

# Analysis of Media Reporting and the Effects of Media Reporting on Gender-Based Violence against Women and Girls in Family and Partner Relationships

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**Analysis of Media  
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# Main findings

## Media reporting

- The analysis reveals that the media predominantly reported on cases of physical (76.9%) and sexual (68.3%) violence. On the other hand, cases of structural/systemic<sup>1</sup> violence were reported in 10.9% of the analysed media reports, while cases of economic violence<sup>2</sup> in 10.3% of cases. The media have the least frequently covered online or digital violence (9.8%) and selective abortion cases (7%).
- In more than half of the analysed cases (58.1%) the media reported cases of gender-based violence (GBV) as a private matter. Furthermore, media have the most commonly reported physical (63.8%) and sexual (61.8%) violence as private matters, and reports on these two types of violence were least often categorized as educational in nature. In slightly more than half of the cases (50.7%), the media reported domestic violence as a private matter.

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1 Structural violence or systemic violence is a type of impersonal but ubiquitous violence against women that permeates all pores of society, pointing to the basic, i.e. structural asymmetry of power between women and men, which is replicated and perpetuated through all social institutions and their order, rules and practices in all spheres. - social, political, economic, legal, cultural or religious; and which are characterized by gender inequality and discrimination.

2 The goal of economic violence against women is to establish control over them and bring women to a state of complete financial dependence on the abuser. Women who are exposed to this type of violence do not have access to money or bank accounts, they are denied money for personal needs, but also for the needs of running a household, they may be prevented or discouraged from finding employment on their own; and, if they have it, their earnings are taken away, their professional progress is sabotaged, jointly acquired property is registered in the husband's name, etc.

- The principle of presumption of innocence of the perpetrator was observed in 99.4% of the analysed cases.
- The media have rarely use stereotypes to describe victims of GBV and infrequently provide justification for the perpetrators.
- Sensationalistic elements are present in reporting on GBV, with 10.8% of the cases in headlines and 3.9% of the cases within the actual media reports. In slightly over one-fifth of the cases (21%), analysed media reports featured some form of sensationalistic audio-visual material.
- The analysis shows that when reporting on GBV, the media used the statement of the victim in 14.4% and the statement of the (potential) perpetrator in 7.4% of the cases. These media reports did not record whether the statements were used with or without the consent of those quoted.
- Media reporting on GBV was educational in nature in only 15.2% of cases. Additionally, statistical data were used in only 14.7% of the analysed media reports, and expert opinions were featured in only 20.9% of them.
- Media reporting on GBV lacked more comprehensive contextualization of the issue; journalists rarely use comparative examples, statistical data, or legislative analysis.

## Effects of media reporting

- Unprofessional media reporting on gender-based violence contributes to the reinforcement of societal stereotypes.
- Traditional respondents (30%) tend to form negative views regarding the attribution of blame to women, the victims of violence when exposed to unprofessional media reporting.

- 22% of citizens believe that a man is always to blame for violence committed by a man against a woman/partner. Additionally, 30.1% believe that a man is mostly to blame but that some blame falls on the woman. Furthermore, 3.4% believe that a woman is mostly to blame and that she provoked the incident. The largest group, comprising 44.5% of respondents, states that it is difficult to ascertain blame until both sides are heard.
- Among respondents with authoritarian tendencies, one-third (34%) endorse sanctions if a partner does not fulfil household or marital obligations. When these respondents are exposed to unprofessional media reporting on GBV, every second person (51%) believes that sanctions should exist.
- One in four respondents, i.e. 27.4 % of citizens, believe that women and girls falsely claim to be victims of violence just to attract attention to themselves.
- Among respondents who say there is more violence against women today than before, there are significantly more of those who have read a professionally written article (56.3%) on GBV as part of an experimental treatment, while 25.4% have been exposed to an unprofessionally written article.

# Introduction

This report has been prepared with two primary objectives. The first is to examine how the media in Montenegro report on GBV through the analysis of a sample of 2,661 media reports and to what extent they adhere to the principles of journalistic professionalism and ethical reporting. The second objective is to employ an innovative experimental method to assess the extent and nature of the influence that media reporting on this subject exerts on citizens' attitudes, opinions, and subsequent behaviour.

The criteria used for assessing professionalism and ethics in reporting have been derived from the *Manual for Reporting on Gender-Based Violence Against Women*,<sup>3</sup> which was developed to assist journalists in adopting principles of professional and ethical reporting on GBV.

The analysis of media reporting based on these criteria has shown that media still often write about GBV as a private rather than a societal problem, emphasizing sensationalistic elements of the act itself. Additionally, they frequently compromise the anonymity and privacy of victims by revealing their identities or details that could lead to their identification, thereby subjecting victims to secondary victimization. Putting the victim in the public spotlight further stigmatises them and subjects them to societal/peer pressure. While media have demonstrated a high degree of professionalism in certain segments of reporting, research results indicate that they miss opportunities to fulfil their educational and preventive role regarding this social issue.

The experimental part of the research, which provides empirical confirmation that unprofessional media reporting on GBV reinforces stereotypes in society, demonstrates to what extent media reporting is important, as well as their real power and responsibility. We already know that media play a role in shaping public opinion, but we lack

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<sup>3</sup> The documents is available at: <https://www.osce.org/me/mission-to-montenegro/534203>



knowledge about the extent to which reporting style contributes to formation or consolidation of attitudes and stereotypes that perpetuate violence. This report employs contemporary methodological approaches in social sciences to precisely gauge the cause-and-effect relationship between the style of reporting, media professionalism, and the reinforcement of gender stereotypes among media consumers.

It is important to note that media reporting plays a vital role in raising awareness about prevalence and impact of GBV by depicting its various forms, including domestic violence, sexual violence and harassment, psychological violence, and stalking. Media reporting can contribute to preventive efforts by educating the public about the fundamental causes and risk factors of GBV. By addressing core issues such as toxic masculinity, misogyny, and power imbalances, the media can play a pivotal role in creating a safer society for all. Enhanced understanding and recognition of this issue can initiate public discourse and societal pressure on potential perpetrators.

In conclusion, reporting on GBV helps victims know they are not alone and that their experiences are acknowledged. This validation can encourage victims to come forward, seek help, and break the silence surrounding this issue. It can and should motivate them to use the support and resources available to them.

# 1. Methodological framework

The project has two primary objectives. Firstly, it seeks to understand the past practice of reporting by Montenegrin media on cases of GBV. Secondly, it aims to measure the effects of reporting that does not conform to journalistic professional and ethical standards on citizens' attitudes towards this topic. Each of these two objectives required an innovative and different approach to data collection and analysis.

## 1.1. Analysis of media reporting

For the purpose of the first objective, which seeks to measure the effects of reporting that deviates from journalistic professional and ethical standards on citizens' attitudes towards this topic, a comprehensive analysis of media reporting on GBV was conducted. The analysis focused on television reporting as well as reporting on news portals and in daily newspapers, in the following types of media:

Type of media	TV stations	Online portals	Daily newspapers
Media outlet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- RTCG</li><li>- Prva</li><li>- Nova</li><li>- Vijesti</li><li>- Adria</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Vijesti</li><li>- CDM</li><li>- Analitika</li><li>- Dan</li><li>- RTCG</li><li>- Pobjeda</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Pobjeda</li><li>- Dan</li><li>- Vijesti</li></ul>

Our analysis covers reporting on the topic of workplace violence against women spanning over a three-year period (March 2020 – March 2023), especially considering that emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic has led to a surge in domestic violence cases. During this period, violence

has been on the rise both globally<sup>4</sup> and in Montenegro<sup>5</sup>.

For the purpose of analysis, material on the reporting of the mentioned media during the specified period was collected from the news archive maintained by the Arhimed Agency. Given the expansive nature of the analysis timeframe and the multitude of media outlets involved, the project team conducted a detailed search of reporting on cases of GBV to ensure a more focused search. The search in the extensive database of media reports maintained by Arhimed was initially guided by documented cases of femicide in Montenegro over the past three years, followed by the use of keywords commonly featured in texts related to GBV.

Upon collecting the material, each news report was coded according to a scheme designed by the research team. The coding scheme was created as a series of indicators based on the *Manual for Reporting on Gender-Based Violence against Women*. These indicators shed more light on the areas in which Montenegrin media adhere to professional and ethical reporting principles.

## 1.2. Analysis of the effects of media reporting

For the purposes of the second objective, which aimed to assess the extent and nature of the impact of media reporting on this topic on the attitudes, opinions, and subsequent behaviour of citizens, a research experiment was designed. Initially, three texts were

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4 More information available at: [https://www.economist.com/graphic-detail/2020/04/22/domestic-violence-has-increased-during-coronavirus-lock-downs?utm\\_medium=cpc.adword.pd&utm\\_source=google&ppccampaignID=18151738051&ppcadID=&utm\\_campaign=a.22brand\\_pmax&utm\\_content=conversion.direct-response.anonymous&gclid=Cj0KCQjw0IGnBhDU-ARIsAMwFDLIEDVZOa25w-d\\_FFAzYULd4MNC9mwuwC94pqp-3bUsAv0ktTI-9b3MMaAskCEALw\\_wcB&gclidsrc=aw.ds](https://www.economist.com/graphic-detail/2020/04/22/domestic-violence-has-increased-during-coronavirus-lock-downs?utm_medium=cpc.adword.pd&utm_source=google&ppccampaignID=18151738051&ppcadID=&utm_campaign=a.22brand_pmax&utm_content=conversion.direct-response.anonymous&gclid=Cj0KCQjw0IGnBhDU-ARIsAMwFDLIEDVZOa25w-d_FFAzYULd4MNC9mwuwC94pqp-3bUsAv0ktTI-9b3MMaAskCEALw_wcB&gclidsrc=aw.ds)

5 More information available at: [https://www.socioloskaluca.ucg.ac.me/img/arhiva/PDF2020\\_2/Vujovic.pdf](https://www.socioloskaluca.ucg.ac.me/img/arhiva/PDF2020_2/Vujovic.pdf) ; <https://www.slobodnaevropa.org/a/porodico-no-nasilje-crna-gora-pandemija/30518116.html>

designed to simulate newspaper articles. The first article represents an unprofessionally written article on GBV that's not in line with the recommendations of the *Manual for Reporting on Gender-Based Violence against Women*. The second article represents a professionally written newspaper piece on GBV that adheres to all the recommendations of the manual. The third newspaper article is unrelated to the topic of GBV. The group that has received that article has served as a control group, facilitating the validation of effects observed in the first two groups.

The texts were professionally designed to resemble pieces from newspapers to make them as credible as possible. Additionally, each participant was presented with them as if they were real newspaper articles.

All the texts presented to the participants are available in the Annex of this report.

The fundamental idea of the research experiment is to determine whether there are connections between the treatment to which the participants were subjected (the newspaper article they read) and their responses to questions about various aspects of the topic - gender-based violence.

The distribution of texts among participants was entirely random. The main goal of this approach is to ensure that the participants in all three groups are identical in all other characteristics except one - the treatment to which they were exposed. In this way, we eliminated the possibility that other characteristics of the participants (such as their gender, region of origin, or age group) could be factors explaining differences in responses among the three groups. As a result, given the uniformity of other participant characteristics, differences among them can be explained by the one difference that exists in the experiment - the treatment they were exposed to, i.e., the newspaper article they read.

For the purposes of this research, a two-stage stratified random

sample was designed, which is representative of the adult population of Montenegro. The first stage of stratification is by region. In this stage, the entire territory of Montenegro was divided into 3 regions: northern, central, and southern. The second stage of stratification is based on the size of settlements, with each region subdivided into large, medium, and small settlements. The size of the polling station was taken as the basis for sampling, and the interviewers, at each selected polling station, randomly selected a household to conduct the survey. In the final stage, the “last birthday” method was used to select a survey participant within the household.

The basic frequencies presented in the report reflect the attitudes of all adult citizens of Montenegro, given that the research was conducted on a representative sample, which guarantees a maximum measurement error of +/- 3.1% for incidences measured at 50% on a 95% confidence interval.

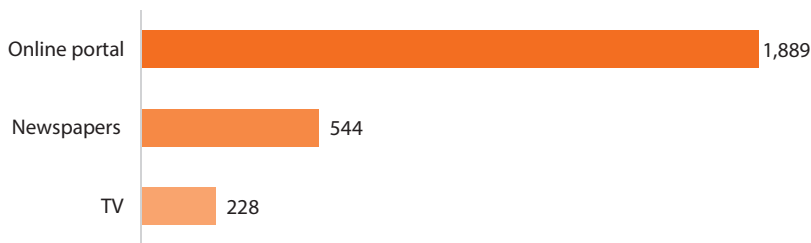
Data was collected between June 12 and June 26, 2023. The research involved a sample size of one thousand respondents, with 48.5% male participants and 51.5% female participants.

## 2. Analysis of the effects of media reporting

### 2.1. Structure of analysed media reports

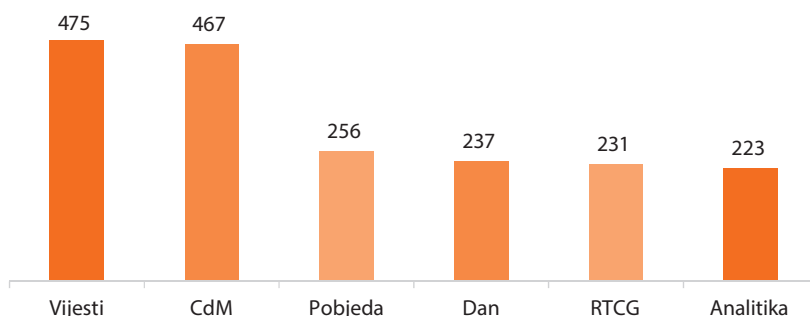
In the research section related to the practice of the Montenegrin media reporting on cases of GBV, 2,661 media reports were analysed. Out of the total number of analysed reports, 1,889 (71%) were published on online portals, 544 (20.5%) in newspapers, and 228 (8.6%) were broadcasted on television.

**Graph 1:** Type of media



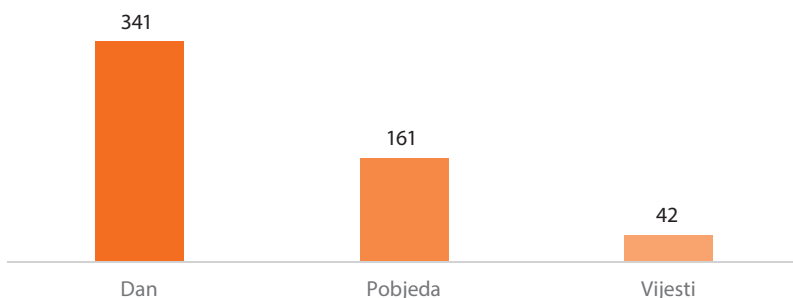
In terms of analysis of media reports on GBV published on online portals (N=1,889), 475 of them (25.1%) were published on the Vijesti online portal, 467 (24.7%) on the CdM online portal, 256 (13.6%) on the Pobjeda online portal, 237 (12.5%) on the Dan online portal, 231 (12.2%) on the RTCG online portal, and 223 (11.8%) on the Analitika online portal. Other online portals were not part of our analysis for the purposes of this research.

**Graph 2:** Portals – Structure of analysed reports



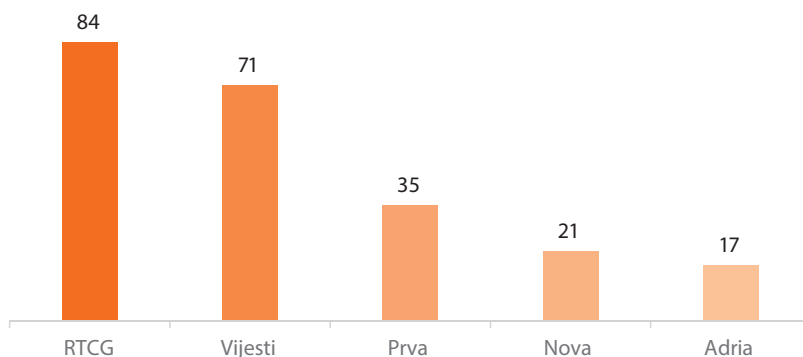
Out of 544 analysed media reports on GBV published in printed daily newspapers, 341 (62.7%) were published in Dan, 161 (29.6%) in Pobjeda, and 42 (7.7%) in Vijesti.

**Graph 3:** Daily newspapers – Structure of analysed articles



When it comes to TV stations, out of a total of 228 television reports on GBV, 84 (36.8%) were broadcasted on Radio Television of Montenegro (RTCG1 and RTCG2), 71 (31.1%) on Vijesti TV, 35 (15.4%) on Prva TV, 21 (9.3%) on Nova TV, and 17 (7.5%) on Adria TV.

**Graph 4:** TV stations – Structure of analysed reports

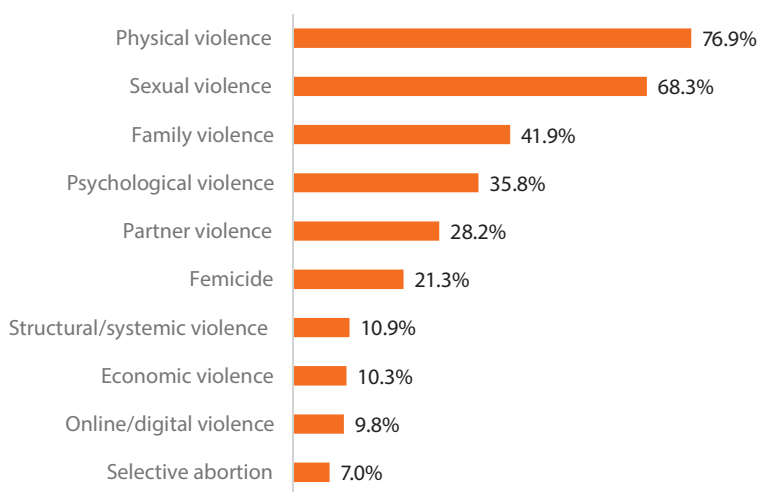


At the level of analysed media reports (2,661), we were interested in the frequency of reporting on different types of gender-based violence against women. Using the *Manual for Reporting on Gender-Based*

*Violence against Women*, we identified ten different forms of gender-based violence: physical, psychological, sexual, familial, partner, economic, structural/systemic, online/digital violence, femicide, and selective abortion. The following graph presents data on the frequency of reporting on these types of GBV. Given that some reports may encompass more than one type of violence, the total percentage in the graph exceeds 100%.

The analysis reveals that the media most commonly covered cases of physical (76.9%) and sexual (68.3%) violence. On the other hand, cases of structural/systemic violence were reported in 10.9% of the analysed media reports, while cases of economic violence were reported in 10.3% of the cases. Media least frequently reported on cases of online or digital violence (9.8%) and cases of selective abortion (7%).

**Graph 5:** *Type of violence*



Additionally, it should be noted that these types of violence often overlap, with nearly every case of sexual violence reported by Montenegrin media implying an element of physical violence as well.



## 2.2. Data analysis

The analysis of media report data is presented in the form of seven sections as follows:

First, data related to educational/informative elements of media reports are presented. These elements encompass the inclusion of experts in media reporting, the use of statistical data, the provision of legislative analysis, and the presentation of comparative practices.

Second, data related to whether the media described the physical and psychological state of the victim, the method of committing the crime, and whether medical reports were featured in the reporting.

Next, data on the presence of sensationalism elements in media reports are presented.

Fourth, data on whether the media provided any justification for the violence committed and (potential) perpetrators – whether they referred to their roles in society and the family or to tradition – as well as whether they attributed the reason for the violence to the victim, and whether they attempted in any way to tarnish the victim's reputation.

Fifth, we presented an analysis of data on the presence of information that could reveal the identity of the victim and perpetrator.

Sixth, we offered an overview of the frequency of using statements – from the victim, perpetrator, their lawyers, and witnesses – when reporting on cases of gender-based violence.

Lastly, data is presented regarding media reporting on the judicial/criminal process. It is crucial to emphasize once more that the analysis of media reports spanned from March 2020 to March 2023, and therefore, it is plausible that certain cases of GBV may not have been entirely adjudicated in court within this timeframe. Hence, this information demands special consideration with respect to the timeframe within which the analysis was conducted.

All the elements mentioned above were measured against indicators based on the recommendations from the *Manual for Reporting on Gender-Based Violence against Women*.

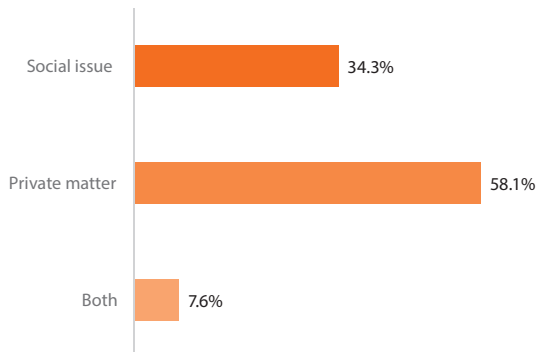
## 2.2.1 Educational and informative elements

Educational elements should play a pivotal role when discussing media reporting on cases of GBV. Their significance lies in providing a comprehensive understanding of this issue, promoting empathy, initiating informed discussions, and encouraging action in the fight against gender-based violence. The media has the power to shape public perceptions and attitudes concerning this matter through its reporting.

When reporting on sensitive and multidimensional issues like gender-based violence, it is imperative to go beneath the surface and provide the audience with a deep understanding of the problem. Educational elements, such as the inclusion of experts, statistical data, offering legal framework analysis, and comparative practices, enable just that.

Data indicates that more than half of the analysed media reports (58.1%) reported on cases of GBV as a private matter, while 34.4% treated it as a social issue. The remaining 7.6% of media reports discussed cases of GBV as both a private and a social matter.

**Graph 6:** *Do media report on the situation as a private matter or as a social issue?*



This first indicator already implies that journalists have not recognized the importance of reporting on GBV as a societal problem, aiming to connect the broader context with individual cases. GBV often has deep

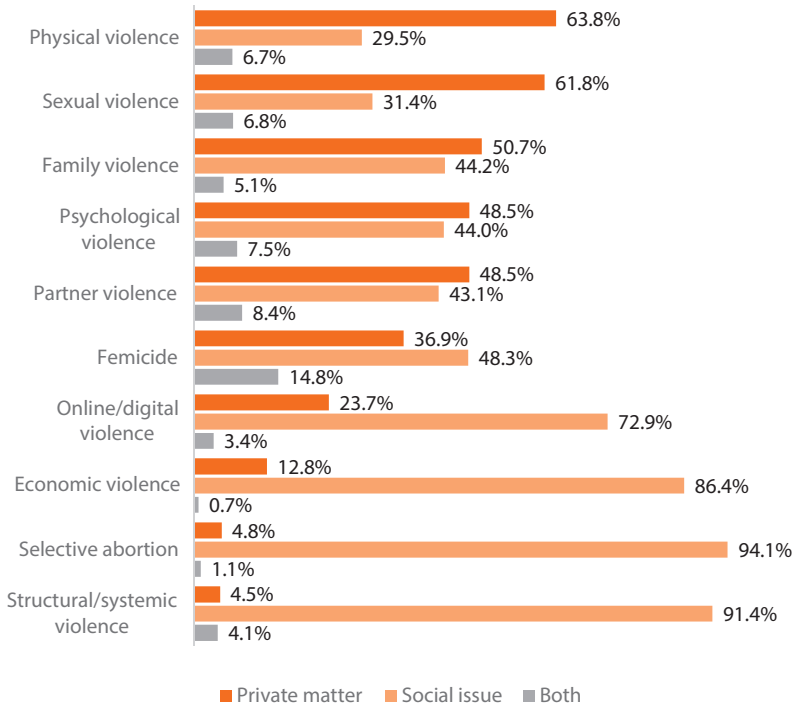
roots in social structures and economic factors. By reporting it as a social issue, the media can link this issue to the broader context of power imbalances and social inequalities.

When cross-referencing this data with the types of violence, it becomes evident that media most commonly depicted physical and sexual violence as private matters (in 63.8% of physical violence cases and 61.8% of sexual violence cases). Media also portrayed cases of family violence as private matters in slightly over half of the cases (50.7%).

On the other hand, when reporting on online, economic, structural violence, and selective abortion, the media most frequently presented them as social issues.

When looking at the 'Both' category (which refers to reporting on violence as both a private matter and a social issue), it is noticeable media most often used this approach in reporting on femicide (14.8%).

**Graph 7: Type of Violence X Is it reported as a private matter or as a social issue?**



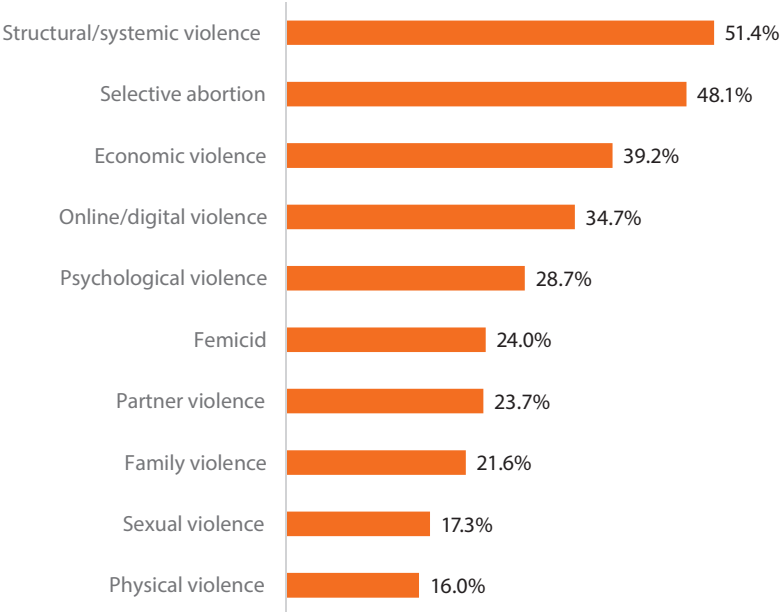
Media reports analysis indicates that only 15.2% of them have an educational character. Additionally, only 14.7% of the analysed media reports incorporated statistical data.

An educational approach allows the public to better understand the underlying issues related to gender-based violence, including patriarchal culture, gender roles, and societal biases. With educational elements in reporting, the media can significantly contribute to dispelling the prejudices and myths surrounding GBV, which is crucial for changing a culture that tolerates and/or justifies violence.

When comparing this with the data on types of violence, we observe that the majority of media reports on instances of structural violence have an educational character (51.4%). This is somewhat understandable, as this type of violence involves institutions or societal structures harming

individuals in some way. Nevertheless, this number is still quite modest, given the importance of an educational approach in reporting on GBV. Following these reports are those on cases of selective abortion (48.1%). On the other hand, media reports on cases of physical and sexual violence are the least likely to be considered educational in their nature. This observation gains on importance when considering that this analysis demonstrates that psychological and physical violence cases dominate media coverage in the context of GBV.

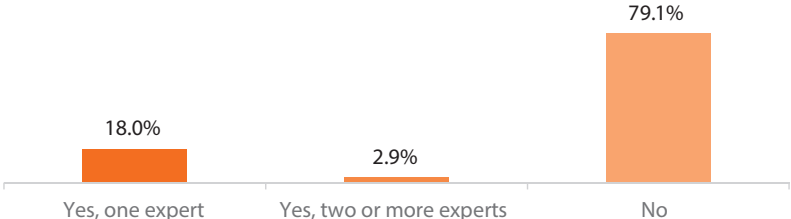
**Graph 8:** *Type of Violence X Does the media report have an educational character?*



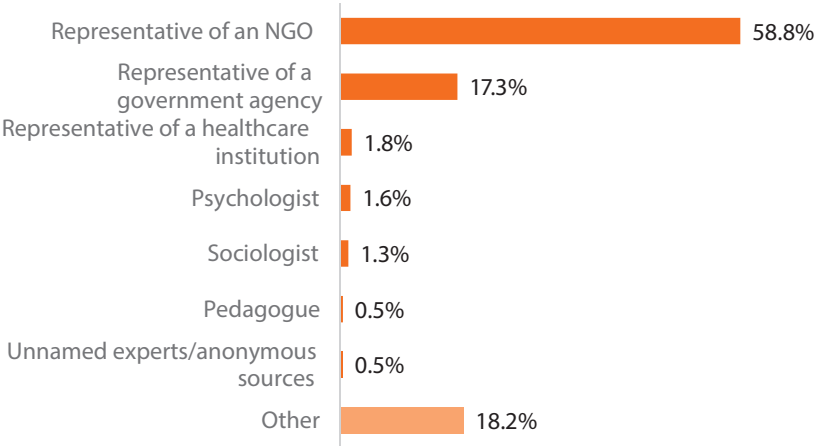
A feature on GBV can become significantly more educational if journalists invest additional effort to incorporate expert opinions into the story. Experts can add a deeper understanding of the complexity and depth of the issue. Thanks to their insights, the public can learn more about the causes, consequences, and context of GBV. Furthermore, experts can educate the public about GBV by offering information on different forms of violence, their characteristics, and their impact on victims. This facilitates heightened awareness and comprehension of the problem.

However, an analysis of the collected material reveals that a cumulative 20.9% of reports included expert opinions, with 2.9% incorporating the perspectives of two or more experts. Conversely, more than a half of the reports that featured expert opinions predominantly presented viewpoints from representatives of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), while 17.3% included opinions from government representatives.

**Graph 9:** *Does the media reports include expert opinions on the given topic?*

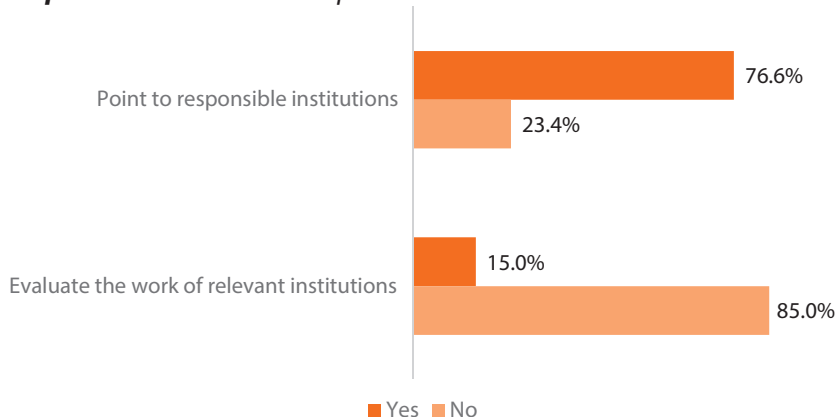


**Graph 10:** *Who are the experts included in the reporting?*



The analysis of media reports indicates that when reporting on GBV, in more than three-quarters of cases (76.6%), the media point out the responsible or competent institutions for the given case. The media did not provide this information in the remaining 23.4% of cases. Additionally, in only 15% of the analysed reports, the media scrutinized the performance of competent institutions.

**Graph 11:** Does the media report:



Cross-referencing the data reveals that, among those media reports that identified the responsible authorities, only 18.3% raised questions about their performance. It's essential to emphasize the significance of scrutinizing institutional actions since this practice fosters transparency, enhances institutional accountability, and consequently contributes to overall advancements in addressing and preventing further instances of GBV.

Additionally, the analysis has shown that only 3.3% of media reports provided an analysis of the legislation regulating the field being discussed. On the other hand, only 1% of the analysed media reports pointed out examples of comparative practices, while 99% of them did not use comparative practices.

These two elements in media reporting are of utmost importance as they not only enable and facilitate an understanding of the legal framework but also indicate legal gaps that need to be addressed to enable better legal handling of similar cases in the future. Elaborating

on these aspects in reports offers insights into the context and gravity of the issue, indicating the extent to which the problem of GBV is acknowledged within the legal system. It also has the potential to empower victims by demonstrating that their experiences are recognized and comprehended on a broader scale.

## 2.2.2. Description of the execution of violence

When it comes to cases of GBV, the media should be extremely cautious when using explicit details about the nature of the violence, as well as the physical and psychological consequences suffered by the victim, and they should avoid using them.

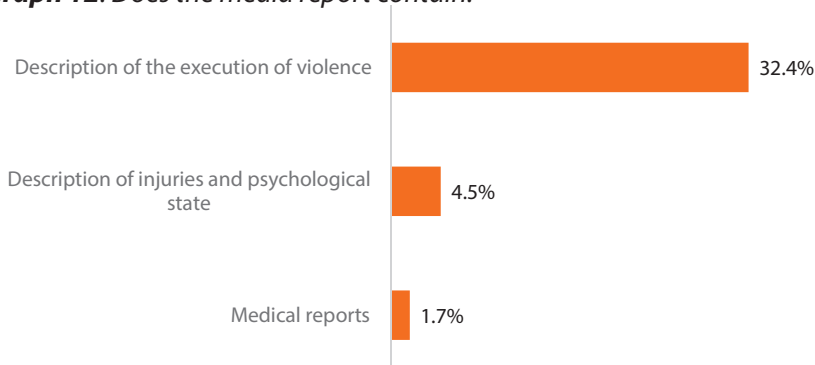
Reporting on these details violates the dignity of the victim, causes re-traumatization, and stigmatizes the victim in society, potentially leading to shame for the victim. In their reporting, the media should promote empathy and educate the public, with constant attention to the balance between responsible reporting and informing the public without causing harm to the victim.

In line with this, the use of medical reports should also be avoided, and if used, several steps should be taken to ensure that the reporting is done professionally and in accordance with ethical rules. In this sense, it is of particular importance to have the consent of the victim to use and publish such information, and all information that could directly indicate the victim's identity should be omitted from the published media report.

Our analysis shows that the media described the method of injury in almost one-third (32.4%) of cases, while in 4.5% of cases, they described the victim's injuries and psychological condition. In 1.7% of cases, they have used medical reports.



**Graph 12:** Does the media report contain:



The responsibility falls on journalists to further educate themselves on this topic so they can strike a balance between informing the public and respecting the privacy of victims. Journalists must be responsible and carefully select the information they will convey to raise awareness about GBV without causing additional harm to the victims or promoting sensationalism. The following section reveals the extent of sensationalism in Montenegrin media when reporting on cases of GBV.

### 2.2.3. Sensationalism

Sensationalism in media coverage of GBV is the practice of emphasizing sensational or disturbing aspects of a story in order to gain audience attention, often at the expense of a serious understanding of the problem. This form of reporting often highlights dramatic elements and employs shocking details to elicit heightened emotional responses from media consumers.

In the domain of media reporting, sensationalism aimed at attracting attention and generating heightened emotional responses has the potential to undermine the integrity of sensitive topics.

Sensationalism can have grave negative consequences. Such reporting can dehumanize the victim of violence by turning their suffering into shocking entertainment or sensational content. There is a risk that the media will turn a serious topic of GBV into entertainment content in society. This can create very dangerous assumptions for the normalization of violence in society.

The analysis shows that every tenth report (10.8%) on GBV uses some kind of sensationalist headlines.

Examples of such headlines include:

*"The fourth victim comes forward: He forced me to touch him."*

*"Father sells his daughter for 20,000."*

*"Man pays people to watch him rape a woman"*

*"Trial in Bijelo Polje: A man suspected of forcing a girl into marriage, pulling her by the hair and slapping her."*

In 3.9% of cases, the media incorporated elements of sensationalism through the article, and additionally, in 21% of cases, they also described shocking scenes.

It is important to perceive these two data as connected: in 3.9% of the analysed media reports, special elements of sensationalism were noticed – but not those that necessarily include shocking scenes. On the other hand, in 21% of cases, the media did describe shocking scenes in reports and reportages, and even those descriptions can, in part, be viewed as sensationalism. Some of the instances of particular sensationalism in reporting include:

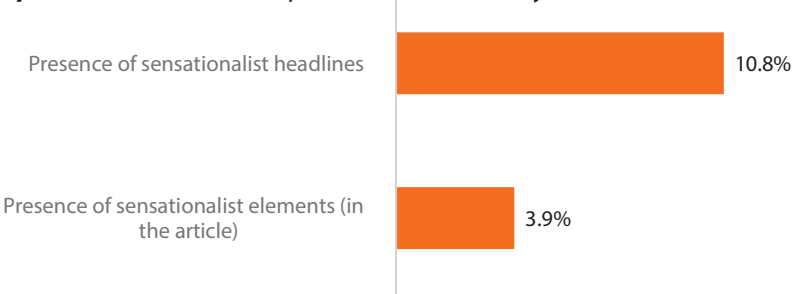
*"He wanted something more, the girl resisted, but he didn't care. He tore her underwear she showed him in the photo. Then he raped her."*

*"When she was fifteen, her stepfather crawled into her bed. They were alone in the house. She was awakened by his hand on her thigh."*

*"He said that he was going to take out her eye, or break her arm or leg, or that he was going to kill her, and then he told her that he wanted to have a child with her, which he achieved through sexual intercourse, which resulted in the victim's pregnancy."*

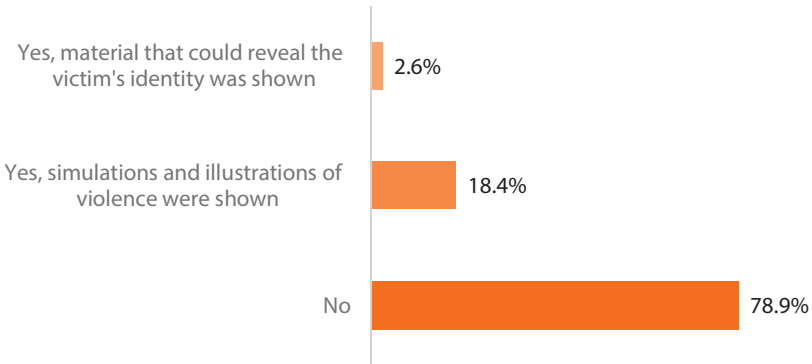
*"Cetinje massacre will pale in comparison to what I intend to do..."*

**Graph 13:** Are the media reports characterised by:



A cumulative 21% of television broadcasts contained some form of sensationalist-auditory material – of which 2.6% used material that could reveal the identity of the victim, and 18.4% of them showed simulations or illustrations of violence.

**Graph 14:** Was any kind of sensationalist visual-auditory material used during reporting?



Based on these data, we can conclude that the media more often resort to the use of sensationalist headlines than the use of sensationalist content within reports. The reason for this may be the 'need' to win over readers and/or viewers with the title and lead them to read the media report, i.e. follow the media reportage.

It is important for the media refrain from this practice, regardless of the fact that it can attract readers and contribute to short-term goals, which are significantly smaller than the negative consequences that are caused in this way. Ethical, responsible and sensitive reporting is essential, especially when dealing with sensitive topics such as GBV.

## 2.2.4. Justification for violence

One of the particularly dangerous practices in media coverage of GBV is the use of stereotypes, especially when it aims to justify violence. Such reporting, which is full of stereotypes (examples: “she deserved it”; “she provoked him”; “he was just venting his anger”...), can strongly contribute to the maintenance of harmful social norms and perpetuate a culture of violence. In addition, such reporting can reduce the abuser’s responsibility for his actions and shift the blame onto the victim or the circumstances. Perhaps most dangerously, this kind of reporting can encourage others to justify their own violent behaviour with said stereotypes.

Nevertheless, the analysis shows dominantly positive findings when it comes to this topic, related to the work of Montenegrin journalists. Among the positive examples, it should be noted that in only 0.3% of cases, when reporting on GBV, did the media talk about gender roles in society and the family, while in only 0.2% of cases, did they report on this themes called for tradition. In the cases where tradition was invoked (6 cases in total), the media predominantly reported on cases of GBV in Middle Eastern countries, such as Iran and Syria, and highlighted cases of ‘honour killing’ and ‘bride kidnapping’.

During the analysis of media reports, it was recognized that the media provided justification for the abuser in only 0.2% of cases. In those cases, it was recognized that there is frequent reference on the one hand to the figure of the father who, due to the responsibility he carries with him, ‘justifies violence’. On the other hand, violence was justified in cases where the perpetrator was under the influence of alcohol. Although rarely noticed in this analysis, any practice of relativizing or justifying violence is undoubtedly a negative phenomenon that must be completely eliminated when it comes to reporting on gender-based violence.

In the analysed texts, the use of stereotypical expressions to describe the victim was not recognized at all. Additionally, in only 0.2% of cases, the media attributed responsibility for the violence to the victim. Similarly, in only 0.2% of cases, attempts to damage the victim’s reputation through reporting were recognized in the texts. In those five cases, it was stated that the victim became an ‘easier target’ because he was ‘under the influence of alcohol’, or that the victim ‘ran away from home’, or that he had a ‘tendency to choose older partners’.

Although the number of media reports that contained some of these elements was extremely small, it is important to continuously emphasize that any use of them should be completely eradicated from media reports because they can leave lasting consequences on the victim and even create a culture in which violence is tolerated.

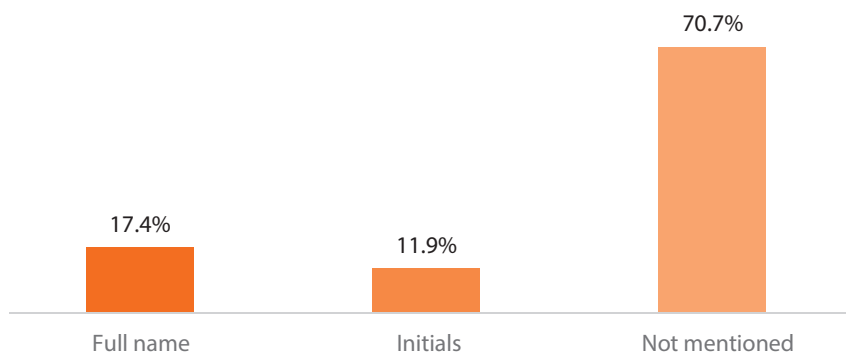
## 2.2.5. Elements indicating one's identity

We have analysed the section regarding the disclosure of the victim's identity with special attention. Victims of gender-based violence often experience immense trauma and may fear retaliation from the perpetrator or social stigma. Revealing their identity can expose them to additional risks or cause additional emotional suffering. Furthermore, disclosing the identity of the victim represents a gross violation of human rights. Montenegrin media has significant room for improvement in this regard, and this is one of the indicators where zero tolerance for violations of the Handbook's recommendations is necessary.

### 2.2.5.1 Victim's identity

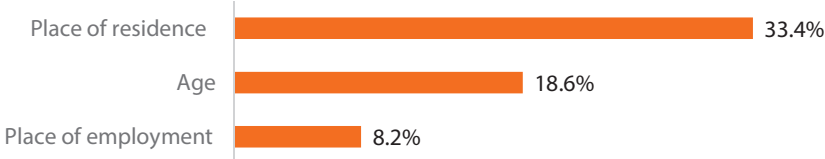
Slightly over a quarter of the analysed articles (25%) contain the full name of the victim, indicating a significant opportunity for improvement in reporting on GBV, as this goes against one of the basic guidelines for professional and ethical reporting on GBV.

**Graph 15:** *Does the media report mention the victim's name or initials?*



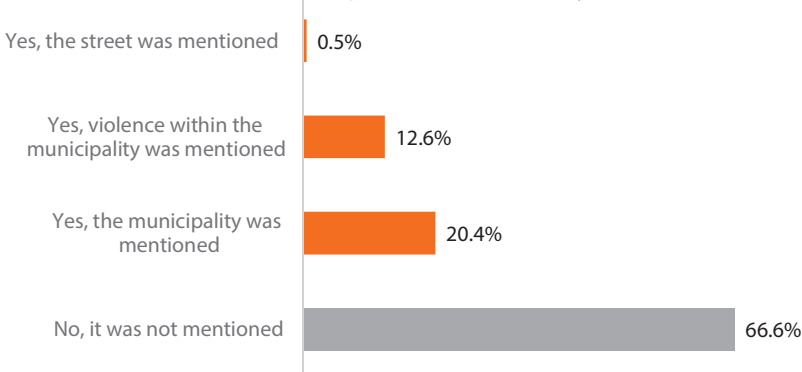
We have also analysed other elements that could reveal the victim’s identity. In this regard, it is important to note that almost a third (33.4%) of media reports contained information about the victim’s place of residence, 18.6% mentioned the victim’s age, and 8.2% disclosed the victim’s workplace. Furthermore, 4% of media reports, including television broadcasts and newspaper articles, featured photographs of the victim. This data was gathered from the analysis of 772 media reports.

**Graph 16:** Information revealing the victim’s identity



Although in 66.6% of cases, the media did not mention where the victim lives, in one-fifth of cases (20.4%), they mentioned the municipality where the victim resides, while in 12.6% of cases, they even mentioned the settlement within the municipality. In a small number, only 0.5% of cases, the media even mentioned the street where the victim lives.

**Graph 17:** Information revealing the victim’s identity



This data underscores that although the media generally refrain from revealing the victim’s identity, they do, in certain instances, choose to disclose information that directly threatens the victim’s privacy and dignity. It is imperative to put an end to such media practices. Victim

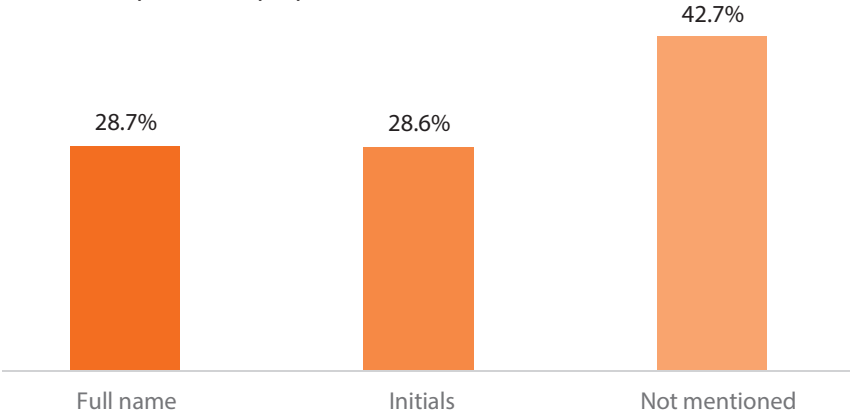
information, whether pertaining to different types of violence or femicide, should not be disclosed unless there is a justifiable reason, such as public interest or the victim's or their family's consent (in the case of femicide or violence against a minor). Revealing the victim's identity in GBV reporting can have severe and lasting adverse consequences for both the victims and society. This can lead to the retraumatization of the victim, jeopardize their safety, and potentially harm investigative or judicial processes. These are just a few of the reasons why it is crucial for the media to safeguard the victim's identity when reporting on GBV.

In addition to not disclosing the victim's identity, it is also important, for various reasons, not to reveal the identity of the perpetrator. Disclosing the perpetrator's identity can indirectly lead to the victim's identity being exposed, and sometimes, it may infringe upon the basic human rights of the perpetrator, undermining the presumption of innocence or stigmatizing individuals who may later be proven innocent.

The analysis of media reports indicates that in 17.4% of cases, the media mentioned the full name of the (potential) perpetrator, while in 11.9% of cases, they mentioned the initials of the (potential) perpetrator.

The analysis reveals that in 28.6% of cases, the media mentioned the initials of the (potential) perpetrator, while in 28.7% of cases, they mentioned the full name.

**Graph 18:** Does the media report mention the name or initials of the (potential) perpetrator?



This practice can undermine one of the most important legal principles in such cases – the presumption of innocence. **Montenegrin media rarely engage in such practices. The analysis shows that in as many as 99.4% of cases, the media respected the presumption of innocence of the perpetrator** when reporting on GBV cases .

### 2.2.6. Statements

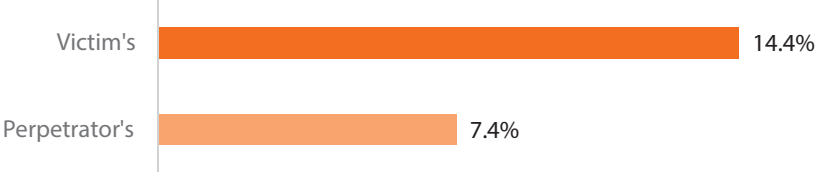
While no explicit rule prohibits using victim statements, it is crucial to note that, in cases where they are used, they should be handled carefully, with a high degree of responsibility, and, above all, in accordance with ethical principles.

Statements should be used with the victim’s consent and with a focus on their well-being. The objective should be to raise awareness of GBV and contribute to a meaningful discussion on this topic rather than merely seeking to attract an audience or sensationalize media coverage.

Similarly, when using statements from potential perpetrators, a high level of caution is required. If not done properly, the use of such statements can contribute to the re-traumatization of the victim. Additionally, using statements from perpetrators may shift the focus toward the perpetrator’s standpoint, thereby disregarding the victim’s experience. Furthermore, media reports incorporating perpetrator statements may take on a sensationalist tone.

The analysis indicates that when reporting on GBV, the media used victim statements in 14.4% of cases and statements from (potential) perpetrators in 7.4% of cases. These media reports did not specify whether the statements were obtained with or without the consent of those quoted.

**Graph 19:** *The used statement belonged?*





In 1.4% of cases, the media used witness statements when reporting. Among witnesses, parents (30.8%), other family members (25.6%), such as siblings, neighbours (23.1%), children (5.1%), and others (7.7%) were the most commonly interviewed. This is another area where journalists must exercise extreme caution since statements from parents, relatives, neighbours, and/or friends can potentially lead to the identification of the victim.

While witness statements can offer valuable perspectives, the media should ensure that their use is guided by ethical principles. If witness statements are included in reporting, they should be contextualized, verified, and used in a way that respects the well-being and privacy of all individuals involved. The primary focus of reporting should continue to be on raising awareness of GBV, advocating for victims, and contributing to an informed public discourse.

The data demonstrates that, in cumulative terms, statements from lawyers were incorporated into media reports in 20.9% of cases – in 19.7% of these cases, it was a statement from the lawyer of a potential perpetrator; in 1.1% of cases, it was a statement from the lawyer of the victim, and in only 0.1% of cases, statements from both the victim's lawyer and the perpetrator's lawyer were included.

## 2.2.7. Judicial process

Reporting on the judicial process is of utmost importance when it comes to cases of GBV.

This type of reporting provides transparency and informs the public about the legal sanctions the perpetrator has faced as a consequence of their actions. Moreover, these pieces of information carry a responsibility and send a strong message that cases of GBV are taken seriously, and those who commit such acts will be held accountable for their actions. This form of reporting also plays an important role in educating the public and fostering awareness among citizens. Additionally, it can serve as an empowerment tool for other victims, encouraging them to come forward and report their abusers.

In the context of media reporting on GBV, the use of statements from

the relevant court provides insight into the process and, due to the expertise of the individuals whose statements are most frequently used, often prevents different interpretations or relativization of the violence. Statements from the presiding judge also have educational value as they typically bring the case closer to the broader public and prevent sensationalism by providing a clear and expert analysis of the case.

Data indicate that in 45.1% of cases, the media reported on sanctions imposed on the perpetrator, while in 32.1% of cases, they covered the final verdict rendered by the competent court in the given case. Moreover, in 42.3% of cases, the media incorporated statements from the competent court or judge to resolve the case.

**Graph 20:** Was there reporting on:



## 3. Analysis of research experiment results

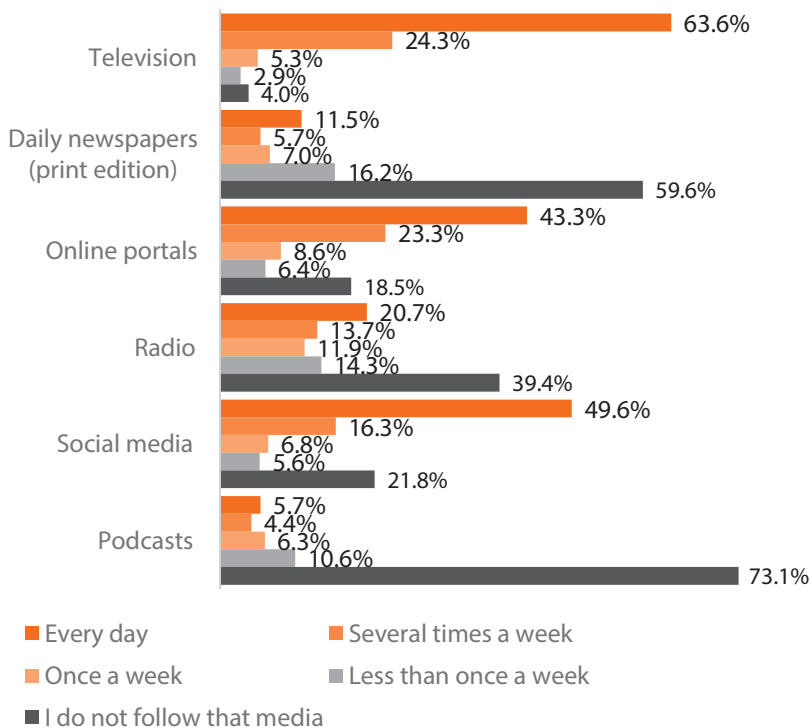
The research experiment findings are categorized into four sections. The first section discusses the viewership and readership of the media in Montenegro. The subsequent section takes a closer look on the effects unprofessional media reporting on the attitudes of Montenegrin citizens, focusing on their attribution of blame in partner relationship violence, their views on what warrants punishment in such relationships, the potential influence of media reporting on reporting (or not reporting) violence, and the (de)stigmatization of the topic. Following that, data is presented regarding Montenegrin citizens' perceptions of women's societal status, their beliefs about the existence of violence against women in Montenegro, and their willingness to report such cases.

All results that are not presented in the main part of the report are available in the Annexe.

### 3.1. Media viewership/readership in Montenegro

The analysis of media influence starts with the level of following/reading certain media outlets so that later effects can be observed in relation to how often Montenegrin citizens follow specific media outlets. First, respondents were asked how often they obtain information on a certain media.

**Graph 1:** How often do you obtain information from the following media?



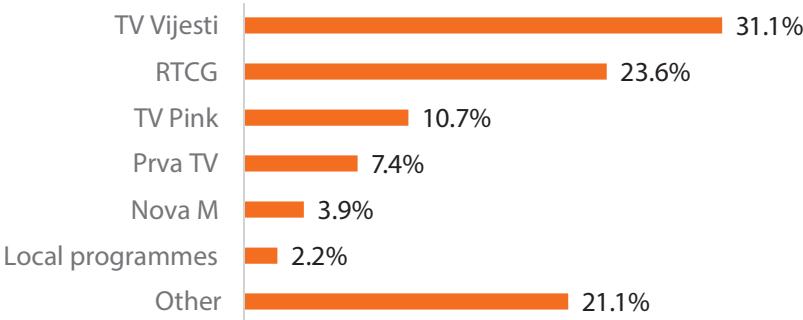
The research findings are in line with numerous other studies aiming to determine the frequency of media use. Television is still the most followed medium in Montenegro. However, compared to previous research, this percentage is on the decline. Furthermore, in line with broader trends observed in other studies, the data indicates a growing number of individuals who obtain information through online portals and social media platforms. It is worth noting that data related to social media<sup>6</sup> should be interpreted with caution, as some respondents may consider following specific media outlets on social networks as

6 More information available at: <https://cemi.org.me/me/post/gotovo-polovina-gradana-smatra-da-je-pod-uticajem-dezinformacija-kad-je-u-pitanju-politicka-situacija-1114>

a form of social media information consumption. Additionally, the research reveals a decrease in the number of people who read daily newspapers in their print format.

Within the group of mentioned media, we were also interested in determining which specific media outlets Montenegrin citizens follow. For a specific type of media, this question was only asked to respondents who said they follow a specific media outlet daily. It is important to note that the question was open-ended, meaning that respondents were not provided with answer choices but responded based on what they could recall. Data is presented in the following graphs, specifically for television, daily newspapers (print edition), portals, social media, and radio stations<sup>7</sup>. The number of respondents who answered these questions is provided in brackets.

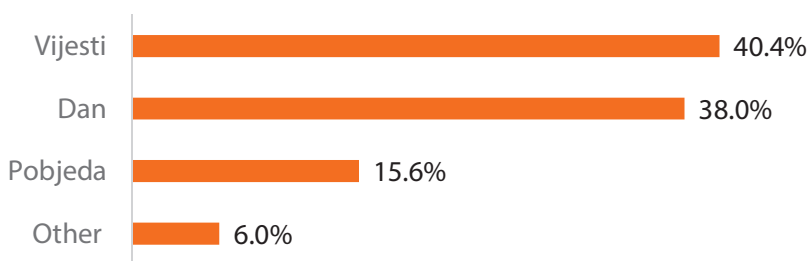
**Graph 2:** Which media do you mostly watch? TELEVISION (n = 883)



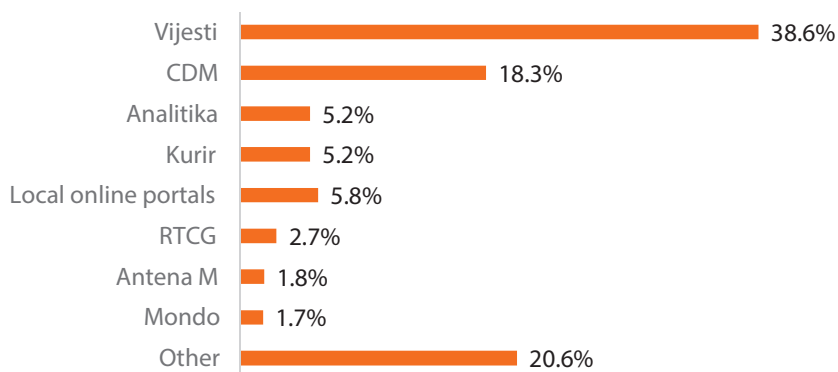
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<sup>7</sup> Data were not presented for podcasts due to a small number of responses. Additionally, those who listened to podcasts were quite vague and mostly mentioned topics they listen to (e.g., “about sports” or “about healthy diet”) rather than specific shows.

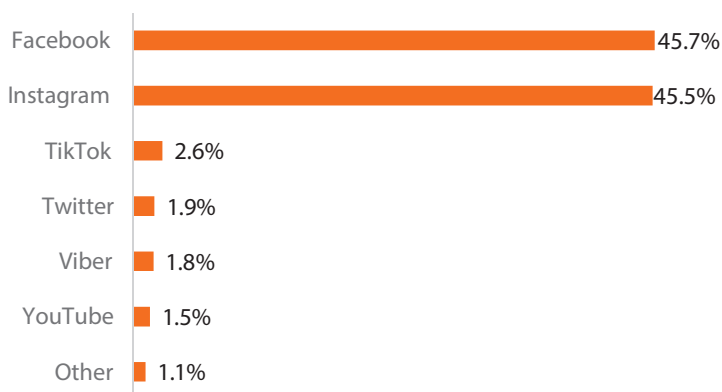
**Graph 3:** Which media do you mostly read? DAILY NEWSPAPERS (n = 163)



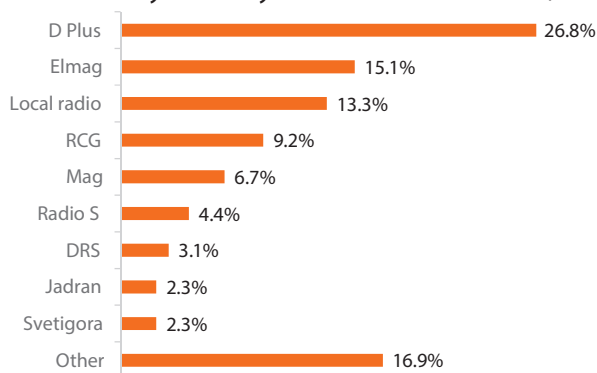
**Graph 4:** Which media do you mostly follow? ONLINE PORTALS (n = 654)



**Graph 5:** Which media do you mostly follow? SOCIAL MEDIA (n = 655)

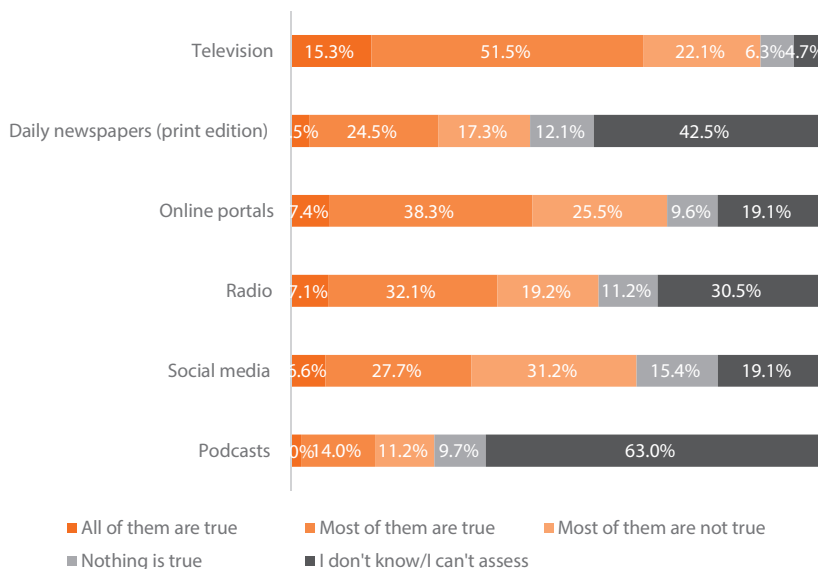


**Graph 6: Which media do you mostly listen? RADIO STATIONS (n = 325)**



Furthermore, for the purposes of the analysis, it is exceptionally important to know which media the respondents follow and have trust in, i.e., whether they believe that the information in the following media is truthful or not.

**Graph 7: How much do you trust the following media? Would you say that the information in the following media is...**

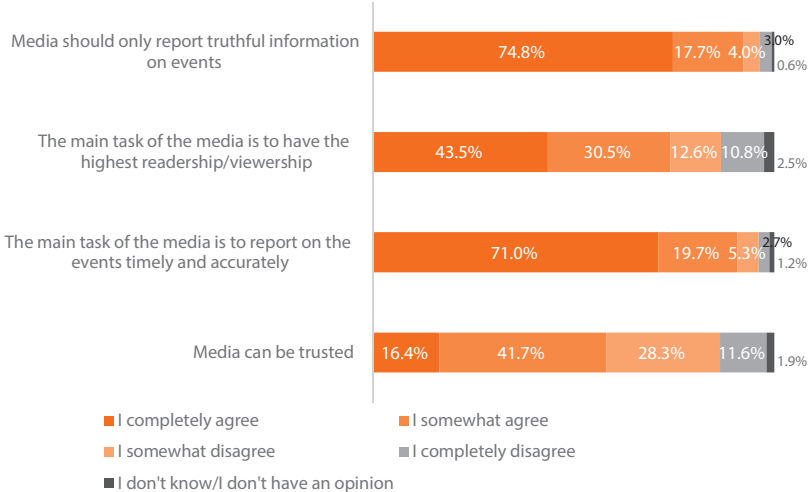


Of all media, Montenegrin citizens show the highest trust in television.

Approximately 15.3% believe that all information presented on TV is truthful, with an additional 51.5% trusting that most of the information is accurate. This level of trust in television significantly surpasses that in other media outlets. It's worth noting that television is the most frequently followed medium among citizens, underlining the significance of these findings. In addition to television, online portals also enjoy considerable trust, with 45.7% of respondents indicating that all or most of the information on online portals is truthful. Among the more commonly followed media, social media has the lowest level of trust, with 45.6% stating that most or all of the information on social media is not truthful.

In addition to trust in the media, we also tried to gauge how citizens perceive the role of the media in society through their agreement with the following statements.

**Graph 8:** To what extent do you agree with the following statements?



The prevailing sentiment in society is that the media should only convey truthful events and that the main task of the media is to timely and accurately report events. In line with what we observed in the previous question, Montenegrin citizens hold divided views on whether the media can be trusted, with 58.1% believing that they can or mostly can. Particularly interesting and relevant for this research is the high level of agreement with the statement that the main task of the media is to have the highest readership/viewership.



Even 43.5% completely agree with this statement, with an additional 30.5% partially agreeing. This opens up the possibility that, in order to achieve their “main task,” i.e., the highest readership and viewership, the media may sometimes slip into sensationalism or seek to publish news without detailed verification to be the first and grab the largest share of readership/viewership. This can be especially problematic when addressing sensitive topics such as GBV. Subsequent data in the following section reveals the extent to which unprofessional and sensationalistic reporting on GBV can influence the formation of diverse attitudes on this issue.

## 3.2. Media influence on attitudes towards gender-based violence

To investigate the influence of media on attitudes towards gender-based violence, we designed an experiment within our research. The goal was to divide respondents into three equally sized groups, each exposed to a newspaper article and then asked questions related to their attitudes toward GBV.

The methodology behind this experiment is detailed in the first part of the report, while the results are in the sections below.

First, it should be noted that for the purposes of the analysis, we will observe differences in responses among the three groups mentioned:

- The first group read an unprofessionally written article filled with sensationalism and stereotypes about women and their “responsibility” for gender-based violence<sup>8</sup>. This group will be labelled as “unprofessional article” in the graphs.
- The second group read an article written according to all standards of reporting on GBV<sup>9</sup>. This group will be labelled as “professional article” in the graphs.

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8 Article A, available in the Annex of the report.

9 Article B, available in the Annex of the report.

- The third group (control group) read an article unrelated to the topic of GBV<sup>10</sup>. This group will be labelled as “control group” in the graphs.

Within the overall sample, the distribution of articles was completely random to eliminate the chance that other factors (such as gender or other characteristics of respondents) would dominantly shape differences between groups. With the experimental design, we made it possible for any effects we find in the data to be attributed to differences in treatments among respondents. We will analyse the effects of unprofessional media reporting on GBV through the influence of media texts on several indicators, including:

- Attribution of blame for violence in partner relationships
- Views on punishment for women/partners
- Reporting of violence
- De-stigmatization of the theme of GBV through media<sup>11</sup>

### 3.2.1. Attribution of blame for violence in partner relationships

The first indicator we are analysing is the attitude towards who is to blame when violence occurs in partner relationships. This phenomenon was measured through the question, “If violence by a man against a woman/partner occurs in family or partner relationships, who would you say is to blame?” Overall, every fifth citizen says that the man is always to blame (22%), while an additional 30.1% feel that the man is mostly to blame, albeit with some shared responsibility on the woman’s part. Furthermore, 3.4% suggest that the woman is mainly responsible and provokes such incidents. The largest group, comprising 44.5% of Montenegrin citizens, maintains that it’s difficult to determine blame until both sides are heard. This baseline data already reflects a significant degree of relativization concerning GBV **despite the question’s**

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10 Article C, available in the Annex of the report.

11 It involves the process of removing negative biases, shame, and stigma associated with victims, as well as promoting empathy, support, and understanding towards them.

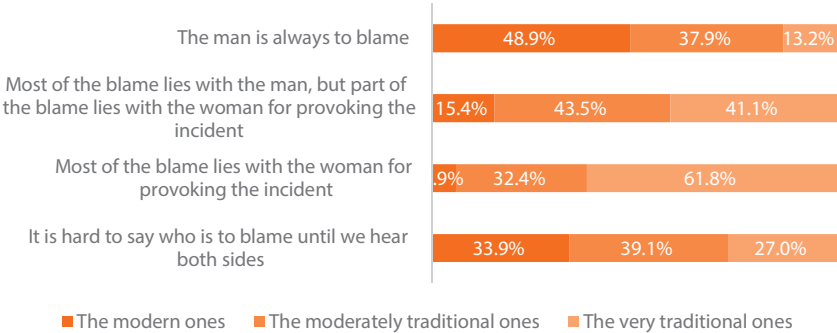
**explicit focus on violence by a man against a woman/partner.**

From the attitudes regarding the role of women in society and the relationships between women and men, we formed a scale of traditionalism among respondents, dividing all respondents into three groups:

- Very traditional, strongly endorsing the idea that women’s roles should be confined to motherhood and housewifery, favouring men as leaders and directors, and supporting their precedence in higher education.
- Moderately traditional, holding these beliefs to a lesser extent.
- Modern, exhibiting considerably more progressive views on women’s roles in society.

First, we correlated the level of traditionalism among respondents with their responses to the question, “If violence by a male partner against a woman/female partner occurs in family or partner relationships, who would you say is to blame?”

**Graph 9:** *If violence by a man against a woman/partner occurs in family or partner relationships, who would you say is to blame? X Traditionalism scale*



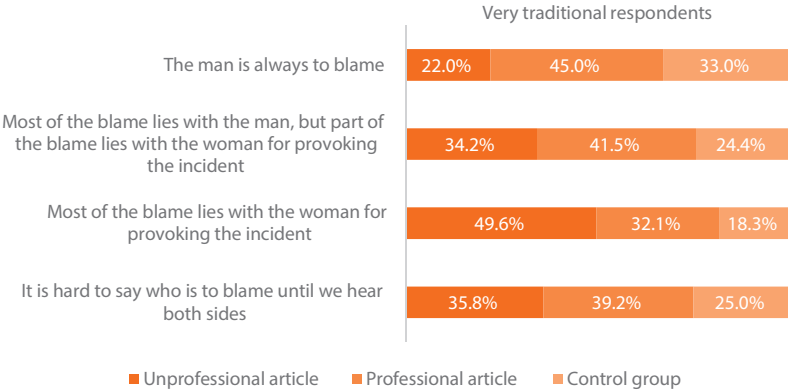
We are analysing the data within the group that provided a specific answer to the question about who is to blame if violence by a male partner against a woman/ female partner occurs. The data reveals that within the subset of individuals who attribute most of the blame to the woman and believe she provoked the incident, the predominant segment consists of those holding very traditional views, comprising as many as 61.8%. These respondents represent the smallest proportion

within the group that believes the man is solely responsible.

Furthermore, the data reveals another obvious pattern: the more traditional an individual's views, the less likely they are to solely blame the man for violence committed by a man against a woman/partner.

It is particularly interesting to see what happens within the group of traditional respondents when exposed to different treatments, i.e., newspaper articles.

**Graph 10:** *If violence by a male partner against a woman/female partner occurs in family or partner relationships, who would you say is to blame? X Treatment, for very traditional respondents*

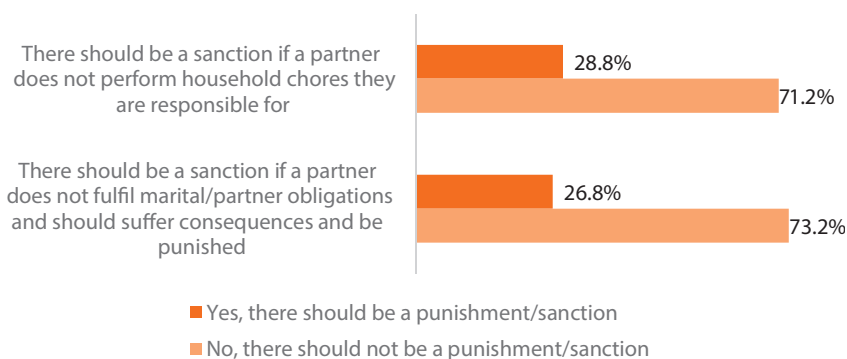


The graph shows data only for very traditional respondents. If there were no treatment effect, there would be no difference between the texts, and roughly, within the group that says the woman is to blame, for example, about a third of those who read the unprofessional article, the professional article, and the article for the control group would provide such responses. However, depending on whether they were subjected to treatment or not, the percentages fluctuate within this group. The data demonstrates that traditional respondents (constituting 30% of Montenegro's population) tend to form more negative attitudes regarding the blame assigned to women who are victims of violence when exposed to unprofessional media reporting on this topic. This data shows that **unprofessional media reporting on GBV reinforces stereotypes in society.**

## 3.2.2. Punishment of women/partners

After being exposed to different treatments, respondents were asked whether certain behaviours by their partner should be punished/sanctioned. First, we see that about a quarter of respondents believe that a partner should be punished if they do not perform household chores or marital/partnership duties.

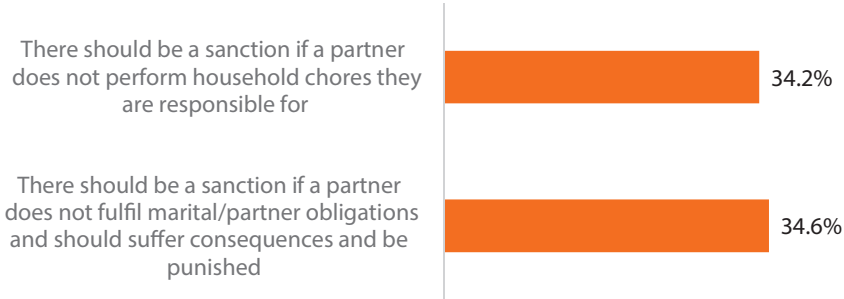
**Graph 11:** *Should a partner suffer sanctions in case of...*



When looking at the overall sample of Montenegrin citizens, we see that quite a high number of those believe that there should be sanctions in the specified situations. To further understand these numbers, we analysed the differences between respondents with authoritarian tendencies and those without. The literature recognizes that high trust in strongly hierarchically organized institutions/organizations strongly indicates authoritarian attitudes. Accordingly, we developed a measure of authoritarianism. In order to set a higher threshold for respondents with authoritarian tendencies, we identified those who have trust in hierarchically organized institutions/organizations. According to these criteria, as many as 46% of Montenegrin citizens fall into this category.

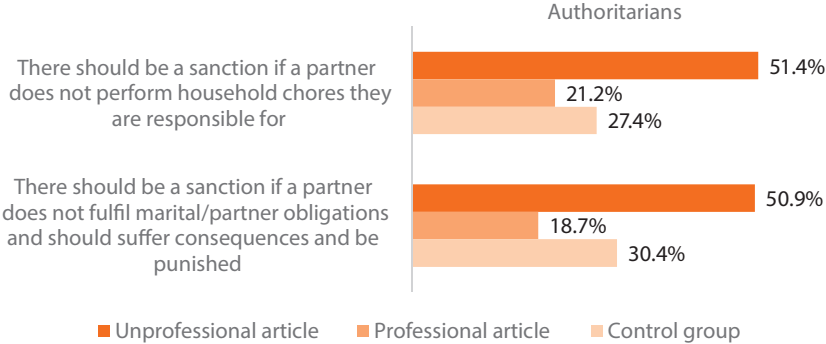
In theory, this group should differ from those without authoritarian tendencies, especially in their inclination towards sanctions. The data confirms this.

**Graph 12: Should a partner suffer sanctions in the case of X**  
**AUTHORITARIANS**



Among those with authoritarian tendencies, a considerably larger proportion believes that sanctions or punishments should be imposed if a partner neglects household or marital responsibilities. This group significantly influences the figures in this indicator for the entire sample. In this case, as well, we can see that unprofessional media reporting on GBV has the effect of reinforcing stereotypes.

**Graph 13: Should a partner suffer sanctions in case of... X Treatment, for authoritarians**



Of all respondents with authoritarian tendencies, those who read an unprofessionally written article are dominantly inclined to believe that

sanctions should exist for failure to fulfil household or marital duties. As a reminder, the unprofessional article specifically discusses a husband committing violence against a woman and implies that the “tipping point” was the fact that the woman didn’t prepare lunch, clean the house, and engage in other activities often perceived as women’s duties in the household.

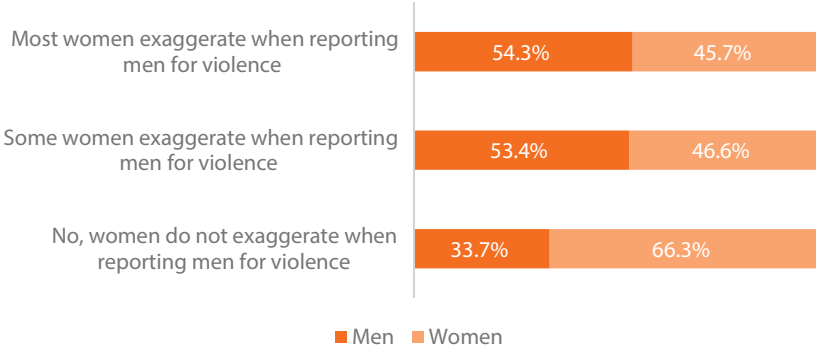
It is important to note that in Montenegro, according to the collected data, **more women (28%) than men (26.8%) believe that sanctions should exist if a partner does not fulfil household or marital duties.** This can be considered an ideal-typical example of internalized patriarchy. This is a phenomenon where men or women adopt and prioritize behavioural rules in accordance with a patriarchal worldview over their own interests and needs. This discovery underscores the necessity for further education regarding the adverse effects of gender roles in partner relationships and society, as well as heightened self-awareness regarding the internalization of patriarchal norms.

### 3.2.3. Reporting for violence

An important step in combating GBV is the establishment of a system that protects victims. One of the key elements of that system is for the victim to feel empowered enough to report the violence. In the case of Montenegro, approximately one in four citizens (27.4%) believes that women and girls sometimes falsely claim to be victims of violence merely to seek attention. Additionally, as many as 53% of Montenegrin citizens contend that some (41.5%) or most (11.5%) women tend to exaggerate when reporting men for violence.

These indicators also contain significant differences between men and women.

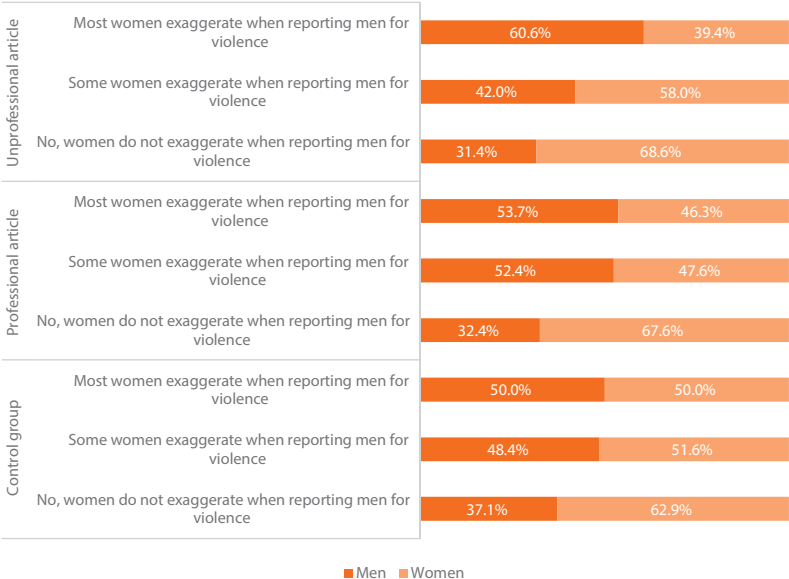
**Graph 14:** Do you think women exaggerate when reporting men for violence? X Gender



Among those who believe that women exaggerate when reporting men for violence, men outnumber women. Differences in attitudes between surveyed women and men are especially evident in the third response, which denies that women exaggerate when reporting men for violence. Among all respondents who assert that women do not exaggerate when reporting violence, two-thirds are women.



**Graph 15:** Do you think women exaggerate when reporting men for violence? X Gender, by treatment



Respondents exposed to an unprofessionally written article are more inclined to think that women exaggerate when reporting men for violence. Exposure to unprofessional media reporting further accentuates the gender-based differences. Namely, **of all respondents who were in the group that read unprofessionally written media reports on gender-based violence and who say that most women exaggerate when reporting violence, as many as 60.6% are men.**

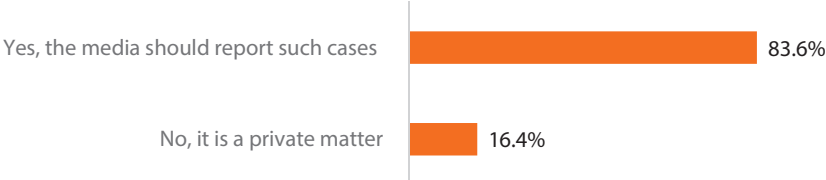
### 3.2.4. De-stigmatization of theme of gender-based violence and combating stereotypes through media

De-stigmatization of theme of GBV in the media plays a vital role in creating social awareness, promoting gender equality and providing support to victims. It involves the process of removing negative biases, shame, and stigma associated with victims, as well as promoting

empathy, support, and understanding towards them. Media reporting can significantly contribute to the de-stigmatization of theme of GBV. By regularly reporting on GBV, the media can help normalize discussions on this topic. When this issue is openly discussed in the public sphere, the associated stigma is reduced, making it easier for survivors and victims' to share their experiences and seek help. Furthermore, destigmatizing theme of GBV through the media aids in disseminating information about its causes, consequences, and various forms, promoting a deeper understanding of this societal issue.

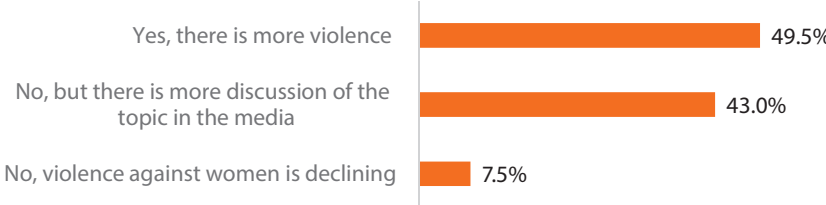
The majority of citizens of Montenegro believe that the media should report on cases of violence against women.

**Graph 16:** *Do you think the media should report on cases of violence against women?*



However, the data also indicate that a significant number of Montenegrin citizens believe that the media talk much more about GBV today than before. In fact, 43% of respondents believe that violence against women is not increasing but that the media is covering it more.

**Graph 17:** *Do you think there is more violence against women today than before?*

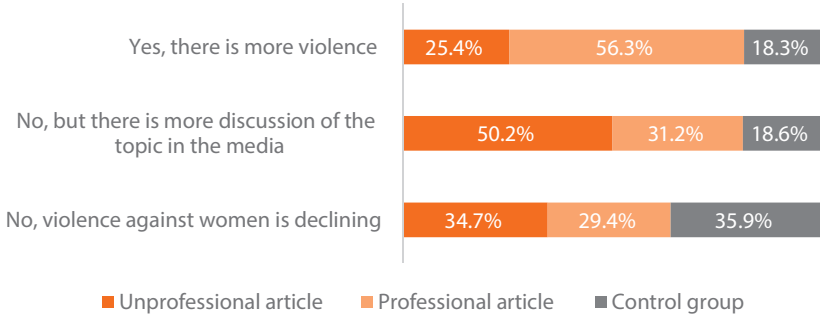


When we analyse these indicators in relation to citizens' attitudes about the role of the media in society, interesting patterns in the data emerge.

Among respondents who believe that the main task of the media is to have the highest readership and viewership, a higher percentage (49%) assert that the media discusses violence more but that it is not actually increasing. Conversely, among those who believe the media's main task is to provide timely and accurate event reporting, 37.2% claim that the media simply talk more about violence, without it genuinely being on the rise.

The articles prepared for the purposes of this research also showed how professional or unprofessional reporting affects citizens' attitudes about GBV on this indicator.

**Graph 18:** Do you think there is more violence against women today than before X TREATMENTS



The data reveals a clear pattern. Among those who say there is more violence against women today, a significantly higher proportion had read a professionally written article on GBV as part of the experimental treatment. Among other things, the professionally written article includes the following statement: "Association data show that violence against women is on the rise, with 9% more cases of violence against women in the first half of 2023 compared to the same period last year." Although the specific data is fictional for the purposes of the research experiment, the finding shows that citizens pay attention to statistical

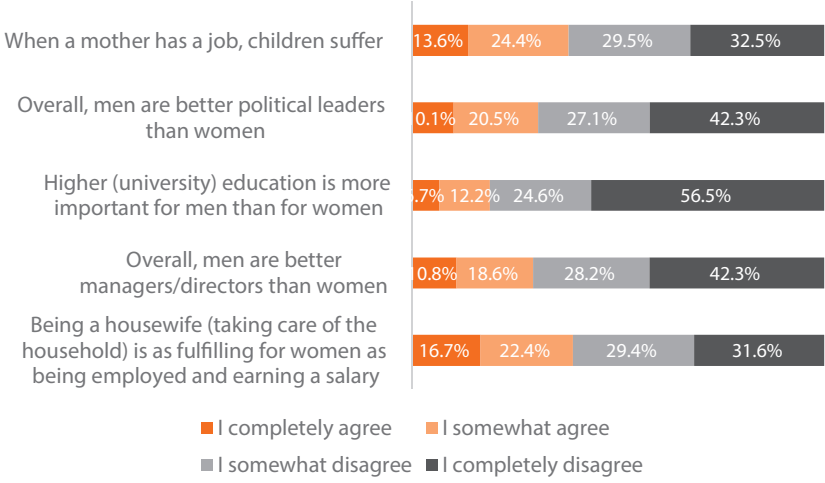
data when reporting on GBV, which should further encourage journalists and media to use available data in their reporting.

The utilization of statistical data aligns with the fundamental recommendations outlined in the *Manual for Reporting on Gender-Based Violence against Women*.

### 3.3. Women’s position in society and gender roles

In addition to the experimental part, within the framework of public opinion research, as part of public opinion research, we aimed to gauge Montenegrin citizens’ attitudes towards gender roles in society and the status of women in Montenegro. The primary objective was to empirically determine whether traditional and conservative viewpoints on these topics render individuals more susceptible to the negative influence of unprofessional reporting on GBV. However, despite the basic idea, analysing the given data descriptively is important and interesting.

**Graph 19:** To what extent do you agree with the following statements?



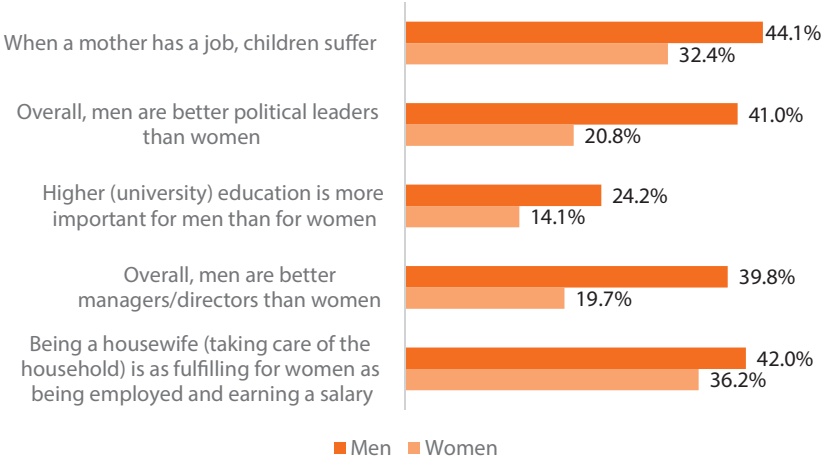
The graph illustrates that the majority of Montenegrin citizens gen-

erally endorse progressive views on the position of women in society and gender roles. This is particularly evident in the statement that higher (university) education is more important for men than women, with 81.1% of citizens saying they disagree.

With the exception of the statement mentioned above, approximately one-third of Montenegrin citizens agree with statements that reflect traditional views on gender roles in society. This is particularly evident as 38% of citizens believe that children are negatively affected if their mother is employed, 30.6% believe that men make superior political leaders than women, 29.4% contend that men excel as managers compared to women, and a substantial 39.1% argue that being a stay at home mom is as fulfilling for women as being employed and earning a salary.

The data also show significant differences in attitudes between men and women. Therefore, we analysed the mentioned attitudes by comparing the percentage of those who agree with these attitudes (the sum of those who completely and somewhat agree) between men and women. The results are presented in the following graph.

**Graph 20:** *To what extent do you agree with the following statements? Percentage of those who agree by gender*

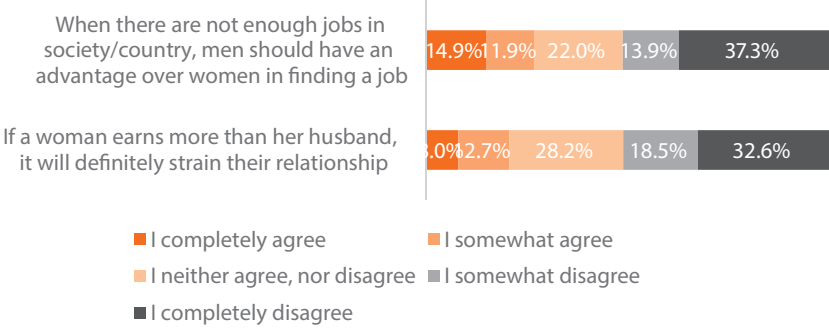


In each of the mentioned statements, significantly more men agree than women. The largest difference is related to leadership, whether it

is political leadership or leadership at work. In both instances, almost twice as many men believe they are more suited for these roles compared to women. Notably, one-third of women believe that children suffer if their mother works and that women find staying at home as fulfilling as employment with a salary.

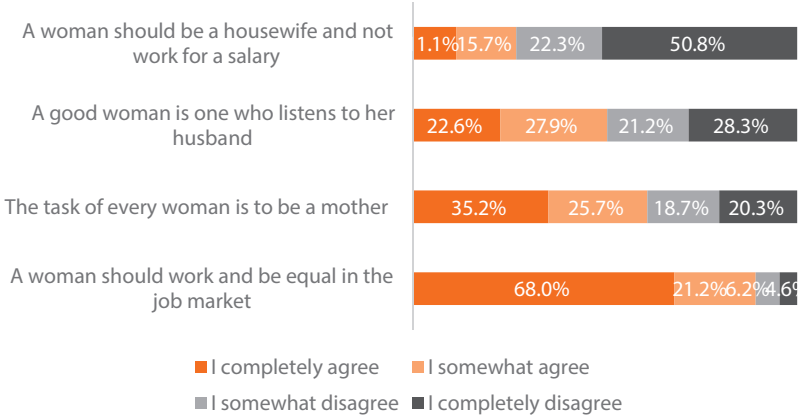
The need for further education of Montenegrin citizens on these topics is evidenced by the fact that every fourth citizen believes that men should have an advantage over women in finding a job, and every fifth believes that if a woman earns more than her husband, it will strain their relationship.

**Graph 21:** *To what extent do you agree with the following statements?*



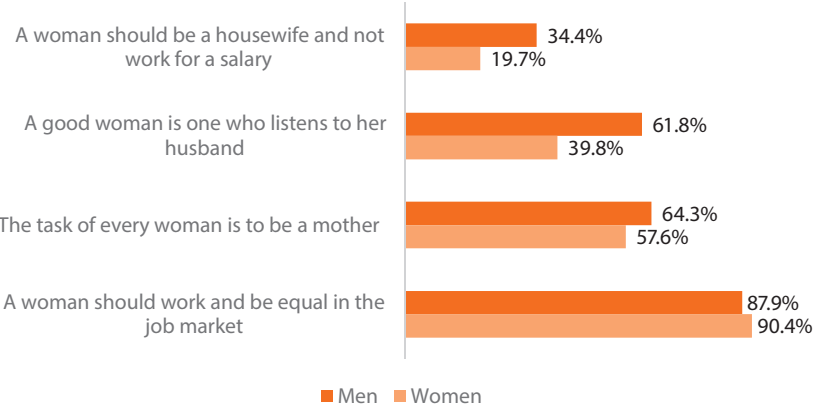
Prejudices about gender roles are often hidden from public view, and they are not always easy to uncover in public opinion research, where there is a fear that respondents may provide socially desirable answers. Nevertheless, by examining the agreement of respondents with certain statements, it is possible to gain a deeper understanding of people’s prejudices and attitudes.

**Graph 22:** To what extent do you agree with the following statements?



Even slightly over 60% of Montenegrin citizens say that it is the task of every woman to be a mother; furthermore, more than half of them believe that a good woman obeys to her husband. There are significant differences in how men and women view gender roles in this question as well.

**Graph 23:** To what extent do you agree with the following statements? Percentage of those who agree by gender

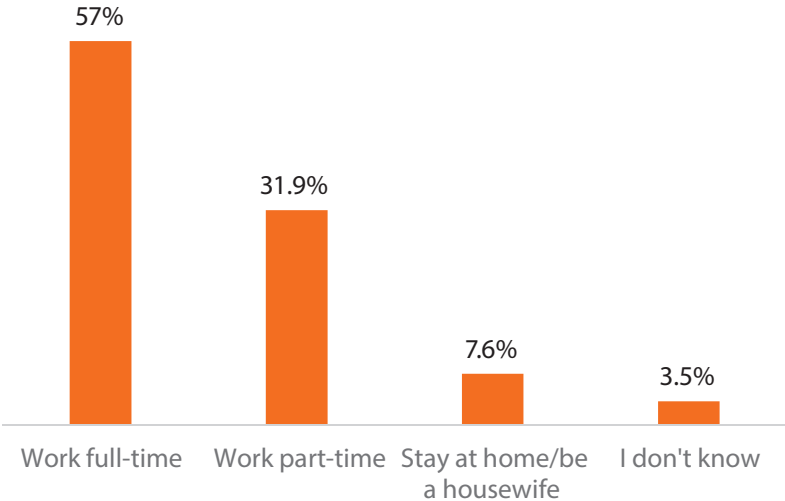


There is a high difference in the percentages of those who say that a good woman is one who listens to her husband. Among all men,

as much as 61.8% share this view, compared to 39.8% of women. Interestingly, there are almost no differences between men and women in agreeing with the statement that it is the task of every woman to be a mother - over 55% of women and two-thirds of men hold this view.

Finally, two pieces of data about what Montenegrin citizens believe women should do in marriage and how parental leave should be organized after the birth of a child. Most respondents believe that a woman should work full-time even when she is married, 57%. Even every third Montenegrin citizen believes that a woman should work part-time, and 7.6% say she should stay at home and be a housewife. Interestingly, among men, more than every tenth (11.2%) say that a woman in marriage should stay at home and be a housewife.

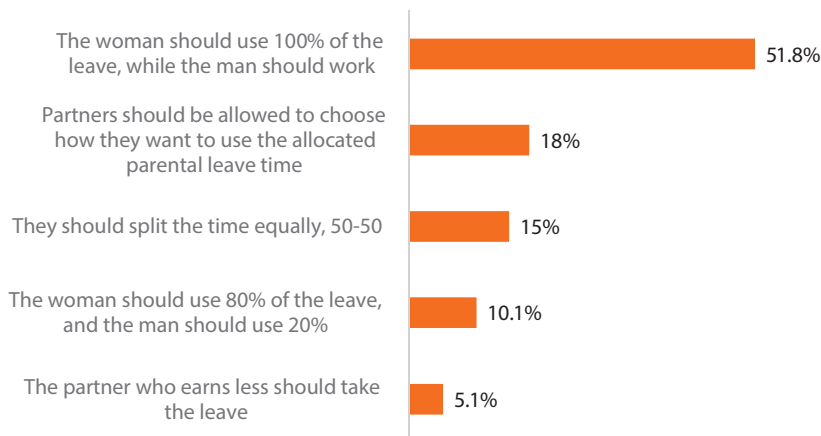
**Graph 24:** *What do you think a woman should do in marriage?*



The majority of citizens of Montenegro see the main role of women in the household after the birth of a child in the family, as seen in the following graph.



**Graph 25:** How do you think parental leave should be divided between husband and wife?



Even 51.8% of Montenegrin citizens say that the husband should work while the wife should use 100% of the parental leave. It is interesting to note that there are almost no differences between men and women in their views on this topic.

All the data indicate the need for additional education of the entire population in Montenegro and the need to work on improving the position of women in society, as well as perception of citizens about the role women should have in Montenegrin society.

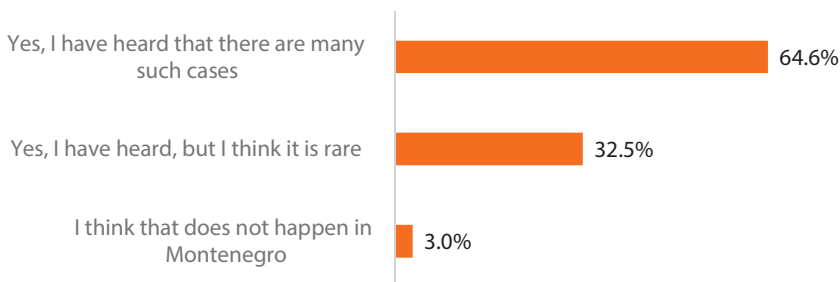
### 3.4. Reporting Gender-Based Violence

Gender-based violence, encompassing domestic violence, sexual abuse, harassment, and various forms of mistreatment, frequently remains unreported due to fear, shame, and the associated stigma. It is important to raise awareness throughout society to help women understand that they have the right to report such incidents without condemnation and that reporting can lead to legal protection, support, and justice.

In Montenegro, citizens have a broad awareness of the presence of

men's violence against women and girls within family and partner relationships.

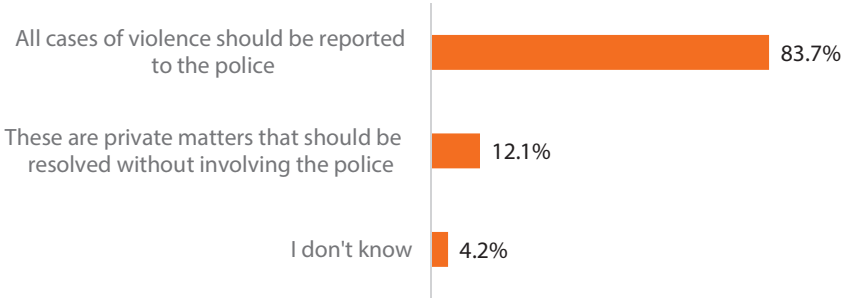
**Graph 26:** *Have you heard that there are cases of men's violence against women and girls in family and partner relationships in Montenegro?*



Nearly two-thirds of Montenegrin citizens say they have heard that there are many cases of men's violence against women and girls in family and partner relationships. While perception may not be an entirely reliable measure of the prevalence of violence, it does reflect societal perspectives and citizen impressions. Only 3% say that violence does not happen in Montenegro, and one-third of citizens believe it is rare.

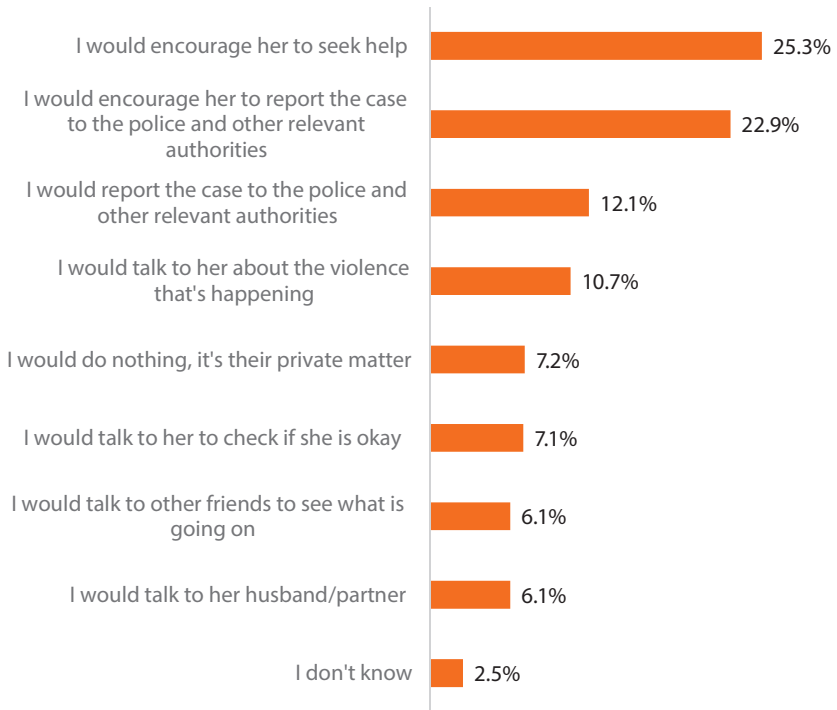
The majority of them state that such cases should be reported to the police – as much as 83.7% – which can be seen in the following graph.

**Graph 27:** *Should cases of domestic violence/violence against women and girls be reported to the police?*



However, only slightly more than one in ten Montenegrin citizens (12.7%) say that they would report a case to the police if their friend found themselves in a situation where they were a victim of violence by a partner.

**Graph 28:** *What would you do if your friend was in a situation where they were a victim of violence by a partner?*



The majority of citizens say they would encourage their friend who is a victim to seek help (25.3%) or report the case to the police and other relevant authorities (22.9%).

# Conclusions

Media reporting on GBV plays a significant role in shaping public perception of this serious societal issue. The analysis underscores that media coverage often frames GBV as private matters, rarely exploring the broader context, employing relevant statistical data, comparative instances, or legislative analysis. Such an approach can limit public comprehension of the gravity of this issue and reduce the significance of addressing this form of violence.

According to the analysis, media outlets rarely use stereotypical language when describing victims and even less frequently provide justifications for the perpetrators. This is of utmost importance in preventing the perpetuation of violence and the stigmatization of victims. Moreover, the media generally respect the presumption of innocence in their reporting in most cases, which is crucial in safeguarding the rights and dignity of all involved parties.

However, while media outlets adhere to professional standards in most cases, sensationalistic elements are present in reporting on GBV, particularly in headlines and sometimes within the content itself. This can have negative effects on society, as sensationalism can contribute to reinforcing stereotypes and lead to incorrect conclusions, such as that a woman is to blame for the violence she has suffered or that she is falsely claiming to be a victim just for attention.

Regarding the effects of media reporting, the research has shown that unprofessional reporting on GBV can strengthen stereotypes in society. Individuals, especially those with traditional orientations, exposed to such reporting tend to develop more negative attitudes and blame victims for the violence, significantly complicating efforts to address violence against women.

It is concerning that one in four citizens doubts the truthfulness of reports from women claiming to be victims of violence, which can further hinder reporting and providing support to victims. Such attitudes often arise among men, and unprofessional media reporting can reinforce these prejudices.

On the other hand, professionally written articles about GBV have the potential to improve understanding of the issue and raise awareness of its presence. Such articles can reduce negative attitudes and prejudices among respondents, especially those who believe that violence against women has increased compared to the past. This highlights the importance of responsible and professional journalism that contributes to creating a society aware of the problem of GBV and ready to address it.

Based on the findings of this research and the analysis of media reporting and its effects, several recommendations can be made with the aim of improving media reporting on GBV:

- **Education of journalists:** Journalists should undergo additional education on GBV to gain a better understanding of the issues and be able to recognize sensationalism. This education should include avoiding stereotypes in reporting and educating journalists on the basic principles of respecting the presumption of innocence. Journalists need to further educate themselves to balance informing the public and respecting the victims' privacy. Journalists should exercise responsibility and discretion in selecting information to convey, to raise awareness about GBV without causing further harm to victims or promoting sensationalism.
- **Contextualization and statistical data:** Journalists should provide a broader context for instances of violence and use relevant statistical data to help the public better understand the scale of the problem. This will raise awareness of GBV.
- **Empowering victims:** The media should emphasize the importance of empowering victims, avoiding stigmatization, and providing them with space to share their experiences. Encouraging victims to speak out can help reduce taboos and encourage others to support them. Of course, the use of statements from victims of violence in the media must strictly adhere to ethical principles.
- **Critical examination of sensationalism:** Editorial policies should encourage critical thinking and a critical approach to

sensationalistic elements in reporting. Sensationalism can have serious negative consequences. Such reporting can dehumanize victims of violence, turning their suffering into shocking entertainment or sensational content. This risks making such a serious issue as GBV into entertainment in society, creating dangerous assumptions about the normalization of violence. The focus should be on providing relevant information rather than sensationalism, which can have negative effects on society.

- **Partnership with women's violence prevention organizations:** The media should establish partnerships with experts, institutions, and various organizations engaged in violence prevention and support for survivors. This will provide access to expert knowledge and sources of information that will contribute to higher-quality reporting.
- **Diversity in reporting:** It is essential to ensure that women play a more active role in media reporting on GBV, whether as journalists, representatives of civil society, experts, or sources of information. This will ensure a more comprehensive and more informed view of the issue of GBV.
- **Raising awareness of the effects of reporting:** Media reporting significantly shapes the perception of reality. If the media disproportionately or inaccurately reports on GBV, it can lead to a misunderstanding of the problem and its underlying causes, resulting in a skewed perception of societal dynamics.

# Annex

## *Illustration 1: Unprofessionally written article – Treatment A*

### Husband Beats Wife Because She Didn't Prepare Lunch?!

Yesterday, in the village near Pljevlja, a rather unusual piece of news echoed in this small place by the Breznica River. Svetlana Kosić (59) reported her husband Vladimir (64) for causing her severe bodily injuries in the afternoon. The police are investigating the case.

In pursuit of this story, our journalists asked neighbors if they knew the married couple Kosić and if they knew what happened. Their first neighbor, Dragan, says that he has known Vladimir for many years and that he is a hardworking man, a farmer, who toils in the field every day to earn a living for his family, trying to support his son who lives in Budva and is currently job hunting. Economic difficulties and problems have not spared the Kosić family, who are doing their best to survive, but neighbors are not sure if all household members contribute equally.

Neighbor Ljiljana says she has noticed that Svetlana is spending more and more time away from home, sometimes staying in town for several hours, leaving the house in a mess, and she adds, "she doesn't seem to care about preparing meals for her family."

Neighbors believe that this incident may have been the last straw, and that after a long day at work, Vladimir came home tired and hungry, only to find a messy house and an empty plate, which particularly infuriated him.

"I may have overreacted a bit, but she's my wife, and she has to take care of the house and the family. It's clear what her role in the house is, to cook and prepare meals. I'm sorry, but I think she needs to understand where she went wrong," Vladimir told the police, according to confidential sources.

Neighbor Ljiljana adds that she feels sorry if Svetlana suffered injuries, but she believes that we should also hear Vladimir's side of the story before drawing conclusions about what happened yesterday in the Kosić family home. Other neighbors declined to comment, saying it's a private matter for Svetlana and Vladimir, and others shouldn't interfere in their lives. "Let them sort it out between themselves," one passerby commented briefly.



## New Case of Violence Against Women

The police in Pljevlja have received a new report against a resident of that municipality for violence against his wife. This is a new case that is part of the increasing number of reports of domestic violence in Montenegro.

"The rising trend of gender-based violence is alarming, especially in partner or marital relationships, where there is an increasing number of cases of husbands' violence against their partners or wives in Montenegro," says psychologist Marija Popović, president of the Montenegrin Psychologists Association.

Data shows that violence against women is on the rise, with 9% more cases of violence against women in the first half of 2023 compared to the same period last year. There are several explanations for this, they say.

"It is unquestionable that Montenegrin society is still traditional, and in many parts of the country, men still believe that they are the head of the household, and that women should exclusively take care of the house, behave according to their

wishes and instructions, and some even think it's acceptable to impose sanctions if that doesn't happen. This is, of course, very harmful, and such thought patterns need to be changed as soon as possible."

This situation needs to change, and the data indicates that change is needed as soon as possible. Popović emphasizes that everyone in society has a responsibility to contribute to positive changes.

"Of course, it is in the interest of every individual to have as little violence in society as possible, and of course, we can all contribute. However, the key role is that of the relevant institutions that must provide a systematic response to the occurrence of violence against women and girls. By this, I mean the entire system, from ministries, through social services, police, prosecution, and even the media as one of the key actors in society." It is important, according to experts, that every woman feels safe enough to report violence and does not fear retaliation or stigmatization in society.

# Global Warming Likely to Exceed the Threshold by 2027

In the coming years, temporary peaks in global temperatures are likely to reach 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial averages.

Researchers say there is now a 66% chance of surpassing the 1.5°C global warming threshold between this period and 2027.

The World Meteorological Organization (WMO) estimates that there is a 66% chance that global temperatures will exceed this milestone in at least one of the next five years.

Over the next five years, temperature records are almost certainly going to be broken. The weather pattern El Niño, combined with human-induced climate change, will alter global temperatures.

El Niño refers to above-average sea surface temperatures that periodically develop across the eastern and central equatorial Pacific. This phenomenon brings heavier rainfall to Latin America and the southern United States while causing drought in Australia, Indonesia, and parts of Southeast Asia.



