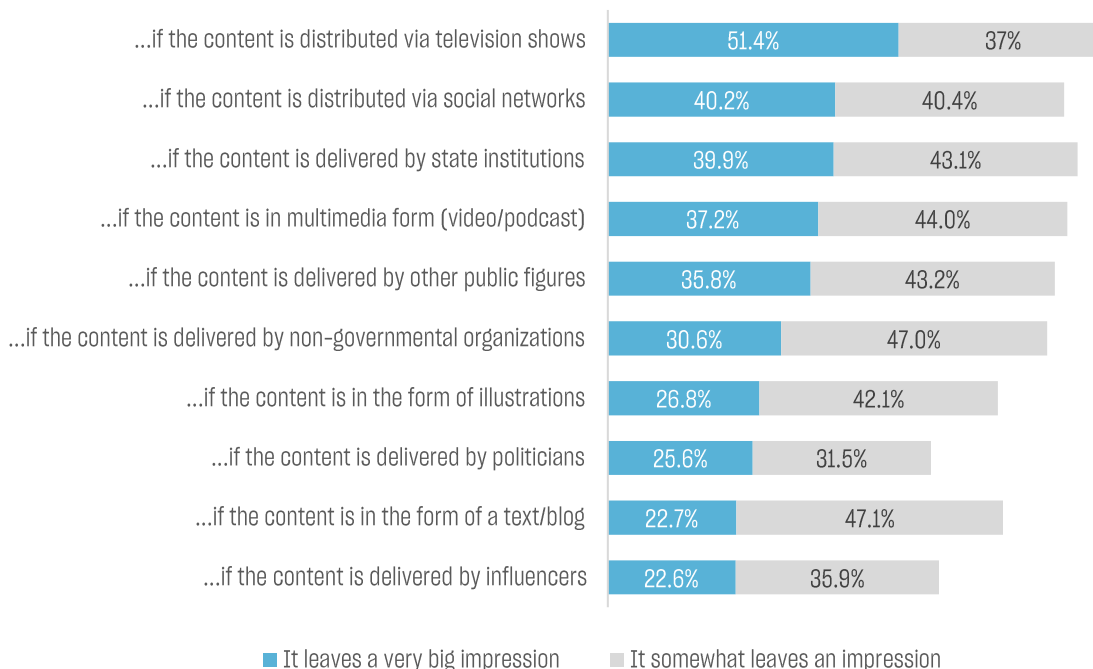


Figure 39: Think about the media content and public campaigns that focused on violence against girls and women. Please rate to what extent this content affects you in relation to the following characteristics



Key findings and conclusions

Although this is not a traditional victimological research in terms of its scope, it has provided us with very important and interesting findings, not only about how psychological violence is perceived by Montenegrin citizens, but also about its prevalence, and it can therefore complement the official statistics that does not disaggregate data per type of violence. The research has revealed very concerning data about this phenomenon being widespread in Montenegrin society. In addition to information obtained directly from women who have personally experienced psychological violence, a somewhat indirect indicator of prevalence was the unusually great level of interest displayed by the respondents in participating in the survey and answering the open-ended questions. Namely, on average, over 60% of the respondents provided answers to open-ended questions, thus greatly exceeding the average response rate recorded in public opinion surveys.

When it comes to the perception of psychological violence, we find that 44.1% of respondents believe this to be most common form of violence in intimate partner and family relationships, and 85% of the surveyed population perceive psychological violence against women and girls as being either very common or at least occurring in individual cases in Montenegro.

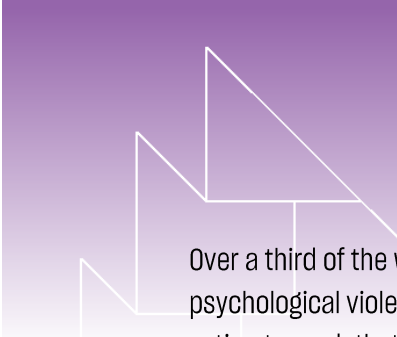
Citizens report on psychological violence against women and girls as occurring most often in marriages and with married couples living with extended families, and over two-thirds (72.8%) identify partner as the abuser. Every tenth respondent believes that psychological violence is most likely to occur in domestic partnerships, an option substantially less cited than marriage, which is perceived as the most likely setting for psychological violence, and couples with children, deemed to be a very likely violence-prone setting.

Although the respondents have different associations to the very term of psychological violence, by far the majority of them cite some form of humiliation and/or mistreatment by a partner. The perceptions of psychological violence as a notion are consistent with the theory.

Citizens indirectly recognize the link between economic dependence and the risk of psychological and other forms of violence. For example, unemployed women and girls (55.2%) are found to be among most vulnerable categories, followed by single mothers. The next most cited factor that contributes to the risk are children - threats of taking away one's children are recognized as the most common form of psychological violence.

It is a concerning finding that as much as one-third of the surveyed citizens believe that women and girls are making false claims of psychological violence just to draw attention to themselves, and that almost one-fifth believe that a man has the right to tell a woman/girl to be quiet if he finds her annoying. Men (35.8%) are more likely than women (26.8%) to say that women and girls make up claims of psychological violence in order to draw attention to themselves (35.8%). A rather sizeable percentage (8.6%) has been recorded with those supporting the claim that a man has the right to insult a woman/girl if she is financially dependent on him.

Despite numerous awareness campaigns, citizens relatively rarely see psychological violence as stemming from unequal power relations between women and men. Alcoholism, drug addiction, gambling and other types of addiction are much more often cited as reasons behind psychological violence (79%).




Over a third of the women covered by the survey report on having personally experienced at least one form of psychological violence. Given the sensitivity of the topic, we can safely assume that this is a very conservative estimate and that the actual percentage is substantially higher. The data were cross-referenced with demographic variables, resulting in an important conclusion that the probability of a woman experiencing psychological violence remains the same, regardless of whether she is younger or older, regardless of her educational background or employment status, or whether she lives in an urban or rural area. In other words, any woman can be subjected to psychological violence. Only women living in low-income households are identified as being more likely than others to be victims of psychological violence. Among the respondents that experienced the threat of having their children taken away from them, more than one-third (40.8%) are unemployed. The unemployed women are also those most likely to report having experienced humiliation and being ridiculed - 41.4%, which is yet another confirmation of the link between financial independence and violence. As many as 9.8% of the respondents claim that they were kicked out of their house/apartment (ie. one in 10 women in Montenegro), and 8.5% say that their partner would destroy their personal belongings and household objects.

More than half of the respondents who experienced some form of psychological violence did not turn to anyone, and almost one-third (30%) turned to family and friends. A fewer percentage of women turned to official institutions and services, such as the Police Directorate (10.9%), the SOS hot line for women and children - victims of violence (8.2%) and centres for social work 7.1%. Those respondents who did not seek help from anyone did not do so out of fear of having their family torn apart (10.6%), fear that no one would believe them (5.9%), patriarchal upbringing/tradition (4.8%), fear of the abuser (4.5%) or fear that the society would be blaming her (4.1%).

According to the testimonies of women who claim to have consulted a health care worker or a professional, in majority of cases, the professionals would write up a report, provide advice or help, and only in 14.8% of cases would they file a report to the police. Therefore, only 14.8% of the competent authorities acted in accordance with the Law on Protection from Domestic Violence and reported abuse to the police.

Apart from these personal accounts, the survey has also revealed that almost half of all the population surveyed (43.3%) have, at some point, personally witnessed a situation where a man was insulting or shouting at his partner, sister, or mother. As many as one-third of those who witnessed such an incident did not react in any way. Reasons cited as an explanation for their lack of reaction include fear of feeling embarrassed by other people, shock, not wanting to aggravate the situation, believing that the victim cannot be helped, but there were also answers such as "I'd rather not interfere in other people's business" or "I have enough problems of my own" or "someone in charge should be handling this". The last three responses indicate that psychological abuse is seen as belonging to a private sphere that the respondents believe should not be interfered with.

Almost two-thirds (60.4%) of the surveyed citizens believe that reporting cases of violence to competent institutions tends to lead to divorce, while more than one quarter (26.6%) of respondents believe that reporting violent incidents tends to prompt a change in the behaviour of the abuser. More than three-fifths of the surveyed population believe that the problem of psychological violence is not given enough attention in Montenegro, and they generally do not consider themselves sufficiently informed about protection mechanisms in place.



The issue of adequate reaction is a recurring theme in responses provided within this survey. Respondents to the survey are obviously very unsure as to what an adequate reaction would be. Therefore, the question of where they would seek out information on how to help a victim is extremely relevant. The largest portion of respondents, one-third of them (33.2%), would turn to the Police Directorate to learn about how to help a person who has suffered psychological violence, while others would turn to the Centre for Social Work, friends and Women's Safe House.

The final conclusion of this research is that psychological violence is a very widespread phenomenon that citizens need to be informed and educated about. It is a positive finding that citizens are showing a keen interest in being informed on this topic, especially in terms of mechanisms for protection against psychological violence, different forms of psychological violence, victim support, but also the legal aspects of the problem.