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# **Early Marriage – Culture or Abuse?**

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## INSTEAD OF AN INTRODUCTION

Child marriage is still practiced in a number of Roma communities around Europe. Although there is insufficient data on the extent of this practice, The European Roma Rights Centre research as well as reports by international organisations indicate that child marriages continue to be practiced in Roma communities in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Greece, Kosovo, Macedonia, Moldova, Montenegro, Romania, Turkey and Ukraine and in migrant Roma communities in certain Western European countries, such as Italy. This is one of the most harmful traditional practices that violates the rights of young people and sharply limits their opportunities for social realization.

Although, the Roma community which is the focus of this research has already taken the path of its modernization process (as any other traditional community) and slowly overcomes some these harmful practices, still it is wide-spread among certain conservative groups of Roma community in Bulgaria, Slovenia and immigrant Roma groups in Italy.

Forced / early marriages are violation against young people (particularly against young women) even if they are not perceived as such by their parents who commit this practice. It usually results in school drop-out (especially of the girls) and ceasing the personal development and realization of the victims. Although this practice is forbidden by the law there are few consistent efforts for preventing and ceasing it. From one side the conservative Roma families still perceive it as a respect-deserving tradition and a kind of traditional care for their children; they are not aware that it violates the rights and the well-being of their children. That is why they continue it from generation to generation. From the other side the state institutions in charge of preventing such practices (schools, social services, police, etc.) lack knowledge how to prevent and react to it. Moreover, they often do not realize the core of the problem. Usually they are passive in intervening harmful practices within Roma community or do it without engaging Roma informal authorities and activists that leads to failure of the intervention. No consistent efforts for coordinated work of responsible institutions and the Roma community itself for preventing forced / early marriages exist at present.

During the recent years early marriages in the Roma community (we have to clarify yet from the very beginning that it is actually cohabitation, creating a family and not really a “marriage” from the legal point of view) has turned into a topic, which is getting higher in the policy agenda both of national and European institutions because of the diversity of aspects following this violating practice. Often this leads to early school leaving followed quite quickly by early births, since according to traditional and marginalized families the married woman is expected to prove that she can give birth: she is highly appreciated as the continuer of the family and if she cannot fulfil this role, she has to bear one of the heaviest stigmas. Frequently, different forms of domestic violence, divorces, miscarriage and various diseases among the young mothers inevitably follow early marriages. Therefore, we could see a whole series of negative phenomena, to which we, as a European society should be highly sensitive.

At the same time, there is a whole set of stereotypes, existing in majority society stigmatizing Roma community and Roma traditions and value systems. Due to the lack of knowledge and awareness a lot of people consider Roma marriages a typical Roma



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tradition, while on contrary it is a custom characterizing all traditional societies, not just Roma; in addition, many of the institutions do not react when they come across cases of early marriage because they consider it a Roma community issue in which they should not and could not interfere. Further myths and stereotypes refer to „buying and selling“ of young Roma girls, regarding as a common practice of giving birth at 12 years of age and so on: they often result from the lack of information, lack of surveys in this area, and lack of an adequate discussion, involving representatives of the Roma community. In contrast to the interest of the general public, a discussion on early marriages rarely takes place within the Roma community. It is often avoiding the issue being afraid that this might enforce the stigma on the community.

Within the context described above and in order to further explore and address the issue of child/early marriages the consortium of People's University of Kočevje (Lead partner) (SI), Development and Education Centre Novo mesto (SI), Amalipe Center for Interethnic Dialogue and Tolerance (BG) and FormAzione Co&So Network – Consorzio scs (IT) has started a project in 2014 “Early Marriage – Culture or Abuse?” financed by DG Justice of the European Commission (JUST/2013/DAP/AG/5556). The project proposal is based on the results of the project "Preventing Early / Forced Marriage", which was also funded under the DAPHNE III (Reference number JLS/2008/DAP3/AG/1298-30-CE-03124780080) successfully led by Amalipe Center for Interethnic Dialogue and Tolerance from Bulgaria. The initiative uses the method of mediation as well as direct field work (including both, Roma community and school communities) as a tool to upgrade day-to-day work of responsible public institutions. The program is a vital innovation in the field of child abuse prevention. The project stresses on community work and the work with Roma families for avoiding this practice instead of increasing the administrative punishment. The project applies a method of coordination and participatory approach and ensures coordinated work of responsible institutions, NGOs and Roma authorities for preventing early / forced marriages. Until now the efforts of these stakeholders have not been coordinated in any way and Roma informal authorities and NGO activists have not been seen as possible partners. This has proved to be inefficient. Therefore, the project establishes all necessary preconditions for coordinated work of all responsible institutions (child protection departments, schools, etc.) and for coordinated work of NGOs, informal authorities and officials. In addition, the project uses “door to door” concrete method of field work and survey in order to have reliable picture about the problem of early / forced marriages. Recommended principle of interaction between all institutions will be achieved and upgraded with the newly formed mediation program. It will be carried out for the experts from various institutions who have contact with the Roma population (Roma representatives, social workers, teachers, NGOs, municipal civil servants, employees in the health community centers, police, court). Interaction between all institutions will be established with the team (community) discussions regarding critical cases, identified in the field by Roma mediators. Experts on mediation will develop and execute trainings within Roma communities and in schools. The program content will provide information related to reproductive health, sexual education family planning, awareness of cultural diversity for the promotion of learning and acquiring skills of constructive solving conflict situations and awareness on the importance of cultural diversity and modernization of Roma culture.



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## THE ROMA COMMUNITY AND THE CONTEXT OF THE SURVEY IN SLOVENIA, BULGARIA AND ITALY

The aim of the chapter is to present a brief picture of the Roma community living in the areas where the survey took place in the three countries: Slovenia, Bulgaria and Italy. This would draw the frame and present the community specifics, general situation and tendencies which would help us better understand and context the results from the survey.

### SLOVENIA

#### PROFILE OF THE ROMA COMMUNITY

In compliance with the legislation from the field of protection of personal information, which is currently in force, the ministries or the governmental offices and competent institutions do not keep specific records of individuals based on ethnicity or nationality, meaning, that the numerical data only stems from the official population census records, kept by the Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia.<sup>1</sup>

During the population census of 2002, 3.246 residents chose to define themselves as members of the Roma community, while 3.834 individuals listed the Roma language as their native language. In comparison with the census from 1991 it would appear, that 2.259 residents defined themselves as Romani, which is 30,5 % less than during the 2002 census, while 2.752 individuals listed their native language as Romani, 28,2 % less than in 2002.<sup>2</sup>

Regardless of official data of the population census, data from other sources shows, that there are between 7.000 and 10.000 Roma people living in Slovenia, the majority in Prekmurje, Dolenjska, Bela Krajina and Posavje regions.<sup>3</sup>

#### Origin of the Roma people and their settlement in Slovenia

Historical sources mention the Roma in the territory of today's Slovenia as early as in the 15<sup>th</sup> century. From the 17<sup>th</sup> century on, the data on Roma is more frequent; they can also be found in population registers. Research shows, that the settlement of the Roma in Slovenia took place along three paths: the predecessors of Romani, living in the Prekmurje region (North-East Slovenia) came through Hungarian territory, the Dolenjska region group of Roma (South-East Slovenia) came through Croatia, while the Roma of Gorenjska region, smaller groups of the Sinti, arrived from the north, through today's Austria. Even though it is a population which initially led mostly nomadic lives

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<sup>1</sup> Considering the stated fact that, in Slovenia, from a methodological point of view, it is impossible to compare desired data between the majority population and the Romani. Thus, most of acquired statistical data, acquired from the Romani, needs to be taken as an estimate.

<sup>2</sup> General Information about the Roma Ethnic Community in the Republic of Slovenia. 2006. Ljubljana: Government of the Republic of Slovenia, Office for National Minorities. Acquired on 29.10.2014 from: <http://www.uem.gov.si/fileadmin/uem.gov.si/pageuploads/IzrednaGradivo3.pdf>.

<sup>3</sup> Urh, Špela. Etnično občutljivo socialno delo z Romi. PhD Dissertation. 2009. Ljubljana: Faculty of Social Work. Acquired on 7.8.2014 from: <http://www.dlib.si/stream/URN:NBN:SI:doc-VMTOFKSS/97973d67-853f-4d5d-8a1e-354d105d9b63/PFD>.



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and often changed their place of residence, we can now speak of permanent settlement in the Prekmurje, Dolenjska, Bela Krajina and Posavje regions. In these areas, we consider the Roma to be a traditionally settled population, which, in a more or less constant settlement, remained in place to this day.

In the 60s and the time of war in Yugoslavia, the Roma began to arrive from the former Yugoslav republics of Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo and Macedonia to Slovenia. Most of these Roma people live in larger Slovenian cities (Ljubljana, Maribor, Celje, Velenje, Jesenice).<sup>4</sup>

## The Roma community in Slovenia

The Roma community in the Republic of Slovenia is a constitutionally acknowledged minority community, which does not have the status of a classic national minority, but, as a minority community. It is recognised as a minority with its own ethnic and cultural specifics (language, culture and history), which, in compliance with the provisions of the Constitution, it may maintain. Thereby, its expressed needs are taken into consideration.

The legal foundation for the management of the position of the Roma community in the Republic of Slovenia is Article 65 of the Constitution, which states, that the position and rights of the Roma community, living in Slovenia, are arranged by the legislation. This set out the legal foundations for protective measures. The consistent implementation of the Constitutional provision occurred with the Act on Roma Community in the Republic of Slovenia<sup>5</sup>. Additionally, the protection of the Roma community is also integrated into other laws. Along with laws, the care for the implementation of special rights of the Roma community and for the improvement of the position of the Roma community is included in numerous programmes, strategies and resolutions from individual social fields.

At the European and national level, the Roma community is considered to be an ethnic group, a minority, facing the biggest existential trouble, the very fact that its special status is based on. The Roma community is, as a minority in all environments, most often a victim of social exclusion, discrimination, segregation and poverty. It also has a special status due to the fact, that it does not have a country of its own, which would care for it, as is the case with the Italian and Hungarian national minority communities in the Republic of Slovenia and the transboundary Slovenians. The Republic of Slovenia is one of the European countries, which includes the Roma people in the public administration matters at a local level.

The representatives of the Roma community have, along with the general voting rights as Slovenian citizens, also a special voting right in the twenty municipalities with a historical Roma presence, where they alone elect the Roma councillor from the special lists of eligible Roma people.

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<sup>4</sup> Forced Marriages of Roma Girls. Final report. 2014. Ljubljana: Social Protection Institute of the Republic of Slovenia. Acquired on 1.6.2015 from: <http://www.irssv.si/upload2/Prisilne%20poroke%20romskih%20deklic.pdf>.

<sup>5</sup> Act on Roma Community in the Republic of Slovenia. Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia, no. 33/2007. Acquired on 28.10.2014 from: <http://www.uradnilist.si/1/objava.jsp?urlid=200733&stevilka=1762>.





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The data on **educational structure** of the members of the Roma community shows, that their educational levels are low. Most Roma in Slovenia have not finished the elementary school. According to the data, this is true for over 65 percent of the members of the Roma community, of which 60 percent men and 70 percent women.<sup>6</sup>

In Slovenia, a research has been carried out in 2006 regarding educational and professional interest of Roma from the Dolenjska, Bela Krajina, Kočevsko and Grosupeljsko areas. The research took place within the scope of the PISR project (Professional Informing and Counselling for Roma People). The results of research have shown, that, among the interviewed Romani, as many as 80 percent of the people have not completed elementary school and over 90 percent are unemployed. Among those with finished elementary school, 45 percent expresses a readiness to enter professional education, however, they see many barriers and issues regarding this, and thus do not decide to participate. At the same time, research has shown that 60 percent of surveyed Roma are satisfied with their position and do not wish for changes in the field of education and employment.

In 2004, Slovenia adopted a document titled Strategy of Education of Roma in the Republic of Slovenia (and its update in 2011). The document is important, since it contains the foundations, principles, goals and fundamental solutions for a more successful inclusion of the Roma people into the education at all levels in the Republic of Slovenia.<sup>7</sup>

A comparison between genders on the national level shows, that the share of women with an incomplete elementary education is being reduced somewhat quicker than the share of men. In 2002, 7% of residents were without education (8% women and 5.8% men). In 2011, the share of population without education was reduced to 5.5% (5.3% women, 3.4% men).<sup>8</sup>

Among the elementary questions of the complete social integration of Roma, the level of **employment** is a significant one. Employment is not merely a necessary condition for the provision of fundamental existential possibility; it is also one of the basic conditions for the improvement of the overall social - economic position of the Romani. The employment rate of Roma in Slovenia is generally low although no precise records exist. The general image of the Roma people unemployment indicates a concentration of the Roma in several areas, especially the Prekmurje and Dolenjska regions, which also represents a regional issue. The issue of Roma unemployment is closely connected to their educational structure. The number of registered unemployed Roma is increasing through the years as a relative and absolute number. According to the information of local administrations and employment offices, where the unemployed Roma people are registered, certain employers have a negative attitude towards Roma employment. Among Roma living in different areas of Slovenia certain differences can be identified. A

<sup>6</sup> General Information about the Roma Ethnic Community in the Republic of Slovenia. 2006. Ljubljana: Government of the Republic of Slovenia, Office for National Minorities. Acquired on 29.10.2014 from: <http://www.uem.gov.si/fileadmin/uem.gov.si/pageuploads/IzrednaGradivo3.pdf>.

<sup>7</sup> Strategy of Education of Roma in the Republic of Slovenia. Adjustment to the Strategy 2004. 2011. Ljubljana: RS Ministry of Education and Sport. Acquired on 29.10.2014 from: [http://www.mizs.gov.si/fileadmin/mizs.gov.si/pageuploads/podrocje/razvoj\\_solstva/projekti/Strategija\\_Romi\\_dopolnitev\\_2011.pdf](http://www.mizs.gov.si/fileadmin/mizs.gov.si/pageuploads/podrocje/razvoj_solstva/projekti/Strategija_Romi_dopolnitev_2011.pdf).

<sup>8</sup> Strategy of Education of Roma in the Republic of Slovenia. Adjustment to the Strategy 2004. 2011. Ljubljana: RS Ministry of Education and Sport. Acquired on 29.10.2014 from: [http://www.mizs.gov.si/fileadmin/mizs.gov.si/pageuploads/podrocje/razvoj\\_solstva/projekti/Strategija\\_Romi\\_dopolnitev\\_2011.pdf](http://www.mizs.gov.si/fileadmin/mizs.gov.si/pageuploads/podrocje/razvoj_solstva/projekti/Strategija_Romi_dopolnitev_2011.pdf).



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smaller part exists, which is very well integrated into the environment of the majority population and maintains their cultural and language characteristics at the same time. The majority of Roma, however, lives separately, in the environment of their own communities, and find it difficult to become involved in another environment. At any rate, separation (due to their own wish or due to external factors) influences the exclusion from equal possibilities of competition at the labour market, pushing the Roma people further onto the social periphery.

The **health** determinants and inequality in the health of the Roma population are influenced by an entwinement of social and economic factors (living environment, hygiene conditions, social networks, education, upbringing, employment), cultural factors (specifics of Roma culture and tradition, which is, in places, committed to ancient customs of natural and magical healing) and factors, connected to a healthy lifestyle (smoking, drug abuse, unhealthy nutrition, physical activity). All these factors entwine and influence (mostly in a negative way) the health of the Roma population.

Various groups of Roma live in Slovenia. One could even claim that the Roma in Slovenia are a heterogeneous population group. The differences between individual groups influence the practice of marriage as well.

The Social protection Institute of the Republic of Slovenia published a report in 2014, titled Forced Marriages of Roma Girls, within which, the historical and culturological characteristics of specific Roma groups are presented:

**The Roma people of Dolenjska region** live in the areas of Dolenjska, Posavje and Bela Krajina. They came to Slovenia from Croatia. Among them, an exceptionally low education structure and high number of illiterate persons or persons with incomplete elementary education is a specific. In 2006, a wider research on education and professional interests of the Roma in the areas of Dolenjska, Bela Krajina, Posavje, Kočevsko and Grosupeljsko was carried out, showing that 80% of the surveyed Roma individuals did not complete elementary school, while over 90% of them are unemployed. The report summarizes the findings of Ms. Klopčič that the Roma of Dolenjska, in the past, worked as rock breakers or road maintenance workers, while nowadays most of these traditional professions died out. Among the Roma of Dolenjska, formal marriage is rare, with most of them living in an extramarital community. The most common form of marriage is running away. This means that a couple decides to live together, but since the families do not approve of their relationship (most commonly since both are still minors), they run away and hide for a while (e.g. with relatives). After a certain time, the couple returns and lives together, while their cohabitation is already understood as marriage. This form of marriage is an issue primarily due to the girls and boys "get married" very young (on average at 13 or 14 years of age, but cases with girls being 12 are also known), due to which they do not complete elementary school. Early pregnancy is also problematic. There are no elements of coercion in this form of early marriage. The parents of minors do report the running away to the police and the social work centres, but not as an act of kidnapping. In most cases, matters end in a way where the care for the girl is assumed by the husband's family, where the couple also usually moves to.

**The Roma people of Prekmurje region** came to Slovenia through Hungarian territory. The report states, that their educational and employment structure is somewhat better





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than with the Roma people of Dolenjska region. According to Ms. Klopčič, the Roma of Prekmurje were more successful in finding employment in recent past, especially the one from Goričko area, who used to do seasonal work in farming and construction in nearby Austria.

The pattern of reporting for this group of Roma does not deviate significantly from the rest of the population. Individuals choose their partners freely, there is no coercion from the parents' side. Before the wedding, they socialise and date, some live together and do not marry, some marry after a few months, others later. Virginity is not essential (but individual differences exist), dowry or any kind of purchase of the bride is not known.

Slight differences in comparison with the majority population may be noticed in terms of age of marriage. The Roma people of Prekmurje mostly marry in their early twenties, which is still later than other Roma groups.

**Sinti of Gorenjska region** moved to Slovenia through Austria. They are completely assimilated at this point.

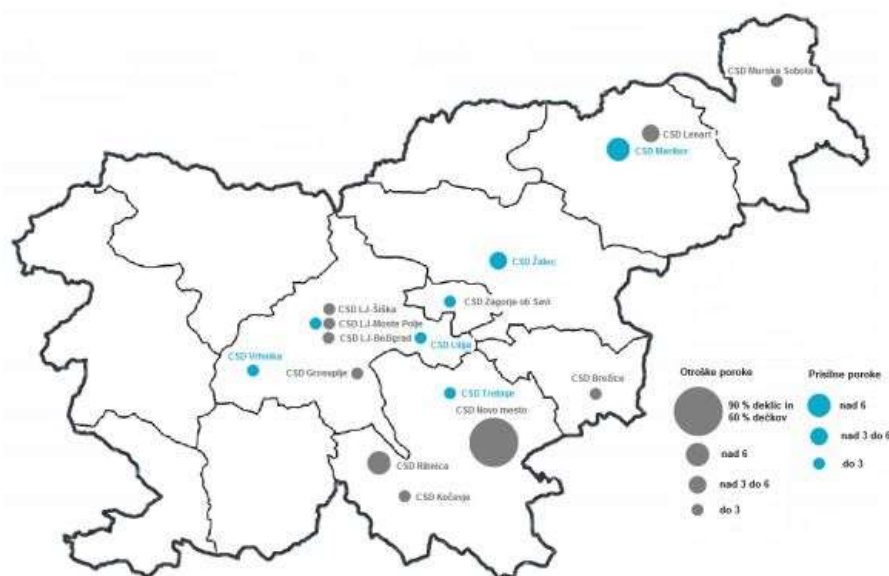
A special group is formed by the **immigrant Roma people from former Yugoslav republics**. These have come in two major waves. The first wave occurred in the 1960s and the second in the 1990s. Among those, two types of marriage remain: arranged marriages and running away. The couples which enter marriage very young are usually those where marriage has been arranged. The other form of marriage with immigrant Roma is running away, however with the difference that the consequences for individuals who decide for it are often much more severe. Most commonly a couple decides to run away when the parents do not approve of the chosen partner.

The report finds that the scope of child and forced marriage in Slovenia is anything but negligible. Information by non-governmental organisations shows higher estimates of frequency of this occurring in comparison with centres for social work. Motivations for forced marriage stem from the patriarchal society and are institutionalised through social and cultural norms. The consequences of child and force marriage is visible in early school termination, early pregnancy and the confinement of women in the private sphere.<sup>9</sup>

Number of child and forced marriages by statistical regions (Social Work Centre data):

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<sup>9</sup> Forced Marriages of Roma Girls. Final report. 2014. Ljubljana: Social Protection Institute of the Republic of Slovenia. Acquired on 1.6.2015 from: <http://www.irssv.si/index.php/category-list-potreben-za-bt-slider/650-prisilne-poroke-romskih-deklic>.



Source: Forced Marriages of Roma Girls. Final report. 2014. Ljubljana: Social Protection Institute of the Republic of Slovenia. Acquired on 1.6.2015 from: <http://www.irssv.si/index.php/category-list-potreben-za-bt-slider/650-prisilne-poroke-romskih-deklc>.

## LEGISLATION FRAMEWORK

Slovenia as a signatory state of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations in 1989, follows its provisions. The Convention defines the rights of children and obligations of a signatory state. Article 1 of the Convention defines the age division line between child and adult in the following way: "For the purposes of the present Convention, a child means every human being below the age of eighteen years unless under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier."<sup>10</sup>

A citizen of the Republic of Slovenia, by completing 18 years of age, acquires all the rights and obligations of an adult, as defined by the Constitution of the Republic of Slovenia in its power as the highest legal document. At the same time, a minor may, in the case of a legal marriage or parenthood (before the age of 18), acquire full legal business competence. The Act on Marriage and Family Relations states that a minor may marry with the age of 18.<sup>11</sup> Should a minor wish to marry before the age of 18, they must, in accordance with Article 23 of the Act on Marriage and Family Relations, first acquire a legal decision by the Centre for Social Work (CSD). A marriage with an advance approval by the CSD is only possible for minors of age 15 or older. CSD will, in such a case, carry out an interview with both minors or the minor and the person, whom the minor wishes to marry, enabling the applicants to justify the suggestion and, at the same time, explore living conditions (material assets, residence, social network, work and

<sup>10</sup> United Nations Convention on the Rights of a Child, 1990. Acquired on 16.6.2015 from: <http://www.varuh-rs.si/pravni-okvir-in-pristojnosti/mednarodni-pravni-akti-s-podrocja-clovekovih-pravic/organizacija-zdruzenih-narodov/konvencija-o-otrokovih-pravicah-ozn/>.

<sup>11</sup> Article 117 of the Act on Marriage states that the right of parenthood ceases with the completion of the age of majority by a child, that is, when the child turns eighteen or, if a minor before the age of majority enters marriage. Act on Marriage and Family relations, Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia, no. 69/2004. Acquired on 16.6.2015 from: [http://www.uradni-list.si/1/content?id=49906#/Zakon-o-zakonski-zvezi-in-druzinskih-razmerjih-\(uradno-precisceno-besedilo\)-\(ZZZDR-UPB1\)](http://www.uradni-list.si/1/content?id=49906#/Zakon-o-zakonski-zvezi-in-druzinskih-razmerjih-(uradno-precisceno-besedilo)-(ZZZDR-UPB1)).



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schooling, parent support...). CSD usually also interviews the parents of the minor applicant and verifies their stance on the marriage, view of possible barriers, concerns and oppositions or support of the marriage.

However, the Republic of Slovenia does not have a legal framework which would define forced marriage as a form of violence.<sup>12</sup>

In 2008, the Republic of Slovenia adopted the Act on Prevention of Family Violence, which manages family legislation and defines different kinds of violence within the family. The law defines the role, tasks, network and cooperation of various national authorities and non - governmental organisations in the processing of family violence cases, as well as sets out the victim protection measures. At the same time, it sets out that anyone, suspecting that a child may be the victim of violence, should report that to the social works centre, police or the State Prosecutor's office, even if being otherwise bound by professional secrecy.

The act does not plan a penalty for the violators, since the criminal issues are arranged and sanctioned in accordance with the Act on Criminal Procedure and the Penal Code.<sup>13</sup> The law thus focuses on a wider area of civil law and the functioning of social services, which can solve violence issues in a long term sense.

The act does not plan a penalty for the violators, since the criminal issues are arranged and sanctioned in accordance with the Act on Criminal Procedure and the Criminal Law. The law thus focuses on a wider area of civil law and the functioning of social services, which can solve violence issues in a long term sense.

<sup>12</sup> The report Forced Marriages of Roma Girls, published in 2014 by the Social protection Institute of the Republic of Slovenia, lists legal frameworks, which forbid early marriage by law: "There are, however, individual elements of forced marriage, indirectly, contained in various laws, as stated by Weber in his article "Impermissibility of the Tradition of Marriage for Girls, Younger than 15 Years of Age" (2012):

- Sexual assault of a person, younger than 15 years of age (Article 173 of the Penal Code); this is also valid in the case, where a minor girl consents.
- Human trafficking (Article 113 of the Penal Code); in the opinion of the author, the parents of a groom, who pay for a bride, and the parents of the bride who accept the compensation, could also be guilty of the crime of human trafficking. This act is performed by those, who, for the purpose of exploitation, prostitution or other forms of sexual abuse, forced work, slavery, indenture or trade with human organs, tissues or blood, purchase a person, take a person over, provide residence, transportation, delivery service or otherwise manipulates such a person or takes part in these actions.
- Child negligence and cruel treatment (Article 191 of Penal Code), where the parents of the bride permit a minor girl to live with the new family. In accordance with the Act on Marriage and Family Relations, the parents are obligated to take care of their own children, which is also included in their right as a parent, relating to the care of the parents for the healthy growth, coherent personal development, upbringing for independent life and work and care for other rights and benefits of minor children.
- The criminal act of coercion (Article 132 of Penal Code) in the case of the keeping of a minor girl against her will. Here, it is also a violation of the freedom of movement, which is a Constitutional right (Article 32 of the Constitution) states that every person has a right to free movement, choice of residence, leaving the country and returning to it at any given time.
- Violation of personal dignity and safety (Article 34 of the Constitution) in the ceremony of the wedding night, where the verification of virginity also includes the presence of the family. The author states, that the representatives of the groom's family could also be penalised for acts of bullying (Paragraph 2 of Article 296 of the Penal Code). Bullying is present when two or more persons mistreat another person, beat it or punish it in other painful or humiliating ways, use force or threat or a direct assault against life or health to chase this person, force them to work or limit their rights violently in another way, thus putting them into a subordinate position."

Forced Marriage of Roma Girls. Final report. 2014. Ljubljana: Social protection Institute of the Republic of Slovenia. Acquired on 1.6.2015 from: <http://www.irssv.si/index.php/category-list-potreben-za-bt-slider/650-prisilne-poroke-romskih-deklic>.

<sup>13</sup> The Penal Code of the Republic of Slovenia, in Articles 173 and 174, defines sexual intercourse or any sexual activity with an individual below 15 years of age as punishable by law. Penal Code, Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia, no. 55/2008. Acquired on 16.6.2015 from: <http://www.uradni-list.si/1/objava.jsp?urlid=20082296>.



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## BULGARIA

### PROFILE OF THE ROMA COMMUNITY

Bulgaria is one of the countries with the most numerable Roma population. The exact number of the Roma could hardly be determined, because a large majority of them prefer to be declared as Turkish, Bulgarian or Wallachians at the population census. According to the census in 2001 370 908 people declared themselves as Roma , and according to the census in 2011 – 325 343 people, out of which 44.13% live in the villages. At the same time authoritative international and Bulgarian researchers determine the number of gypsies in Bulgaria of about 800 000 people.

Roma come to present-day Bulgarian lands at different times and from different places. That is the reason why today so many Roma groups exist, differing (more or less) from one another.

Due to the overall historical trends on the Balkans and in Europe, due to the history of settlement, development and relations of Roma community in Bulgaria with majority population and other minority communities, Roma in Bulgaria use different names to identify themselves. The term “Roma” was formally publically introduced immediately after the end of the WW II with the creation of the theatre “Roma” and the newspaper “Romano esi” (Roma voice) in 1946. The change of the state policy after 1956 and the prohibition for the minorities to use their mother tongue in public places lead to “forgetting” the notion until 1989.<sup>14</sup> After the end of the totalitarian regime, the word “Roma” started to be used by the media, political circles and non-governmental organizations, due to the fact that the majority of the people with Roma identity have defined themselves in this way. That is also the politically correct way to call these people, without, of course, imposing on them another identity since there are two big groups who prefer to be identified either as Millet or as Rudari.

As mentioned above, according to the Census 2011, 325.343 individuals (4,9 %) are self-identified Roma. 85% report Roma as their mother tongue, 7.49% Bulgarian, 6.69% Turkish, and 0.82% other languages. 56.22% profess Orthodox Christianity, 32.24% Islam and approximately 12% are followers of the Protestants denominations.<sup>15</sup> Nevertheless, more than 60% of the Roma hide or deny their identity out of fear of discrimination or loss of social status and occupational/professional position. Generally, Roma identify themselves on the basis of three levels of identity: group, ethnic and national identity. At group level Roma call themselves as “Burgudjii”, “Bakardjii” and other group names. At ethnic level, they call themselves as “Roma, Millet or Rudari” (three different names for different communities). At national level, “Roma” have Bulgarian national identity. In addition, many Roma individuals are abroad for several months every year for temporary work assignments and they are consequently not registered by the census - distorting the actual numbers and percentage share of the population. Among the estimations, the highest percentage of Roma estimated is that of

<sup>14</sup> Elena Marushiakova, Veselin Popov, *Gypsies in Bulgaria*, 1993, 88-93

<sup>15</sup> *National Strategy of the Republic of Bulgaria for Roma Integration*, 2012. Available at <http://www.nccedi.government.bg/page.php?category=125&id=1740> , last accessed: July 2015



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the European Council, according to which the Roma constitute 10.33% of Bulgarian population.<sup>16</sup>

### **Origin of the Roma people and their settlement in Bulgaria**

Roma groups came first to Bulgarian lands during the Second Bulgarian Kingdom. New groups of Roma settled with the arrival of the Turks in the next centuries. During the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century they were joined by Roma people fleeing from Wallachia and Moldova, who at that time had the status of "objects" rather than "persons", i.e. they were kept as slaves. Subsequently Roma migrated into Bulgaria from the territories of present Romania after slavery was abolished. The move was called in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century "the Great Kelderara invasion". Roma who settled in Bulgaria during that period were very different from the Roma who have lived from centuries in the Bulgarian lands. They speak a different dialect of Romanes language (called. "Vlach" dialects). Some of them speak an ancient version of the Romanian language and do not call themselves "Roma". Their religion is Eastern Orthodox Christianity playing an important role in their lives.

Roma were not sent to concentration camps during the Holocaust caused by the Nazi-regime. There were plans for deporting Jews but Bulgarian Orthodox Church, Bulgarian intelligentsia and even people from the ruling party opposed these plans and were not realized. During the War there were restrictions: for example there were food portions for everyone; the portions of Jews were 50%, the Roma received only 25% of the total.<sup>17</sup>

### **The Roma community in Bulgaria<sup>18</sup>**

As mentioned above the Roma community in Bulgaria is not a homogeneous one but is compiled of a number of layers, meta-groups and sub-groups.

#### ***YERLII***

The first in historical aspect is the meta-group of the so-called *Yerlii* – i.e. local, settled Roma. They are decendents of the Roma who came during the period from the 13<sup>th</sup> to the 18<sup>th</sup> century, and who gradually settled and for centuries on lived together with both Bulgarian and Turkish population. To a large extent the term *Yerlii* was introduced for popular usage mainly as a scientific point of view to summarize a large group of Roma, who settled at different times in the Balkans from the Middle Ages to the beginning of 19<sup>th</sup> century. A large part of the Roma themselves (except several subgroups near Sofia and Kyustendil) do not recognize the term *Yerlii*, and prefer the subgroup names or just *Roma /Gypsies*.

*Yerlii* divide themselves into two large groups: *Horahane Roma* (Turkish/Muslim Roma) and *Dasikane Roma* (Bulgarian Roma, Christians).

#### **a) "Dasikane Roma"**

<sup>16</sup> Krumova, Teodora and Deyan Kolev, authors. *Manual on Roma History and Culture*, 2013, 50-55

<sup>17</sup> Krumova, Teodora and Deyan Kolev, authors. *Manual on Roma History and Culture*, 2013, 18-20, 35-37

<sup>18</sup> Pamporov, A. *Romskoto vsekidnevje v Bulgaria* (Roma Everyday Life in Bulgaria), 2006; Center Amalipe. *Preventing Early Marriages*, 2011, 21-22





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Literally translated **“Dasikane Roma”** today means Bulgarian/Christian Roma. As a whole the word “das” in its original meaning meant “servant”, “slave”. The generalizing term *Dasikane Roma* identifies about 26 subgroups, speaking different dialects of the Balkan type of Roma dialects, with significant lexical influence from the local Bulgarian dialect. Dasikane Roma is the predominant Roma population in Northwest and some parts of Central North Bulgaria and approximately half of the Roma population in Southwest Bulgaria. These are for example *Burgudžiii*, *Dzhambazi*, *Tudzhari*, etc. Among them a slight tendency for Pro-Bulgarian behaviour can be observed, but some groups proudly preserve their Roma identity and traditions (for example part of the Burgudžiii in Shumen area call themselves “*parpul Roma*” - “*real Roma*”).

### **Specific subgroups with preferred other identity:**

#### **b) Grey pigeons**

In Southeast and Central South Bulgaria there is a group of people, who the Bulgarians call “Bulgarian Roma”, the Roma call “Dasikane Roma”, and the Turkish call “*giaour chengenesi*”. They call themselves Asparuh Bulgarians or Ancient Bulgarians, and the neighbouring population often designates them as “Grey pigeons” or “*Demirzhii*”. The group inhabits a relatively concentrated area along the Valley of Maritsa River with approximate boundary to the east – the town of Chirpan, to the west – the town of Pazardzik, to the north – Central Stara Planina Mountain and to the south – the Rhodopes Mountain. The Grey pigeons prefer intermarriages and avoid marriages with other ethnical groups within the country, except Bulgarians, as is their preferred identity. As a tradition the representatives of the group are members of the Orthodox Church, although under the influence of the Gospel Pentecostal Church in some villages a process of evangelization takes place. The peculiar for this group is that in some residential areas the mother tongue is Roma, while in others – traces of Roma language are completely absent. Nevertheless they recognize themselves as representatives of one and the same group and marry each other and the place of living determines also the language to be spoken at home.

#### **c) Tsutsumani**

In the three areas of Northwest Bulgaria lives a group of people, which the Bulgarians call “Bulgarian Roma” or “converted Roma” and the Roma designate as “Tsutsumani”. The Tsutsumani are Orthodox Christians, who Bulgarians do not accept as “real” Bulgarians, and the Roma do not accept as “real” Roma. Their mother tongue is Bulgarian, but they have several words with Roma origin in their language. In the general case the Tsutsumani do not live in ethnical separated neighbourhoods, but are dispersed among the Bulgarian population. They are considerably better integrated than the rest of the Roma in the region – the size of the households, the educational level and the unemployment level are similar to the ones of the Bulgarians in the respective area.

#### **d) “Horahane Roma”**

Literally translated **“Horahane Roma”** means today Turkish/Muslim Roma . Horahane Roma are the predominant Roma population in Northeast, Southeast and Central South Bulgaria and approximately half of the Roma population in Southwest Bulgaria. Horahane Roma are the most numerous Roma group in Bulgaria. They profess Islam



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mixed with numerous Christian elements, and their holiday system includes not only Bayrams, but all significant Christian holidays – St. George's Day (*Erdelez*), St. Basil's Day (*Bango Vassilii*), St. Todor's Day, St. Ivan's Day, even Christmas and Easter. They speak *Romani* mixed with a number of Turkish words, and some of them use Turkish language together with Romani language. Horahane Roma are divided into number of subgroups. For example *Basket-makers*, *Tinsmiths*, *Drandari (Musicians)*, etc. In the course of time these internal group differences have faded up and today the larger majority of Horahane Roma are a uniform group, which keeps only a distant memory about the former craft and subgroup division.

### **Specific subgroups with preferred other identity:**

#### **e) Millet**

In the regions where Horahane Roma live, there are groups of people who call themselves "Millet". The Bulgarians usually designate them as "Turkish Roma" or "Roma with preferred Turkish consciousness", the Turkish call them "Millet chengenesi". The Romani-speaking Roma have dubious attitude and some accept them as Roma, others consider them Turkish. Although the census of the population they declare themselves as Turkish, the name they use for themselves is *Millet*. "Millet" is a Turkish word, which can be best translated as "ethnos" or "religious community". During the time of the Ottoman empire the minority Christian population was divided into *Millets* in terms of religion – for example Orthodox, Judeans, Armenians (not in the ethnical meaning of the word, but in the religious one, as long as the Armenian Church differs from the Eastern Orthodox). The only *millet*, which was divided in an ethnical principle, was the gypsy one – *Chengene Millet*. The Turkish themselves did not use the word "millet" when referring to themselves<sup>19</sup>. Part of the gypsies, who called themselves "Millet" used also the name "Turkish gypsies", but categorically deny being called "Roma". For them Roma are only the Christians who speak Roma language. The mother tongue of the Millet is Turkish, but in some residential areas the older generations use Roma language as "a secret language", and in other groups the usage of a small number of Roma words is preserved as a slang.<sup>20</sup>

#### **f) Agupti**

In the region of the Rhodopes Mountain lives a group of people, which call themselves and is called by the others Agupti. In the middle of XXth century they were classified as Gypsies based on a fragment of a folk song: "Turkish captured Rada,/ and then made her Agupti/ Agupti – a black gypsy...". But Agupti are a wonderful example of change of the initial group identity with the preferred Turkish identity within several generations. If in the middle of XX century researches register Egyptian identity combined with "clear ancient Rhodopi speech", at the end of XXth century the Agupti differ showing tendency towards inclusion in the surrounding Turkish population and usage of the Turkish language. A decisive factor in this case is probably Islam. Similar to the Millet, the usage of the Roma language is as a "secret" language, used by the older generation.

<sup>19</sup> It is only since 20 century, after the Kemalist cultural revolution that the word "Millet" began to be used regarding Turks yet, not in its ethnic or religious meaning, but in its social meaning – as a synonym of "people's".

<sup>20</sup> Kolev, D., T.Krumova. *Za identichnostta na Milleta* (About the Millet Identity). 2005



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## KALDARASHI

The second large Roma meta-group in Bulgaria are the so-called *Kaldarashi*. They come with "the big Kaldarashi invasion", initially passing through Austro-Hungary and Serbia, as a result of which they are often called "Hungarian Gypsies", "Austrian Gypsies", "Serbian Gypsies" or "Nyamtsuri" (i.e. German Gypsies). They are divided into two large groups - *Bakardzhii* and *Lovari* (from the Hungarian "lo" - "horse", due to which they are known as "horse stealers") and into many subgroups.

The Kaldarashi is one of the best preserved Roma groups in Bulgaria. They still have potestarian forms preserved – such as the Roma court - *meshere*, they speak mainly Romani, they strictly keep their customs and traditions. The lavish way in which they celebrate Easter (Patragi) and St. George's Day, as well as Kaldarashi wedding ceremonies often points them out as one of the most interesting Roma customs in Europe. The Eastern Orthodox Christianity plays very important role in the life of the Kaldarashi and they are devoted Christians.

Until the middle of 20<sup>th</sup> century they were nomads, who travelled from village to village to sell their goods. They settled down after the promulgation of Decree 258 of the Council of Ministers dated 1958, prohibiting "nomadism and begging in the People's Republic of Bulgaria". In absolute numbers they are not many. But in territorial aspect Kaldarashi live in all country regions, they rarely form large neighbourhoods, more often several families settle in a village together with the other population but without mixing with the other Roma .

The number of the Kaldarashi in Bulgaria is about 30 000.<sup>21</sup>

## RUDARI / LUDARI

Groups of people which the neighbouring population calls "Romanian gypsies" live predominantly in the village regions of Plovdiv, Stara Zagora, Nova Zagora, Burgas, Varna, Dobrich, Veliko Tarnovo and Pleven areas. The representatives of this community call themselves "Rudari" or "Ludari" – depending on the local dialect. Due to their specific crafts, the surrounding population knows them as Kopanari (whittlers) and Mechkadari (bear-tamers), for which their words are respectively *Lingurari* and *Ursari*. During the census and the sociological researches the Rudari/Ludari identify themselves usually as Romanian, Wallachians or Bulgarian, but they always insist on being differentiated from the Roma . Usually older generations accept the name "Romanian gypsies" for them, because the words *tsigán* and *tsigánka* mean respectively "husband" and "wife" in their speech (as by the way is the meaning of the words *rom* and *romni* in Roma language). The Rudari / Ludari speak a dialect of the Romanian language. In Bulgaria there are two dialects – north (more influenced by the standard Romanian) and south (with more distinct influence from the Greek language). Although they live in relatively differentiated ethnical neighbourhoods, they are probably the best integrated Roma group in the Bulgarian society in relation to the level of education, employment rate, as well as the size of the households, in which they do not differ from the Bulgarian

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<sup>21</sup> Krumova, T., D.Kolev, G.Daskalova – Tsvetkova. *Sbornik materiali "Preodoliavane na tradicionnite I novi anti-romski stereotipi* (A Collection of materials "Overcoming traditional and new anti-Roma stereotypes"), 2011.

population in the certain residential areas. The number of the Rudari in Bulgaria is about 70 000.<sup>22</sup>

## ATTITUDES

The majority and other ethnic, linguistic and religious minorities cultivate negative stereotypes towards Roma communities. Amalipe conducted in 2011 a representative survey among teachers, social workers and health professionals.<sup>23</sup> A majority of medical doctors, teachers and social workers consider Roma as lazy and irresponsible, susceptible to commit crimes. Consequently, they cannot be trusted. On the question: “Who are the Roma and what are their characteristics?” following answers were given:

Medical doctors		Teachers		Social workers		Comparative National survey	
criminals	40.1%	criminals	46.1%	Uneducated	43.3%	Larcenous	<b>46.3%</b>
dirty	39.0%	lazy	42.6%	Criminals	40.7%	Lazy	<b>23.4%</b>
lazy	36.6%	uneducated	32.4%	Dirty	37.1%	dirty	<b>15.4%</b>
uneducated	32.1%	dirty	25.8%	Lazy	34.5%	liars	<b>11.2%</b>
liars	26.5%	musical	25.4%	many children	27.3%	gypsies	<b>9.6%</b>
irresponsible	10.8%	liars	21.9%	Liars	23.2%	uneducated	<b>8.6%</b>
tricky	9.4%	irresponsible	19.1%	Irresponsible	18.0%	poor	<b>7.7%</b>
poor	9.1%	revellers	15.2%	Music	16.5%	revellers	<b>6.5%</b>
ill-mannered	8.7%	many children	11.3%	ill-mannered	13.4%	insolent	<b>3.7%</b>
musical	8.0%	knit together	11.3%	Poor	12.9%	tricky	<b>3.0%</b>

## SITUATION OF ROMA IN BULGARIA

Roma in Bulgaria are the most disadvantaged group in regard to education. The table below shows the school enrolment of Roma children in %

<sup>22</sup> Krumova, T., D.Kolev, G.Daskalova – Tsvetkova. *Sbornik materiali “Preodolavane na tradicionnite I novi anti-romski stereotipi* (A Collection of materials “Overcoming traditional and new anti-Roma stereotypes”), 2011.

<sup>23</sup> Kolev, D., T.Krumova, A.Pamporov, D.Radulescu, S.van der Zwaan, T.Balcik. *Beyond Anti-Roma Stereotypes: the World is not Just White and Black*. 2013



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School enrolment up to class 4: male 30.7% female 38.7%

School enrolment up to class 8: male 42.9% female 37.1%

School enrolment up to class 12: male 15.7% female 4.1%

University enrolment in %: male 0.5% female (less)

(National Strategy of the Republic of Bulgaria for Roma Integration (2012-2020)).<sup>24</sup>

There has been only a slow improvement of Roma educational achievements in the last 20 years. Different reasons can be accounted for that Roma children do not go to school or drop out from school:

- Low level of education of parents and their lack of understanding the value and importance of the education for the future prospects of their children;
- Some harmful traditions as early marriages which turn especially Roma girls into school drop-outs as early as the age of 12
- The recent situation of high unemployment even among well-educated youth which demotivates Roma parents to encourage their children to go for education
- Socialization patterns in many tightly knitted Roma neighbourhoods that create group obligations and additional difficulties to break out for an individual educational benefit
- Unfavourable school environments, like discriminatory attitudes of teachers and non-Roma fellow students
- The school remains an alien to Roma as no social or cultural Roma elements are communicated. Roma history and traditions are not reflected in text books
- Frequent labour migration of parents resulting in high rates of school absenteeism.
- Lack of motivation and disinterest of students

Official measures in place to enforce compulsory education/facilitate school enrolment/prevention of drop-out include:

- legal obligation of children in the school going age (age 6 to 16) to attend school free of charge
- recently adopted legal provision to stop social support to parents whose children in obligatory school going age are not in school
- additional assistance schemes for socially weak pupils (it concerns all children at school age and not only minorities or specifically Roma students)
- the National Program providing free breakfast for all children from 1 to 4 grade.
- provision of free transport for the kids from villages that have no school
- children who study in focal point schools are provided full day schooling, free lunch and free transportation

At the same time, the adult illiteracy among Roma is the highest compared to other minority groups in Bulgaria. For civil society actors, adult illiteracy is an especially important indicator as illiterate parents cannot assist their children in school homework and often do not put much importance on the education of their children.

<sup>24</sup> *National Strategy of the Republic of Bulgaria for Roma Integration*, 2012. Available at <http://www.nccedi.government.bg/page.php?category=125&id=1740> , last accessed: July 2015



Another serious problem preventing Roma from equal access to quality education is school segregation. The successful integration of Roma children into the national system of education needs a balanced class representation of majority and minority children, enriching all with intercultural competence. Even though this ideal could not be achieved in the primary education of remote rural regions with a high concentration of minority groups; it could be supported and achieved in secondary or higher education provided as a rule in bigger villages and towns with more diverse population. In actual fact, the number of Roma students transferred from segregated to desegregated schools constantly grows. Preventive measures for reducing the number of Roma school drop-outs are in place and the Roma children get more and more integrated into the national system of education. Still, some negative tendencies regarding the formation of 'secondary segregated schools' can be observed when Roma students move or are moved to a certain school and gradually become a majority there. Then non-Roma parents of students start to move their children to other schools under the prejudice that many Roma students in a class will lower the quality of education. Over the years such a school could turn into a secondary segregated school. Often a rumour about lower quality of provided education due to many Roma children is spread among the majority and other minorities and thus qualified teachers also start to move to more prestigious schools.

With regard to the value of education of Roma parents, there are four types of Roma families:

- Traditional families do not perceive education as a strong value. They do not obstruct the education of their children but on the other hand, they not proactively support their schooling and education
- Modernized families are strongly interested in the education of their children and make sure that they are in school
- Marginalized families often stop their children from attending school in order to engage them in income generation activities
- Conservative families pertain to cultural reasons that are used to justify Roma socialization without schooling. Patriarchal habits and early marriages would prevent the girl child to attend school.

With regard to specific Roma communities:

- The conservative Kaldarashi Roma community still does not perceive education as a strong value. Most of the elder generation of this community never attended school or has completed only 2-3 grades. The majority of the middle generation improved to a certain extent: usually men have completed at most 8 grade (in order to obtain driving license). Women dropped out without completing even primary stage. Among the youngest Kaldarashi primary education is not an exception, although dropping out is still prevalent. Some of the boys continue in gymnasiums but usually leave the school after 1 or 2 years. The Kaldarashi female student who graduated gymnasium and after this did her degree at Veliko Turnovo University is an exception to be mentioned. To summarize, there are some positive changes but they are slow and not sustainable; good education is still an exception.



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- The Horahane-Roma group is somewhat different. Their educational attitudes are one generation ahead compared to Kaldarashi: the middle generation (both males and females) has primary education completed and diploma obtained. Many of the youth continue in high schools, especially the boys. There is understanding among the parents that education is important

At present, 36% of Roma define themselves as unemployed out of which 11.4% are officially registered with the Directorate of Employment Agency (DEA) and 24.2% are not registered. Data on territorial segments indicate that the number of unemployed Roma in North Bulgaria is significantly higher than in the Southern region (BRQu, A11.1). Findings of sociological surveys conducted in 2010 and 2011 indicate that the Roma (un-) employment has cyclical nature in Bulgaria. The employment rate is lower in the winter and higher in the summer. The average employment rates for the analysed period are 31%. The seasonal nature of the Roma employment rate is easy to explain, taking into account that the two main occupational arenas employing Roma community members are agriculture and constructions. During the last two years there has been a significant decrease of employment in the constructions industries.

Most of the Roma labour emigrants leave their families and their children in Bulgaria with negative consequences for the schooling of children. In a resolution of the European Parliament in March 12, 2009 the fact was outlined that that children left at home by labour migrants experience a general lack of care with reduced physical and mental health, passivity in schools and non-participation in education. At times malnutrition and even abuse of unprotected children is reported. Usually young Roma labour migrants initially leave their children in the care of their parents and relatives.

The employment rate among Roma women is very low, only 23.6%. This is due to the fact that Roma women take care of children and home. About 60.5% of the young women living in the urban areas and 69.3% of the older women are not employed.

Roma share similar situation in the field of healthcare. A World Bank initiated study compiled and analyzed available data on Roma mortality in Eastern Europe concluding that life expectancy of Roma throughout Eastern Europe is about 10 years less than that of the overall population (Ringold D, Orenstein MA, and E Wilkens 2005). According to this study, the average life expectancy of Bulgarians is 73.5 years. Whereupon, the average life expectancy of Roma people in Bulgaria is approximately 63.5 years. According to data of the National Statistics Institute of Bulgaria from 2001, barely 5% of the Roma people reach retirement age (Open Society Institute: 2008). According to a survey carried out among 498 women in seven different Roma communities in Bulgaria in 2012, 52.2% of the participants were not health insured, 47.1% did have a health insurance and 0.7% did not know their health insurance status (Kolev, Baev, Boyanova, Tarnovo 2012). 21.68% of the participants say that the primary care physician refuses to pay house visits when needed. Another indicator related to the access to primary and secondary health services in the same survey shows that 30.12% of the participants felt discriminated by medical personnel. 36.5% say that their children do not attend annual health check up by a physician. The survey shows that the access to emergency health care is very poor. 37.75% say that an ambulance would take up to 30 minutes to reach the patient. According to 11.04%, it takes an hour or more for an ambulance to reach



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the patient in need. Some 4.01% stated that the emergency room refuses to send an ambulance. Focus group interviews showed that the reasons for refusal of emergency care are due to either the lack of health insurance of the patients or the fact that they live in Roma community. The Bulgarian law on health states that the emergency care is free of charge regardless of the ethnic origin or the health insurance status (Kolev, Baev, Boyanova, Tarnovo 2012).

## **LEGISLATION FRAMEWORK**

Children under 14 years of age in Bulgaria do not have legal capacity – a recognized by the law ability to express legally relevant will. Their actions or inactions do not bring forth legally valid result. For them and on their behalf legal actions are performed by their legal representatives – parents or guardians and trustees. The law presumes that in this period a person has not reached the appropriate degree of maturity that enables him/her to realize and guide his/her actions through which he/she would obtain rights and undertake obligations. Children aged 14–18 are minor. This period is a transitional age when mental and spiritual maturation takes place, which allows them to exercise rights and obligations in a limited way. The acts of minors are legally relevant if performed with the consent of their parents or guardians.

The Penal Code defines the legal age of consent for sexual intercourse – completed 14 years of age. Sexual intercourse with a girl under 14 years of age is considered a crime, regardless of whether the child has willingly participated or not. Upon completion of 14 years of age the law protects the child from unwilling sexual intercourse through the requirement to understand “the nature and meaning of the act”.

Crimes against youth are directly related to the tradition of arranged marriages. A person who, by abusing his parental power, compels a child of his, who has not accomplished 16 years of age, to live connubially with someone, is subject to punishment. Connubial life between an adult and a girl under the age of 16 is also considered as a crime. Inciting and facilitating such connubial cohabitation is also subject to punishment.

The marital ransom is considered a crime only if given for a girl under the age of 16. A parent or any other relative that received the ransom and allows his daughter or relative under the age of 16 to live connubially with someone is subject to punishment.

An important aspect is that, in case between the victim and the perpetrator is contracted marriage before the execution of the punishment or closing of the court investigation, no penal responsibility is borne. Thus, serious crimes are compensated if marriage is contracted between the perpetrator and the victim.

On the other hand, for every crime punished by imprisonment of less than 5 years, an agreement with the prosecution office may be contracted and then a punishment below the prescribed minimum will be imposed. Thus, the replacement of heavier punishments with much lighter ones becomes possible even in the absence of exclusive or multiple extenuating circumstances. Most of the crimes related to early/forced marriages fall into this category.



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Every child (an individual under the age of 18 years) has the right to protection for his/her normal physical, mental, moral and social development and protection of his/her rights and interests. An obligation of every citizen, who becomes aware of a child in need of protection, is to report immediately to the Social Assistance Directorate, the State Agency for Child Protection or the Ministry of Interior. This obligation also applies when such information is obtained in the course of exercising a profession or occupation, which is bound by professional secret.

Actually, in Bulgaria there are no specific public policies for the prevention of early marriages in the Roma community. This type of activities is considered mainly in the context of promoting the welfare of the child and the protection of the child: as described above. On the other hand, the issue is sometimes raised in the context of the whole policy for Roma integration.

The targeted policy for Roma integration in Bulgaria dates back to the late 90s and was strongly influenced by the efforts for the accession of Bulgaria to the EU and NATO. On 22 April 1999 the Council of Ministers adopted a Framework programme for equal integration of Roma in Bulgarian society. It was followed by the Strategy for educational integration of children and students from the ethnic minorities – 2004, Health strategy for disadvantaged people, belonging to ethnic minorities – 2005, National programme for improving the housing conditions of Roma – 2006. In addition, Bulgaria was one of the co-founders of the initiative Decade of Roma Inclusion and in 2006 approved its Action Plan for the initiative. The documents related to Roma integration were partially updated in 2010: in May was adopted the updated Framework programme for equal integration of Roma in Bulgarian society, 2010–2020, and in March – the updated the Strategy for educational integration of children and students from the ethnic minorities.

The analysis of these documents strikes with the fact that the issue of early marriages is not explicitly included. It is even not discussed in the context of the topic of the Roma woman, which is not so popular either. Thus, a section on the Roma woman was included in the Framework Programme from 1999 without discussing the issue of early marriages. In the updated Framework Programme (May, 2010), this section dropped off entirely.

Against the background of the existing problem with early marriages among a considerable number of the Roma in Bulgaria, this fact is surprising and speaks of a lack of understanding on the part of the institutions of the necessity of targeted actions for solving the problem with early marriages, as well as of the lack of a comprehensive dialogue on the issue inside the Roma intelligence and community. The negative stereotypes, promoted by some of the most influential media, regarding the early-births rate of the Roma, emphasise in addition the unwillingness of many Roma activists to take up the issue of early marriages.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Center Amalipe. *Preventing Early Marriages*, 2011, 21-22



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## ITALY

### PROFILE OF THE ROMA COMMUNITY

The presence of Roma and Sinti in Italy is estimated to be between 120.000 and 180.000, which means around 0,25% of the total population. Half of them are Italian citizens and around 60% are younger than 18 years old. In contrast with the general perception, only 3% of the Roma population in Italy are nomads. Around 40.000 people have been settled in “camps”.

According to Alexian Santino Spinelli<sup>26</sup> the first certain presence of Roma groups in Italy can be dated at 1422 AD. Many documents testify their movements to Italy and internal transfers. According to the author, Roma groups have come to Italy mainly through Greece, Yugoslavia and Austria passing by Friuli Venezia-Giulia (North-eastern region nowadays bordering Slovenia and Austria). At the end of Fifteenth century Roma started to be persecuted in Italy, as in the rest of Europe: most of the decrees banished them from the various kingdoms in the peninsula, under the threat of imprisonment and whipping; in some cases the killing of the members of these communities was encouraged and deliberately unpunished. In the following centuries the persecution against Roma went on in Europe, as in Italy, through: forced assimilation, separation of children from families, reclusion deportation in the colonies and enslavement. The culmination of this persecution arrived with *Porajmos*, the extermination of Roma and Sinti operated by Nazis, during the Second World War.

#### The Roma community in Florence

In between 1986/7 a group of sixteen families of Roma from Kosovo settled with their roulettes in a square close to the station of Castello (in the municipality of Florence); one more group of eight families from Kosovo and eight families of Roma from Macedonia settled close to the Sinti place, close to via Baracca. The families from Kosovo were coming from different places, like Pristina, Pec, Mitrovica, and all of them had left Verona, a northern city in Italy, probably due to evacuations that were enforced by the police. After a short period the population of Castello obtained to send them away, advancing reasons related to public order. Through the intervention of the Municipality (some deputies and the Chief for the social rights of the City of Florence) the Roma from Kosovo were helped to move in a camp, with their roulettes, in viale dell' Olmatello.

The second group of sixteen families (from Macedonia and from Kosovo) was moved in the outskirt of the area of Isolotto (Quartiere 4), close to dumping area of bus and hospital waste. The area, very close to the bank of river Arno, was at high risk of flood, therefore after a period of heavy rain, in 1994 these families were moved to emergency recoveries (like gyms and in the hospital Banti, no longer in use) because of a flood.

After the flood, the area was adjusted by the filling and the elevation of the ground: the so called camp “Poderaccio” was created. Roma were given only containers and fountains, the hygienic condition was alarming with respect of plumbing, garbage

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<sup>26</sup> A.S. Spinelli, *Baro Romano Drom- la lunga strada di rom, sinti, kale, manouches ,romanichals* Meltemi Editore, 2003





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disposal, lack of proper showers, regardless the garbage dump area in the proximity. The onset of tuberculosis a hepatitis brought to the decision of vaccination for the Roma living there.

One more spontaneous camp rose in a private area called Masini, from the name of the owner. This camp was by far the worst: soon tents and shelters were substituted with wood barracks. In a short time the area Masini grew up to the river Arno: this area was then bigger than the Poderaccio and the Olmatello camps.

With the outbreak of the civil war in the Balkans in 1991, many Roma, in particular those from Bosnia and Montenegro, could not return to their countries; therefore in the period 1991-1994 around 250 families (1300 people) were living in between:

- Olmatello camp, officially recognized by the Municipality
- Poderaccio camp, officially recognized in 1994 under a great pressure of Roma people
- Masini area, which was never recognized until its closure

The three camps were characterized by extreme living conditions to the point that fires occurred often. It must be pointed out that at least two fires that killed a child of two years old in Olmatello and a girl at the age of four in Poderaccio were malicious.

The precarious life in camps due to the lack of space and the terrible standard of hygiene led people living in Poderaccio and Olmatello camps together: they turned to associations for help. In 1994, Roma representatives from the three camps together with ADDM<sup>27</sup>, ARCI Regionale, Fondazione Michelucci<sup>28</sup> among the others, turned to the Municipality to ask for a different solution. The delegation was then joined by the presidents and some council members from the areas involved, that is to say Quartiere 4 and Quartiere 5. In particular CIR<sup>29</sup> was involved in order to obtain the refugee status for those among this population who had right to it. Meetings were set with the neighboring councils and also with those outside the province of Florence to distribute Roma families in the territory (e.g. Livorno, Massa Carrara, Lucca, Pisa, Pontedera, Empoli). About 20 of these families had a good integration path and are still living in the cities where they had been assigned. Around 30 families instead preferred to leave on their own toward Roma, Bologna and Parma.

Notwithstanding the distribution of Roma families in Tuscany and the work done with CIR for the recognition of their refugees status, the problem of the three camps was not solved yet. The municipality decided to attempt to leave backward the experience of camps and try to go beyond it: it could have been possible to lighten the pressure of overcrowded camps and their decay through the test of small settlements/villages, created on purpose and spread along the city. The realization of this project was possible through the implementation of the L.R. 73/95, a regional law about Roma and Sinti integration in Tuscany, through which the municipality of Florence received the financial funding. Under this law it was possible to plan different housing solutions:

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<sup>27</sup>Associazione Diritti Difesa delle Minoranze

<sup>28</sup><http://www.michelucci.it/>

<sup>29</sup>Consiglio Italiano Rifugiati



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- The renewal of the official Roma camps (e.g. providing toilets and plumbing)
- The creation of settlements for Roma
- The salvage of the abandoned buildings and their renovation in order to place families there
- The enrolment of Roma families in the waiting list of the public housing service (ERP<sup>30</sup>)
- The enrolment of some families into the waiting list for emergency housing

These policies have proved to be successful. At the beginning, the enrolment of Roma in the waiting list of ERP has been seen by the municipality with some sort of caution, both for the protests they feared on the side of Italian citizens and also for the fear that Roma might have had troubles in adapting to sedentary life. On the contrary, the first placements turned out to have been so rewarding that in the calls afterward the participation of Roma increased considerably. Lately at least fifteen Roma “young couples” obtained a public house taking benefit from the policies focused on young people. The creation of settlement of houses was successful too: six houses were built in the neighboring of Guarlone and then devolved upon six families.

From 1997 Roma were distributed in all the five areas of the municipality of Florence: one hundred families, around five hundred people. The Olmatello camp was closed, according to the Regional Law n. 2 of 12/01/2000, dedicated to policies and measures to implement for Roma and Sinti people.

In the area of Florence there are many different Roma groups which have been covered by the survey:

- Roma from Kosovo
- Roma Ascalie
- Roma from Albania
- Sinti
- Roma from Macedonia
- Roma from Bosnia
- Roma from Montenegro

### Roma from Kosovo and Ascalie

The main groups of Roma in Kosovo are **Gurbeti**, **Arlie** from Pristina and **Ascalie**. The latter are mixed marriage between Roma and Albanians; from many generations they use to intermarriage. They feel different from all other Roma, whom they call “*Gabeli*”, because they are mixed and their language is Albanian. Kosovan Roma observe tradition very strictly, in particular they celebrate some steps of the individual life with several celebrations: birth, baptism, circumcision, marriage and death are the main occasions. In general, Kosovan Roma and Ascalie are Muslims, while Roma from Serbia are Orthodox. In Florence, Roma of Kosovo origin came mainly from the capital, Pristina, but also from Kosovska Mitrovica, Vucitrn, Pec-Pea and many other small villages. In most of these places, Kosovan Roma were living in contact with Albanians and, like in Pristina, both with Albanians and Serbians. Moreover, the attendance of children at public schools has brought to the point that children have learnt Albanian and Serbian and they are losing

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<sup>30</sup>Edilizia Residenziale Pubblica



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Romanès. Their dialect is full of Serbian and Albanian words, and in some cases Romanès has been replaced by Albanian even in Roma houses.

Until the late '90s Roma in Kosovo had a national radio and run some TV programs. Some were politicians, deputies and council members, both into Serbian parties and in Albanians ones. In the late 1990s, with the outbreak of Kosovan war between Serbians and Albanians, the situation for Roma worsen: they were either conscripted by Serbian, or accused of being allied with the latter by Albanians. Most of them preferred to flee. Nowadays just few Roma families are still in Kosovo: around 150.000 people left for Europe.

### Roma from Albania

Roma from Albania are very similar, from a cultural point of view, to Ascalie from Kosovo who, as seen above are mixed marriages between Albanian and Roma. Some of the Roma groups that can be found in Albania are *Arlie*, *Cergaia Ursara*; they speak Romanès, which they call *čhibromanì*, which is a language full of different dialects and many influences from Albanian language as well. Roma have been in Albania for at least six centuries, and the abundance of foreign and Albanian terms in their language it is a prove of it. The same can be said for Muslim Religion which has been adopted from centuries by these groups of Roma. They generally are not strictly practicing, but religion affect and is intertwined with culture and traditional celebrations. Some of the most important celebrations are "*babina*" the baptism, and the *sunetluko* the circumcision, and the *kumluko* the godparents. When a person is going to have a baby has to chose somebody who will become the grandparent of the child. This kind of bond is very important and strengthen the friendship between the parents and the grandparents.

### Sinti from Prato

As it has been said before, Sinti have been present in Italy for many centuries; there are many groups of Sinti, coming from different countries of Europe: *Gackane Eftawagaria* also called *Sinti Teich* (from Germany); Sinti in the group of *Manuche* (from France); Sinti *Travellers* (from the Netherlands). They are often tied to particular jobs that their families have been doing for centuries: e.g. carousel owners, craftsmen, knife grinder. Until 2000, around half of the families were working in the field of carousels; lately this job is being abandoned because, it is becoming very difficult to pay taxes for seasonal work that mostly depend on the weather. Sinti are looking for stable jobs that allow a more stable life. This fact it is important because, notwithstanding the "integration"<sup>31</sup> of most of them in the plurality of the Italian society, Sinti have kept their identity: mainly their language, and their traditional jobs. The situation is varied: in many cases they live in apartments, as the average Italian citizens. In many cases, they live on their own lands with their mobile homes and cabins in small groups of families all kin related among them. In some cases they are still stuck in marginality, such as camps. It has to be considered that Sinti and Roma have not been recognized as minorities under the law 482/99<sup>32</sup>. A campaign for their recognition as minorities is taking place in 2015. In the

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<sup>31</sup>"Integration" does probably not describe accurately the situation of Sinti in Italy: they have been in the country for so long that they are part of its history

<sup>32</sup> [www.icfiginoserenza.it/filespdf\\_ic/rom%20sinti%20camminanti%201.rtf](http://www.icfiginoserenza.it/filespdf_ic/rom%20sinti%20camminanti%201.rtf)



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last 50 years, Sinti had “special schools” to attend, where they were confined with the excuse of “nomadism”. The language that Sinti in Prato speak is strongly influenced by German terms.

### LEGISLATION FRAMEWORK

The Constitution of the Italian Republic does not define "child and adult" but, with its Article 3, states the equality of its citizens:

*All citizens have equal social status and are equal before the law, without regard to their sex, race, language, religion, political opinions, and personal or social conditions.*

*It is the duty of the Republic to remove all economic and social obstacles that, by limiting the freedom and equality of citizens, prevent full individual development and the participation of all workers in the political, economic, and social organization of the country<sup>33</sup>*

With the law n. 39 in 1975 it has been established that the adult age is at 18 years old.

In 1991, with **law n. 176**, Italy has ratified the "Convention on the Rights of the Child"<sup>34</sup>, first promulgated in 1989<sup>35</sup>. The Convention establishes the main principles behind the rights of the child which, briefly, are<sup>36</sup>:

- no- discrimination of the child on any basis (Art. 2)
- the priority of the best interest of child (Art. 3)
- the right to life, survival and development of every child (Art. 6)
- the right of having children's view respected and taken into consideration on the matters that concerns them (Art. 12)

Three articles of the Constitution, 29, 30 and 31, are relevant with regard of rights of children and marriage. They can be considered as further specification of Art.3: in particular, Art. 29 defines "marriage" , while articles 30 and 31 state the duties of parents to their children in terms of their support, education and upbringing.

**Article 29** states: *The Republic recognizes the rights of the family as a natural society founded on marriage. Marriage is based on moral and legal equality of the spouses within the limits laid down by law to guarantee the unity of the family.*

**Art. 30:** *Parents have the duty and right to support, educate, and tutor their children, including those born out of wedlock. Should the parents prove incapable, the law provides for the fulfillment of their duties. The law ensures to children born out of wedlock any legal and social protection compatible with the rights of members of the legitimate family. Rules and limits to determine paternity are set by law.*

**Art 31:** *The Republic furthers family formation and the fulfillment of related duties by means of economic measures and other benefits, with special regard to large families. The Republic protects maternity, infancy, and youth supporting the institutions needed for this purpose.*

<sup>33</sup><http://www.immigrazione.regione.toscana.it/lenya/paesi/live/contenuti/EventiDellaVita/accordodiintegrazione/costituzioneitalianamultilingue/Costituzioneitalianaversioneinglese.pdf>

<sup>34</sup><http://www.unicef.it/doc/599/convenzione-diritti-infanzia-adolescenza.htm>

<sup>35</sup><http://www.unicef.it/doc/599/convenzione-diritti-infanzia-adolescenza.htm>

<sup>36</sup><http://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CRC.aspx>



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To what concerns the criminal law, the one regarding citizens underage is distinct from that of adults.

Article 69 of the Criminal Code regulates sexual acts with minors of 18. It states that to have sex with a child younger than 14 years old it is a crime<sup>37</sup>. In the age between 14 and 16 years old, it is always a crime, no matter if the minor had expressed consent, if the adult is a relative or somebody who has the minor's custody. In the age gap between 16 and 18 years old, like in the latter case it is always a crime if the minor and the adult are relative or if the adult has the custody of the minor; in case of rape, weather the victim is younger than 18 that constitute an "aggravating factor".

In Italy the minimum age to get marry is 18 years old. The conditions under which the Court for underage people can authorize the marriage of persons over 16 years old are: that the minor himself/herself requests it to the Court; that the latter will examine the seriousness of the reason which lead the minor to this decision; the Court will have to evaluate his/her psycho/physic maturity and will have to listen to the parents, tutors and the public prosecutor ( art. 84 Codice Civile)

In the Italian law there is not any direct reference to "forced marriage" and "early marriage"; however, according to a research conducted by Le Onde Onlus<sup>38</sup>, violence must be considered as immanent when discussing forced marriage, it is possible to refer to more general law that approaching violence or respect of human rights. Therefore there are two bills that need to be taken into account:

- the ratification of the "Istanbul Convention" (01/07/2013) of the European Council on "preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence" <sup>39</sup>
- the Interior Minister decree of 23/04/2007 which regulates Values of citizenship and integration, where it states in its article 18 that the basis of marriage is the freedom of the young people and therefore are forbidden coercion and marriage of children.

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<sup>37</sup> When the age gap is not more than 3 years

<sup>38</sup>G. Serughetti, M.G. Ruggerini, M.R. Lotti, M. Misiti, M. Virgilio, "Rapporto di ricerca – il matrimonio forzato in Italia: conoscere, riflettere, proporre- come costruire una stima delle donne e bambine vittime in Italia di matrimoni forzati e quali interventi avviare" Le Onde Onlus, 2014 available at [http://www.municipio.re.it/retecivica/urp/retecivi.nsf/PESIdDoc/455DF8A996824E74C1257CE700508B1F/\\$file/ricerca%20il%20matrimonio%20forzato%202014.pdf](http://www.municipio.re.it/retecivica/urp/retecivi.nsf/PESIdDoc/455DF8A996824E74C1257CE700508B1F/$file/ricerca%20il%20matrimonio%20forzato%202014.pdf)

<sup>39</sup><http://www.coe.int/t/dghl/standardsetting/convention-violence/>





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## THE SURVEY: METHODOLOGY, RANGE AND CONTEXT

The whole survey has been based on the perception that early marriages are not a consistent and unchangeable part of the Roma culture, they are not a question of specific “Roma” tradition and its overcoming will not endanger the Roma identity. Early family creation has been a patriarchal, not a Roma tradition: all people in their pre-modern development have created families at early ages. The fact, which today is being called by many “Roma customs” related to the pre-marriage arrangements and the establishing of family among some Roma groups were widespread among the ethnic Bulgarians, Slovenians, Romanians, Hungarians and so on only two or three generations ago.

## TERMINOLOGICAL CLARIFICATION

In the beginning of this research, the term “marriage” used for its purposes should be defined. Undoubtedly, the term “marriage” from a purely legal point of view does not encompass all situations of early and forced marriages, object of this research. The only “marriage” recognised by the law in the countries included in the project, is the union concluded under the terms and procedure of the respective Family Code. The term “marriage”, however, is used in the research as married life in the Roma community means ***establishing a family, the common life of the spouses, the adherence to the established ethical norms in the community, the need of rites and rituals, which are part of the concept of “marriage”***.<sup>40</sup>

Essentially, the creation of a family in the Roma community has most of the characteristics of a marriage (with the only – though of vital importance – difference, that it is not registered before the relevant institutions. A number of international documents, treating the issue of early/child/forced marriages also underline that this is a marital union in essence, which is not registered before the law.<sup>41</sup> This does not change its main characteristics and does not decrease the seriousness of its consequences: with regard to the development, the future social realisation and the rights of the child.

## METHODOLOGY OF THE RESEARCH

Exploring sensitive issues, such as sexual and marriage behaviours and reproductive attitudes, is related to a number of ethic and methodological dilemmas that should be resolved before the beginning of the research itself: what type of research is admissible and what is unacceptable to ask; how we should approach the respondents in order to receive reliable information and at the same time respect people’s privacy. Therefore, a combination of regular closed or half-open questions used in similar researches are used together with vignette questions. When it comes to sensitive topics, the predefined answers often cannot describe the attitudes and the life experience adequately. Therefore, for the purposes of the survey under the project “Early marriage – Culture or Abuse?”, a complex questionnaire has been developed. Based on a modular

<sup>40</sup> For more information on Roma wedding customs and traditions and early/forced marriages, please, go to <http://amalipe.com/index.php?nav=publications&lang=2>

<sup>41</sup> Doc. 10590, 20 June 2005, Forced marriages and child marriages, Report, Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men, Rapporteur: Mrs Rosmarie Zapfl-Helbling, Switzerland, Group of the European People’s Party; UNICEF, Innocenti Digest, No 7 – Early Marriage, Child Spouses, March 2001, p. 5–8.

principle it provides information using different techniques for collection of information. Since the number of the interviews will be rather small in order to have a representative sample, the aim of the research is to have qualitative rather than quantitative dimensions.

The survey has used the method of random sampling. The interviewer has asked only **ONE** person in a **HOUSEHOLD** (all the people living in one building and sharing one and the same budget). This should have been the person with **the closest birth date**. No person under the age of 14 was to be questioned. All the interviewers have gone a training prior to carrying out the survey. Where possible teams of male and female interviewers have been organized (for example, in Bulgaria) and depending on whether the interviewee was a man or a woman, the male or the female moderator respectively was doing the questionnaire. They had to be very flexible in order to be able to get relevant and reliable information. The interviewer had to make sure first that the respondent was alone and there were no other people around since it would definitely influence his/her answers, especially in case of young girls or young daughters-in-law the mother/mothers-in-law would insist to stay in the room and understand what it was about.

In order to make comparisons and follow the tendencies, the questionnaire for the present project has been designed following the model of the one used in the research under the project “Preventing Early/Forced Marriage” with the financial support of the Daphne III Programme of the European Commission (Reference number JLS/2008/DAP3/AG/1298-30-CE-03124780080)<sup>42</sup>

### RANGE OF THE SURVEY

The first round of the survey took place in March - May 2015 and covered 1335 respondents in total (557 questionnaires in Slovenia, 351 questionnaires in Italy and 426 questionnaires in Bulgaria).



<sup>42</sup> Amalipe Center for Interethnic Dialogue and Tolerance. *Preventing Early Marriages*, 2011

## SLOVENIA

The survey questionnaires were deployed in the field in March 2015. The questionnaires were deployed by 8 external interviewers, 2 Roma mediators and 2 project coordinators. Before the survey was carried out, both project coordinators met the interviewers twice. Together, they reviewed the entire questionnaire. Precise instructions were provided regarding the selection of respondent and an agreement on a time plan of interviewing, as well as geographical coverage of terrain was adopted. As a result no troubles were noted while carrying out the interviews.

In Slovenia, a total of 557 survey questionnaires were deployed. The locations of the deployed questionnaires were as follows:

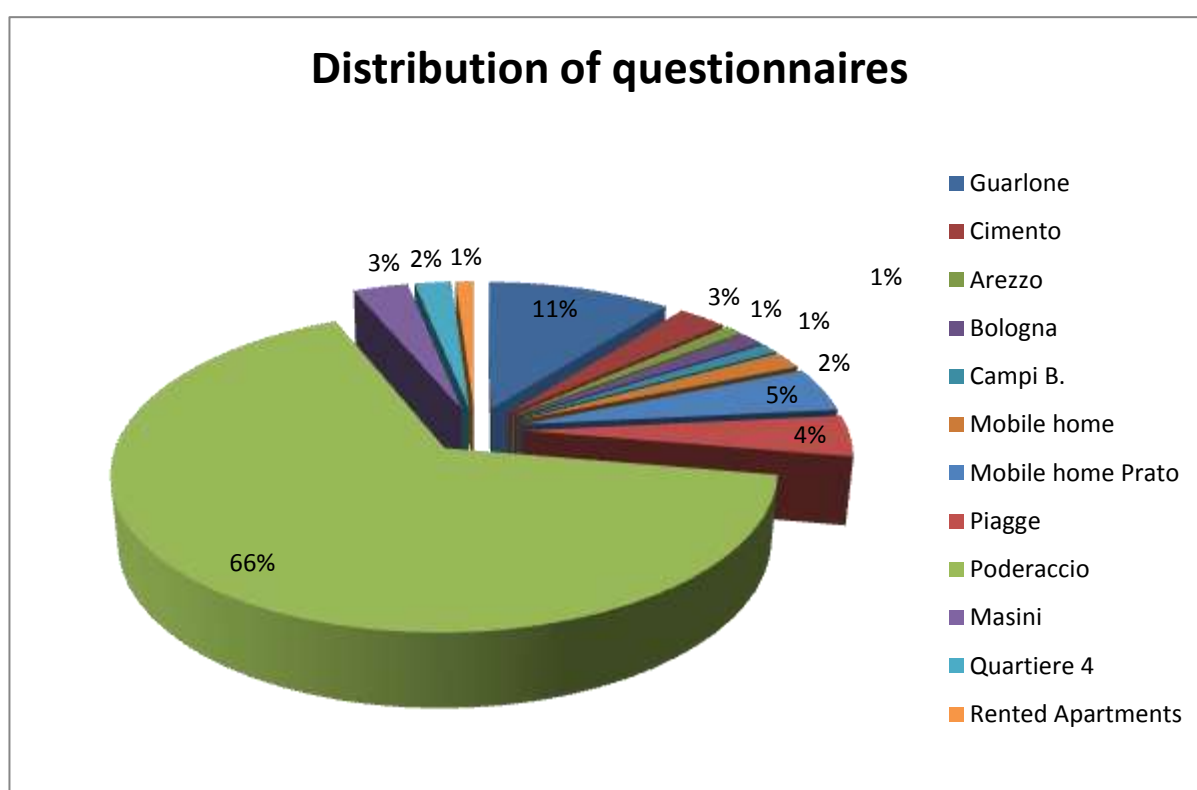
Settlement	number	%
Prekmurje region (Murska Sobota, Beltinci, Goričko, Puconci, Pušča)	113	20,3%
Dolenjska region (Novo mesto, Trebnje, Šentjernej, Drama, Dobruška vas, Ob potoku, Brezje, Šmihel, Poganci, Jedinščica, Ruperč vrh), Kočevje, Ribnica, Bela Krajina (Metlika, Kanižarica Črnomelj, Drama, Semič, Lokve)	413	74,2%
Grosuplje, Ljubljana	4	0,7%
Maribor and surrounding areas	18	3,2%
Undefined	9	1,6%
TOTAL	557	100%

## BULGARIA

The research was carried out in April and May 2015 on the territory of Veliko Turnovo district. 426 questionnaires in total were filled out on the territory of Veliko Turnovo district. The region has a diverse Roma community with representation of almost all Roma groups. Therefore, the interviews made a distribution of the questionnaires in settlements with different Roma population in order to cover the diversity of the community. Due to the previous work in the region, the survey was implemented in rather favorable conditions with positive responsiveness of the respondents included. In order to ensure opened and frankly answers to the sensitive questions in many of the places (especially place with more conservative Roma groups) team of interviewers were organized including both a male and a female interviewer.

## ITALY

Before starting interviews mediators in Italy have tried to open a dialogue of mutual trust where to talk of doubts about the nature of some questions; this was particularly important in order to avoid false answers. As icebreaker mediators often used to ask the people how their celebration for marriage works; to talk of their traditions during the feast, how long it lasts and such. Due to the fact that moderators have worked in the target neighbourhoods before, there were familiar to the people and rather well accepted even when asking sensitive questions.



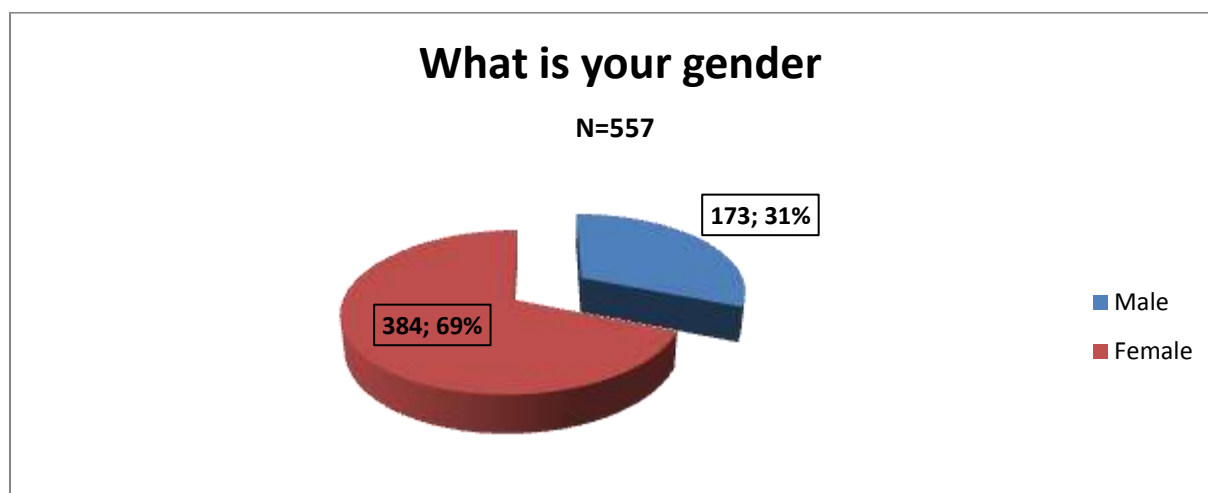
## RESULTS FROM THE SURVEY

### SLOVENIA

#### DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF THE RESPONDENTS

Survey questionnaires were filled out by a bit less than a third of men, specifically 173 or 31% of the respondents, and two thirds of women, specifically 384 or 68,9% of respondents.

Diagram: Respondents by Gender



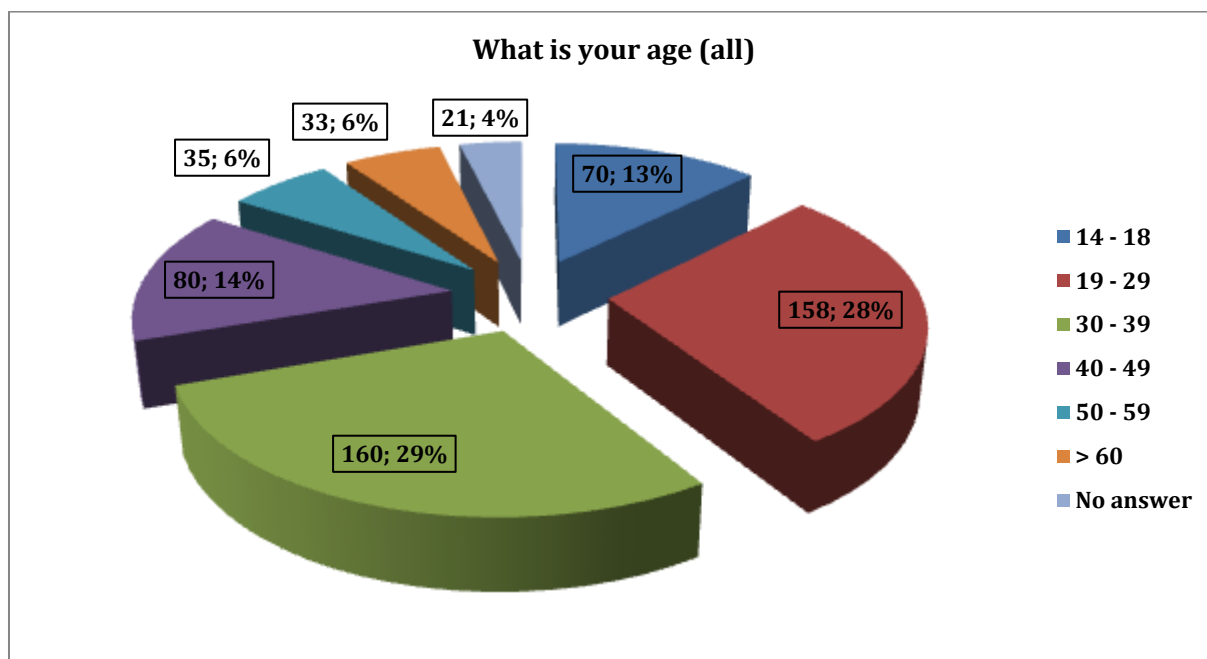
Processing of survey questionnaires shows, that the largest part (almost a third) of the respondents was 30 to 39 years old (160 or 28,9% of respondents). Close to that, the age group of 19 to 29 years follows. There are 158 or 28,3% of those. At the same time, this means that more than half of the respondents are between 19 and 39 years of age. 70 or 12,5% of the respondents were aged between 14 and 18 years, with an almost similar number for the respondents, older than 50 years.

Table: Respondents by Age

Between 14 and 18	Between 19 and 29	Between 30 and 39	Between 40 and 49	Between 50 and 59	More than 60	No answer	Sum
70	158	160	80	35	33	21	557
12,5%	28,3%	28,9%	14,3%	6,3%	5,9%	3,8%	100%

Diagram: Respondents by Age





If we compare the age structure of women and men, we find, that the largest part of the interviewed women and men is aged 19 to 49, with similar shares of women and men also grouped into the age groups of 14 to 18 years and above 50 years of age.

Table: Age of Women

Between 14 and 18	Between 19 and 29	Between 30 and 39	Between 40 and 49	Between 50 and 59	More than 60	No answer	Sum
47	99	119	51	28	25	15	384
12,2%	25,8%	31,0%	13,3%	7,3%	6,5%	3,9%	100%

Table 4: Age of Men

Between 14 and 18	Between 19 and 29	Between 30 and 39	Between 40 and 49	Between 50 and 59	More than 60	No answer	Sum
23	59	41	29	7	8	6	173
13,3%	34,1%	23,7%	16,8%	4,0%	4,6%	3,5%	100%

All respondents defined themselves as Roma

Among the respondents, 282 or 50.6% of individuals have not completed elementary school and 184 or 33% of respondents completed elementary school. A comparison in education and gender shows a similar share between men and women who haven't

completed elementary school. Approximately half of all the surveyed women does not have completed elementary school, and the same goes for men. The share of men and women who have completed at least elementary school is also similar. However, the share of women with a completed secondary school or faculty is slightly higher than that of men. The majority of interviewed Roma with completed secondary school or faculty come from Prekmurje.

A comparison of data, acquired with the questionnaire, to the data of the Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia from 2011 shows, that the share of Roma with incomplete elementary school is considerably higher (about a half of all respondents) than the share of Slovenians, who were 15 years old in 2012 and had no education or had not completed elementary school. In Slovenia, the share of population with incomplete elementary school was 4,4%, or, on the other hand, 95,4% of population aged 15 or over with completed elementary school. The share of respondents who have completed secondary school or even entered and completed high school is 15,3%. A comparison of the acquired data with statistical data from 2011 shows, that there were almost 70% of people enrolled into secondary and high education, that is, considerably more than among the Roma.<sup>43</sup>

Table: Education Level

	F	F%	M	M%	Σ	Σ%	Σ	Σ%
I do not have any education	41	10,7%	16	9,2%	57	10,2%	282	50,6%
Uncompleted primary education	149	38,8%	76	43,9%	225	18,1%		
Proportion of the respondents with no educ. or uncompleted primary educ.		49,5%		53,2%				
Primary education	96	25,0%	51	29,5%	147	26,4%	184	33,0%
Uncompleted secondary	28	7,3%	9	5,2%	37	6,6%		
Proportion of the respondents with at least completed primary educ.		32,3%		34,7%				
Secondary/ high school	56	14,6%	19	11,5%	75	13,6%	85	15,4%
Uncompleted university	5	1,3%	0	0,0%	5	0,9%		
University	5	1,3%	0	0,0%	5	0,9%		

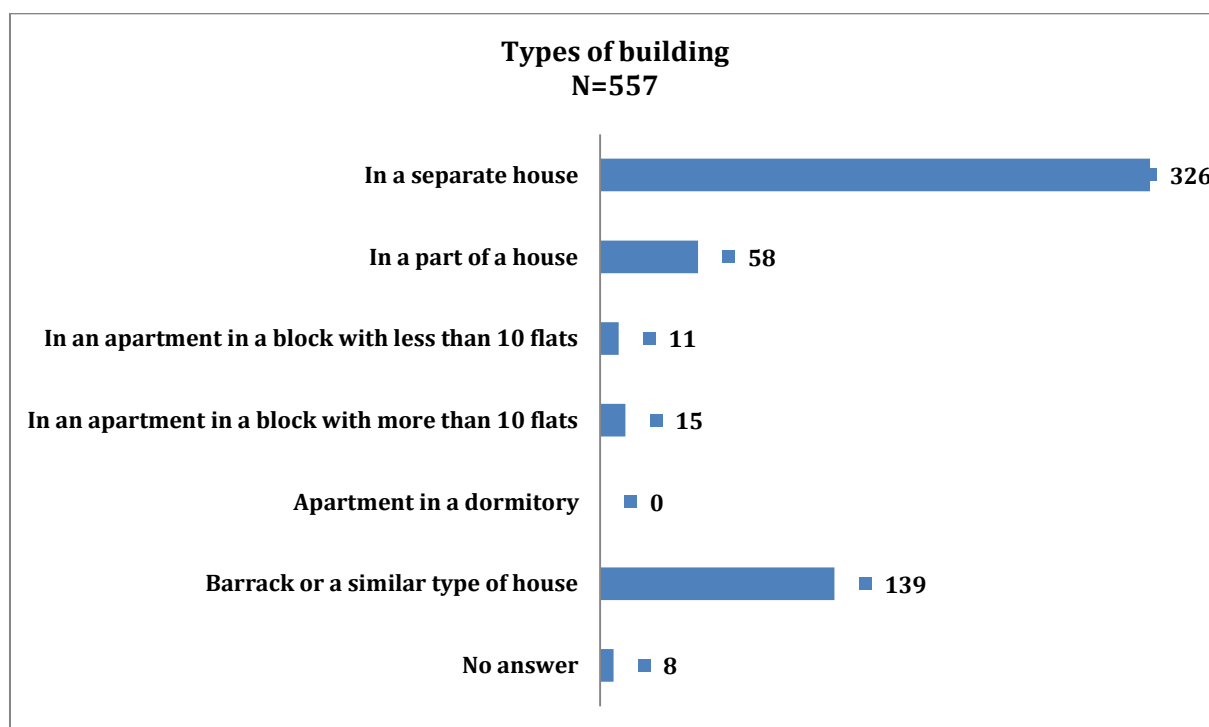
<sup>43</sup> Education, Slovenia, 1st January 2011 – final data. Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia. Acquired on 16.6.2015 from: <http://www.stat.si/StatWeb/glavnanavigacija/podatki/prikazistaronovico?IdNovice=4412>.

Proportion of the respondents with at least completed secondary or university educ.		17,2%		11,5%				
No answer	4	1,0%	2	1,2%	6	1,1%	6	1,1%
Suma	384		173		557	100%	557	100%

## ROMA HOUSEHOLD

More than half of the respondents, more precisely 326 or 58,8%, live in individual houses, 139 or 25% of the respondents live in shacks or similar residence. 58 or 10,4% of the respondents live in a part of a house, while 15 or 2,7% of the respondents live in an apartment building with over 10 apartments. 11, or 2%, of the respondents live in an apartment building with under 10 apartments. None of the respondents lives in a dormitory. 8 respondents did not answer the question.

Diagram: Residence Types

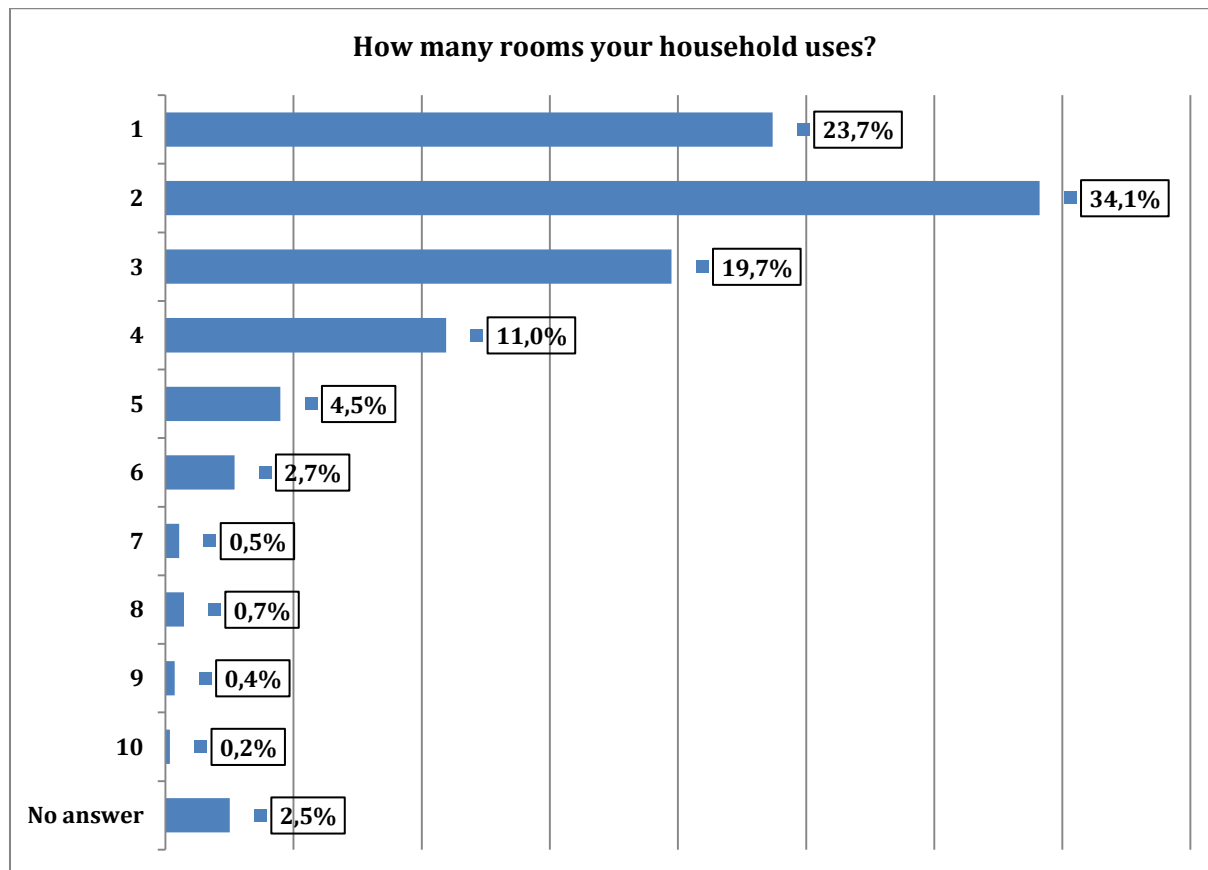


The processed questionnaires show, that the largest part of respondents, living in shacks or similar residence, lives in the area of Dolenjska, Bela Krajina (Črnomelj, Metlika), Kočevje and Ribnica, while the largest part of respondents who live in apartments (in buildings with more than 10 or less than 10 apartments) come from the Prekmurje region.

The majority of respondents (190 or 34,1%) uses 2 rooms, 110 or 19,7% respondents use 3 rooms, while almost a quarter, precisely 132 or 23,7%, only use one room. A few more than a tenth of the respondents, specifically 62 or 11%, use 4 rooms. The number

of respondents with a number of rooms in their household being 4 or more, is 46 or 8,2%. Average number of rooms in a Roma household according to the survey is 2,51.

Diagram: Number of Rooms in Residence



The largest share of respondents who only use one room come from Dolenjska, Bela Krajina, Kočevje and Ribnica (93%), the largest share of respondents who use 2 rooms also comes from Dolenjska with Bela Krajina, Kočevje and Ribnica (73%), while a smaller share (25%) comes from Prekmurje.

Based on the responses, we can say that 483 or 86,6% of the respondents does have plumbing. This also means that a few less than 15% do not have water in their residence. We found that the majority of these households is located in Dolenjska, Kočevje and Ribnica (90%), a small percentage in Bela Krajina (Črnomelj, 5%) and Prekmurje (4%). Among the respondents, a smaller share has a bathroom and toilet in their residence, a few less than 70%, meaning that over 30% of respondents do not have a toilet and a bathroom in their residence.

Table: Equipment of Individual Household

Do you have in your house	N = 557	
Plumbing	483	86,6%

Video, DVD	<b>242</b>	43,4%
Satellite/ cable TV	<b>246</b>	44,1%
Electric or gas stove	<b>351</b>	62,9%
Wood stove	<b>447</b>	80,1%
Refrigerator	<b>466</b>	83,5%
Washing machine	<b>447</b>	80,1%
Computer	<b>311</b>	55,7%
Telephone (land line)	<b>133</b>	23,8%
Mobile phone	<b>489</b>	87,6%
A car/minibus	<b>423</b>	75,8%
Toilet	<b>388</b>	69,5%
Bathroom	<b>375</b>	67,2%

We did not directly inquire about electricity with the questionnaire, but we could use the following replies - 466 or 83,5% respondents use a refrigerator and 447 or 80,1% use a washing machine - to conclude that at least as many households have the possibility to connect to a power source. The largest share of the households, which does not use an electric stove, refrigerator or washing machine, is, equal to the accessibility to water, located in Dolenjska, Kočevje and Ribnica (96%).

The responses also indicate 3 specifics that are worth mentioning. As many as 447 or 80% of respondents uses a wood stove. Solid fuels are still the cheapest source of heating in Slovenia and can replace the electric stove in the case, where a household does not have the possibility to connect to a source of electricity.

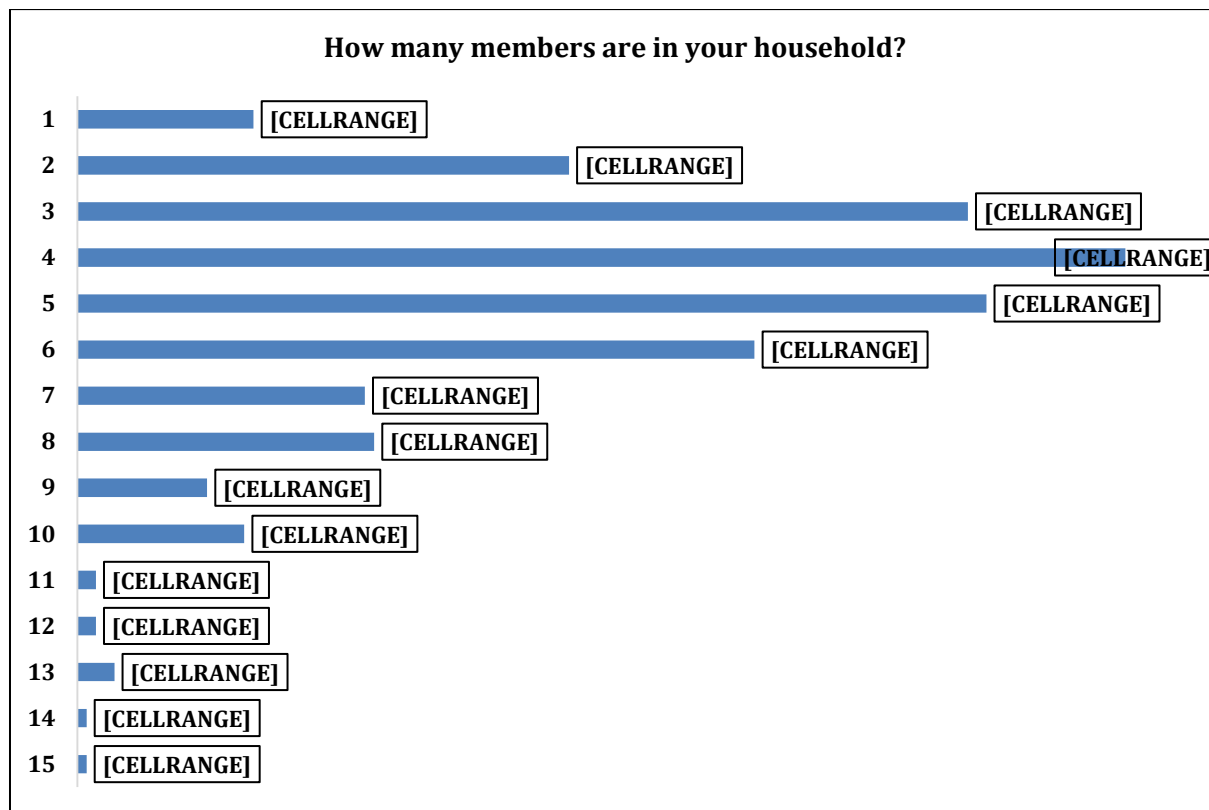
423 or 75,8% of the respondents own a car, which would mean that at least as many of the respondents, or an individual in the respondents' household, also have a driving license.

An exceptionally large share of the respondents, more precisely 489 or 87,6%, owns a mobile phone. 133 or 23,8% of the respondents use a stationary line, which would mean that their residence also has good infrastructure. Over a half of these respondents comes from the Prekmurje or Štajerska region.

The analysis of survey questionnaires shows, that the majority of households (20% of respondents) consists of 4 persons, with 5 person households in the second place (17,6%) and 3 person households following (17,2%). We can thus say that the most frequent household among the respondents consists of 3-5 persons, while the average number of persons per household is 4,65.

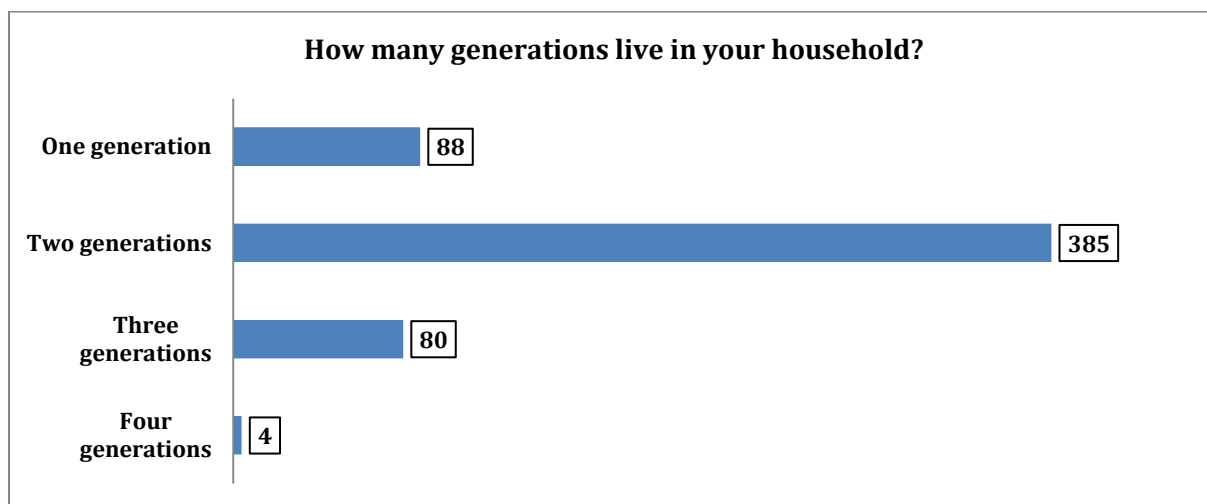


Diagram: Number of Household Members



A comparison of the number of persons per household with the number of generations living in a household shows, that 69% of respondents live in a household, where only two generations meet. A more detailed review of replies shows, that households with two generations, in two thirds (75%), contain generations of parents and their children. The share of extended families (three or four generations) is considerably smaller, representing approximately 15% of all the respondents, of which the largest share (72%) consists of households, uniting children, parents and grandparents.

Diagram: Number of Generations in a Household



According to the information of the Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia from 2011, the average number of individuals per household in Slovenia was 2,5. The most common type of household was a single-family household that is a household, where all members are also members of a single family (the share of such households was 55%).<sup>44</sup>

### **MARRIAGES AND PARTNERSHIPS**

As pointed above there are differences in forms of marriage in Slovenia, connected to the cultural tradition of the individual Roma group. From the answers of the respondents about their marital status, we can see, that the largest share (183 persons or a bit under 33%) of the respondents live in a relationship, but without a formal or traditional wedding. If we add the share of those respondents, who confirm that they were married in a traditional way, the number or share is 286 respondents or 51,3% of those who live in a relationship, not legally registered as marriage. The data also shows that 85 or 15% of the respondents are formally married. An analysis of data also indicates a larger number of respondents that are single. These are 137, a share of 24,6%. We assume that the number is this high due to the methodological orders, based on which we surveyed the first person to have a birthday in the family and is aged 14 or more. Among the respondents, there were 70 in the age of 14 to 19 years, most of these still unmarried.

Diagram: Marital Status of Respondents (basic version)

<sup>44</sup> Households and Families, Slovenia, 1.1.2011 - final data, Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia, available at: <http://www.stat.si/StatWeb/glavnanavigacija/podatki/prikazistaronovico?ldNovice=4029>.

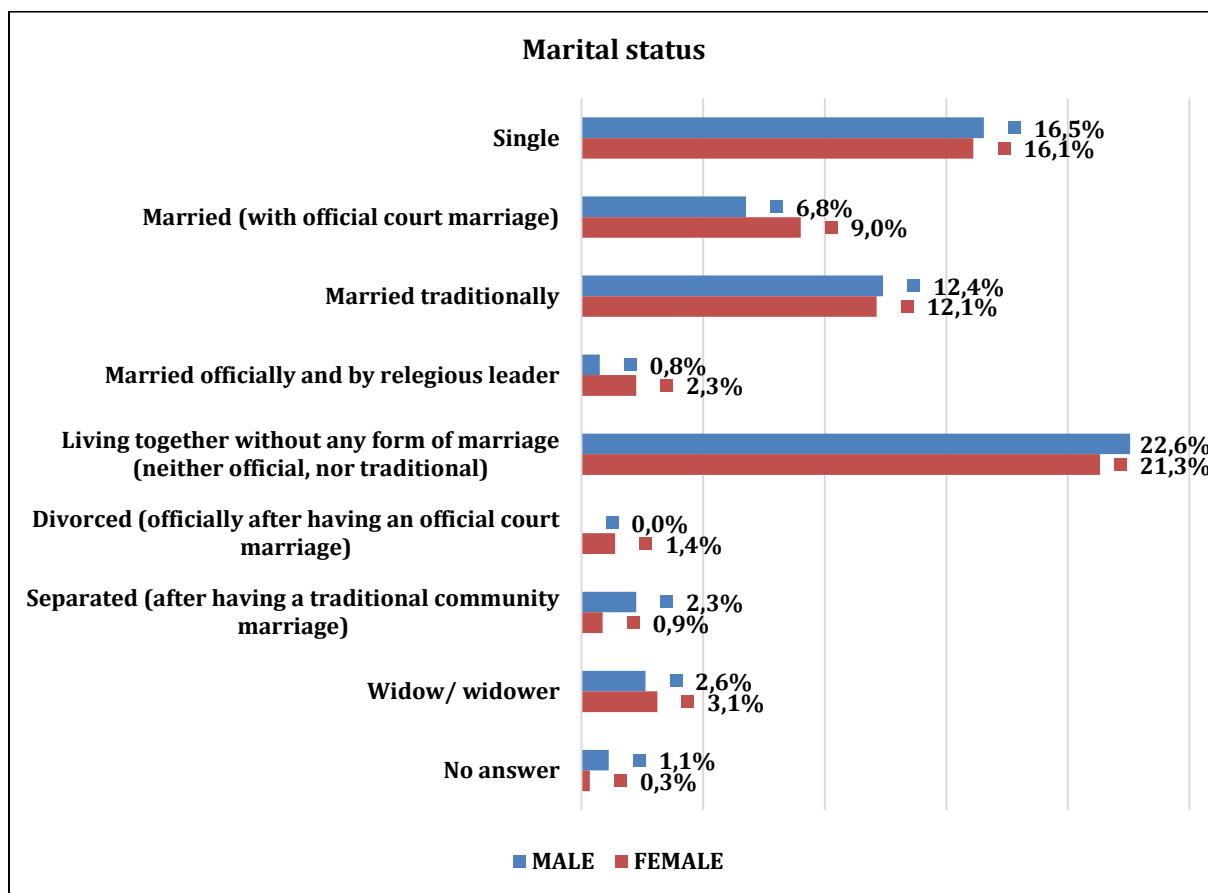
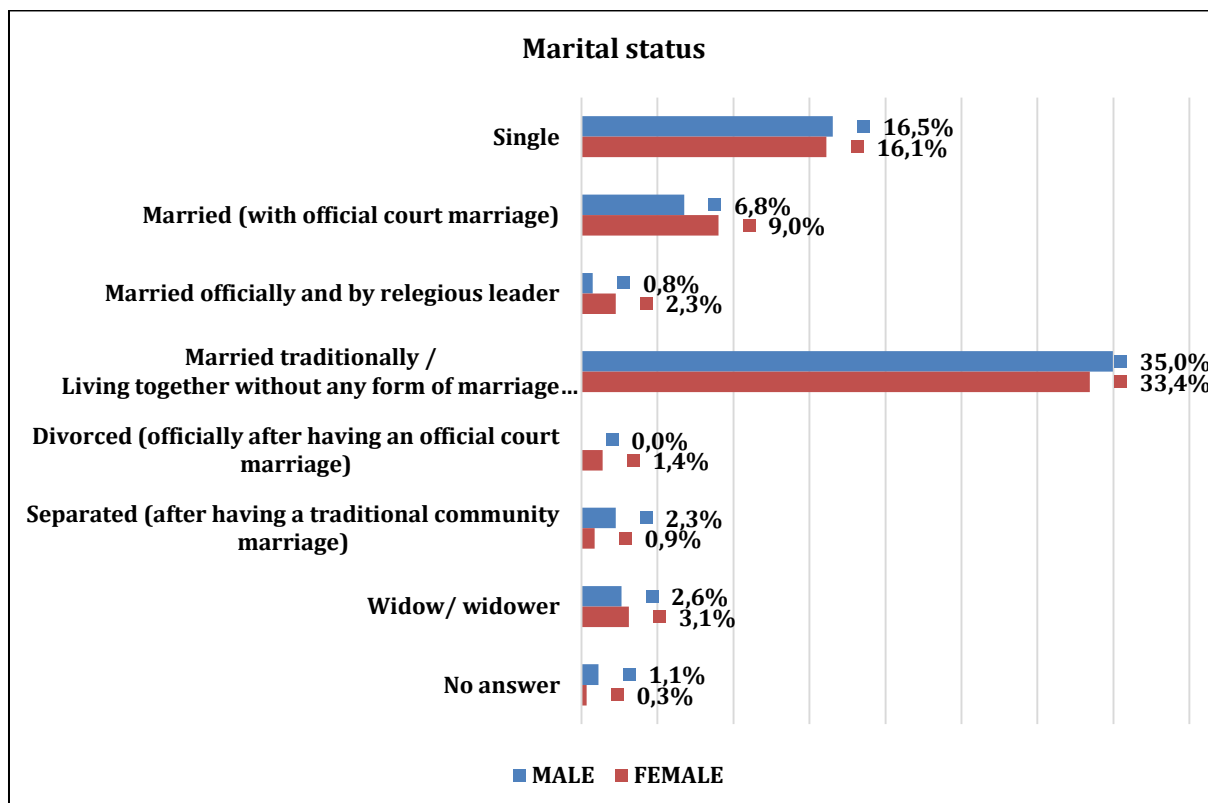


Diagram: Marital Status of Respondents (unified answers)





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431 or 77,4% respondents have a permanent partner with whom they live together, while 126 or 22,6% did not reply. We assume that there are those among them who, due to age, have not registered or are not in a relationship yet.

If we disregard the latter, the data is as follows - 333 persons are currently in relationship, a share of 77,3%, while 81 or 18,8% are not in a relationship, even though they had already been in one, while another 17 persons or 3,9% had more than one relationship.

A comparison of answers, related to the age of respondents upon entering the relationship shows, that most of the respondents (210 or 37,7%) entered the relationship between ages 14 and 18. A comparison by gender shows, that this group includes 40% of all interviewed women and 35% of interviewed men. Among the women, who entered the relationship between ages 14 and 18, 16% are without education, 54% with unfinished elementary education, 25% with finished elementary school and only 2% of women with finished secondary school. A similar pattern can also be seen with men who entered the relationship at a similar age: 15% of them are without education, 46% has not completed elementary school, 37,7% completed elementary school and only one man, or 1,7%, has completed secondary school.

The respondents who began their relationships at ages 14 to 18, entered into a relationship with a partner who was:

- younger than 14 years (1 person),
- 64% partners were the same age as the respondents upon entering the relationship, thus 14 to 18 years,
- 58% partners were older, thus in a group aged 18 to 24 years and
- 9% were older than 24 years.

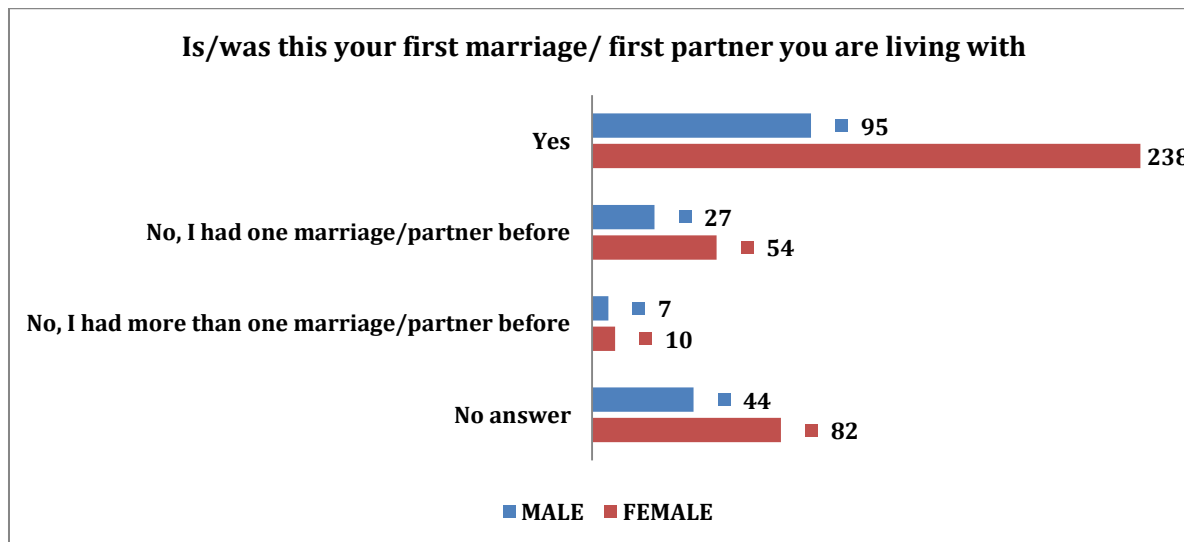
In second place by the number of answers, we see the group of respondents who entered their relationship between ages 18 and 24 years. There are 171 or 30,7% of them, more specifically 59 or 34,5% men and 112 or 29,2% women. Among women, 5% of them have no education and 22% have not completed elementary school. As many as 41% have completed elementary school and as many as 29% have completed secondary school. In this group, 2 men or 3,4% are without education, 42% without completed elementary education, 30% of men with completed education and 21% of men with completed secondary education.

As many as 84% respondents in this group also confirmed, that it was their first relationship. Only two persons in the group entered into a relationship with a younger partner, while the rest were in the same age group or had older partners.

Third in the line is the group of respondents, which has not answered or has not had a relationship yet. There are 124 or 22,4% of them. Among the respondents, there are also 30 or 5,4% of them, who entered the relationship before the age of 14. Of these, there are 28 women and 2 men. We found out that most of the respondents from this group comes from inferior living conditions - shack settlements, have incomplete elementary school and, except for five, all had older partners upon their entry into relationship. 57% of respondents from this group remained in the relationship to this day, while 43% changed relationships.

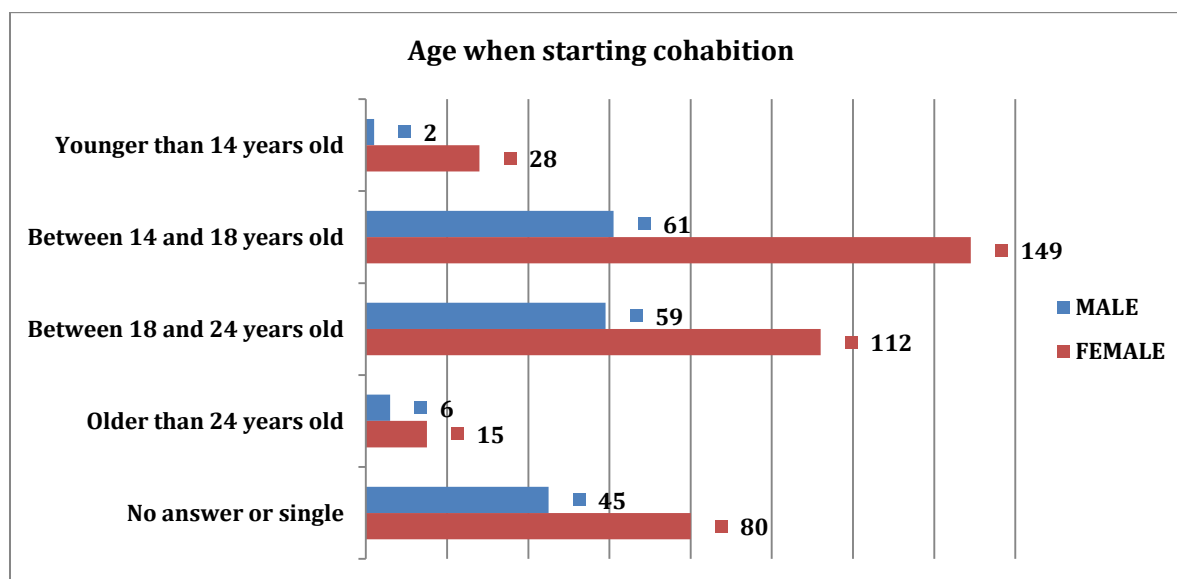
Among the respondents, there were also 21 or 3,8% persons, who entered their relationship after the age of 24.

Diagram: Number of Marriages / Partnerships



An interesting fact is that 125 respondents did not reply to the question how old they were, when they entered the relationship with their partner. We assume that those respondents, who are younger and have not been in a relationship yet, didn't answer the question. The largest number of respondents, replying to this question, stated that they entered a relationship at the age between 14 and 18 years. These number 210 and are a share of 37,7%. The following share are those, who entered the relationship between ages 18 and 24. There are 171 or 30,7% of those. Third largest group consists of respondents, who entered their first relationship under the age of 14. There are 30 of them, making a share of 5,4%. The smallest group of respondents have established their first relationship at an age, older than 24. There are 21 of them, a share of 3,8%.

Diagram: Age when entering first relationship





Only 30 respondents entered their relationship under the age of 14. Among them, 17 or 56,7% told, that this was their first relationship and that they are in it for as long as 10 years. Among the respondents, who entered the relationship somewhat later (aged 14 to 18 years), 158 or 75,2% are those, who maintained their first relationship. As many as half of the respondents have been in the relationship for as long as 5 years, while 16% for as long as 10 years.

A comparison by gender shows, that the largest deviation between men and women upon entry in the first relationship is at early age (under 14 years of age). 7,3% women and only 1,2% men entered relationships early. The difference between genders is reduced for ages 14 and above.

Table: Age of Respondents when Entering First Relationship by Gender

Age when starting cohabitation	Younger than 14 years old	Between 14 and 18 years old	Between 18 and 24 years old	Older than 24 years old	No answer or single	Suma
557	30	210	171	21	125	557
	5,4%	37,7%	30,7%	3,8%	22,4%	
MALE	2	61	59	6	45	173
	1,2%	35,3%	34,1%	3,5%	26,0%	
FEMALE	28	149	112	15	80	384
	7,3%	38,8%	29,2%	3,9%	20,8%	

Results of survey questionnaires show that girls, who entered a relationship before the age of 14, mainly live in poorer living conditions or come from shack settlements. A half of these girls did not complete elementary school while the other half only completed elementary school.

The share of male respondents who decided for cohabitation with their partner between ages 14 and 18 make up the largest share at a bit over 37%. Among 149 women, 16% are without education, 54% with incomplete elementary school, 25% with completed elementary school and 2% (3 persons) with completed secondary school.

The education structure of men who entered the relationship between ages 14 and 18 indicates a similar share of individuals without education (15%). 46% men have not completed elementary school, 37,7% have completed it and only 1 completed secondary school.

Among the respondents who entered a relationship between ages 18 and 24, the totals are 112 or 29,2 % women and 59 or 33,9% men.

Among women who entered a relationship between ages 18 and 24,5% are without education, 22% have incomplete elementary school, 41% have completed elementary school and almost 29% have secondary school education.

Men who entered a relationship aged 18 to 24 have the following education structure: 2 or 1,15% of the respondents has no education, 42% have incomplete elementary school, 30% has completed elementary and 21% has completed secondary school.

Based on acquired data we may assume that it's mainly girls, who enter relationships before the age of 14, specifically those, who live in poorer living conditions and have incomplete elementary school or are without education. From the acquired data, it is not possible to claim, whether the abandonment of education is a reason or consequence for persons who established a relationship.

The connections between age of respondents when they entered a relationship and their final education imply, that the respondents (male and female), who have a higher level of education, decide for relationships later. It is worth restating, that the connection between education and the age of entry into relationship exists, but it is impossible to state with certainty which of the two is the cause and which the consequence.

A review of respondents' replies regarding the time they had or took before getting married shows, that the majority (282 or 50,6%) were seeing their partners for over a month. If we subtract the number of persons who have not answered the question (since they were not in a relationship yet) from the total number of respondents, then their share is 67,1%. In second place, there are respondents (74 or 13,3, or 17,6% with the subtraction of those who did not answer) who saw their partner once or a few times. In third place, a group who only saw their partner once, in the presence of their parents; this was the respond of 19 or 3,4% respondents (or 4,5% with subtraction of those who did not answer). The fourth place is taken by the group who met their partner several times, but in arrangement of the parents. There are 17 or 3% of them (4% with the subtraction of those who did not answer). Among the surveyed, there are also 4 females (or less than 1%), who have said, that they never saw or met their partner before marriage.

The presence of the patriarchal model among the interviewed Roma was verified with three questions (the questions and results are listed below).

Diagram: Relations between having sexual intercourse and age/parent's permission

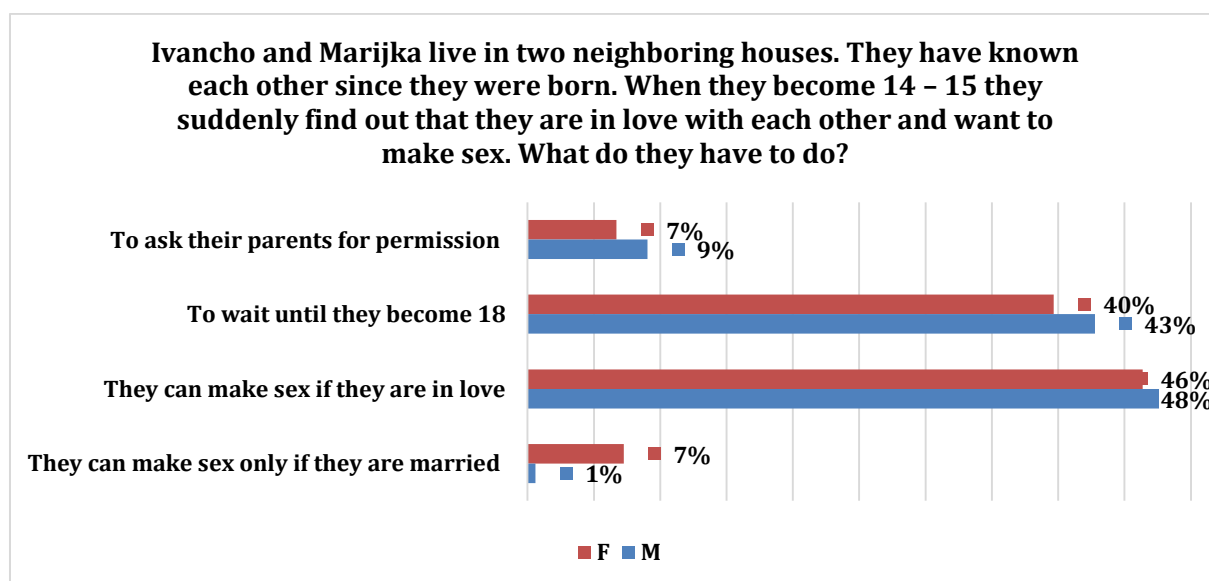


Diagram: Decision to get married

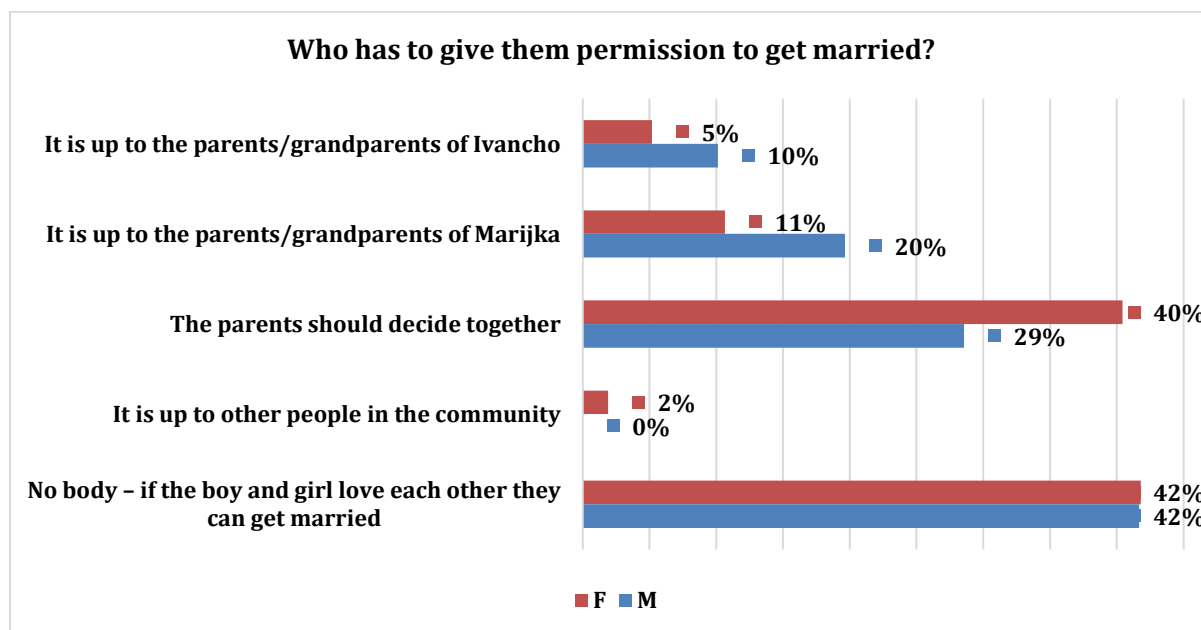
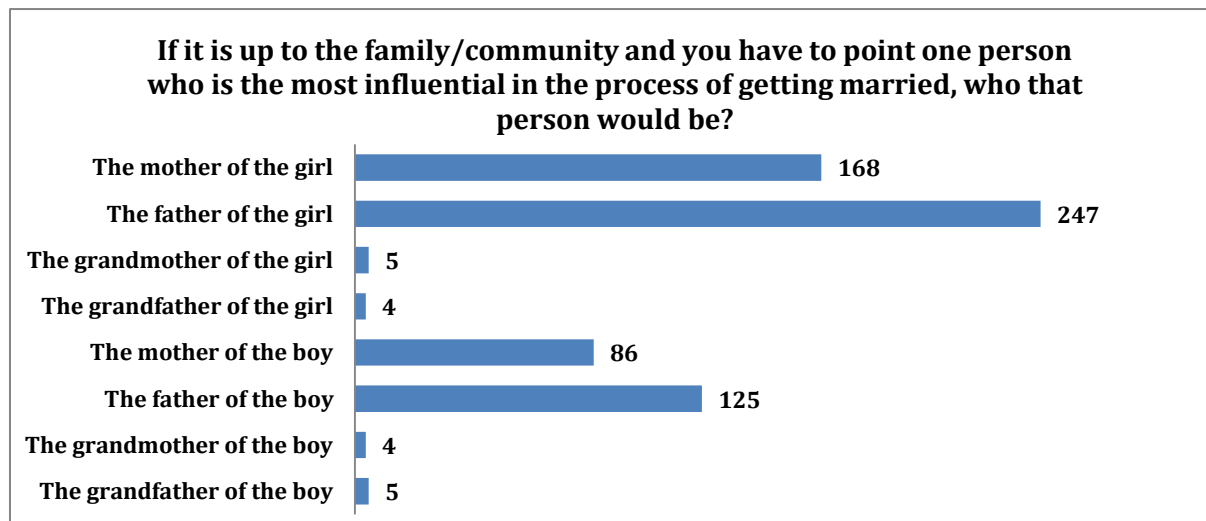


Diagram: Influence of the family in the process of getting married



The results of the answers show, that there are two answers which stand out as the majority, regarding the respondents' opinion on sexual intercourse between two young persons (aged 14 to 15 years). Somewhat less than a half (47,6% of the men and 46,8% of the women) are of the opinion, that two young people who love each other may also have sexual intercourse. Right after this group (no significant difference between genders), there is a group of respondents who stated, that the young must wait with sexual intercourse until they complete 18 years of age (42,8% of men and 39,7% of women).



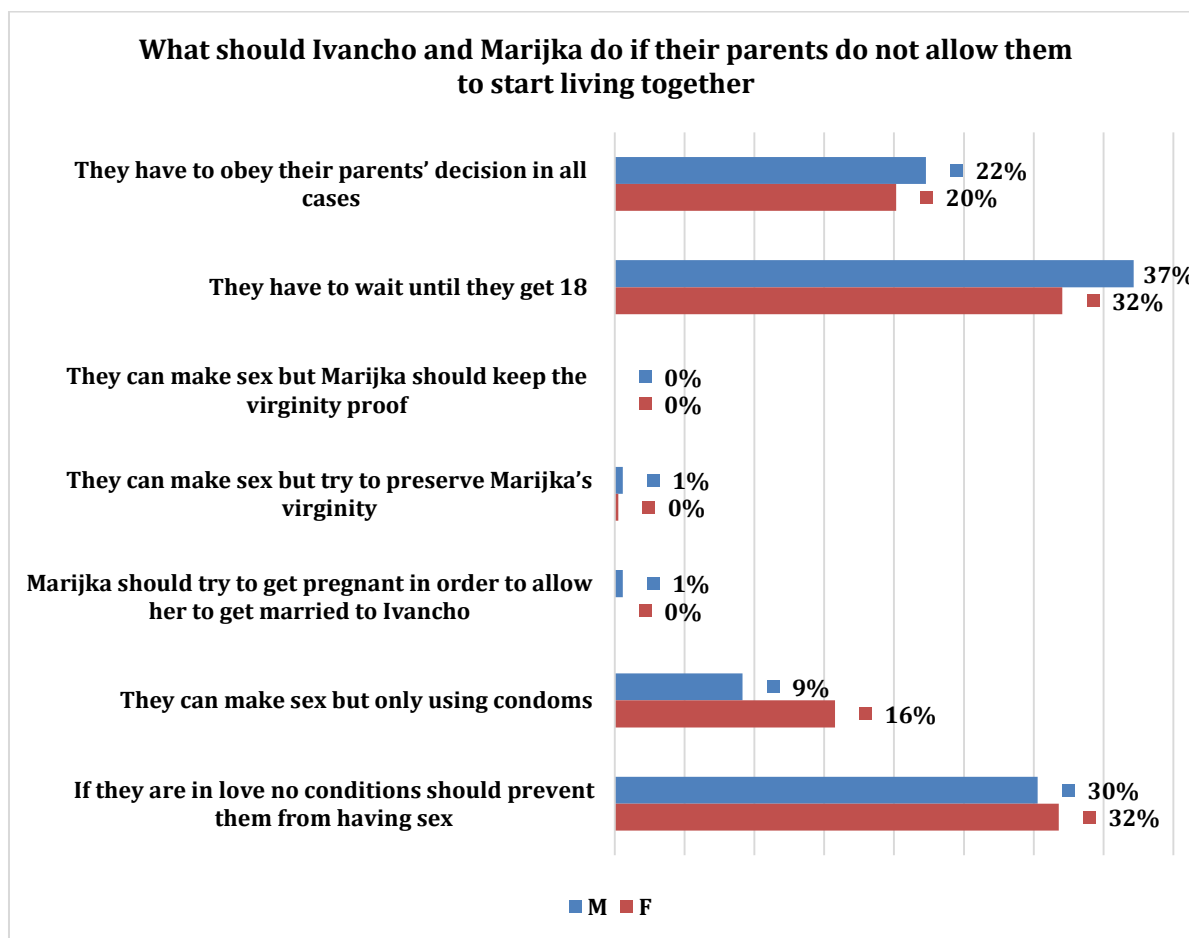
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Furthermore, the results from the survey show that over 40% of respondents is of the opinion, that they do not need a permission from the community, elderly people or family members to marry as long as they love each other. There was no difference between genders. Around 34% are of the opinion that the parents have to permit the marriage. Within this group, there is a significant difference between genders. Around 40% of the surveyed women are of the opinion, that the decision of parents is necessary, while the number of men of the same opinion is lower. 28,6% of surveyed man thinks so, while 14,5% of all respondents are of the opinion that the permission for marriage must be given by the girl's parents. Here, we have a significant difference between genders too. 10,6% of surveyed men and 19,6% of surveyed women opted for this reply.

In order to compare facts with attitudes an additional set of questions was asked. From the answers of the respondents to additional questions measuring attitudes and tendencies regarding the influence of parents and significant others on the decision for a common life of two young persons, we find a similar division of opinion among the respondents as in the previous questions. There are two perspectives, which are almost equally represented. The first contains the answers of respondents, which are of the opinion, that the young should wait with sexual intercourse until they turn 18 (thus until legal adulthood), or that the parents have an important role in their lives. There are a bit over a half of them, 59% men and 52% women. On the other side, there are those who see sexual intercourse as a decision of the couple in love, regardless of their age. These are of the opinion that the two young people may have sexual intercourse or that they may have intercourse if they use protection. There are a bit fewer than half of these, 39% men and 46% women.

From the replies, we found that there is only a small number of respondents, who accept the will of their parents in the choice of partner. Most surveyed suggests that children talk to their parents about the parental choice of partner, there are 55% of them or that they agree to the runaway from an arrange marriage, there are 39% of them. The given replies allow us to say that a "runaway" is a common form of youth reaction among the Roma of Dolenjska region, in spite of the protests of their parents.



In terms of follow up steps for solving early sexual intercourse consequences or early pregnancy, as many as 58,5% are of the opinion (56% of females and 61% of males), that a marriage of the young couple and care for the child is an appropriate solution. A few more than a third of the respondents (34% total or 39% males and 26% females) agrees with the statement, that the decision on motherhood is up to the girl's parents. Very few respondents (a total of 8,5% or 4% men and 13% women) see the solution for the pregnancy in an abortion, carried out in secret.

Finally, since Ivancho and Marijka do not have experience, they make sex but suddenly, a month later, Marijka finds out she is pregnant. They had not expected it since they thought that you cannot get pregnant the first time you make sex. What do you think, what they should do now?	To get married and keep the baby	To tell their parents and the parents should take Marijka to have an abortion	To make abortion secretly from their parents	
M	56%	39%	4%	
F	61%	26%	13%	



Those of the respondents who have decided for the couple who had sexual intercourse and a child in early youth should marry displayed the mentality that a child is the fruit of common love and that the help by the parents would eventually come. The respondents deciding for abortion while informing the parents in advance displayed thoughts of the inability of youth to care for a child.

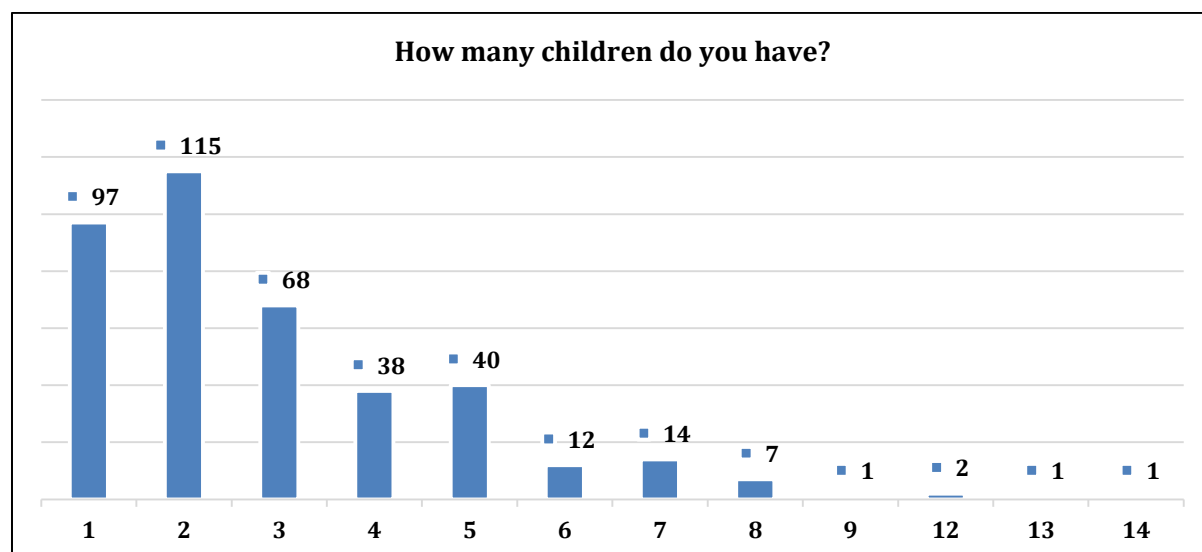
From the answers of respondents about how a girl who has early sexual intercourse should react, there are no replies which would confirm the importance of virginity for a relationship of the two young.

### CHILDREN AND FAMILY PLANNING

Among the respondents, 396 or 71% have children. The largest share of the respondents has 2 children, at a bit over 29%. 97 respondents have one child, making the share 24,5%, and 68 or 17% of the respondents have three children.

The respondents with 4 or more than 4 children numbered 116 or 29.3%. Among the respondents, there were also persons with a large number of children (9 and more than 9 children). There were as many as 5 of them, of which one person had 14 children. The comparison with Slovenian average shows, that the Slovenian families have significantly fewer children on average. Statistical data only shows 1,18 children.<sup>45</sup>

Diagram: Number of Respondent's Children



396 of the respondents or 71% have children.

When asked about when they had their first child, the following answers were provided:

- 16 persons or 4% of respondents did not answer the question;
- 163 persons or 41% respondents were aged 18 to 20 years at the time of birth of their first child. Division by gender shows that, among them, there were 53 or 43% of men and 110 or 40% of women.

<sup>45</sup> Households and Families, Slovenia, 1.1.2011 - final data, Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia, available at: <http://www.stat.si/StatWeb/glavnanavigacija/podatki/prikazistaronovico?IdNovice=4029>.

Women, who had their first child between ages 18 and 20, have the following education structure:

- 12 or 11% of them are without education, 44 or 40% have incomplete elementary school, 38 or 35% of the interviewed women have completed elementary or incomplete secondary school, 15 or 14% of them have completed secondary school. None of the women with higher education has children. Regarding marital status, we find that 25% of the women who had their first child between ages 18 and 20 are married legally, 56% traditionally or live in an extramarital cohabitation, while the rest are single (5%) and widows (5%).

Among the interviewed men, those who got their first child aged 18-20 are 53 or 43%. Their educational structure is as follows:

- 6% without education, 51% with incomplete elementary school, 38% with completed elementary school or incomplete secondary school, 3 or 6% with completed secondary school. In this group of respondents 70% of men live in an extramarital cohabitation or are married traditionally, while 17% are married legally.
- Respondents who became parents between ages 14 and 18 number 125, which is 31,5%. A division by gender shows, that this group of respondents includes 34 or 28% of men and 91 or 33% of women.
  - The educational structure of surveyed women in this group is as follows: 23 or 25% of responding women have no education, 50 or 55% have incomplete elementary school, 16 or 18% of women have completed elementary school and only one has completed secondary school. As many as 88% of women who've had children between ages 14 and 18 come from Dolenjska, the rest from Prekmurje. In terms of marriage, 77% of the women who have had children between ages 14 and 18 live with their partner in an extramarital cohabitation, 9% are formally married, 8% single, 5% widows, the rest live separately.
  - Educational structure of surveyed men who have had children aged 14 to 18 is as follows: 7 or 20.5% are without education, 18 or 53% have incomplete elementary school, 9 have completed elementary school. All of them come from Dolenjska region. 59% of male respondents, who had their first child in the ages of 14 to 18 are traditionally married or live in extramarital cohabitation, 12% are married legally, 12% are divorced, 9% are widowers, the rest are currently single.
- 90 or 22,9% respondents were aged 20 years or more at the time they had their first child. Division by gender shows that there were 27 or 22% men among them and 63 or 23% of interviewed women.
  - Women who had their first child aged 20 or more have the following education: 5% are without education, 19% have incomplete elementary school, 32% have completed elementary school and 40% completed secondary school. Two of them, that is 3%, have completed high school

studies. In this group of women (first child after age 20), 19% are married legally, 46% are married traditionally or live in extramarital cohabitation and 10% are single.

- Men who became fathers aged 20 or over have the following education: only one of the respondents is without education, 33% have incomplete elementary school, 29% have completed elementary school, 36% have completed secondary school. 68% of respondent men who have had their first child after the age of 20 live in extramarital cohabitation, 7% are legally married and 11% are currently single. The rest are widowers or live separately.
- 2 or 0,5% of the respondents were aged less than 14 when their first child was born. In both cases, they are females from Dolenjska or Ribnica areas.

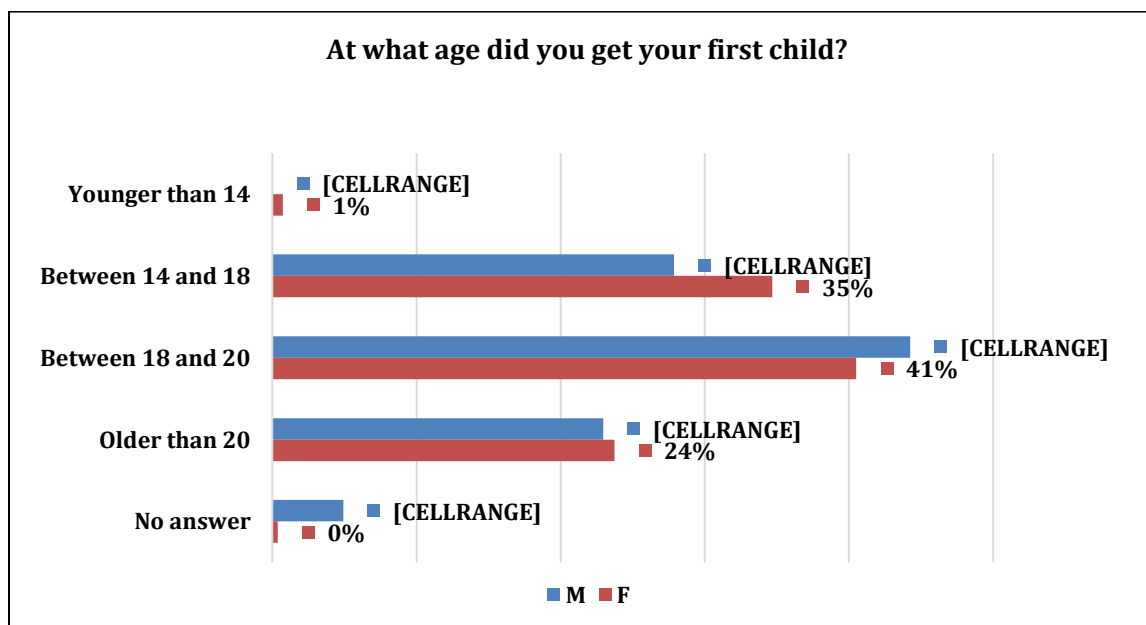
Based on this data, we may conclude that the largest share of interviewed Roma (regardless of gender) have children in ages between 18 and 24, followed by the group of interviewed Roma, aged 14 to 18. The respondents who had their first child after the age of 18 also show higher education levels (regardless of gender). Here, we can't state with certainty, that the education influenced the decision for parenthood at a later age, or if early parenthood influenced the persons to abandon schooling.

A comparison of acquired data with statistical data, which was published for Slovenia in 2011 shows a different picture for the majority population. Among those, the delay of motherhood is notable. In 2010, the average age for first time mothers was even the highest after world war two - mothers were aged 30,3 years on average at the birth of their first child. Those who had their first child last year, were aged 28,7 on average. In comparison with 2009, both average ages increased by 0,2 years. The group with most births in 2010 were women, aged 28 to 31 years. Among women in this group, every eighth had a child. A similar group twenty years ago were women aged 23 and 24 years.

Regarding the year 2009, the birth rate increased most among women, aged 32. Every third woman who was a first time mother in 2010, completed at least 30 years of age.<sup>46</sup>

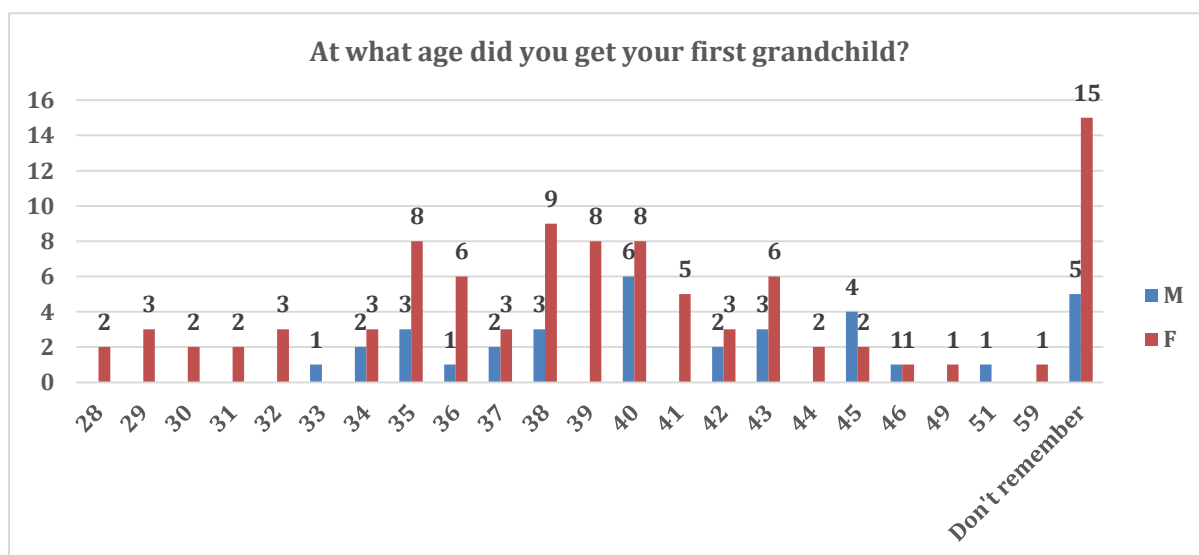
Diagram: Respondent age when getting the first child

<sup>46</sup> Live Births, Slovenia, 2010 - final data. Acquired on 16.6.2015 from:  
<http://www.stat.si/StatWeb/glavnanavigacija/podatki/prikazistaronovico?ldNovice=4015>.



Among the respondents, 127 persons are already grandparents. Among them, 2 interviewed Roma women became grandmothers at 28, and the oldest at 59. The youngest grandfather was 33 years old, the oldest 51.

Diagram: Respondent age when getting the first grandchild

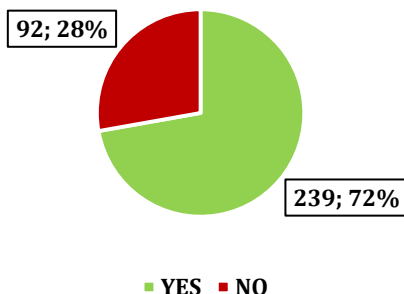


The question regarding the use of means of contraception was presented to 384 women, among which 11 (2.8%), did not respond. 94 or 10.9% did not have sexual intercourse yet, 92 or 23.9% of respondents does not use any contraception, 239 or 62.2% uses at least one of the methods of contraception.

Diagram: Use of Contraception among interviewed women

### Do you use any contraception method? (F)

N=331

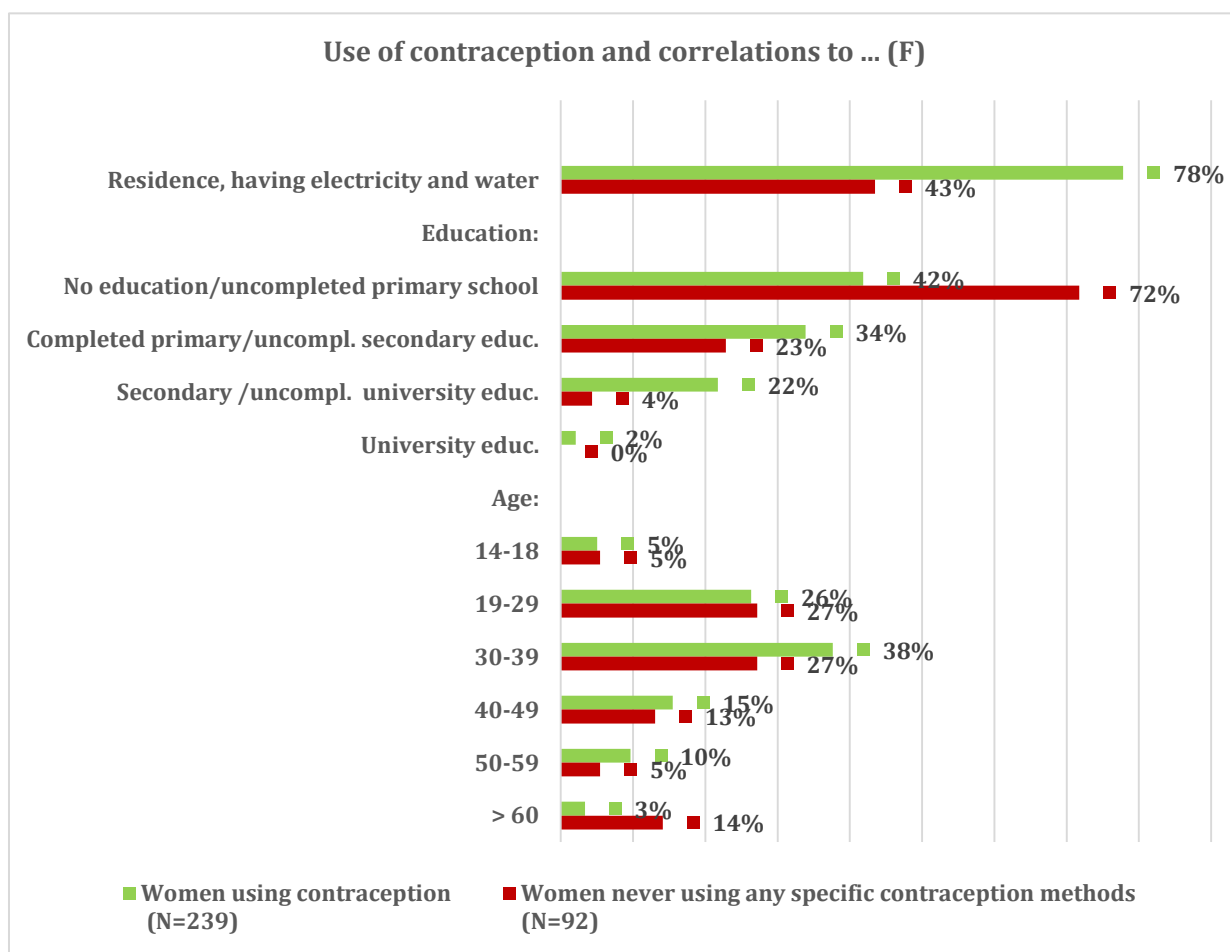


From the comparison of data from the questionnaires of women who do use contraception and the ones that don't, as well as their age, education and type of residence, we find, that:

- Women who use protection have a higher quality of residence equipment compared to those who don't. Over 77% of interviewed women who use contraception has an infrastructurally stable residence (at least electricity and water).
- Women, who use contraception usually have higher education levels. The share of interviewed women who use protection and are without education is lower (41,8%). We also find that 71,7% women, who do not use contraception has not completed elementary school.

Diagram: Use of contraception and correlations to age, education and type of residence



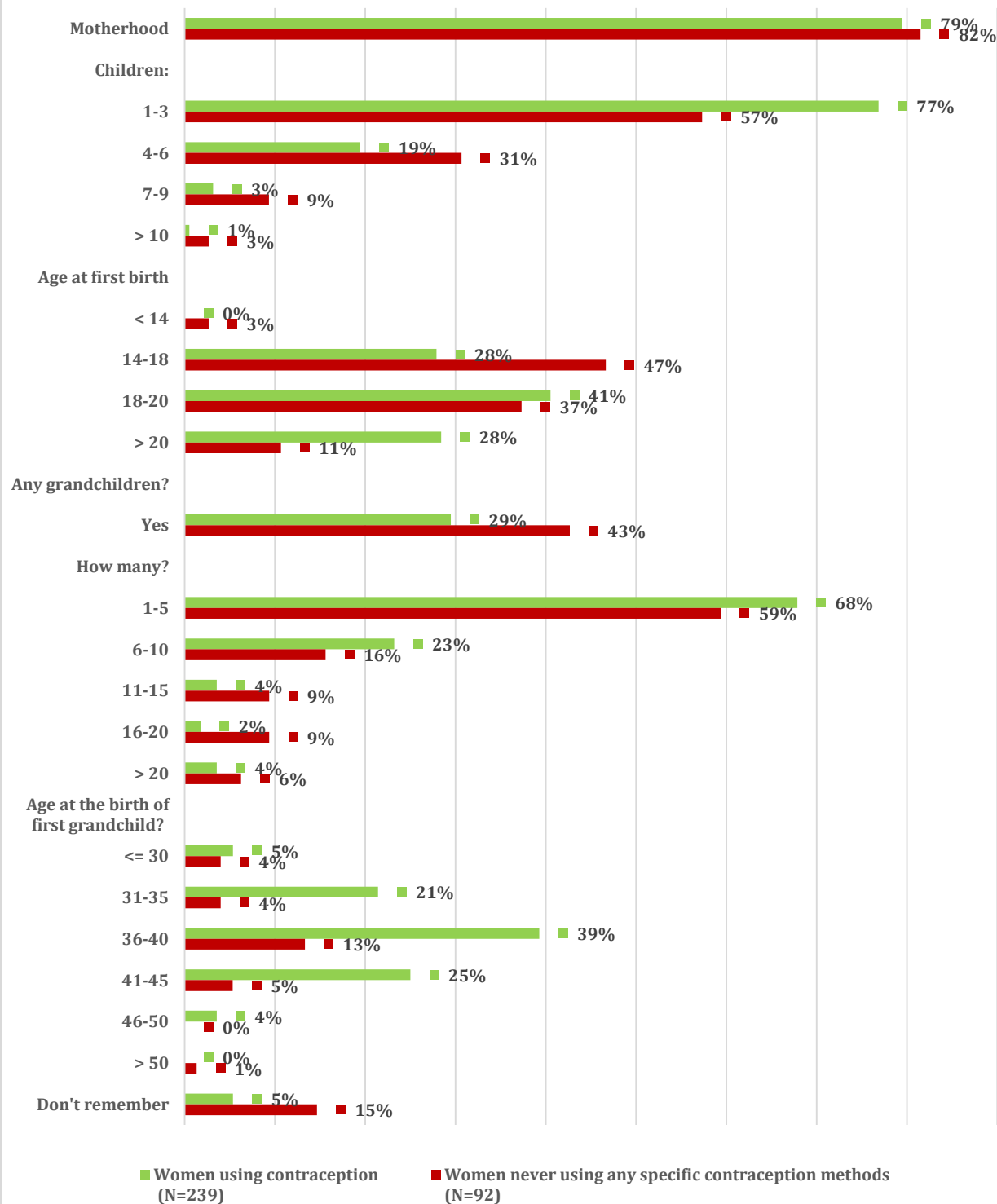


Comparison of data from questionnaires of women who do and who do not use contraception and their motherhood shows the following significant data:

- interviewed women with more children do not use protection
- the largest share of women who use protection had their first child between ages 18 and 20, the largest share of women who do not use protection had their first child between ages 14 and 18
- women, who use protection and are already grandmothers are fewer than women who do not use protection and are already grandmothers
- women who use protection and are grandmothers have fewer grandchildren than women who do not use protection
- women who use protection became grandmothers later than women, who do not use protection.

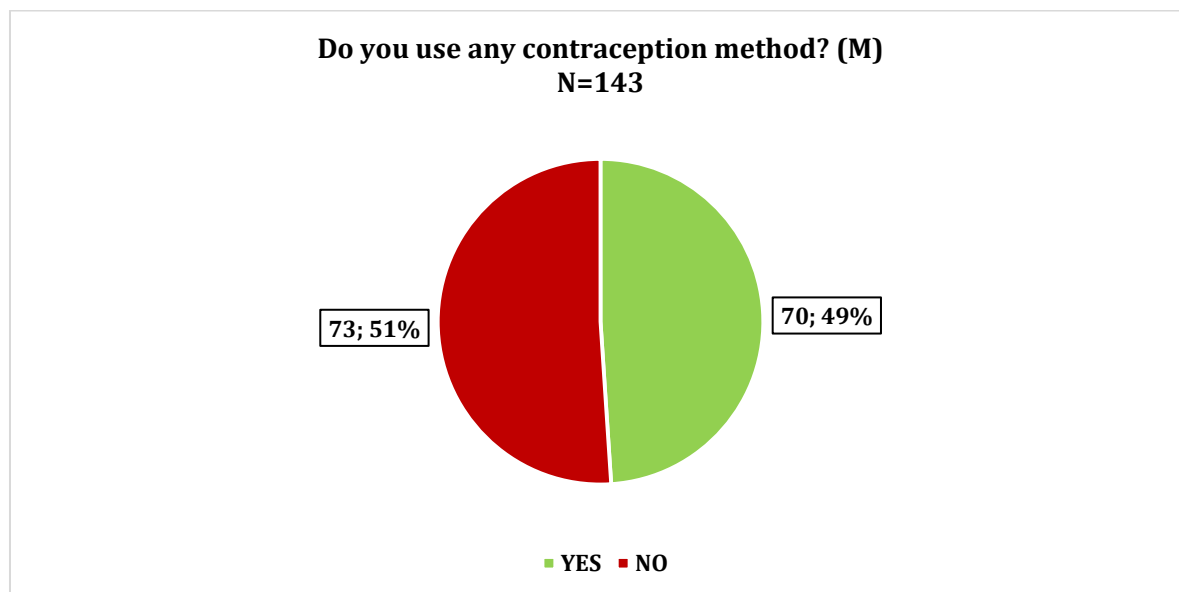
Diagram: Use of Contraception in Correlation to Motherhood, Grandmother hood and Descendants

## Use of contraception in correlation to motherhood



The question regarding the use of contraception was presented to 173 men, of which 8, or 4,6%, did not answer, 22 or 12.7% have not yet had sexual intercourse, 73 or 42,2% does not use any contraception, while 70 or 40,5% uses at least one of the contraception methods.

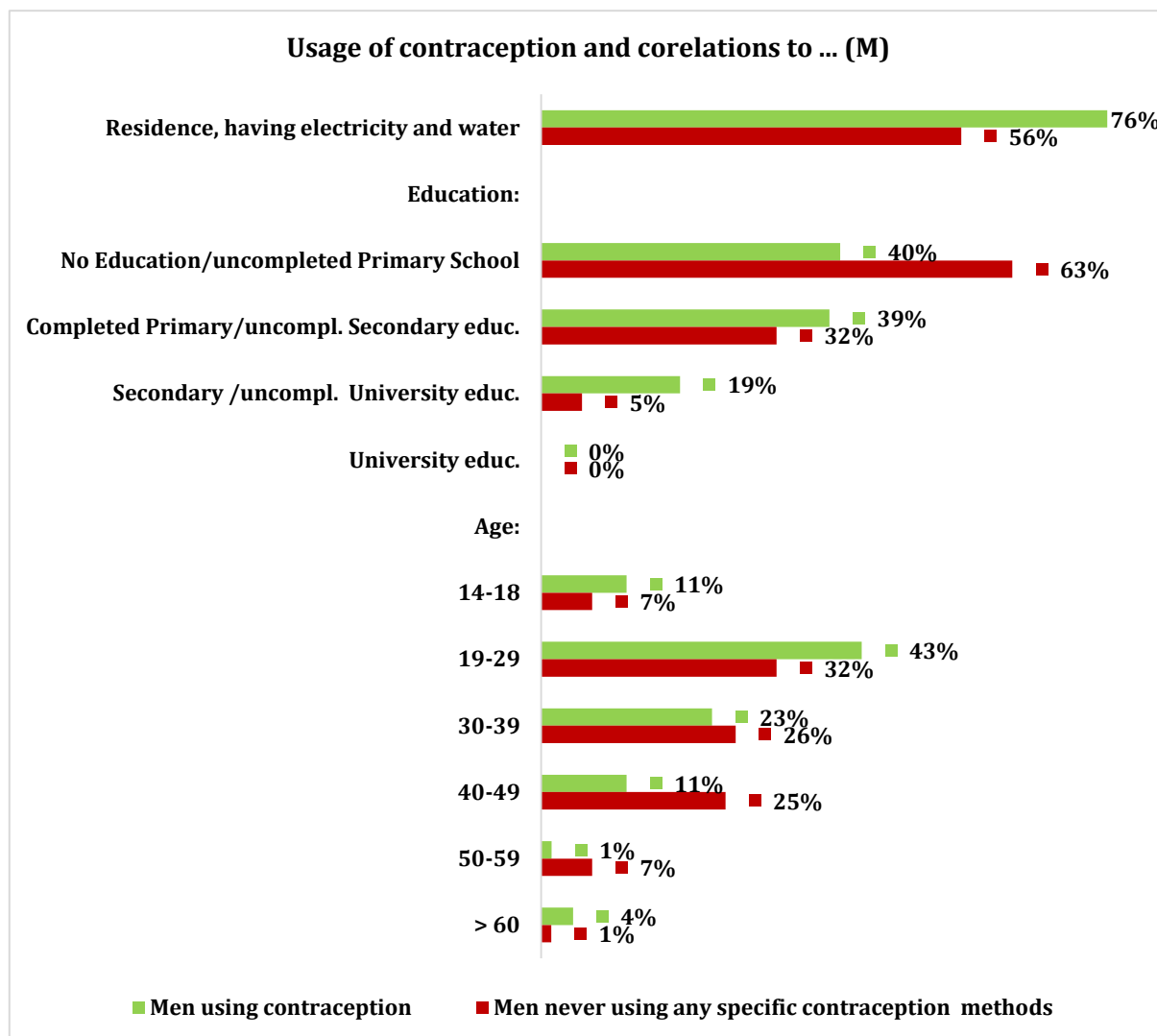
Diagram: Use of Contraception among Interviewed Men



From the comparison of data from questionnaires of men, who use contraception and those who don't, their age, education and type of residence, we find, that:

- Men who use protection have a higher quality of residence equipment compared to those who don't. Over 75% of interviewed men who use contraception has an infrastructurally stable residence (at least electricity and water).
- A comparison of men who do not use protection and those who do to their age shows that the majority of men who use protection is aged 19 to 29, followed by ages 14 to 18. Among older men, the number of contraception users drops.

Diagram: Use of contraception by men and correlations to age, education and type of residence





RAZVOJNO  
IZOBRAŽEVALNI  
CENTER NOVO MESTO



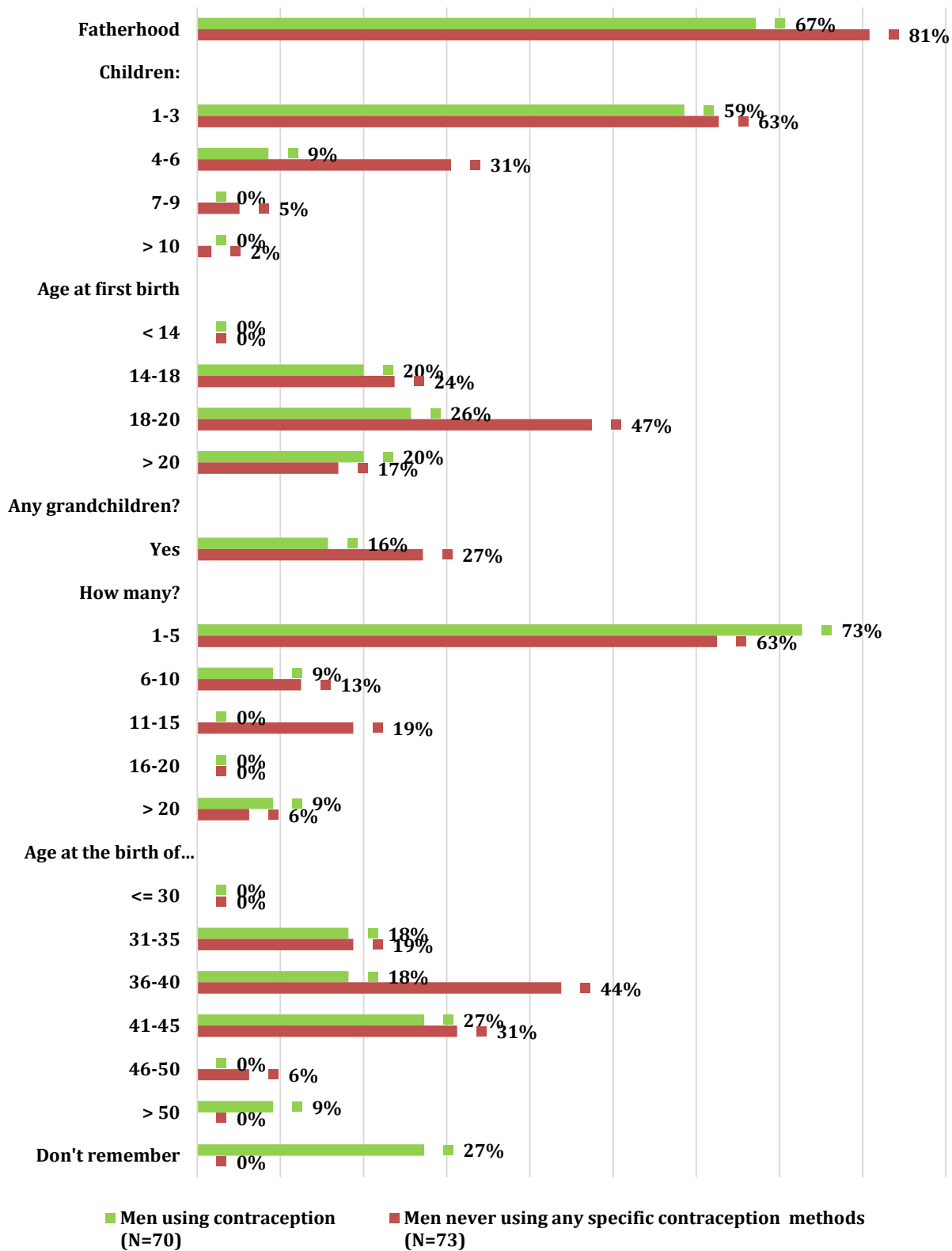
From the comparison of survey questionnaires of men, who use contraception and those who don't, and their fatherhood, the following is worth pointing out:

- surveyed men with more children do not use protection
- the largest share of men who use protection got their first child at ages 18 to 20, but the same also goes for the largest share of men who do not use protection
- men who use protection and are grandfathers are fewer than men who do not use protection and are grandfathers
- men who use protection and are grandfathers have fewer grandchildren than men who do not use protection
- men who do not use protection and became grandparents are more common in age group 31 to 50 than those who use protection.

Diagram: Use of Contraception in Correlation to Fatherhood, Grandfather hood and Descendants



### Use of contraception in correlation to fatherhood



Among the surveyed, there were 92, or 28%, of women who do not use protection. The most common reason they stated was that the man must provide protection, presence of fear, no need for protection, not having seen a doctor yet, being against religion, wishing a child with the partner. Older respondents state that the use of contraception was not "a custom" in older days. A larger share of those who do not use any protection is notable in men, at 73 or 73%.

Regardless of gender, the majority of respondents expects information on contraception from the medical personnel in combination with friends and the internet. An important source of information is also school. It is interesting that the family (parents) as well as brothers and sisters do not appear as contraception information sources. The subject of sexuality in Roma families is obviously still a considerable taboo.

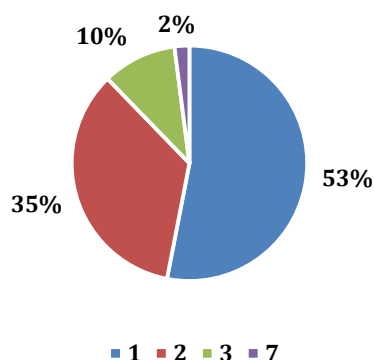
Table: Information About Contraception

Where you should get information about contraception	In my family (parents and elderly people)	From my brothers/sisters	From friends	At school	From medical staff	At other specialized meetings and lectures	From internet	From television
Suma	133	89	167	135	453	63	201	149
M	30	20	49	30	114	11	68	64
F	103	69	118	105	339	52	133	85

Less than 10 % of the respondents shared they had an abortion. Of those, 26 or 53% women had one abortion, 17 or 35% women had two abortions, 5 or 10% women had three abortions and one, who had seven abortions. 59% of these women mentions spontaneous abortion at the age above 24 years, and 24% of the respondents state spontaneous abortion at the age of 14 to 18, with 16% in the group 18 to 20. Under 14 years of age, only one respondent mentions spontaneous abortion. The age structure of this group of women shows that 22% are without education, 31,4% have not completed elementary school, 27% have completed elementary school and 19% have secondary school education.

Diagram: Number of Abortions

### How many times did you have an abortion?



## VALUES

With the aid of the questionnaire (through several segments of questions) we identified the value system among the respondents. In the first part, we were interested in values, related to (marital) relationships and parenthood. From the answers, we summarized, that:

- a majority of the respondents (73% women and 70% men) are of the opinion, that marriage is not obsolete
- a majority of the respondents (96% women and 97% men) are of the opinion, that unmarried couples have the right to live together if they wish to
- a bit over a half of respondents (66% women and 66% men) are of the opinion, that marriage may be terminated; at the same time, a majority of the respondents (91% women and 87% men) are of the opinion that couples, who are not happily married, have the right to separate
- a majority of the respondents (83% women and 86% men) are of the opinion, that parents can not decide about the marriage of their children
- a majority of the respondents (80% women and 77% men) are of the opinion, that girls do not need to marry early to keep their virginity
- half of the respondents are of the opinion, that a child needs a real mother or father; the difference in answers between genders is small
- a majority of respondents (92% women and men) is of the opinion that a child is happy if raised by both parents
- a majority of respondents (86% women and 87% men) approves of single mothers
- regarding a question of necessity of independent lives for children aged 18 to 20, there is a difference between genders; less than a half of women (44%) thinks, that children should live independently at this age, as opposed to more than half of men (60%)
- a majority of women (90%) is of the opinion, that a loving attitude towards the child is not influenced by the mother's employment; a majority of men, but a smaller share (76%), thinks the same; at the same time, less than half of the respondents of both genders think that it is more suitable to send a child to a kindergarten than to have a mother care for the child

- a bit more than half of the respondents (63% women and 58% men) think, that older children should care for younger children
- a majority of the respondents (84% women and 82% men) are of the opinion, that a boy and a girl must first finish school and only then start a family; 69% of those who disagree with this statement come from Dolenjska region.

Table: Agreement With Statements

	384				173			
Do you agree with the following statements?	F				M			
	Yes	No	I don't now		Yes	No	I don't now	
Marriage is out of date	14%	73%	13%		23%	70%	7%	100%
People who have not get married have the right to live together if they want to	96%	3%	1%	100%	97%	1%	2%	100%
Marriage is a life commitment and cannot be broken	22%	66%	12%	100%	23%	66%	11%	100%
It is the parents who should arrange the marriage of their children	13%	83%	4%	100%	13%	86%	2%	100%
The girl should get married at the earliest possible age in order to preserve her purity	8%	80%	12%	100%	8%	77%	15%	100%
People who are not happy with their marriage have the right to get divorced	91%	7%	2%	100%	87%	8%	5%	100%
The woman has to have children in order to be a real woman	54%	35%	11%	100%	55%	31%	14%	100%
The man has to have children in order to be a real man	51%	38%	11%	100%	50%	35%	16%	100%
In order for the child to be happy, it needs to be raised together with his mother and father	92%	5%	3%	100%	92%	4%	3%	100%
A woman can have a baby even if she is not married (to be a single mother)	86%	8%	7%	100%	87%	6%	6%	100%

When children become 18 – 20 they have to start living independently from their parents	44%	45%	11%	100%	60%	31%	9%	100%
A mother who works can have the same warm and giving relation with her child as the mother who does not work	90%	7%	3%	100%	76%	16%	8%	100%
It is more appropriate for the mother to take care of the child herself instead of sending it to a kindergarten	44%	45%	11%	100%	47%	46%	7%	100%
Older children should take care of the younger	29%	63%	8%	100%	32%	58%	10%	100%
A boy/a girl should first finish school and then start a family.	84%	12%	5%	100%	82%	11%	7%	100%

In the second segment, we were interested in values, related to abortion, relationships and sexual intercourse among couples, as well as the role of parents in the marriage of their children. From the answers, we summarized, that:

- a bit over a half of the respondents (56% women and 59% men) are of the opinion, that an abortion is appropriate for a girl under the age of 16; the percentage lowers (a smaller share thinks it's appropriate) in the case, where a girl is already married when undergoing abortion (45% women and only 23% men think abortion is appropriate in this case); however, the share of replies increases when asking about the appropriateness of abortion in the case, where a woman does not love the man she expects a child with (68% women and 64% men)
- a majority of the respondents does not approve of relationships outside the partnership; there are no significant differences between men and women; a share of not supporting is a bit under 90% with both genders; divorce is appropriate for 69% of women and "only" 50% of men
- a large majority of respondents (92% women and 91% men) find it appropriate for a woman and a man to live together even if they are not married
- a majority of respondents (75% women and 79% men) find it appropriate for a single woman to bear a child and raise it on her own
- a majority of respondents (85% women and 80% men) do not think sexual intercourse before the age of 14 is appropriate; however, a majority of respondents (70% women and men) consider sexual intercourse before the age of 18 appropriate; similarly, a majority (82% women and 83% men) find sexual intercourse before marriage appropriate



- a large majority of respondents (93% women and 91% men) does not support prostitution
- a large majority of respondents (90% women and 84% men) does not find it appropriate for parents to decide on the marriage of their children; a large majority (92% women and 89% men) also disagree with bride's parents demanding money for the virginity of their daughter from the groom's parents
- a majority of the respondents (68% women and men) do agree that a girl may run away if she does not love the man she must marry; however we are careful in interpreting this question; parents, in large part, are of the opinion that it is inappropriate to force a child into an arranged marriage, thus, a daughter's escape is understood more as a departure (escape) from her original family
- only about half of the respondents thinks it is appropriate for a girl and a boy to run away, if they do not have the permission of parents to live together; with this question, too, the reply needs to be taken into consideration in connection with the question of independent living of the young after age 18; interviewed Roma do not express a necessity to separate a young family from the original family, but we have nonetheless found, that a majority of respondents lives in independent households, containing two generations.

Table: Appropriateness of Statements

	384					173		
Do you think it is appropriate	F					M		
	Yes	No	I don't now			Yes	No	I don't now
An abortion if the woman is under 16	56%	32%	12%	100%		59%	28%	13%
An abortion when the woman is married and already has children	45%	46%	9%	100%		23%	69%	8%
An abortion if the baby is of a man she does not love?	68%	23%	9%	100%		64%	24%	12%
A woman having a relation with another man than her husband	8%	88%	4%	100%		7%	90%	3%
A man having a relation with other woman then his wife	8%	88%	4%	100%		10%	83%	6%
A woman and a man living together as a couple without being married	92%	5%	4%	100%		91%	5%	3%
A divorce	69%	24%	7%	100%		50%	42%	8%

A single woman to give birth to a child and raise it alone	75%	15%	10%	100%	79%	11%	10%
Sexual relations before the age of 14	10%	85%	5%	100%	14%	80%	6%
Sexual relations before the age of 18	70%	24%	6%	100%	70%	24%	6%
Sexual relations before marriage	82%	10%	8%	100%	83%	10%	7%
Prostitution	2%	93%	5%	100%	5%	91%	3%
The parents have to decide whom their child should get married	7%	90%	2%	99%	12%	84%	1%
The girl should elope if she doesn't love the man she has to marry with?	68%	23%	8%	99%	68%	22%	8%
The parents should ask for money from the groom's side if their daughter is a virgin before the marriage	4%	92%	3%	99%	8%	89%	1%
The girls and the boy should elope if they do not have the permission of their parents	48%	39%	12%	99%	51%	41%	5%
The girls and the boy should elope if the boy's parents do not have the money asked from the girl's parents	23%	59%	17%	99%	28%	59%	10%

In this set of questions, we also wanted to know:

- who, in their opinion, should provide for the family (in a material sense)
- who, in their opinion, should raise the children
- at which age girls or boys in their settlement usually marry
- when, in their opinion, a girl and a boy are ready for marriage

Respondents, for the most part (73% women and 60% men) think, that the material survival of the family should be ensured by both parents. A difference can be seen when divided by gender, as fewer interviewed men decided for the statement, that both should provide for the family materially. As many as 40% of interviewed men is of the opinion that they are the ones, that should ensure survival. 24% interviewed women are

of the same opinion. Only 4% of interviewed women (and no men) are of the opinion, that the woman should ensure the survival of the family.

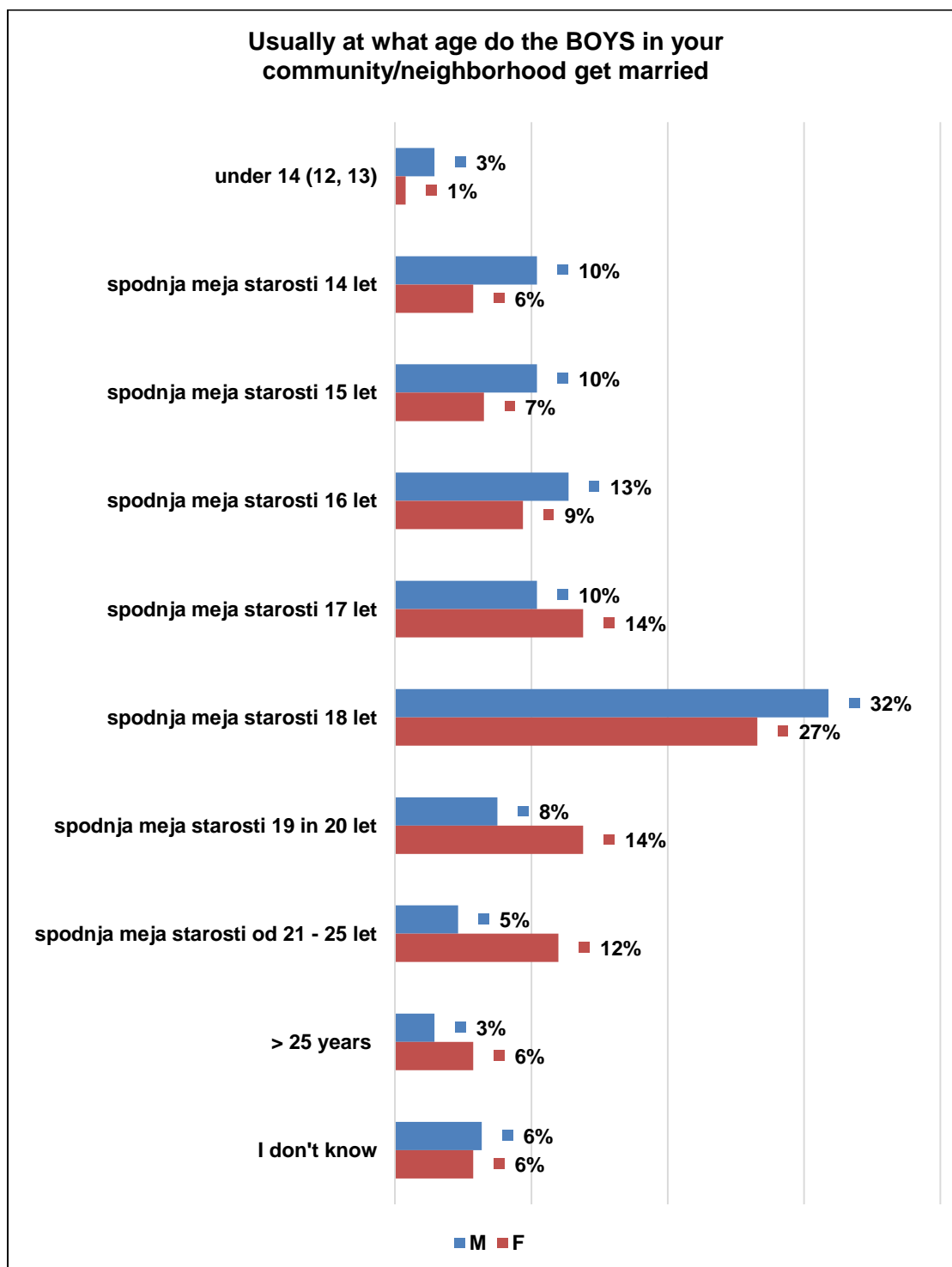
Who should be taking care of the family budget?	F	M
	379	171
a man / a father	24%	40%
a woman / a mother	4%	0%
both, man and woman	73%	60%
other	0%	
	100%	100%

Who should be taking care for bringing up children and their education?	F	M
	379	171
a man / a father	0%	0%
a woman / a mother	18%	11%
both, man and woman	82%	88%
other	0%	
	100%	99%

The majority of respondents (82% women and 88% men) are of the opinion that both mother and father should raise the child. No respondent is of the opinion, that the father alone should raise the children.

Regarding the age of boys, deciding for marriage, we got the following answers: both female and male respondents think, that most boys decide to marry around the age of 18 (27% women and 32% men). A larger share of interviewed men than women is of the opinion, that they marry under the age of 18 and a larger share of interviewed women in comparison to men is of the opinion, that they marry aged 18 years and more.

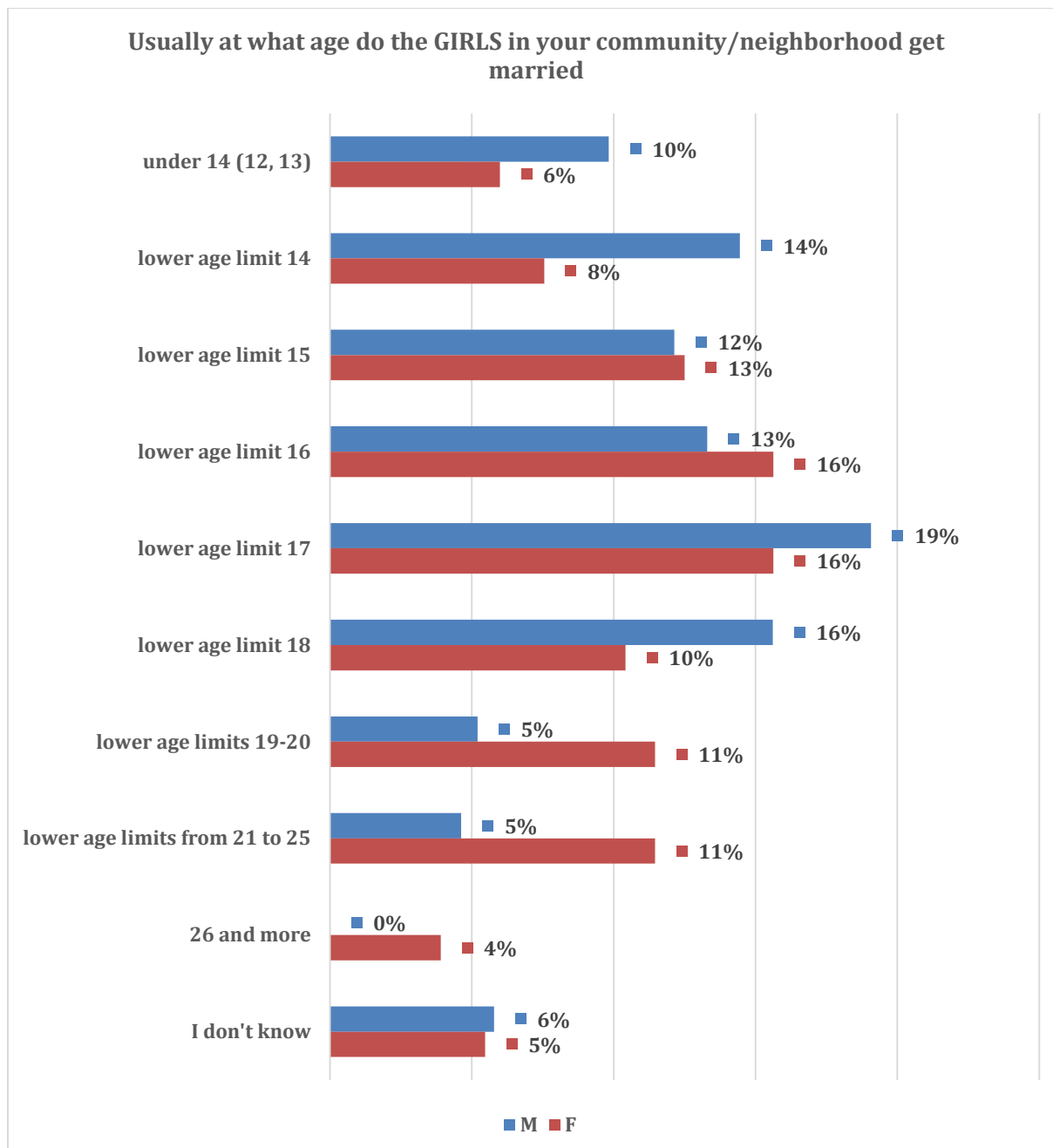
Table: Common age of marriage for boys



When asked about the age of girls deciding to marry, we got the following answers:

The largest share of women think that girls decide to marry between ages 16 and 17. A larger share of men think it's age 17 to 18. A notable share of answers also indicates, that the lowest acceptable age is 14 or even less (12, 13 years), as stated by 13,5% of women and 24% of men.

Table: Common age of marriage for girls



When answering the question when a boy is mature enough for marriage, we get the following estimate: there are no considerable deviations in replies in regards to gender. A majority of all respondents (68%) only states an age limit. Among those, the lowest age limit for boys, suitable for "marriage", is not mentioned under the age of 14. Age 14 to 18 seems appropriate for 11% of the respondents, 18 to 20 years for 68% of respondents, 21 to 25 years for 17% and up to 30 years for 4%. Only one person stated the age above 30 years. The most significant deviation in answers relative to gender is visible in the age of 21 to 25 years, which 20% of women and only 9% of men see as suitable for marriage.



Along with age limits, the most common answers were connected with family life (6%). Among the possible answers in this segment are such as the boy being ready for marriage when he is mature enough to become a father, when he wishes a family, when he wishes for a child... The next segment is connected to financial assets (5%); the respondents state the following - that the boy must finish school and have a job, earn money... Some respondents explicitly state that the decision should be up to the boy alone (4%): the boy alone knows, and may decide on his own, or find out, or feel, when the time is right to get married. From the listed answers, it was also possible to extract such, that stated independence was an important factor in deciding to marry, that is, when a boy finds out, that he can be independent, that he does not depend on his parents, can assume responsibility for his life.

Around 7% of the respondents did not answer.

When asked "When do you believe a girl is mature enough for marriage?" the respondents, similarly to the previous question, mostly (72%) state age, of which as many as 70% state, that a girl is ready for marriage at the age of 18 to 20 years. The age of 14 to 18 years is stated by 17.5% of respondents, while 12% of respondents decided for the age of 21 to 25 years. As a proof of being mature enough to marry, only 1% of respondents stated the age of 26 to 30 years.

Most other answers were connected with an expression of independence or leaving the decision to the individual alone: when she can, when she knows, when she is ready and capable to take care of herself and the family (45%). Approximately 13% of answers are connected with education or the completion of school in connection with getting a job. Respondents also pointed out the financial aspect (having a job) or financial independence (9%). In terms of readiness for marriage, love / being in love plays a more important role with girls than with boys, where 13% are of the opinion that a girl is ready to marry when she falls in love, when she meets the right one, when she loves her partner... Among remaining answers, some (4%) also state the moment when a girl gets her period as a sign of maturity, a sign that she becomes a woman, is developed enough...

7% of respondents did not answer or answered with "I don't know."

## CONCLUSION

The interpretation of the survey results, conducted in Slovenia in the framework of the project »Early Marriage – Culture or Abuse«, has to be considered in the light of historical features of Roma resettlements in Slovenia, culturological specificities of various Roma groups, living in Slovenia, and in the light of legislation governing marriage relations and sexual integrity of minors.

The Roma in Slovenia represent a heterogeneous population group; the differences between relevant groups reflect in the practice of different types of marriages. At least 2 groups of Roma should be mentioned, when talking about early marriages:

- the "indigenous" peoples, living on the territory of Slovenia since 15<sup>th</sup> century and practicing a special form of early marriage – so-called "escape" (the focus group the present summary);

- a group of Roma, migrated to Slovenia from the former republics of Yugoslavia in the 60's and 90's of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, practicing at least two forms of early marriages: arranged marriages and escape.

According to the Slovenian legislation, with a special prior approval of social work centre, a marriage is possible when reaching the age of 15 years; any sexual intercourse before that age is understood as a form of violence.

On the basis of the statistic data (formal and non-formal) the number of early marriages is not negligible. The survey results could not confirm a connection between “escapes”, as a form of the most widespread form of early marriage in Slovenia, and patriarchal social structure of Roma. However, the results indicate the changes, taking place in Roma community on the family-level; the number of generations living in one household (extended families) is reducing.

The survey results show also the connections among housing conditions, education level and early marriage. The poorest the housing conditions (the worst in Dolenjska region) and the lowest education level (largest share of Roma without education live in Dolenjska region), the higher is the level of early marriages (the highest again in Dolenjska region). The majority of the respondents has started to live together with his/her partner in the age between 14-18 years, with no substantial difference between both genders. Their partners were the same age or older. Most respondents became their first child between the age of 18 and 24 years, at the second place is the group of respondents aged between 14-18 years.

The survey results also show an important connection among education level, age when getting married (or starting cohabitation) and age when getting the first child. A marriage at a later age was chosen by the respondent with higher education level. A higher education level is characteristic also for the respondents, becoming parents at a later age. According to the results the majority of the respondents was meeting his/her partner before deciding to start to live together for one month or more, thus indicating there were no elements of forced or arranged marriage present.

A significant element with an impact on the early/later motherhood and raising a family is the use of contraceptives. The survey confirmed an important link: the respondents with higher education level and better housing conditions, mostly use contraceptives as a form of family planning. Once again, the education proved to be an important factor, affecting on the Roma attitude towards early motherhood and marriages. The view of the respondents on early marriages is divided; a half of them favours relationships and sexual intercourses also in the age between 14 and 15 years, the other half defines the age of majority (18 years) as adequate years to start cohabitation and to become sexually active.

Despite legislation restrictions as many as 5,4% of the respondents decided for cohabitation before the age of 14 years, with a significantly larger number of women. This group of interviewers is characterised by the lower education level and the poorest housing conditions.

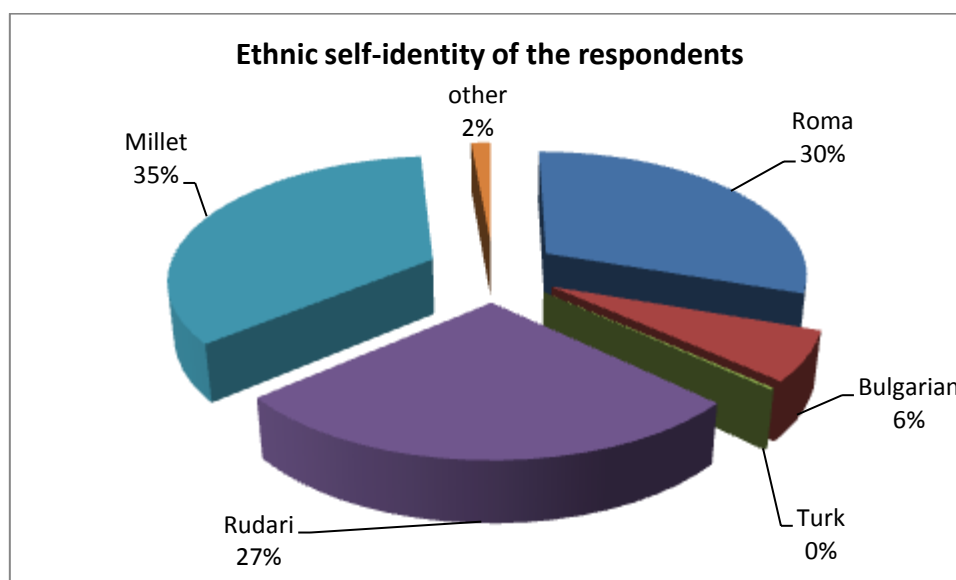
According to the results it can be sum up that the inclusion of Roma children and young people into education (at all levels, from pre-school to tertiary level) reflects in minimising the number of early marriages.

## BULGARIA

### DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF THE RESPONDENTS

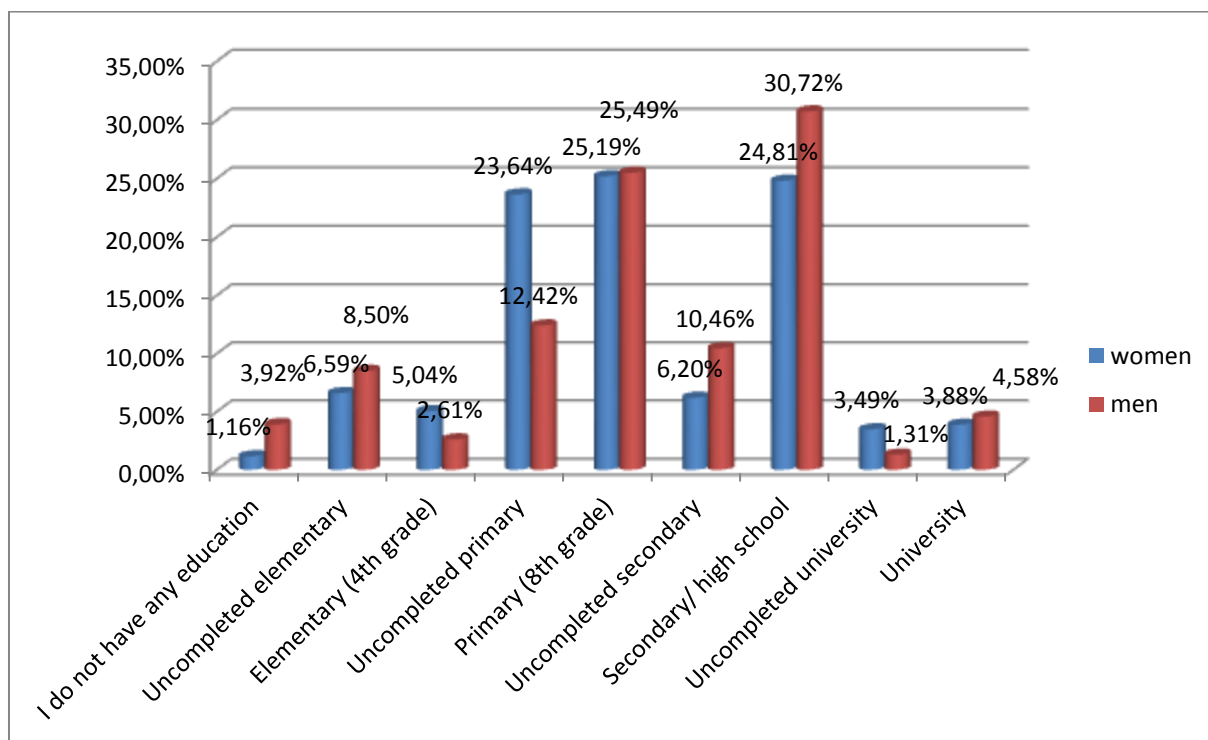
The profile of respondent' settlements in Bulgaria is very diverse: from people living in small villages to people living in small towns. There are no big cities in the region. Two towns have been covered. In one of them Roma live in a separate neighbourhood with living conditions and standards below the minimum; in the other, they inhabit a mixed neighbourhood with an average for the community standard of living.

The survey included 153 men and 270 women. As mentioned above a deliberate goal of survey was to present the whole diversity of the Roma population living in the region. As a result in included 129 persons who identify as Roma, 148 who identify as Millet, 115 who identify as Rudari, 27 who identify as Bulgarians and 7 others.



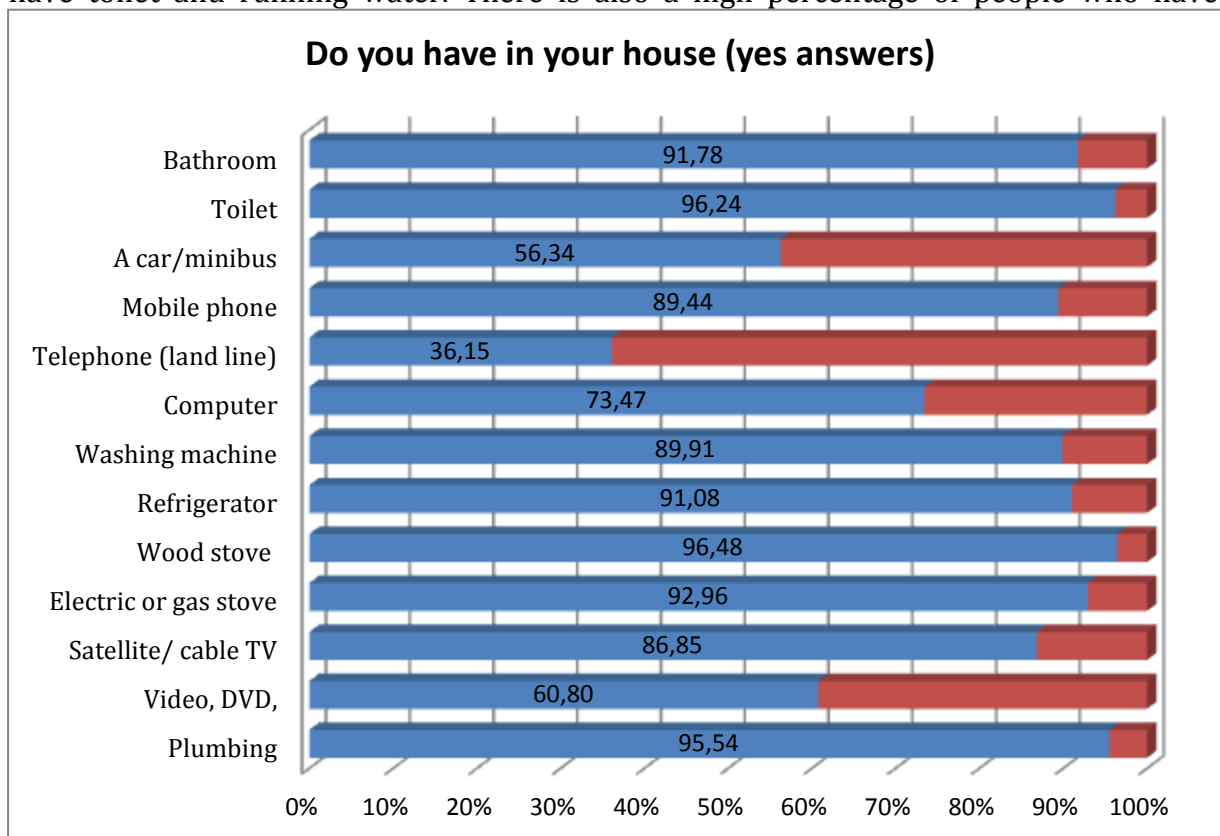
Regarding age, the survey included predominantly people within 19 and 49 (78% of all the respondents) but covered also the other age groups.

The educational profile of the respondents also gives an interesting snapshot of the region. The women from the Roma community have comparatively high educational status. 87% of the women have education higher than elementary and 38,37% have completed primary education and have pursued further educational development. The percentage of men who have completed primary level and have continued their education is slightly higher – 47.06, but there is not such big difference between the educational level of men and women as compared to the general status of the Roma community in the country. One of the reasons for this is that a significant Rudari group has been included in the survey who are one of the groups with the highest educational status. Almost 58 % of the Rudari group have higher than primary education.



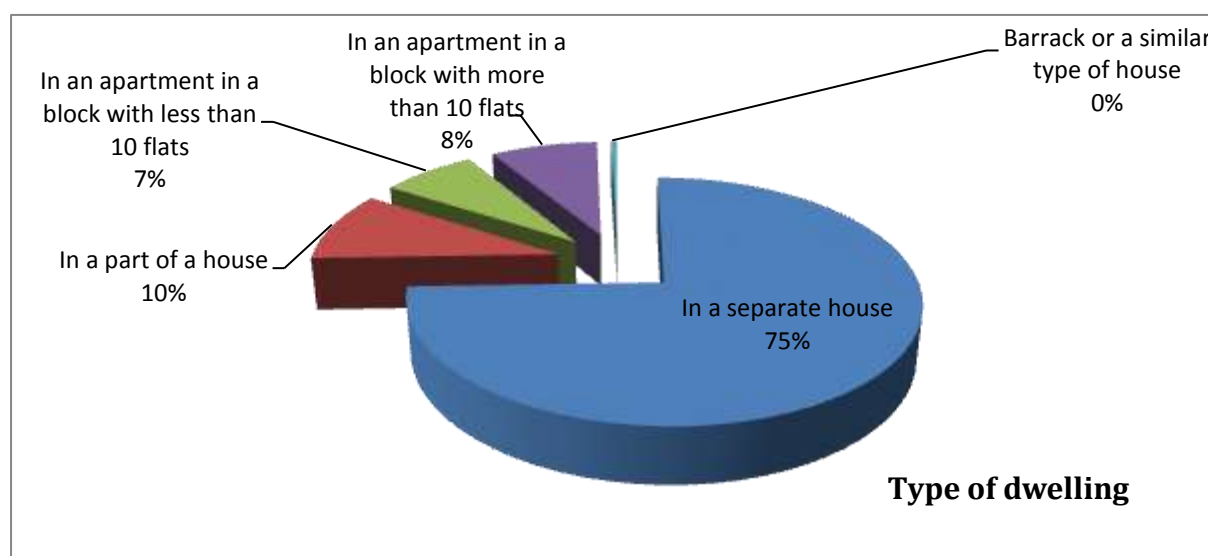
## ROMA HOUSEHOLD

Most of the people have the normal set of utilities that can allow a decent living in terms of living conditions. Despite the crisis there are some improvements. More than 95% have toilet and running water. There is also a high percentage of people who have



available basic utilities, such as washing machine, refrigerator, electric or gas stove, and so on. Compared with the study Center Amalipe has carried nation-wide in 2010, the percentage of people declaring availability of running water in their houses is significantly higher – around 88% in the national survey of Open Society Foundation in June 2007 and 91% of the survey by Center Amalipe (February 2010).<sup>47</sup> One of the reasons for this is the fact that in the region where the survey has taken place no highly marginalized (in terms of living conditions) communities exist.

The present survey shows that the main type of housing, typical for the Roma families in the region is the separate house – around 75 % of the people live in such houses or in a part of a house (10 %).



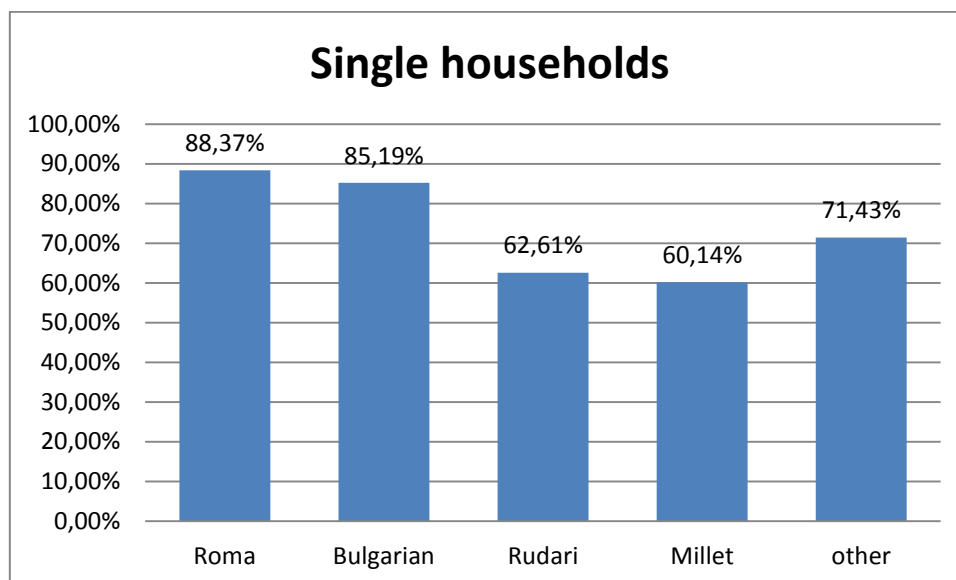
The average number of the rooms (including all separate places) is 4. The average number of people living in the same room according to the survey is 1.13 (with average number of people living in a household – 4.5)

Regarding new technologies, the survey breaks some of the stereotype about Roma showing that almost  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the people have a computer at home and almost 90 % (89.44%) have mobile phones. This is a significant increase compared with the data from 2010 when just 20.4% of the respondents declared having a computer.

The aim of the survey regarding household type and structure has been to check the assumption of Roma living in big households, as well as the hypothesis that extended families are more likely to have higher rate of early marriages. The results have shown that in the region the prevailing type of household is the simple family households, consisting of married without children; married with children; widows or widowers with children; divorced with children; or cohabitating partners with or without children – 70.89 %. The group distribution shows that the highest percentage of single household is among the groups of those who identify as Roma or Bulgarians.

<sup>47</sup> Center Amalipe. *Preventing Early Marriages*, 2011, 21-22

The survey reconfirms the trend outlined by several recent surveys and reports targeting Roma which also point out a transformation of the prevailing type of household from extended or compound households towards single family households.<sup>48</sup>



The average number people in the household, and the number of children in the family also confirms the trends from recent studies, 4.5 persons per household and 2.5 children per family, respectively.

### MARRIAGES AND PARTNERSHIPS

At present marriages in the Roma community have several specifics which need to be noted down since they are related to early marriages in one or another way. Some of them are not legally recognized, but have their historical parallels in number of societies, including Roman law as well as the Bulgarian traditional culture until the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

- Today the custom of “*bride-buying*” is characteristic mainly for the most conservative Roma groups - the Kaldarashi, Burgudjii and Thracian Kalaidjii, among which it is the main form of marriage. Bride-buying is still seen in some of the subgroups of Horahane, Dasikane and Millet Roma, where it is already in a process of transformation and disappearance. Although we talk about “bride-buying” and “brides’ market”, the essence of this problem is not actually buying the girl, but rather buying her “honour” – the right of the boy to take her virginity and the right of the boy’s family to associate the future children with their own kin.<sup>49</sup> That is why the custom of “bride-buying” is closely related to the girl’s virginity – requirement which is still very strong in Roma communities, especially the groups mentioned above. The “ransom for the bride”

<sup>48</sup> Center Amalipe. *Preventing Early Marriages*, 2011, 21-22

<sup>49</sup> Pamporov, A. *Romskoto vsekidnevje v Bulgaria* (Roma Everyday Life in Bulgaria), 2006



is not a “price” but dowry given as compensation to the girl’s family for its loss, when she leaves her home to be married. And because amongst ethnic groups with patriarchal social organization the woman belongs to the kin of her father, the compensation has to be paid to that kin; after the wedding the girl becomes part of her husband’s kin, just like the children who are considered part of the „man’s kin”.

However, the results from a number of ethnographic and sociological studies among Roma in Bulgaria show that the buying of brides has a negative effect in terms of marriage age and early/forced marriages as a whole. In some local communities after the first menstruation the girl is suspended from school in order not to “be deceived”, i.e. to lose her virginity. The fear that the girl could meet a boy and have sexual intercourse before her marriage make the parents marry their daughters at a relatively early age. Since girls at this age are still children and do not know “what is good for them”, the parents choose the marital partner – usually amongst boys, whose parents have also decided that it is time to get them married<sup>50</sup>.

- The custom of “elopement” or “bride-stealing” is another phenomenon connected with marriage and establishing a family. In the common case it is characteristic for these Roma groups, amongst which the custom of buying brides is in process of dying down or has already been overcome. The elopement or bride-stealing is initiated by the lads– in most of the cases it is a result of mutual consent between the two young people, but it is also possible that it is just the lad’s initiative. In these groups the elopement is most commonly related to an attempt to avoid the partner chosen by the parents, which also affects early marriages.

- A specific way of traditional marriage for Roma is related with a preliminary engagement – *nishan*.

In this case the payment is rather symbolic. The core element in the tradition is an important sign (“nishan”) which the boy’s family gives (a ring, a bracelet, earrings). With this type of marriages again the parents negotiate the conditions – when the young couple is going to get married, where they are going to live, what the size of the dowry is going to be, etc., but this is usually done after they have discussed it with the young people. In many cases it is the young who initiate it – they like each other and then ask their parents to arrange the marriage relation and the nishan.

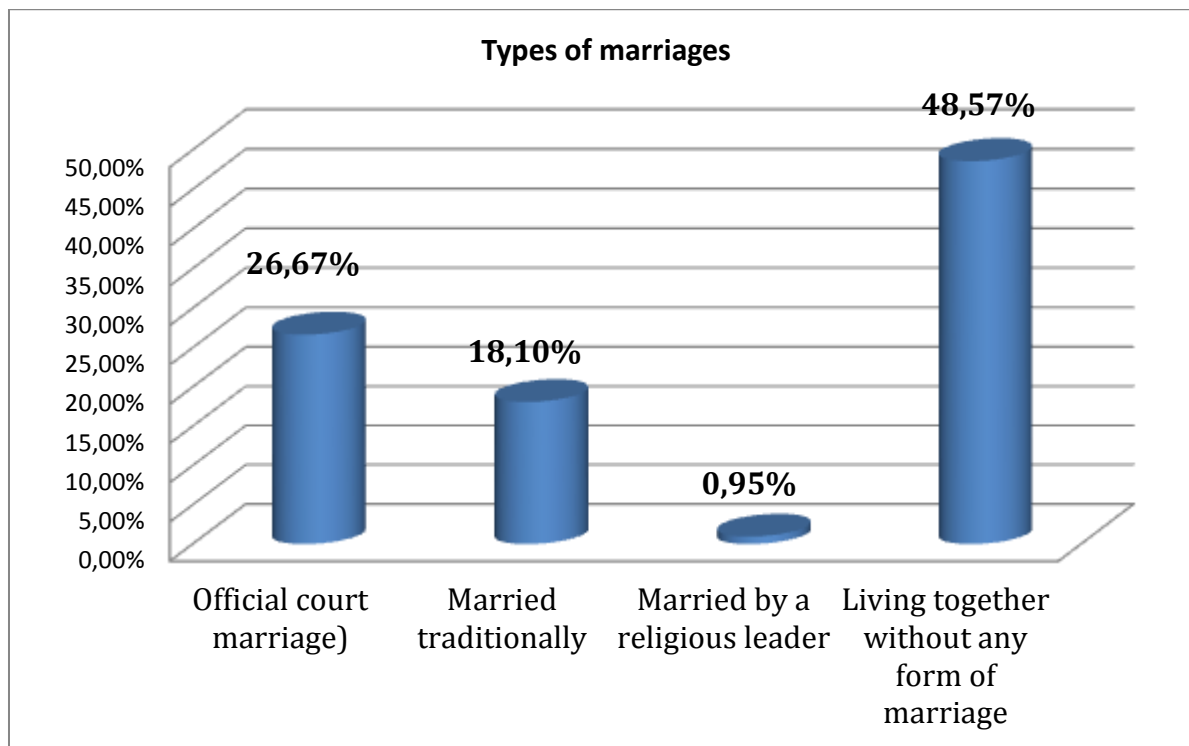
This type of marriage can be quite often observed with many of the subgroups of Dasikane Roma, Harohane Roma, Millet, as well as some Rudari, for which „bride-buying” has faded away as a tradition. Usually these are the groups which practice „elopement” as well. Just like the previous two types of traditional marriages, this one also has the risk of forced marriage – especially for the girl and, of course, this has a negative effect on the early age for the first marriage, too.

More and more Roma families are created by the judicially legal *civil marriage*. For groups and families, which are modernized at a higher level, the civil marriage is observed in a degree not less than the one of ethnical Bulgarians. According to the survey, 26.67 % of the respondents share they have official court marriage. At the same time almost half of the married respondents declare that they are living together without any kind of marriage. However, the indepth interviews carried out give us

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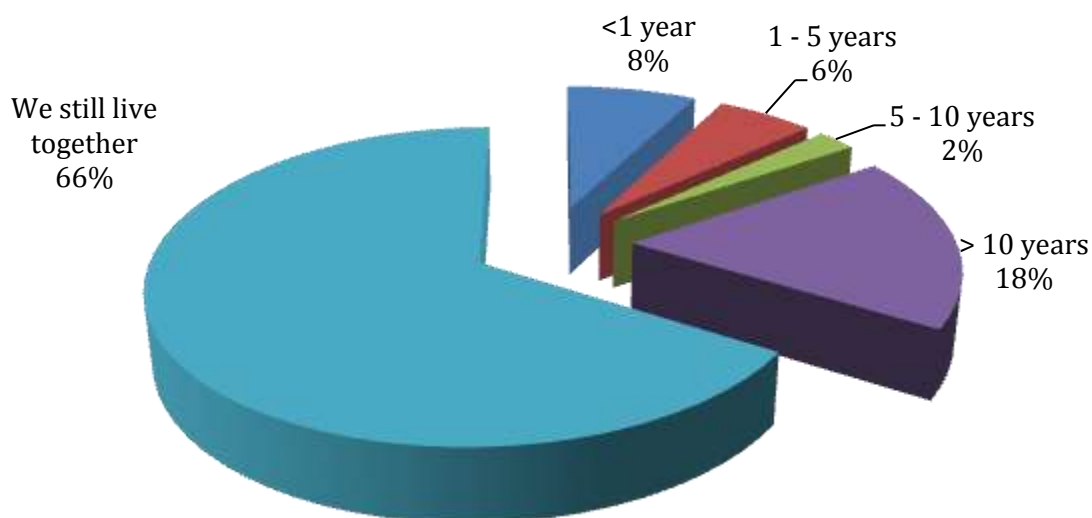
<sup>50</sup> Pamporov, A. *Romskoto vsekidnevie v Bulgaria* (Roma Everyday Life in Bulgaria), 2006

enough reasons to consider that most of these answers refer to a community type of marriage (which is not always considered traditional) but still there is a ceremony although partly modernized.



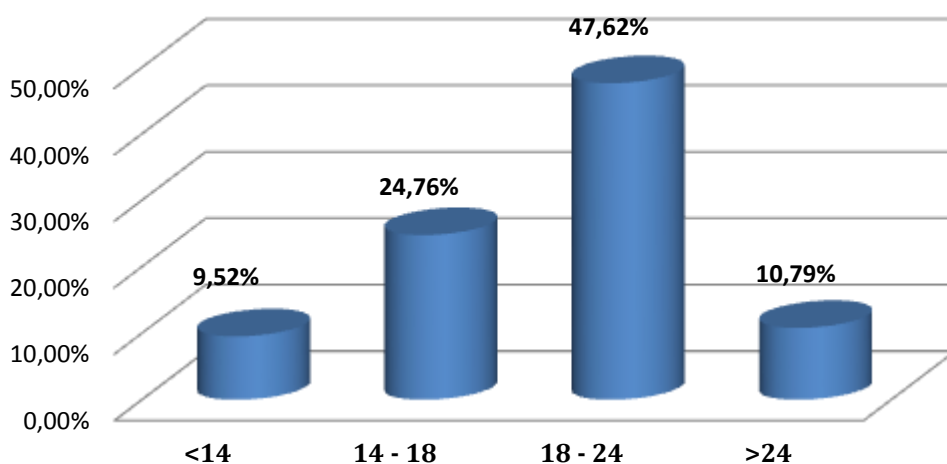
On the basis of the survey, we can make the conclusions that marriage/cohabitation in the Roma community from the region is quite stable since more than 2/3 of the interviewees (66.16%) claim that this is their first marriage and they are still living with their first spouse.

## How long have you lived together with your first spouse



The age of starting a marriage/ cohabitation presents an interesting phenomenon. The survey confirms the tendency already traced by previous studies for raising the year of starting a cohabitation. The research carried out by Center Amalipe in 2010 outline the age of 18.4 – 18.8 average year for starting a cohabitation, while the most common age is 17.<sup>51</sup> The present survey not just confirms this tendency but shows clear increase in this direction. 47.62 % of the respondents pointed that they have starting living with a

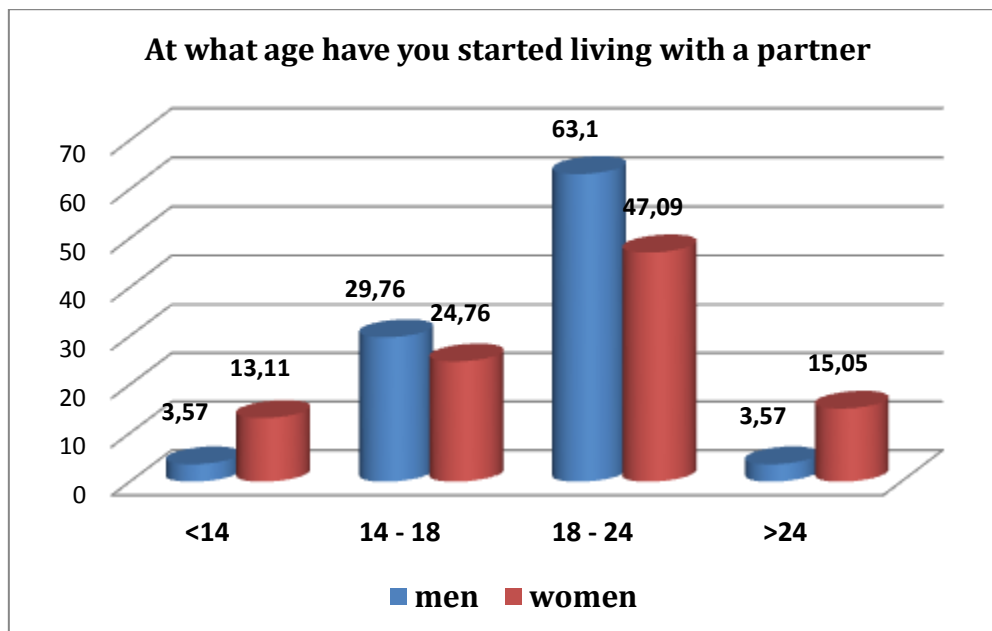
## At what age have you started living with a partner (2015)



partner between 18 and 24 years old; while the previous survey showed that at the age of 18, the share of persons in cohabitation with a partner is 50%. On contrary, the present survey shows that just 34.29% have been married by the age of 18.

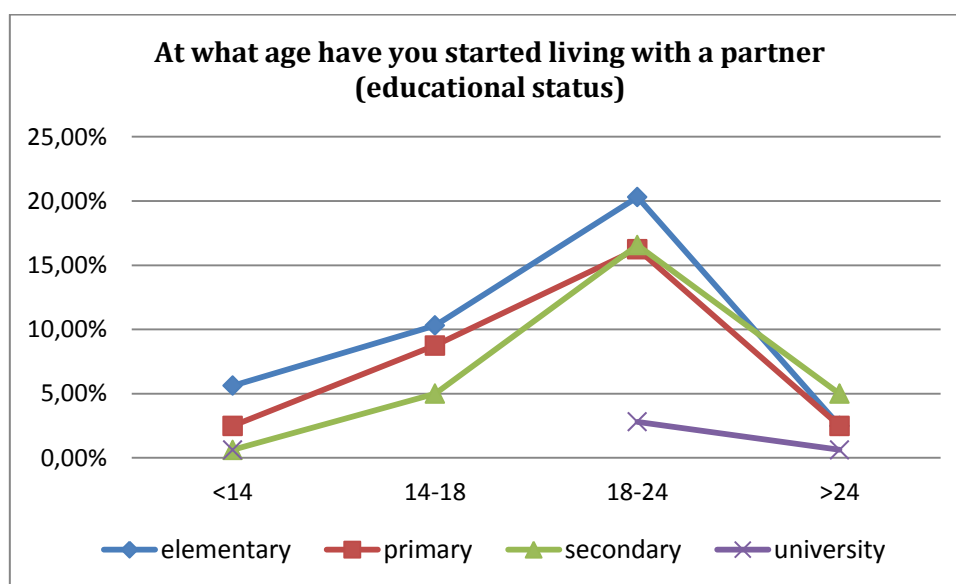
<sup>51</sup> Center Amalipe. *Preventing Early Marriages*, 2011

One can expect to see a difference in the situation of men and women; the survey justifies this. 13.11% of the women vs. 3.57% of the men get married before the age of 14. We can see also a big gap in the age group 18 – 24 years.



At the same time, the perception about the age of marriage existing in the Roma community points towards a slightly earlier age of starting a family. The diagrams below show the difference between the perception about the marriage age and the real age when people start to live with a partner. This difference is probably a result of the stereotypes about marriage existing also in the Roma community. Often the myth spread among the majority population “Roma always get married early: this is their tradition” reflects back in the community: “We can’t change our traditions: we get married early”. Nevertheless, the results from the 2015 survey show that traditions are indeed changing and that the modernization process is happening quicker in reality than in our minds.

Clear pattern however can be seen regarding education and early marriages. The educational level of the respondents is the most significant and distinctive factor for the early start of informal cohabitation and marital life. The increase of the age of first cohabitation and first marriage is in direct correlation with the level of education. The higher the educational level is, the later marital and non-marital partnerships start. 60 % of the people with elementary or non-completed elementary education start family before the age of 14 and 81.31% of the people who have been married by the age of 18 have elementary or primary education. On the contrary, almost 40% of the people who have married after turning 18 (37.56%) have completed secondary education or higher.



Education reflects significantly also on the age of first sexual relations. 88.24% of the respondents with university degree declare that they have started sexual life after the age of 16, while 55.17% of the respondents with lower than completed primary education had been already making sex by the age of 16; 44.14% have started their sexual life after the age of 16.

### CHILDREN AND FAMILY PLANNING

As explained above, the Roma community in Bulgaria is not homogenous. Within the community there are subgroup divisions with significant differences in religion, language, self-identification, traditional art-crafts, calendar and family feasts and other cultural traditions. There are also group differences regarding the children and family planning. As a national representative survey done in 2010 showed, the subgroups division affects meaningful phenomena such as type of households, cohabitation and marriage, etc.<sup>52</sup> The present survey reveals also group specifics and differences regarding children and family planning.

As also explained above, the Roma population in Veliko Turnovo region is composed by a big variety of Roma groups. The survey was done in a way to cover most of them. As a result, it recorded not only the common features shared by almost all Roma groups and local communities but also the specific ones that could be found only among certain groups and places.

Regarding children and family planning the survey revealed the following features:

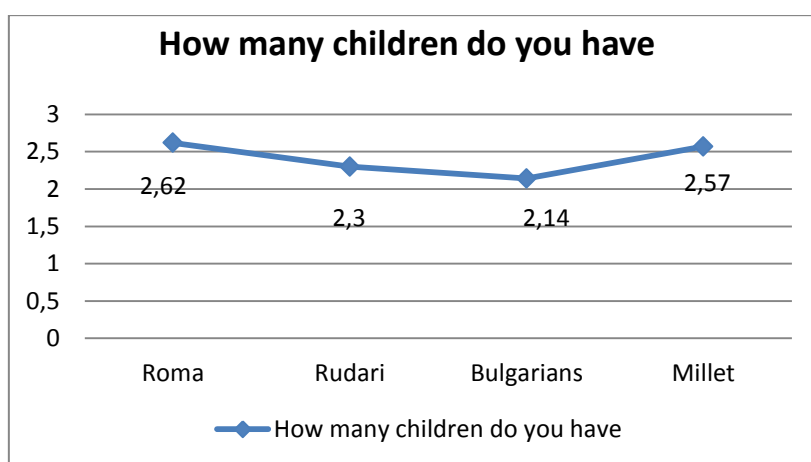
1. Average number of children in a family: it is 2,5. This number is slightly lower compared to the average number of children in Roma family at national level that is calculated at 2,6 during the last Population Census in 2011. At the same time this number is significantly lower compared to the widely shared public stereotype – often repeated by media - that Roma have many children<sup>53</sup>.

<sup>52</sup> Center Amalipe, *Preventing Forced Marriages*

<sup>53</sup> Center Amalipe, *Beyond Anti-Roma Stereotypes*

The tendency of decreasing the average number of children in Roma family is long-standing tendency at national level in Bulgaria. Roma in Veliko Turnovo region completely fit within this tendency.

The survey showed group differences regarding the number of children. The group of *Dassikane Roma* (Roma-Christians who often self-identify as *Bulgarians*) appeared to have the smallest number of children – 2,13. Close to them are *Rudari* group with 2,3. Above the average number for Veliko Turnovo region are *Millet* (Turkish speaking Roma Muslims) – 2,57 and the groups who declared themselves as *Roma* (they are mainly *Burgudjii* and *Kaldarashi*) – 2,62.

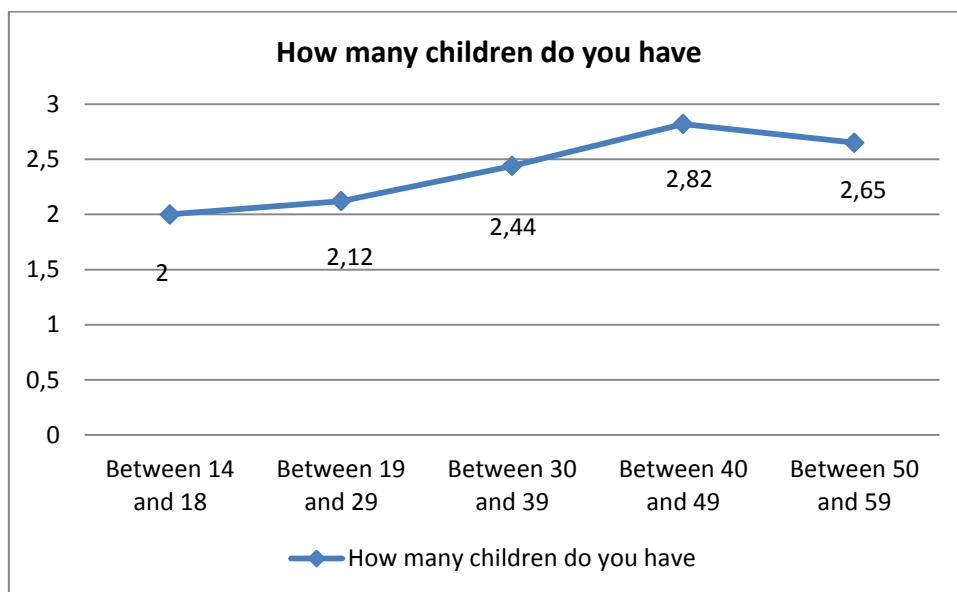


Even among the groups with the highest number of children, the average does not exceed 3. It seems that the model of having two children is sustainable one among the group of *Burgudjii*. Although they appeared as one of the most conservative Roma group in Bulgaria<sup>54</sup>, *Burgudjii* have left aside the patriarchal pattern of having many children and appropriated two-children pattern even 2 generations ago. Similarly to *Burgudjii*, the group of *Kaldarashi* also have small number of children: two or three if the first two are girls. The tradition of this group requires the son to take care about the parents while the daughter becomes part of groom's family. That is why *Kaldarashi* usually give birth to third child if the first ones are female.

The other significant difference regarding the average number of children comes from the age group of respondents. The figures clearly indicate that the younger or example, Roma aged 19 - 29 years have 2,12 children; 30 – 39 years old ones have 2,44 kids. This number increases with the elderly generation of 40 – 49 who have given birth to 2,82 children per family. Among Roma above 50 years old the average number is slightly smaller (2,65) but the sample is not representative in this age group: because of the high mortality rate in certain local communities women from the most marginalized families (who usually have bigger number of children) have died and could not be taken into account by the survey.

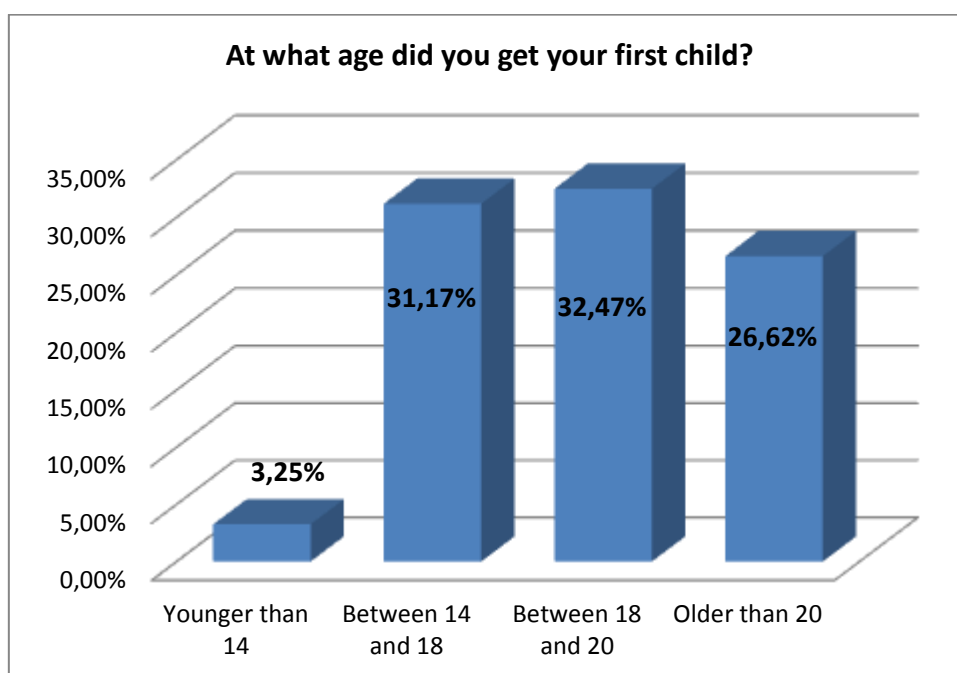
<sup>54</sup> This fact could be explained with the nomadic lifestyle they managed to preserved until early 1960s when were forced to settle by the Communist regime





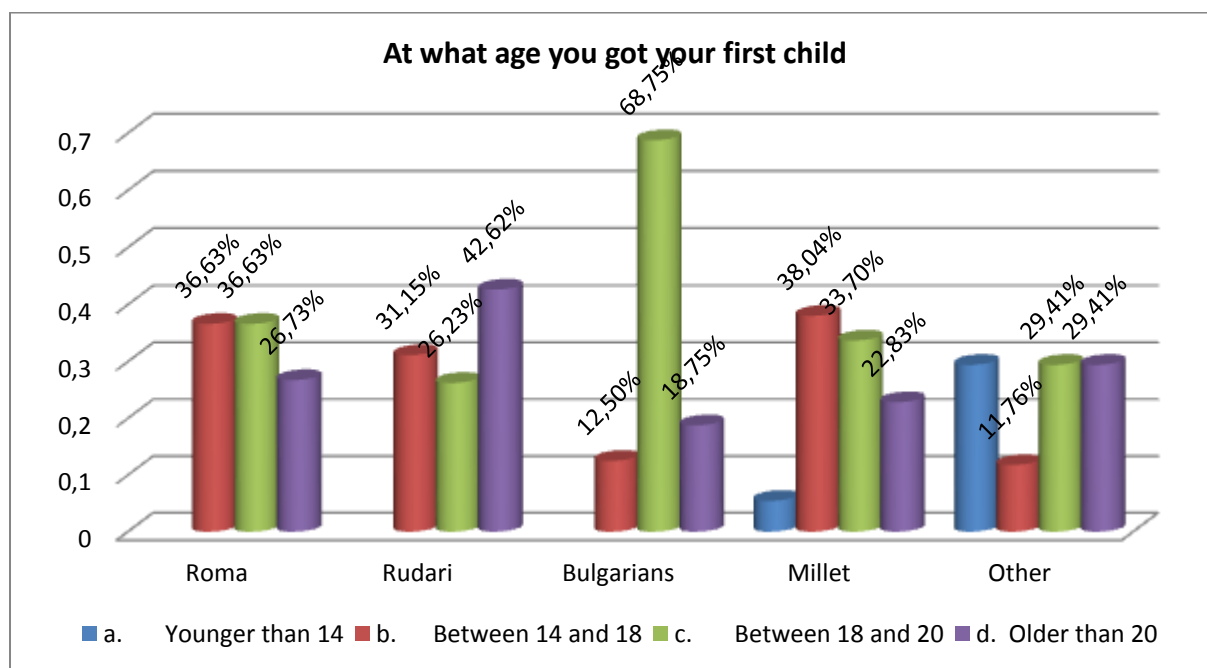
Summarising, the survey clearly registered tendency for decreasing the average number of children in Roma community. Families with big number of kids still could be found but they are exceptions and do not influence the main trend.

- Age for getting first child and first grandchild: the survey clearly shows that nowadays the early births are not predominant trend among Roma in Veliko Turnovo region any more while the extreme early births are exceptions. The majority of Roma who have children reported during the survey that they have got first child above the age of 18: more than 59 % (more precisely, 32,47 % at the age of 18 – 20 years and 26,62 % above the age of 20 years). Less than one third, or 31,17 % reported that they have got first child at the age of 14 – 18 years, while 3,25 % had extreme early birth below the age of 14.

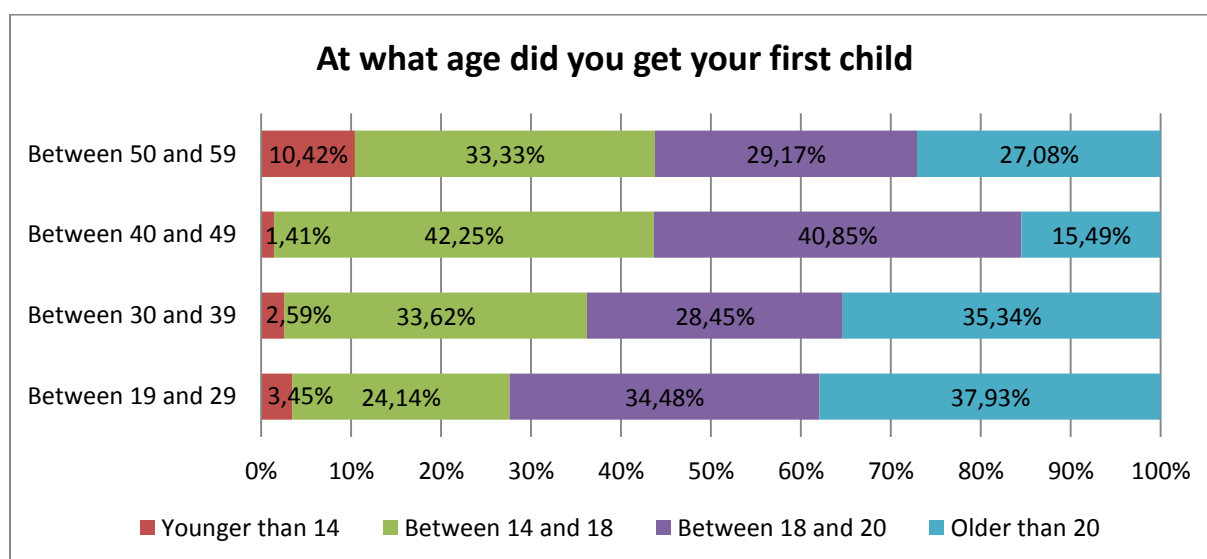


Similarly to the average number of children, the age for getting first child is linked with group differences. Early births are exceptions among *Dassikane Roma* – 12,5 % of them have first birth between 14 and 18 years while no case of extremely early birth (below 14) was registered. The huge majority of this group – 87,5 % - is giving birth after 18. Among *Rudari* extremely early birth was not registered too and the early births are slightly below the average for Veliko Turnovo region – 31,15 %. More than two thirds of *Rudari* – 68,85% - is giving birth after 18. Among this group the biggest share – 42,62 % - is having first child after the age of 20.

More than 63 % of respondents from the groups who self-identified themselves only as *Roma* have also reported first birth after the age of 18. Early births are also significant share (almost 37 %) but not predominant one. The lowest age for first birth was registered among *Millet*: almost 57 % of them have first child after 18 while more than 43 % - below this age. Among *Millet* group the extremely early births are also above the average for Veliko Turnovo region – 5,43 %.



The tendency for increasing the age for first birth could be observed when comparing the respective percentages among the respondents from different age groups. As younger the age group is as bigger is the share of respondents who reported first birth after 18: from 56 % in the groups above 40, through 63,76 % for the age group 30 – 39 to 72,39 % for the younger Roma aged 20 to 29 years. Not surprisingly, the share of births after 20 also increases among the younger age groups.



The trends described are re-confirmed by the age for getting grandchildren. The average age for getting first grandchild among Roma in Veliko Turnovo region is 39 years according to the survey. Overall, the average of 39 years for first grandchild is proxy-indicator for the increase of the age for first birth.

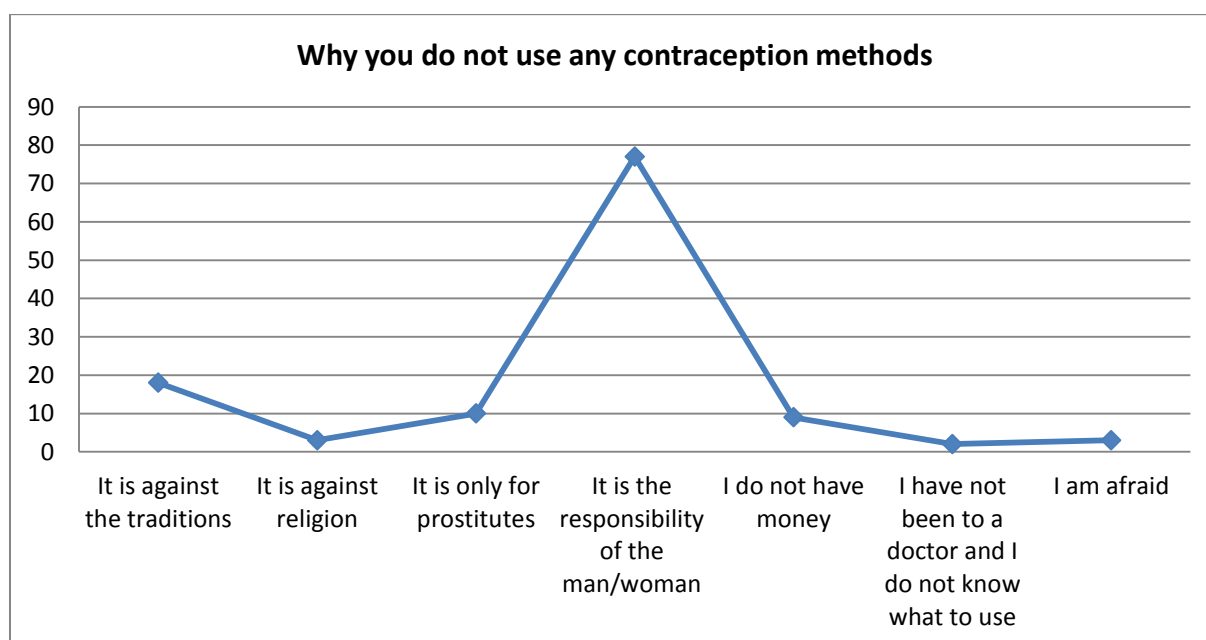
The fact that most of Roma in Veliko Turnovo region have got their first child at age above 18 and the tendency for increasing this age sharply contradict the widely-shared public stereotype for “early Roma births” as well as certain media publications that try to impose the image of extreme early birth to all Roma people. They also confirm the sustainable trend for modernization among Roma community in Veliko Turnovo region and Bulgaria as a whole.

3. Contraception: The survey shows that around half of Roma women who make sex do not use any form of contraception. The main reason is that this is considered mainly as men’s responsibility – 77 answers. The tradition is also factor but with relatively smaller importance: 18 answers. The other factors are stereotypes that link the contraception with prostitution (10 answers), etc. Abortion is also considered as contraception: around 20 % of Romani women included in the survey pointed that they have used abortion as a mean of contraception.

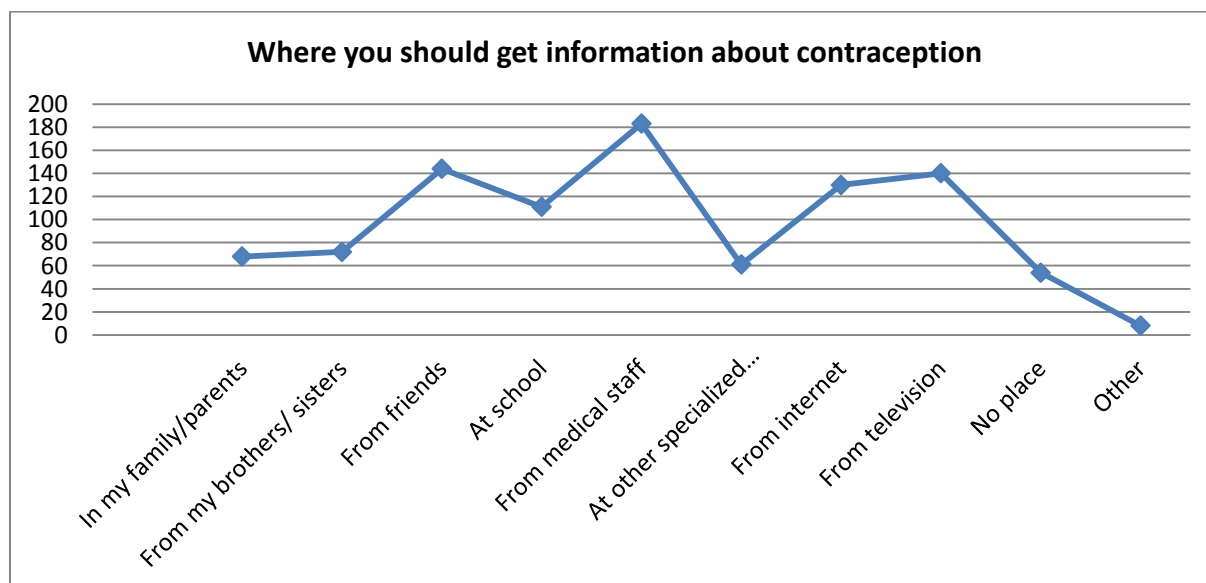
Among Roma men the lack of any contraception is rare case: less than 10 %. The huge majority (almost 90 %) use condoms. Interrupted intercourse and traditional methods are also used although in significantly smaller degrees: 14% and 16 % respectively. Medical staff, friends, television, internet and school (i.e. factors outside the family) are the main sources of information regarding contraception. They are followed by Brothers/ sisters and by elderly people in the family. It seems that certain cultural taboos continue preventing the dissemination of information about contraception in the family environment. That is why certain outsider factors are used to fill the missing information.

Have you used any of the contraception methods pointed below		
	Female	Male

Condoms	193	129
Pills against pregnancy for the women	91	n/a
Emergency pills after sex for the women	44	n/a
Spiral	51	n/a
Interruption intercourse	41	21
Calendar method	19	1
Traditional methods	17	27
Abortion	29	n/a
Never use any specific methods	80	13
I do not make sex	30	2



Interesting fact is that medical staff appeared as the most popular source of information regarding contraception – 183 answers. It seems that medical staff and Roma in Veliko Turnovo region share high degree of mutual confidence that is rare exception at national level. Logical explanation for this could be seen in the activities of Center Amalipe for improving the work of medical staff in Roma community. Particularly, since 2011 the organization implements program for introducing community monitoring of healthcare services that brings together in structured way Roma (including Roma community activists) and medical staff. Expanding this model in other places could have valuable contribution for improving the family planning in Roma community.



School is also a factor in obtaining contraception information: 111 respondents pointed it as one of the main sources. Some 61 included specialized lectures or events. Obviously, the role of the educational activities aimed to raise the awareness of young people about contraception is significant. Such activities should be encouraged.

Third direction for improving the prevention in Roma community that should be developed is the work with families. Overcoming the cultural taboos regarding contraception in family environment would increase significantly their usage.

### ATTITUDES TOWARDS PARTNERSHIP

As mentioned above a key value characterizing the Roma community in Bulgaria is the purity of the girl before marriage. Therefore, the first act of cohabitation is *de facto* considered starting a family. At the same time, within the Roma community, the official act of marriage has low importance according to community perception for establishing a family. According to the survey, most of the respondents (48.57%) consider people living together a family, no matter whether they have official marriage or not. At the same time an interesting tendency among the Roma from Veliko Turnovo region is raising the percentage of official marriages and decreasing the importance of community marriage ceremony.

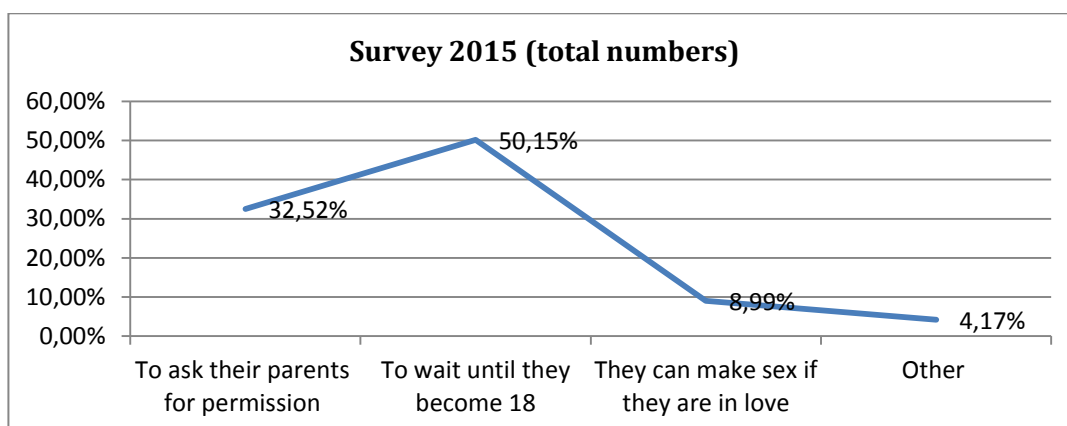
The typical forms of marriage amongst Roma are not legally recognized by the macro society without the presence of a civil act. In the years of the socialist regime, the unregistered cohabitation was constantly criticized. Nevertheless, after 1980 many of the Roma in Bulgaria contract civil marriage not because of external pressure, but because of the significantly high “wedding loan” granted, which gives them an opportunity for an independent start by buying a house, furniture and a car. The data from the conducted in 1992 and 2001 censuses of the population confirm this. In each age group of 25–39 years old about 86% of Roma women have contracted civil marriage, while in the age group of 30–39 years old approximately 90% of men have contracted civil marriage, i.e. despite the early factual start of family life in unregistered

cohabitation in the middle age groups, is observed a significantly high level of legitimate matrimony, typical for the other ethnic groups in the country as well (Pamporov, 2006).

No matter what the real situation is, a sustainable tendency in the attitudes of people is the statement that 18 year old is the reasonable age for getting married.

The first question in Module 5 is aiming at following the tendencies when the public opinion (the opinion of your community neighbours) meters to an extent to define your actions. It is directly related to the attitude of the Roma towards early sexual life and their reproductive culture. Practically behind this question is hidden the following one: Is the age of 14–15 years appropriate for starting sexual (and respectively marital) life?

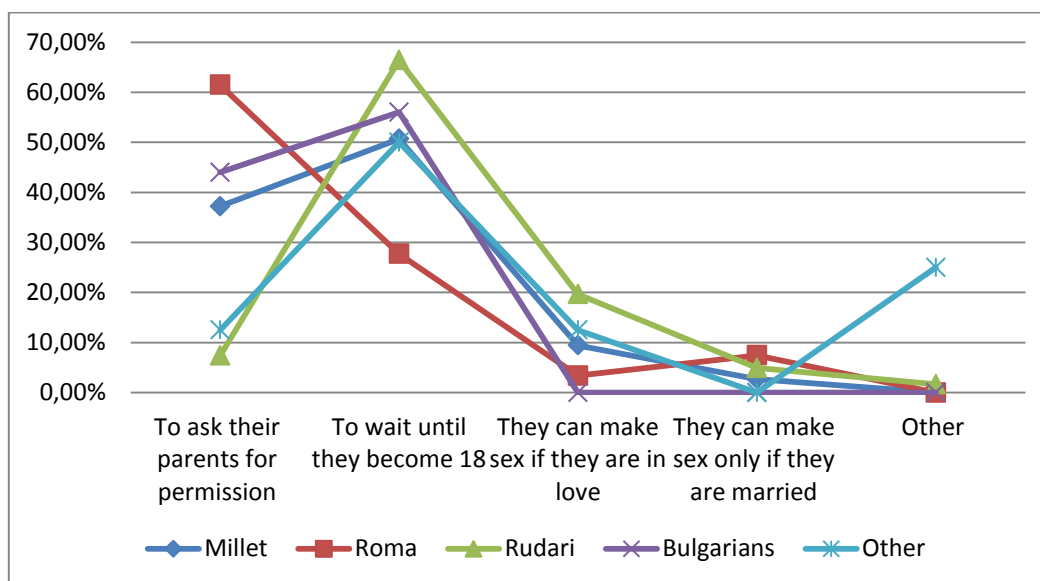
*Ivancho and Marijka live in two neighboring houses. They have known each other since they were born. When they become 14 – 15 they suddenly find out that they are in love with each other and want to make sex. What do they have to do?*



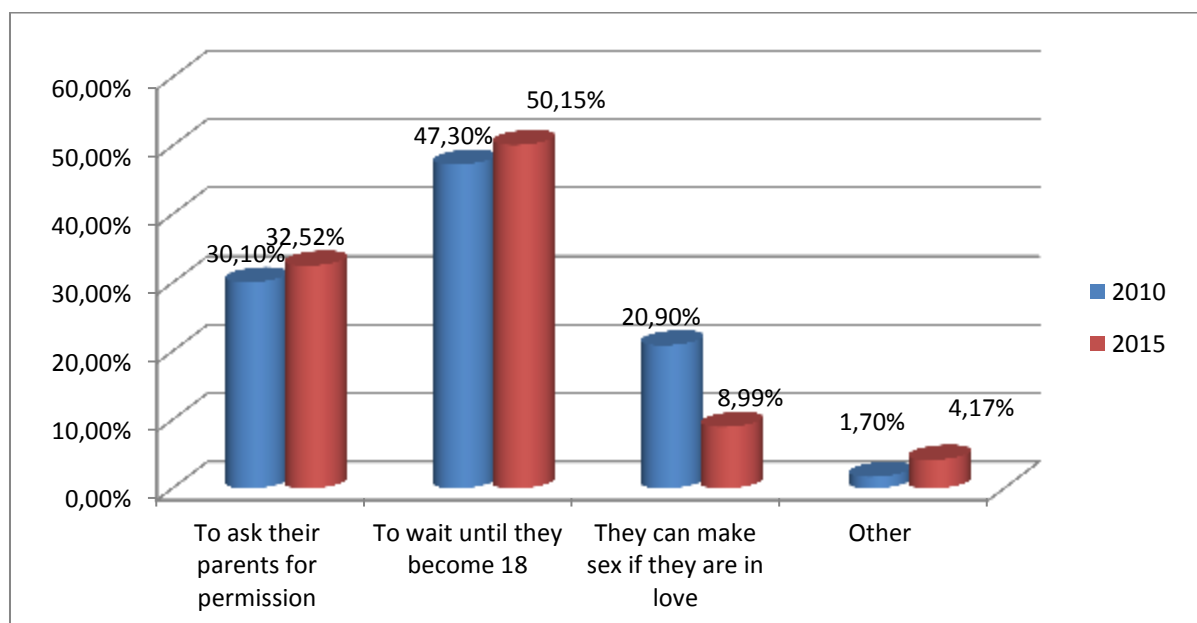
The survey registered different attitudes in the different respondent groups, especially depending on their ethnic self-identification. With the most patriarchal model is the group of those who identify as Roma due to the big share of Burgudjii who are one of the most traditional Roma. It is the only one in which the parents' permission has a greater share than waiting. This conservatism typical for the group can be observed also in the answer if the couple could have sex if they were in love. Only 3.38% of the people with Roma identity chose this answer. Even in the Millet group a positive change can be observed. Previous studies have shown that they have been one of the most conservative group. However, the present research shows that now more than 50% of the respondents from this group would prefer to wait until the young couple becomes 18. The weight of the parents' permission is the lowest in the Rudari group who are often considered as one of the most modernized and educated Roma groups. Furthermore, the Rudari prove to be more open also on having sex if the young people are in love although more than 2/3 of the people think that they should wait until they become 18. However, it has to be noted that the differences between the groups are within the margins of the statistical error.



	Total	Millet	Roma	Rudari	Bulgarians	Other
Must take permission from their parents	32,52%	37,22%	61,49%	7,38%	44,00%	12,50%
Must wait for some time	50,15%	50,67%	27,70%	66,39%	56,00%	50,00%
They can have sex if in love	8,99%	9,42%	3,38%	19,67%	0,00%	12,50%
Other	4,17%	2,69%	7,43%	6,56%	0,00%	25,00%



The positive trend in changing attitudes can be very clearly traced when comparing the data from 2010 and 2015. We can see that in 2015 the most significant difference is perceiving the age of 18 as a minimum for starting a family life or a sexual relation. We can observe also a significant reduce in the preference of having of sexual relation if the boy and the girl are in love in favour of waiting until they become 18.



The change in the patriarchal model of decision-making regarding the marriage can be observed also in the following question: *“Who has to give them permission to get married?”* The first thing that we see is the shared responsibility of the parents of the couple and not one side dominating on the other. The second important point is that there is a shift of the weight of the opinion of the grandparents to that of the parents. This is also a sign of modernization since according to the patriarchal tradition the decisions about the kin and the community are always taken by the eldest people in the kin.

Who has to give them permission to get married	
It is up to the parents/grandparents of Ivancho	22,37%
It is up to the parents/grandparents of Marijka	15,71%
The parents should decide together	50,09%
It is up to other people in the community	3,14%
No body – if the boy and girl love each other they can get married	7,58%
Other	1,11%

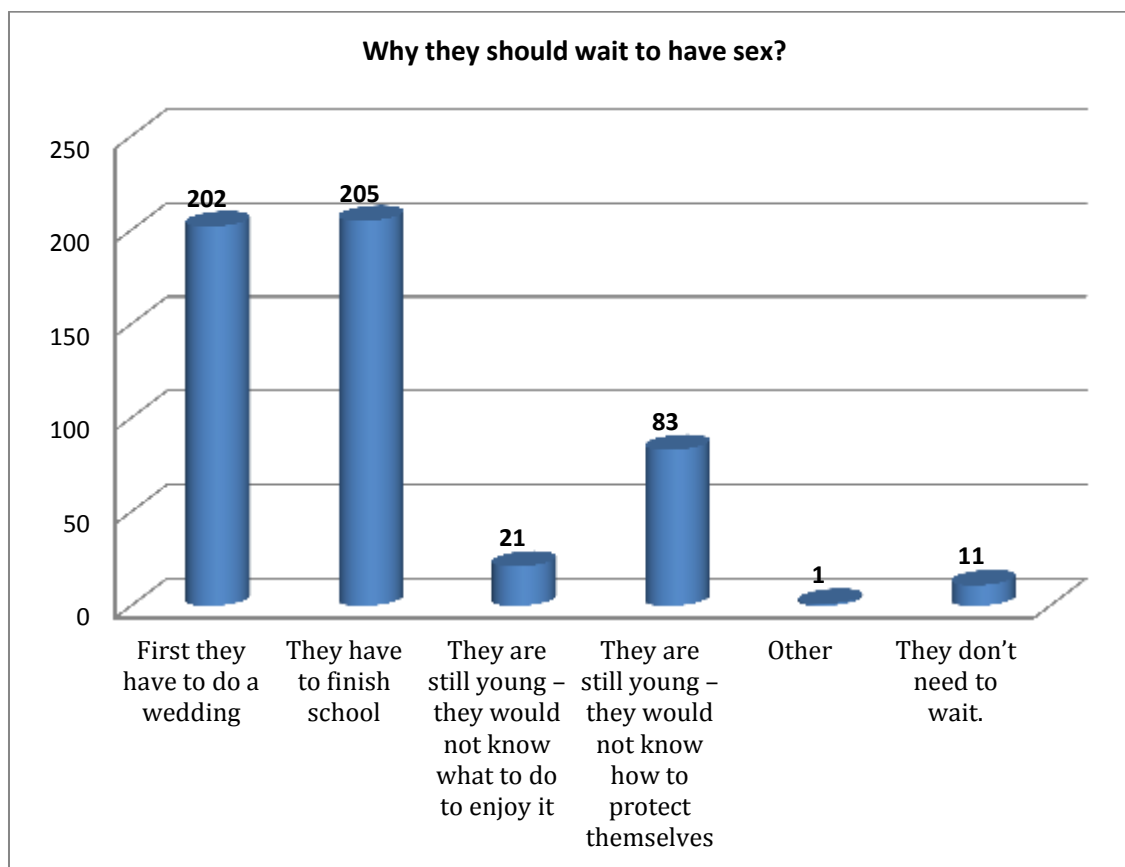
If it is up to the family/community and you have to point one person who is the most influential in this process, who that person would be	
The mother of the girl	21,26%
The father of the girl	19,09%
The grandmother of the girl	7,95%
The grandfather of the girl	6,19%
The mother of the boy	11,97%
The father of the boy	17,65%
The grandmother of the boy	6,40%
The grandfather of the boy	6,30%
Other	3,20%

However, we must acknowledge that the exit hypothesis for the potential risk of forced marriages in Roma communities – where parents decide regardless of their children’s will – in this case is rather rejected. 38.93% of the respondents think that they have to obey their parents’ decision in all cases vs. 42.45% who think that They have to wait until they get 18. As mentioned above, the definite need of the parents’ consent is clearly seen with the Roma (Burgujii) and the Millet groups.

At the same time, another positive change can be observed through the answers to the question *“Why they should wait to have sex”*. Almost 48 % of the answers point that “First, they have to finish school” and slightly outstrips the answer “First they have to do a wedding” (47.20 %) <sup>55</sup>. The third in line is the answer “They are still young – they

<sup>55</sup> The total sum exceeds 100 % since more than one answer has been possible to this question

would not know how to protect themselves” which shows that this issues is getting higher in the agenda of Roma community.

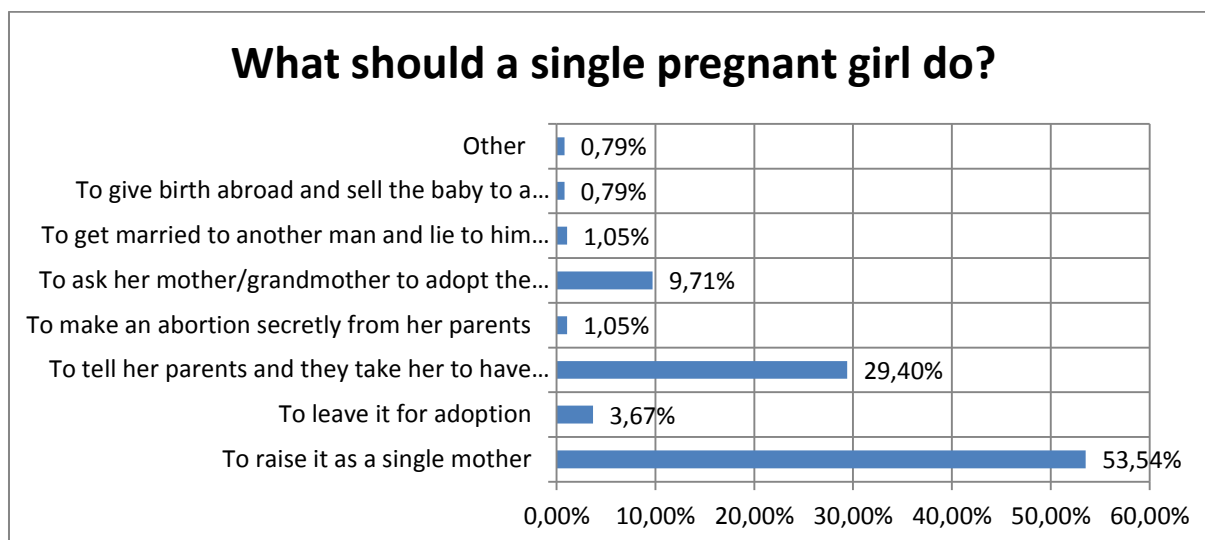


This tendency is further confirmed by the question “*One day Marijka is told by her parents that it is time for her to get married and they have found an appropriate husband for her. What should Marijka do?*” 60.40 % of the answers insist that the girl should ask her parents not to marry her yet because she is too young vs. 29.87 % of the people who believe that she should accept the choice of her parents since this is the tradition and they know what is best for her.

The next set of questions is designed to examine the attitude towards the early unwanted pregnancy as a result of the early start of sexual life. Behind the responses to this question are hidden three questions: 1) Should a girl at the age of 14 or 15 keep the child”; if “yes” then 2) Can the unwanted pregnancy become a reason for early marriage?; and if “no” then 3) Must she end her pregnancy secretly from her parents or they must be aware of her condition?

Almost 60% of the respondents (59.41%) reply that the young people should get married and keep the baby instead of making an abortion no matter with or without the knowledge of the parents. The stress in the first answer should rather fall on the second part of the sentence “keep the baby” having in mind also that children present the highest level of the value scale in Roma perspective. Here the issue about the marriage is rather an inertia than a driving force for a marriage (moreover according to one of the questions in the survey the perspective of the single mother becomes more and more

popular in the community). The next question confirms it since 53.54 % choose the option “To give birth to the baby and raise it as a single mother”. Nevertheless, in some of the most conservative and patriarchal communities like Burgudzii and some Millet group this might be also a factor for early marriage.



On the other hand, this part of the survey breaks one of the stereotypes broadly shared by the majority about the Roma community: Romani women give birth to babies and leave them for adoption. In fact just 3.67 % of the respondents (14 persons out of 381 who have answered this question) answered that they might leave it for adoption. Just 3 respondents out of 381 in turn answer that they would give birth abroad and sell the baby to a woman that could not have children, which is also another myth about the “baby market” run by Romani women.

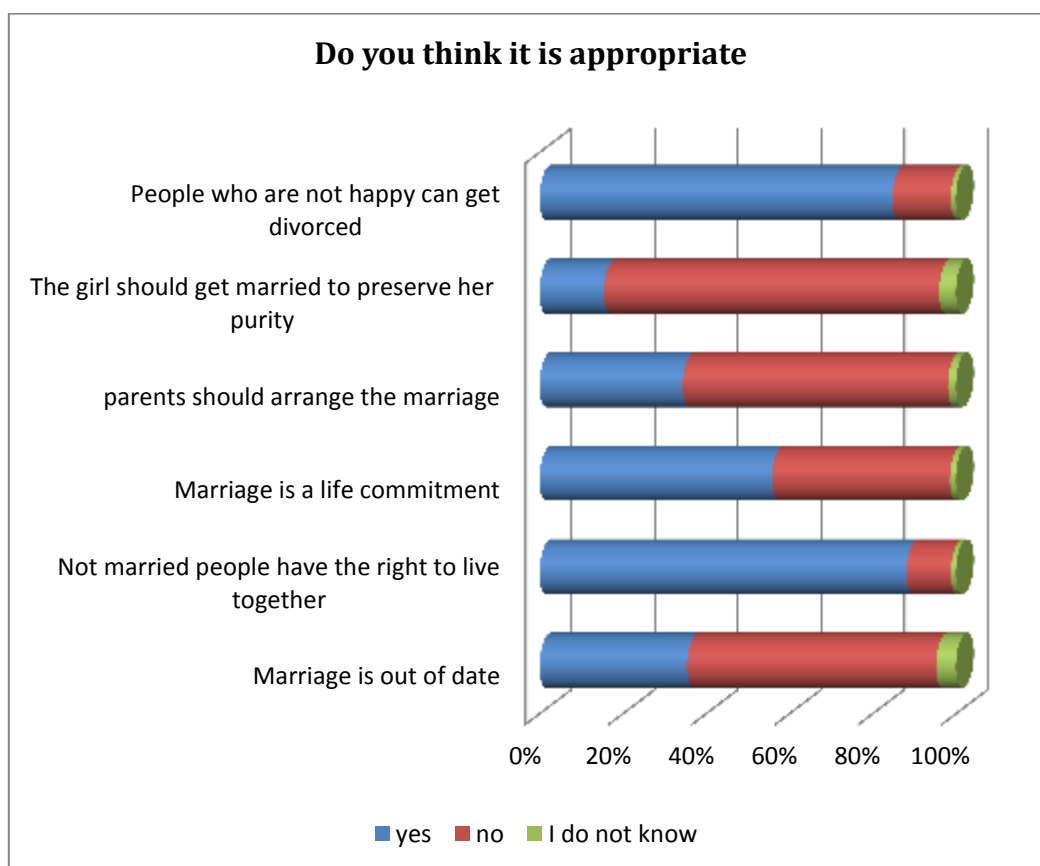
## VALUES

The study carried out within the project “Early Marriage – Culture or Abuse” focuses on several value fields regarding Roma concepts.

The first set of questions in this section explores the attitudes and values regarding family, establishing family and the social roles of man/women, children/parents. The survey shows that the value trends in the Roma community to a great extent reflect the tendencies in the macro society regarding the value of the marriage institution. A survey carried out by a Bulgarian sociologist Alexey Pamporov in 2008 shows that 28.9 % of the people consider marriage as an out-of-date institution; however in the paper “The crisis of the marriage institution, familism and the new family forms” he envisages that a couple of year later, the percentage of people disappointed with family institution would increase up to 40 %.<sup>56</sup> The present survey points that 35.48% of the respondents share the opinion that marriage is out of date as an institution which is close to the number envisaged by Pamporov. The respondents however do not reject people living together but just the marriage as an institution. Therefore, 88.18% of them perceive people living

<sup>56</sup> Pamporov, A., “Krizata na brachnata institucia, familism i novite semeini formi”, pp.154-171, In: Fotev, Georgy, ed. European Values in Bulgarian Society Today. Sofia, 2008, 155

together as a family and respect the right of people who have not get married to live together if they want to. At the same time, those who keep believing in the family institution have quite a steady belief in it. 55.85 % state that marriage is a life commitment and cannot be broken. The processes of modernization is further illustrated with the fact that almost 64 % share that it is not the parents who should arrange the wedding of their children. In addition, the disagreement with the statement that a girl should get married at the earliest possible age in order to preserve her purity reaches 80.47% and more than 83% (83.37% ) share that a boy/girls should first finish school and then start a family.



Do you think it is appropriate	Total		
	yes	no	I do not know
Marriage is out of date	35,48%	59,76%	4,76%
People who have not get married have the right to live together if they want to	88,18%	10,64%	1,18%
Marriage is a life commitment and cannot be broken	55,85%	42,72%	1,43%
It is the parents who should arrange the marriage of their children	34,43%	63,68%	1,89%
The girl should get married at the earliest possible age in order to preserve her purity	15,53%	80,47%	4,00%

People who are not happy with their marriage have the right to get divorced	84,80%	14,01%	1,19%
The woman has to have children in order to be a real woman	48,58%	50,47%	0,95%
The man has to have children in order to be a real man	44,15%	54,65%	1,19%
In order for the child to be happy, it needs to be raised together with his mother and father	86,63%	10,98%	2,39%
A woman can have a baby even if she is not married (to be a single mother)	73,75%	23,15%	3,10%
When children become 18 – 20 they have to start living independently from their parents	50,12%	42,24%	7,64%
A mother who works can have the same warm and giving relation with her child as the mother who does not work	68,08%	29,81%	2,11%
It is more appropriate for the mother to take care of the child herself instead of sending it to a kindergarten	19,34%	76,89%	3,77%
Older children should take care of the younger	68,67%	26,99%	4,34%
A boy/a girl should first finish school and then start a family.	83,37%	13,30%	3,33%

In addition to this a couple of questions tried to follow the family role and the responsibilities within the family (including gender roles and responsibilities). This covered also the issue of family budget. Interestingly enough, the prevailing part of the respondents consider both, the wife and the husband equally responsible about the family budget which is already a clear sign about the intense of the modernization processes and the emancipation of the woman in the Roma community. Furthermore, it is confirmed by one of the questions above which grants the necessary respect and importance to working women. 68.08% of the respondents agree that a mother who works can have the same warm and giving relation with her child as the mother who does not work. This change can be also seen in another pattern in the community. Not long time ago it had been perceived as an appropriate by the community if the mother would send the children to kindergarten instead of taking care about them at home. This automatically implied that she was not a good mother. Now we see that almost 80% of the respondents disagree with this community norm from the near past.

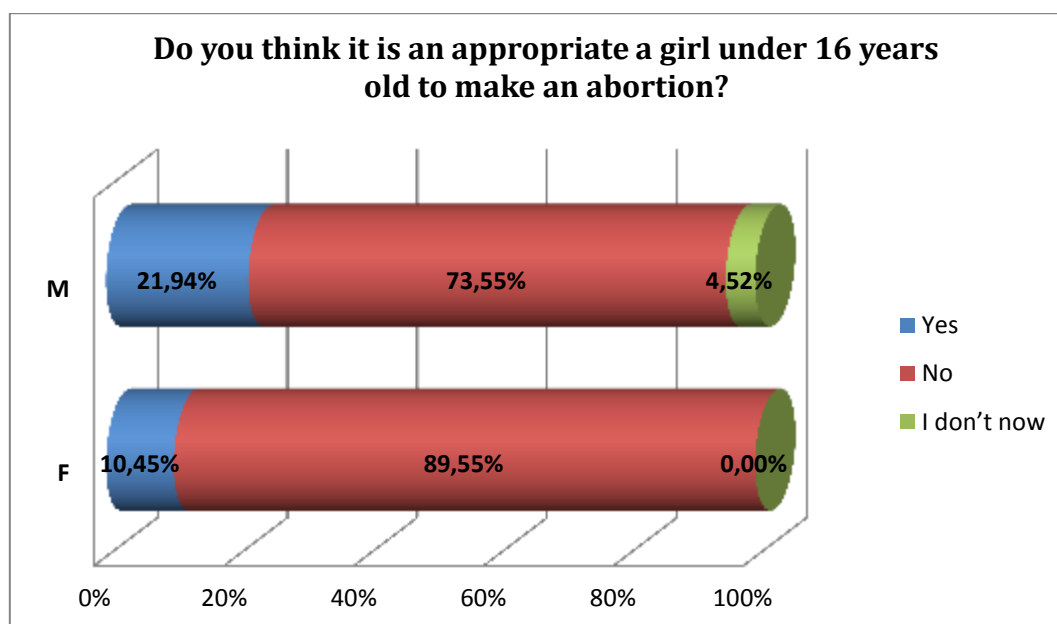
The tendencies describes above can be well followed when moving to the gender roles and responsibilities regarding children and taking care of the children. Here the emancipation process is even more empathically visible. 84.54% of the respondents agree that the father and the mother should have shared responsibilities regarding the bringing up of the children and their education. The latter used to be a field definitely occupied by the women in the family.



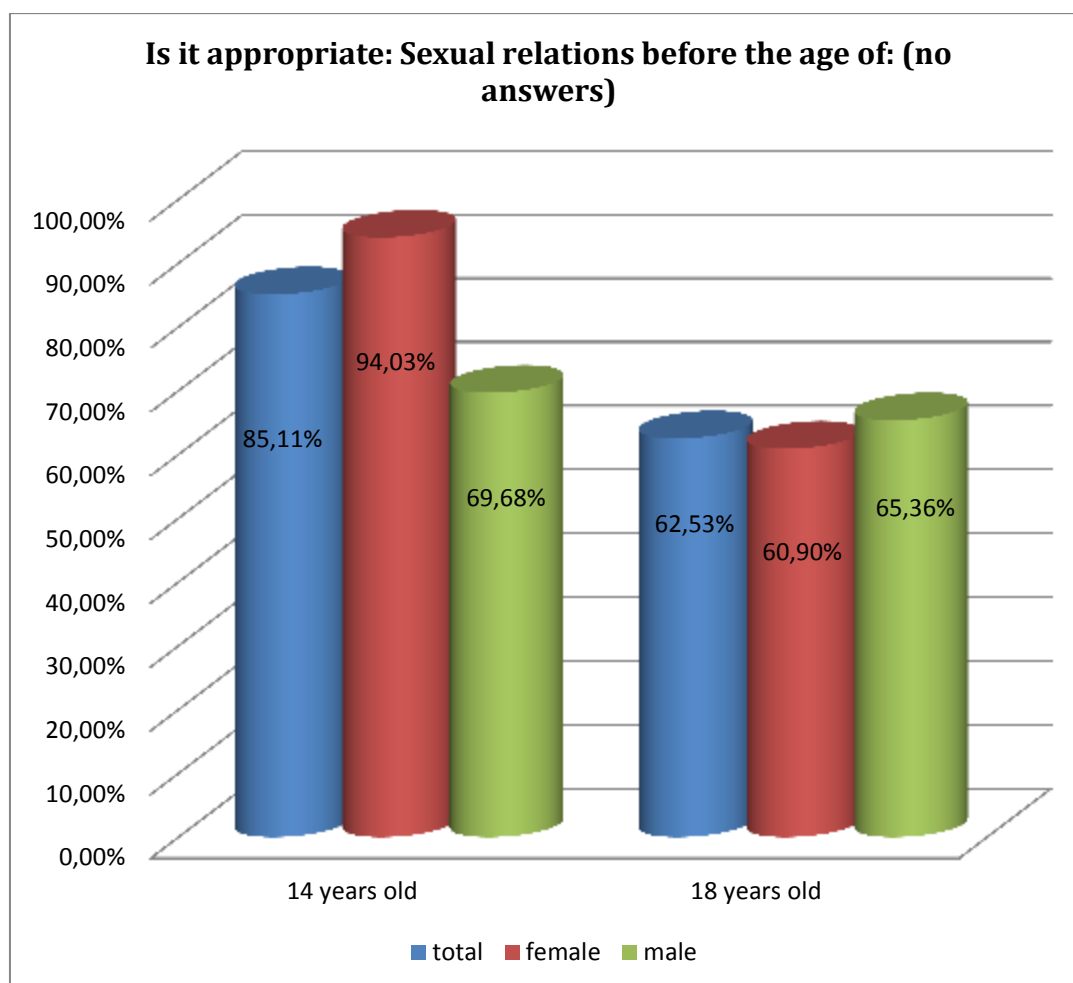
Still, in both issues: financial and gender responsibilities about raising children, a difference in the opinion of male and female respondents can be observed but it is not that big to influence significantly the general trend of modernization.

Who should be taking care of the family budget?	Total	F	M
the father	16,22%	9,73%	27,45%
the mother	7,26%	4,67%	11,76%
both, man and woman	76,27%	85,60%	60,13%
other	0,24%	0,00%	0,65%
Who should be taking care for bringing up children and their education?		F	M
the father	1,93%	1,91%	2,01%
the mother	13,29%	0,24%	15,44%
both, man and woman	84,54%	86,64%	81,88%
other	0,24%	0,00%	0,67%

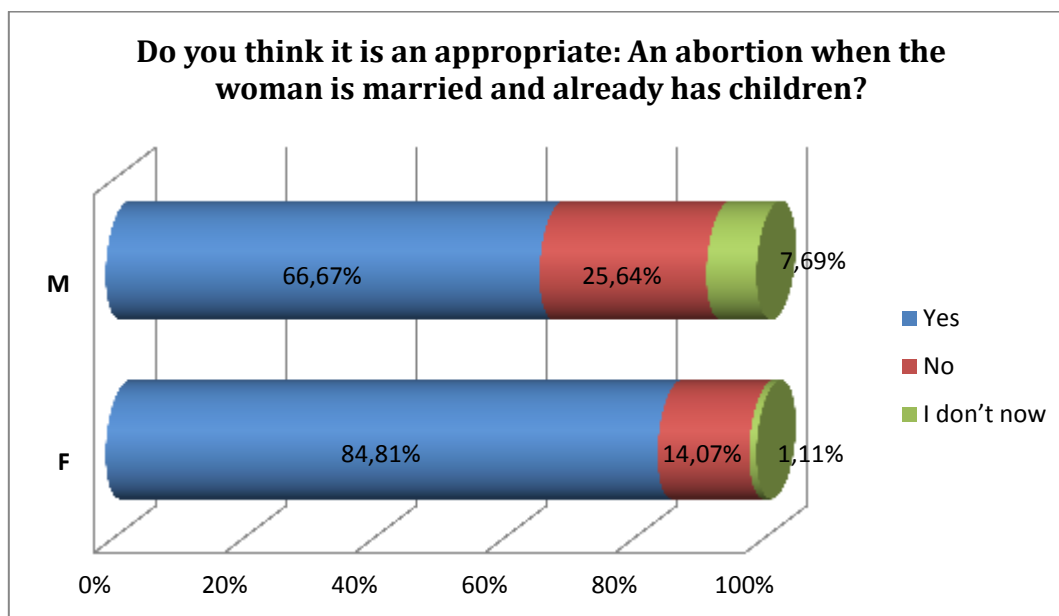
The last section aims to explore in terms of sexuality and values regarding sexual relations, abortion, and specifically issues related to early marriages. The issue of abortions is a sensitive and at the same time an important marker for the Roma family value system. The ambiguity of the issue reveals two very important points. The first one is that most of the people consider abortion before the age of 16 as inappropriate. Probably this is connected not just with the understanding of the healthy aspect of the issue but also with the perspective of the high value of children in the Roma community. The disaggregation of the data shows that women are more concerned about this.



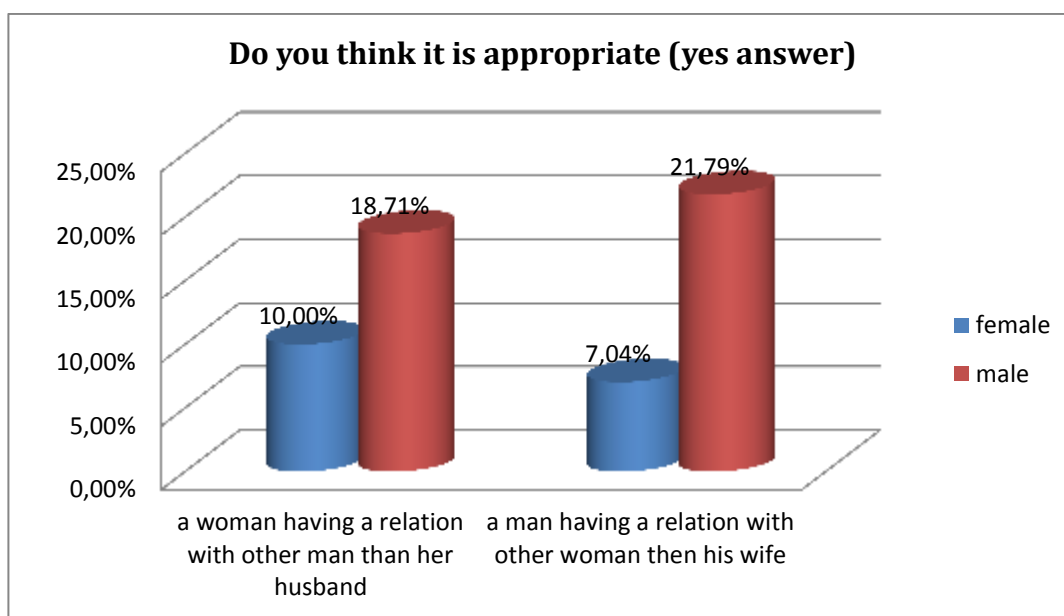
We can follow the same tendency regarding sexual intercourse in general. A positive sign is that more than 85% of the respondents do not accept sexual intercourse before the age of 14, and 62,53 % think that even 18 years is still an early age for sexual intercourse. Here again the percentages are higher among the women, which already shows that they are more likely to change their perception about early marriages having in mind these two basic issues: sexual intercourse and abortion. Most probably this is based on their personal experience which men do not have so a higher percentage of the latter are likely to accept sexual relations before the age of 14. Therefore, when designing campaigns and actions for combating early marriages women should be the basic target groups since there the change is more likely to happen quicker.



At the same time a lot more people perceive abortion as an option if the woman is married and already has children. We suppose that this is connected also with the understanding of abortion as a contraception method as it was shown in the study on early marriages carried out earlier. Here we can also see the gender difference in the answers. For a married woman men are less inclined to accept an abortion valuing every child of the family, no matter how difficult it is for the woman. So, comparing the answers to the two questions, we might conclude that men are more likely to accept an abortion if the future child is still not belonging to the family, but once the family is created every new life belongs to the family and they are less likely to agree to abort it.



At the same time, regarding sexual relations other than with your spouse men seem more likely to accept it, both for men and women (being more acceptable for men).



When speaking about prostitution however, expectedly, this is an issue more appropriate for men than for women. 27,74% of the male answers are in favor of prostitution, while just 5,19% of the women perceive it as appropriate. There is an even higher gender gap concerning sexual relations before marriage. 44,52% of the men perceive it as appropriate (probably associating it not with their own daughters) vs. 18,52 % of the women.

The next set of questions clearly shows that there are a lot of breaks in the frozen lake of early marriage traditions and it has started to melt: it just needs a catalyzer. The following questions confirm that:

- 68,63% disagree that the parents should decide whom their child should get married
- Around 50 % of the respondents believe that the girl (or both the boy and the girl) should elope if she doesn't love the man she has to marry with, if they do not have the permission of their parents or the parents of the groom do not have the money asked from the girl's parents
- Around 60 % disagree that the parents should ask for money from the groom's side if their daughter is a virgin before the marriage

Do you think it is appropriate			
An abortion if the woman is under 16	Total	F	M
Yes	14,66%	10,45%	21,94%
No	83,69%	89,55%	73,55%
I don't now	1,65%	0,00%	4,52%
An abortion when the woman is married and already has children		F	M
Yes	78,17%	84,81%	66,67%
No	18,31%	14,07%	25,64%
I don't now	3,52%	1,11%	7,69%
An abortion if the baby is of a man she does not love?		F	M
Yes	64,32%	62,96%	66,67%
No	30,99%	33,33%	26,92%
I don't now	4,69%	3,70%	6,41%
A woman having a relation with another man than her husband		F	M
Yes	13,18%	10,00%	18,71%
No	82,12%	84,81%	77,42%
I don't now	4,71%	5,19%	3,87%
A man having a relation with other woman then his wife		F	M
Yes	12,44%	7,04%	21,79%
No	81,69%	87,04%	72,44%
I don't now	5,87%	5,93%	5,77%
A woman and a man living together as a couple without being married		F	M
Yes	71,29%	76,03%	62,91%

No	27,27%	22,85%	35,10%
I don't now	1,44%	1,12%	1,99%
A divorce		<b>F</b>	<b>M</b>
Yes	53,07%	56,30%	47,40%
No	41,75%	40,37%	44,16%
I don't now	5,19%	3,33%	8,44%
A single woman to give birth to a child and raise it alone		<b>F</b>	<b>M</b>
Yes	46,01%	45,56%	46,79%
No	46,71%	47,41%	45,51%
I don't now	7,28%	7,04%	7,69%
Sexual relations before the age of 14		<b>F</b>	<b>M</b>
Yes	12,53%	4,10%	27,10%
No	85,11%	94,03%	69,68%
I don't now	2,36%	1,87%	3,23%
Sexual relations before the age of 18		<b>F</b>	<b>M</b>
Yes	36,28%	37,59%	33,99%
No	62,53%	60,90%	65,36%
I don't now	1,19%	1,50%	0,65%
Sexual relations before marriage		<b>F</b>	<b>M</b>
Yes	28,00%	18,52%	44,52%
No	70,12%	81,11%	50,97%
I don't now	1,88%	0,37%	4,52%
Prostitution		<b>F</b>	<b>M</b>
Yes	13,41%	5,19%	27,74%
No	84,47%	94,07%	67,74%
I don't now	2,12%	0,74%	4,52%
The parents have to decide whom their child should get married		<b>F</b>	<b>M</b>
Yes	27,36%	26,49%	28,85%
No	68,63%	70,15%	66,03%
I don't now	4,01%	3,36%	5,13%
The girl should elope if she doesn't love the man she has to marry with?		<b>F</b>	<b>M</b>
Yes	51,06%	49,25%	54,19%

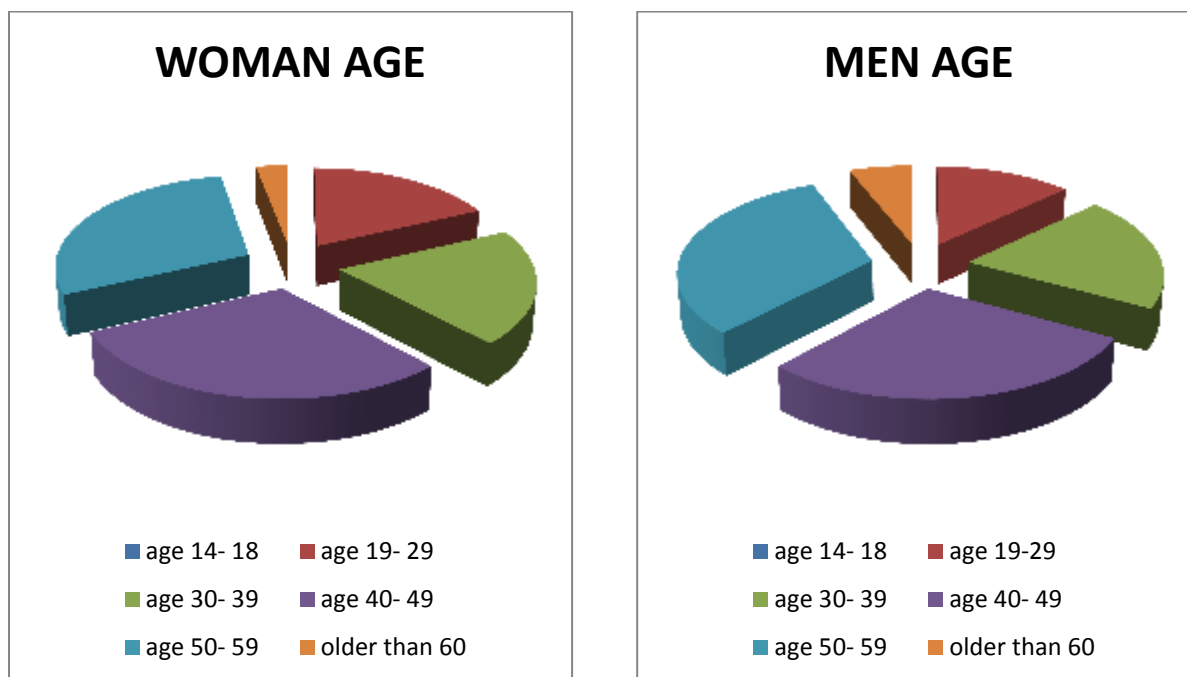
No	32,86%	27,61%	41,94%
I don't now	16,08%	23,13%	3,87%
The parents should ask for money from the groom's side if their daughter is a virgin before the marriage		<b>F</b>	<b>M</b>
Yes	31,67%	30,22%	34,21%
No	59,76%	59,33%	60,53%
I don't now	8,57%	10,45%	5,26%
The girls and the boy should elope if they do not have the permission of their parents		<b>F</b>	<b>M</b>
Yes	43,86%	42,42%	46,36%
No	49,16%	52,27%	43,71%
I don't now	6,99%	5,30%	9,93%
The girls and the boy should elope if the boy's parents do not have the money asked from the girl's parents		<b>F</b>	<b>M</b>
Yes	53,32%	53,51%	52,98%
No	31,04%	26,20%	39,74%
I don't now	15,64%	20,30%	7,28%



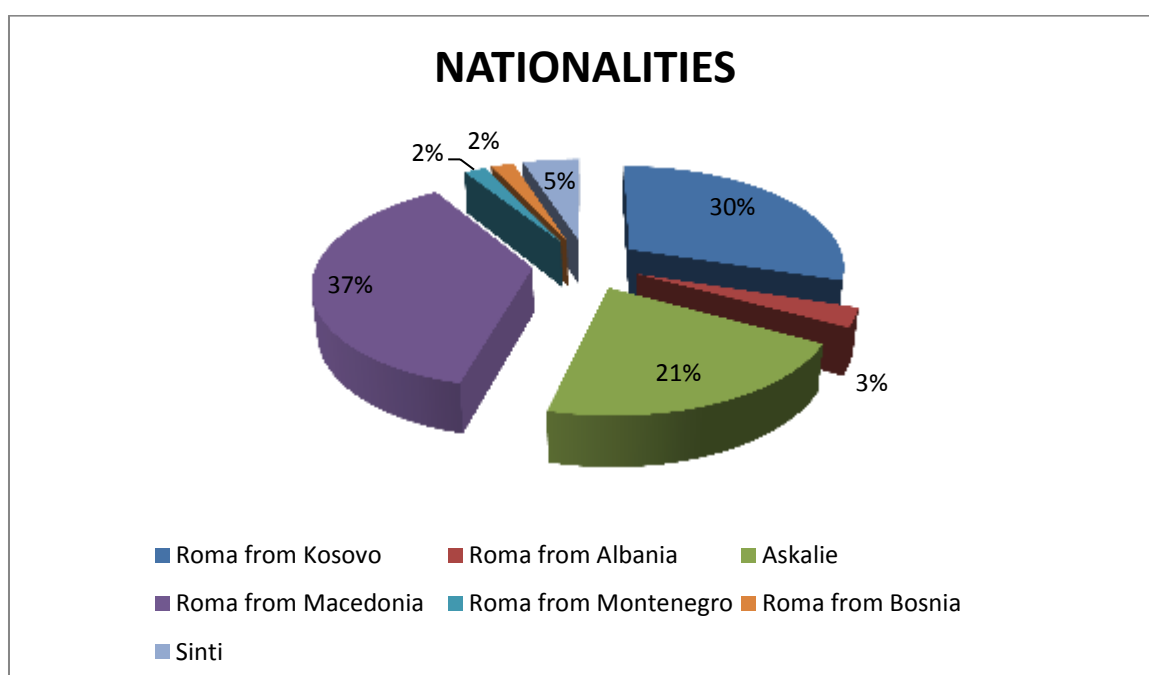
## ITALY

### DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF THE RESPONDENTS

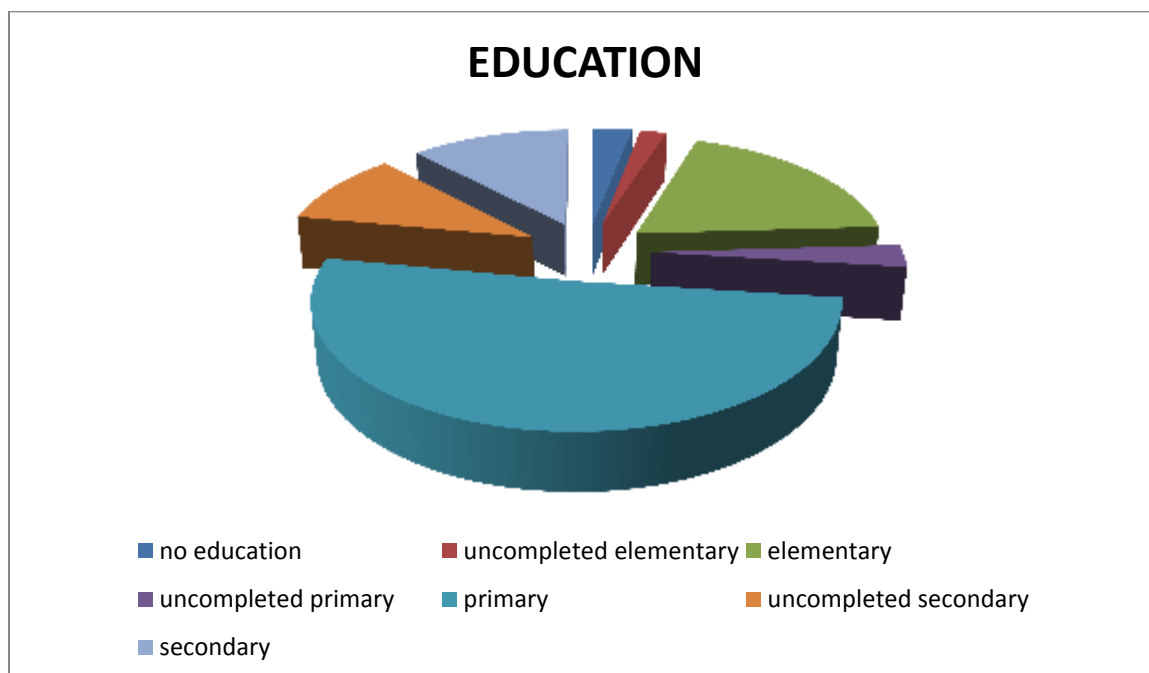
The survey in Italy covered 351 people of which 57% men and 43% women.



It needs to be taken into account that self identification sometimes is not reducible to such a strict category as that of nationality. Many people are married with partners of different Roma origin, and are part of the diaspora of their community (e.g. refugees from Balkans).



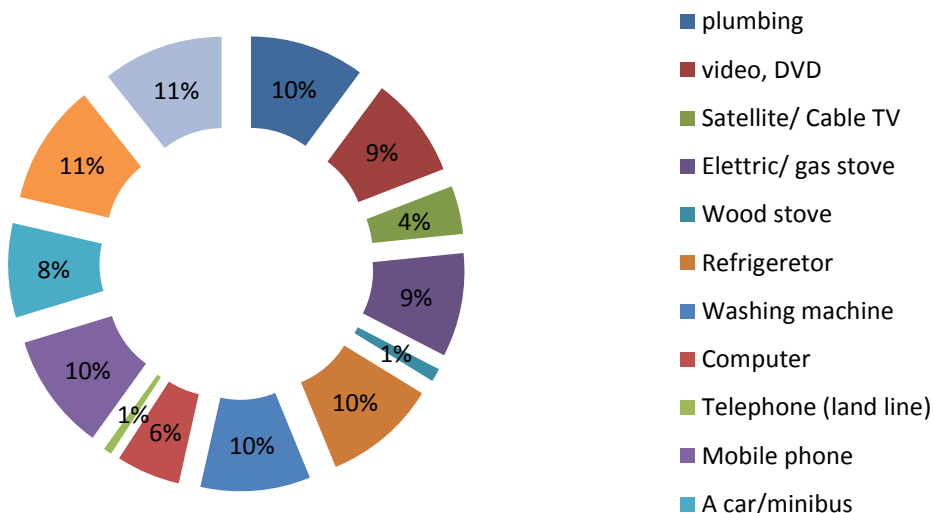
In Italy there is no such data about educational level of people on the basis of ethnic or national origin. There are data that distinguish among Italians and other nationalities in Italy; Roma, however, are crossing these categories too, being both foreign and Italian citizens. From our survey it is possible to state that, in comparison with older generations which we have interviewed, the younger generations attend school for longer.



### ROMA HOUSEHOLD

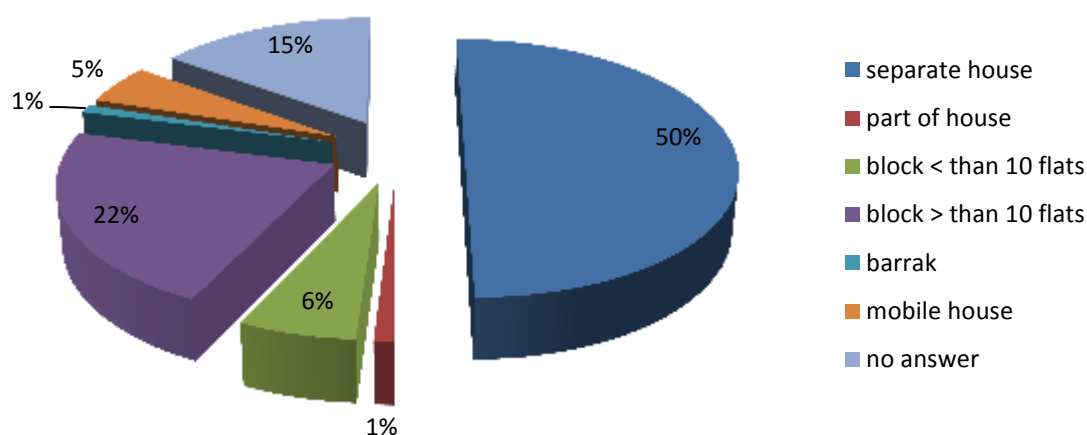
The type of houses of our sample of interviewees are very different. As we have seen above, they were all coming from the following areas of Florence: Poderaccio Camp, with prefab houses; ERP Apartments of the Municipality; Rented apartments in Quartiere 3, Quartiere 4, Quartiere 5 and Guarlone. Outside Florence, an extended family of Sinti in Prato has been interviewed. All the interviewees have toilets, plumbing, electricity and gas facilities.

## Do you have in your house



50% of people declared of living in a separate house; 1% of living in a part of a house. 6% live in a block of less than 10 flats, while 22% people live in a block of more than 10 flats. Almost 2% of people declared of living in a barrack or similar. 18 Sinti, 5% of our sample, live in an option not foreseen by the questionnaire: mobile house. 15% of people have not declared where do they live.

## Type of accomodation



To what concern the people we have interviewed there seems not to be a relation between the type of household and the self identification of the people; however it must be taken into account that most of the interviews we had were taken into the most

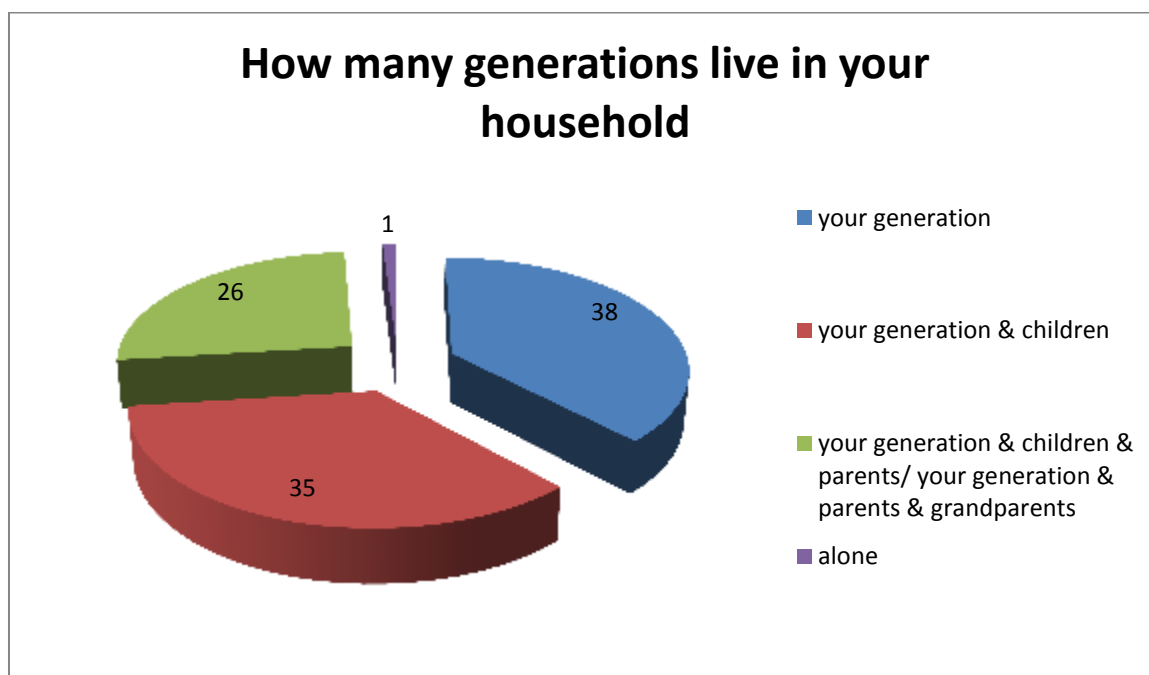
relevant group of Roma people in the area of Florence: mostly people coming from Balkans, especially after the Balkan and Kosovan wars.

There is a relation between the type of household and the living conditions: there is a clear pattern of young people that tend to live in apartments as nuclear families. Families in camps like Poderaccio mostly have 2 or 3 generations living together. The people around the area of Florence, mostly new arrivals from eastern Europe<sup>57</sup>, have not been involved in the research but live in very marginalized settlements as those Roma arrived at outbreak of wars in the Balkans.

The case of Sinti in Prato included in the survey differs from the case of most of the Roma interviewed in Florence: they have been all Italian citizens for many generations (e.g. after the Great War). Their history seems to be reflected also in the choice of the house: they all live in an area with their mobile homes. They are all part of the same extended family although some marriages with Roma from Balkans have occurred in the last 30 years.

The situation in big cities of Italy, and in general, outside Tuscany seems to be much more complicated, especially for the number of camps still far from being dismantled<sup>58</sup>.

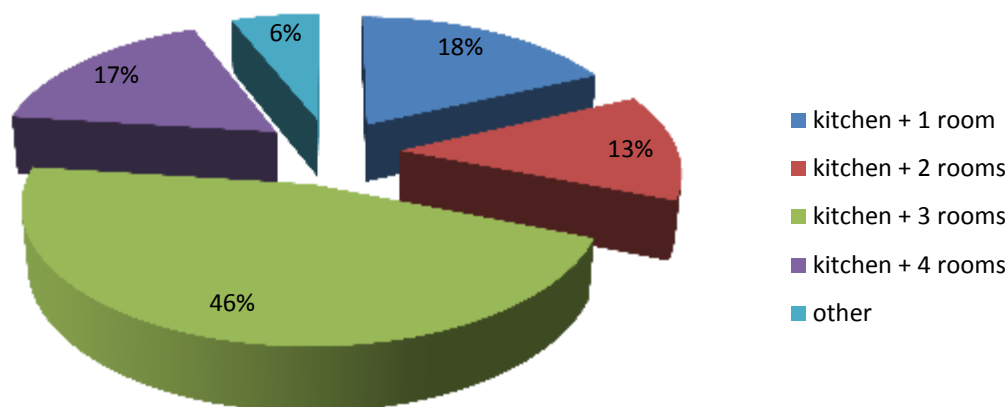
As an average it is possible to say that the household is composed by 5/6 people. Out of 351 people interviewed, 169 said that they live with their children (2 generations in total); 186 declared of living with their own generation (including siblings and the partner's siblings – 1 generation in total). Only 5 people live with grandparents, while 124 interviewees declared of living with their grandchildren, which means that 129 interviewees live with 3 generations in total. 4 people said that they live alone.



<sup>57</sup> [http://www.michelucci.it/sites/michelucci2-dev.etabeta.it/files/case\\_e\\_non-case\\_rom.pdf](http://www.michelucci.it/sites/michelucci2-dev.etabeta.it/files/case_e_non-case_rom.pdf)

<sup>58</sup> See C. Stassolla *Sulla pelle dei rom- il piano nomadi della Giunta Alemanno*, Alegre, 2012

## How many rooms your household uses



## MARRIAGE AND PARTNERSHIP

Marriage is fundamental in Roma culture not only for the reproduction of the kin, but also because it represents the occasion for new alliances and brings together families. Registration of the marriage is seen differently by every community; on a general level, it is possible to say that Roma from the Balkans have their marriage registered at institutional level as well, after a traditional marriage. Sinti, on the other hand, seem not to care for the official recognition.

### Marriage among Roma from Kosovo.

As pointed above, Roma from Kosovo have many different traditions, depending on the area where they have lived and the other people they have shared culture with. **Ascalie** tend to marry later than other Roma groups, generally around 20-25. The tradition is strictly observed. The marriage ritual is performed indifferent steps: usually an uncle on the mother side of the groom, the so called "*Dajo*", goes to the family of the bride as "*stroinico*", the person who asks for the bride's hand. They use a symbolic language like: "we heard that you have a beautiful flower, if God wish, you will give that flower to our son". They do not observe the practice of "Bride buying" but they use to ask for many presents for the bride herself and for her siblings and grandmothers. If the *stroinico* and the bride family find an agreement they have two days of celebration: during the first one every spouse has his/her party with their guest; on the second day the husband family goes to "take" the bride at her family's place; around midnight there is the consummation of the marriage, the most important part of the celebration. The virginity of the bride reflects the honor and the pride of her family therefore if the honor is safe the person in charge of informing the family is compensated with a present. After a week the spouses go for a dinner at the wife's family and then she spends a night there. **Arle**, Roma from Pristina, have been influenced by Serbian culture and language. Among



RAZVOJNO  
IZOBRAŽEVALNI  
CENTER NOVO MESTO



them it is very common the elopement, the so-called “*fuitina*” which is a way of forcing parents to accept a relationship. The celebration of the marriage is similar to that of Ascalie: a *stroinico*, often *dajo* of the boy, is sent to the house of the girl to ask for her hand. The two families invite their guest to their own houses and celebrate separately the first day. On the second day the relatives of the husband go to fetch the bride and take it at the entrance of the house of the boy, where he is waiting. They enter together for the consummation of the marriage, after which the family of the bride is told of her purity. The third day the relatives of the bride arrive to celebrate together.

### **Marriage among Roma from Albania**

Similarly to Ascalie, Roma from Albania are very close to those from Kosovo; when a family decides that it is time to find a wife for one of the sons, they ask a person who is friend to both families “*stroinico*” to invite the family of the chosen girl to talk. When the two families meet, the *stroinico* stands in front of the relatives of the girl and ask for her hand with ritual phrases. Then a symbolic negotiation from the two families starts. Usually it is not money that it bargained over, but rather jewelers that are then kept for the bride.

The marriage feast lasts for more than 2 days: on the first one the two families celebrate separately, they invite neighbors, friends and relatives, also from other countries. On the second day, the relatives of the groom go and take the bride to their place where the celebration goes on with music. Later the relatives of the bride arrive and spend about an hour with them and they leave. The day after the marriage is consumed and the relative of the bride are told if the girl has kept their honor. As in the case of Ascalie in Kosovo, after a week the couple goes to have a dinner with the parents of the bride.

### **Marriage among Sinti**

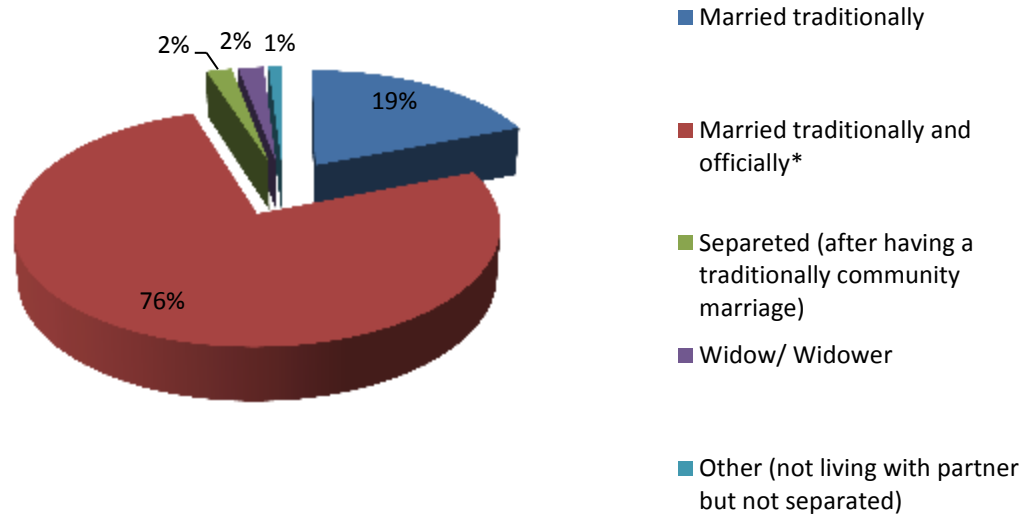
The most common type of marriage among Sinti is “eloping” which is a mean for the boy and the girl to force their family to recognize the union. Usually people marry in the age between 20 and 25, sometimes before 18 years old.

### ***Statistical data about marital status***

272 people of our sample have married with official court marriage; 68 have married traditionally only; 6 people have separated after having a traditional community marriage; 9 are widow or widower. 4 people are no longer living with their partners but they do not consider themselves as separated or divorced. It must be noted that no one of our interviewed has divorced, none has declared of living with his/her partner without any form of marriage and has been married by a religious leader.

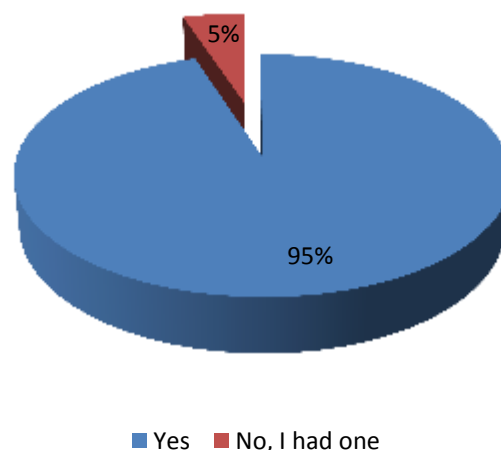


## WHAT IS YOUR MARITAL STATUS



335 people out of 351 declare they are living with their first partner; 15 have had a marriage or a partner before. No one has had more than one relationship before the actual partner. One person has not answered, i.e. 90% are living with their first partner and 5% had a partner before.

## Is/was this your first partener/marriage you are living with



Only 2 men out of 224 started living with their wives before the age of 14, and just 1 woman started cohabitation before 14; in all these 3 cases (around 1% of the total sample) these are respondents from Kosovo between 40 and 49 years old (men) and

older than 50 (woman) **27,7% of men** and almost **50% of women** of our total sample started cohabitation in the **age between 14 and 18**. **63,4% of men** went to live with their wife between the **age of 18 and 24 years** old, while **44% of women** started cohabitation at the same age. **4% of women** against **7,5% of men** started cohabitation older than 24.

Woman Group	Younger than 14	14 - 18	18 -24	Older than 24
Ascalia	-	7	11	2
Bosnia Romni	-	1	2	-
Kosovo	1	25	13	2
Macedonia	-	25	26	1
Montenegro	-	3	4	-
Sinte	-	2	1	1
TOT	1	63	57	6
%	1,5%	49,6%	44,8%	4,7%

Man Group	Younger than 14	14 - 18	18 -24	Older than 24
Albanian Roma	-	-	6	4
Ascalia	-	5	45	6
Bosnian Roma	-	2	2	-
Kosovan Roma	2	25	32	2
Macedonian Roma	-	24	51	2
Sinti	-	4	7	3

TOT	2	60	143	17
%	0,8%	26,7%	63,8%	7,5%

AGE OF MARRIAGE OF <u>MEN</u>	NO EDUCATION	ELEMENTARY	UNCOMPLETED PRIMARY	PRIMARY	UNCOMPLETED SECONDARY	HIGH SCHOOL
<14	-	3	-	-	-	-
14 - 18	2	17	2	31	4	5
18 - 24	-	23	2	78	19	24
> 24	4	2		5	-	5

AGE OF MARRIAGE OF <u>WOMEN</u>	NO EDUCATION	ELEMENTARY	UNCOMPLETED PRIMARY	PRIMARY	UNCOMPLETED SECONDARY	HIGH SCHOOL
<14	-	-	-	1	-	-
14 - 18	6	25	5	22	-	-
18 - 24	4	25	9	18	-	-
> 24	-	4	-	-	-	-

Generally it is possible to confirm the assumption that the **level of education is closely related with the marital age**. In particular we need to point out that most of the parents of teenagers interviewed declared that they wanted their children to “set up properly” (e.g. finishing school and finding a job) before getting married. That was particularly declared in cases of teenager girls for whom their parents seemed to be against marriage with boys who do not conform to the latter standards.

When asked if finishing school and having a job was considered such an important parameter for the boys and the girls, most of the fathers of potential grooms in age of marriage, stressed that for the boys is more important, while mothers, almost in every case, wish for their daughters and their daughters in law to have job before starting a family.

Analyzing men's answer in reference to the age gap with their wives when they got married, in 5 cases women were slightly older than men, when the latter were between

14 and 18 years old. But when men declared to have married after 18, 25% of their wives were younger than them (14-18) while 36,6% were the same age; no wife was older than 18. Looking at the same question asked to women, just in 1 case a boy, younger than 14, married a girl older than 14. 53 % of girls between 14 and 18 years old married a boy of the same age; while 42% married a man between 18 and 24 years old. 44% of the women we interviewed married in the years from the 18th and the 24th ; in the 35% of cases they married with boys of the same age; surprisingly only 2% of them married a man older than 24 years old. 92% of women of our sample still live with their husband; 1,5% separated from their husband but still had spent with him at least 5 years. 88% of men still live with their first wife, 1,7% is widower and has not remarried. 1,7% of men has separated but had lived in their first marriage for more than 10 years, while 4,5% between 1 and 5 years.

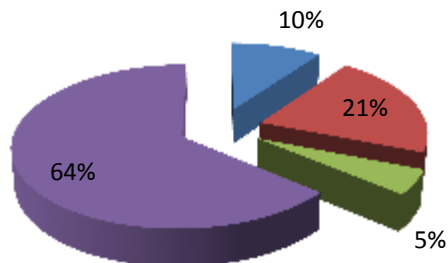
Just few cases remarried after divorce. Only 3,6% of men had a previous marriage before the current;  $\frac{3}{4}$  of these lasted for up from 1 to 5 years, all these are cases of men aged between 40 and 49 years old.  $\frac{1}{4}$  of the men who remarried have had a previous marriage which lasted from 5 to 10 years; the age of the latter men is between 40 and 49. On the side of women, 5,5% of them remarried. As in the case of men,  $\frac{3}{4}$  of first marriages of these women lasted less than 5 years, while  $\frac{1}{4}$  up 10 years. Also in case of women the second marriage, "short" marriages occurred in the age gap of 40-49, while "longer" first marriage occurred to people between 50 and 59 years old.

Nevertheless this data diverges in terms of men and women relating to the age of marrying: for what concerns women, in most of cases, the couple started to live together when the wife was between 14 and 18 years old. On the side of men, the unfortunate marriage started when the groom was between 18 and 24 years old. Further, it has to be noticed that, both in cases of female respondents and in cases of male respondents, there was always an age gap between the partners: in  $\frac{1}{4}$  of cases men were younger than their wives; in  $\frac{3}{4}$  the brides were very young, between 14 and 18 years old.

All the respondents have declared that sexual relation is strictly connected to marriage, no matter if they consider "marriage" "Signing papers in the municipality" (less than 3%); "Having a marriage ceremony in the community" (87,5%) or "Starting living together no matter if there was a ceremony or not (7%)". Nevertheless, sexual relation need to be followed by one of the options above for people to be considered married.

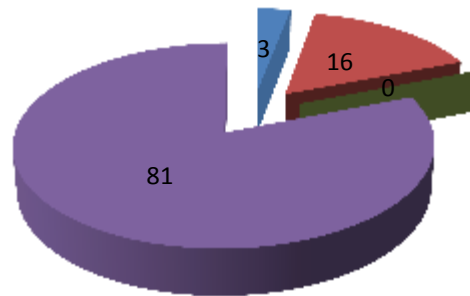
The strong and rather conservative community norms in terms of marriage can be seen also in the fact that 22,7% have not seen their partner before the marriage, 26,5% have seen each other once or just a couple of times, organized by their families/ community, 17% have seen each other for more than a month but it was all organized families/ community and just around 25 % have been dating on their own before the marriage (7,5% have seen each other once or just a couple of times on their own and 18% have seen each other for more than a month on their own).

**MARCO AND MARA ARE 14/15 THEY ARE IN LOVE AND THEY WANT TO HAVE SEX - WHAT SHALL THEY DO? - (men)**



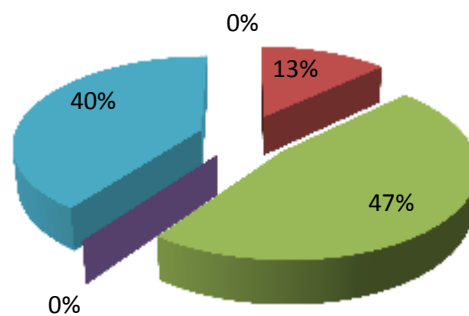
- ask their parents
- wait to be 18
- they can do it if they are in love
- they have to marry, so they marry

**MARCO AND MARA ARE 14/15 AND THEY ARE IN LOVE AND THEY WANT TO HAVE SEX- WHAT SHALL THEY DO? - (women)**



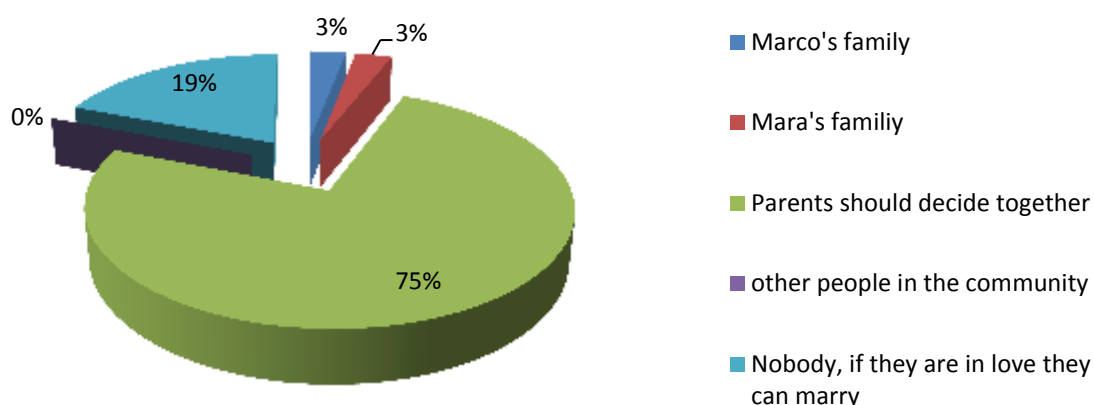
- ask their parents
- wait to be 18
- they can do it if they are in love
- they have to marry, so they marry

**WHO HAS TO GIVE THEM THE PERMISSION TO GET MARRIED?- (women)**



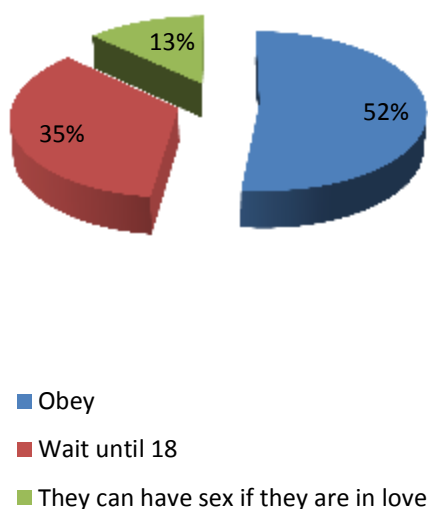
- Marco's family
- Mara's family
- Parents should decide together
- Other people in the community

WHO HAS TO GIVE THEM THE PERMISSION TO GET MARRIED? - (men)

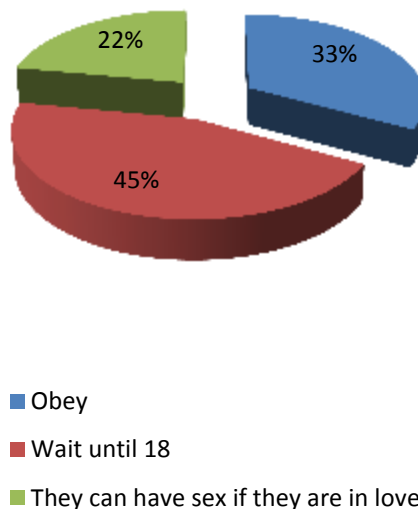


As we can see patriarchal tradition it is still strong, however, women seems to be more open to the idea of free choice of partner in marriage, as well as older people: in our sample there is seems to be a correlation between the older age and the possibility for people to tolerate marriages not approved by family. Almost every interviewed has stressed the importance of having the families (e.g. parents and grandparents of the couple) agreeing together; the only exception to this view is that of Sinti, who all agreed on the fact that it is entirely up to the boy and the girl if they want to get married: they still practice eloping.

WHAT SHOULD MARCO AND MARA DO IF THEIR PARENTS ARE AGAINST THEIR COHABITATION? - (women)



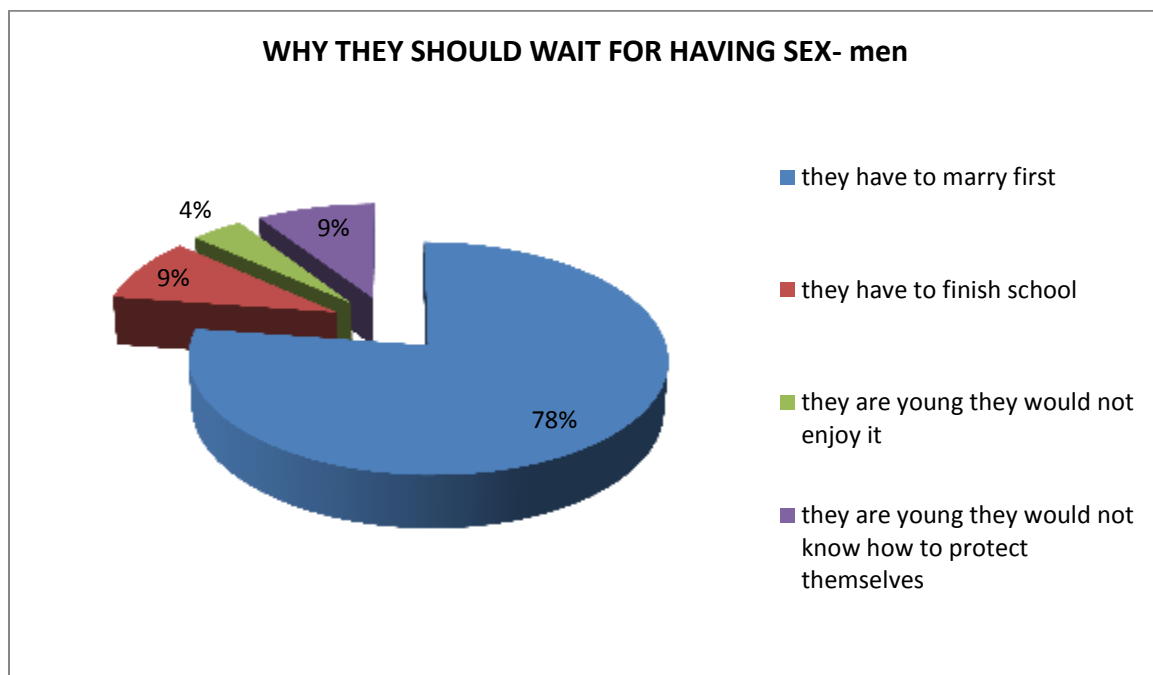
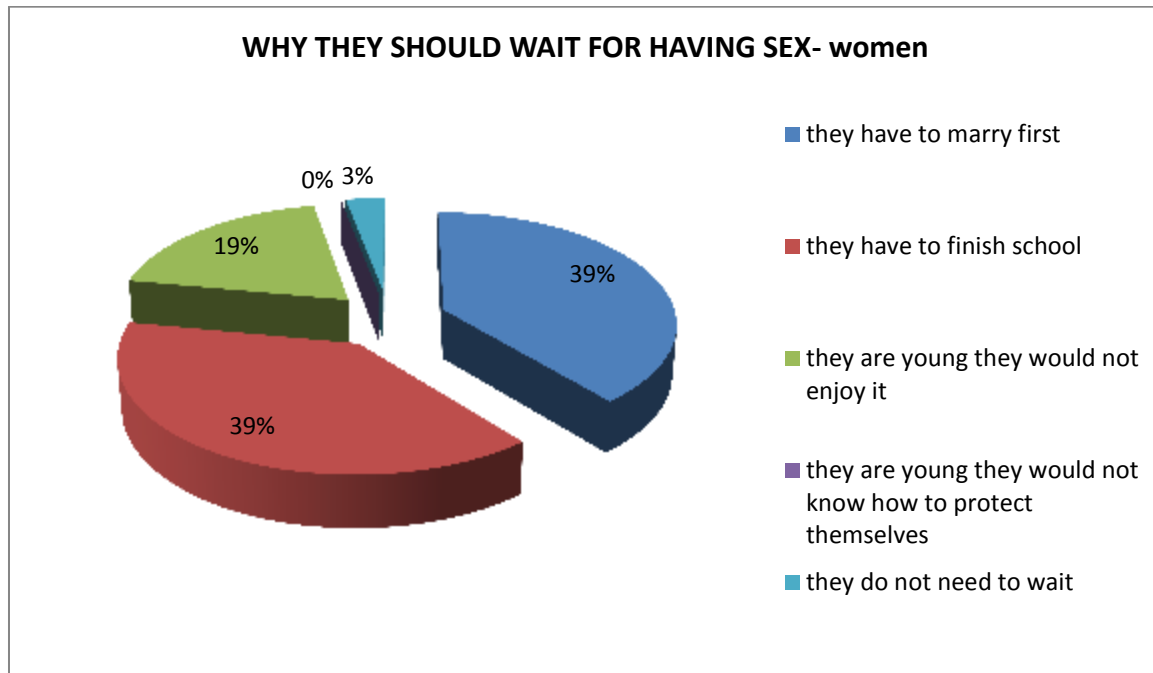
WHAT SHOULD MARCO AND MARA DO IF THEIR PARENTS ARE AGAINST THEIR COHABITATION? - (men)



Nobody has considered the alternatives: "They can make sex but Mara should keep the virginity proof; They can make sex but try to preserve Mara's virginity; Mara should try



to get pregnant in order to allow her to get married to Marco; or They can make sex but only using condoms.



Again women of our sample seemed to be more open than men to free choice after being 18; and they gave much more importance to the accomplishment of studies before starting a family.

Both women (89%) and men (88%) of our sample think that a girl pregnant at early age (14-15) should keep the child and marry the father of the baby. Slightly more women (11%) rather than men (8,5%) agree that a girl in that situation should tell her parents of the pregnancy and be taken to have an abortion. Therefore it is possible to affirm that an unwanted pregnancy can definitively become a reason for early marriage.

Even in the case where respondents chose the option of taking the girl to have an abortion, the widespread idea was that the family must be included in the matter, to support the girl and also to defend her honor.

For what concerns a girl that finds herself pregnant without her partner, women have opted for the possibility of keeping the baby and raise him/her as a single mother (67%); or ask to the mother or the grandmother to adopt the child (22%) ; or ask for help to her parents in order to get an abortion (6%).

On the men side: 27% opted for the girl to keep the baby and raise him/her as a single mother; 62% of men preferred the option of asking the mother or the grandmother to adopt the child; 8% for getting abortion helped by her parents.

Few people have pointed out that the girl should either follow the boy and his family abroad or wait for his return, but in any case they should be considered married.

The other options were not taken in any consideration by the respondents:

- To give birth to the baby but leave it for adoption
- To make an abortion secretly from her parents
- To get married to another man and lie to him that this is his child
- To give birth abroad and sell the baby to a woman that cannot have children

### ***CHILDREN AND FAMILY PLANNING.***

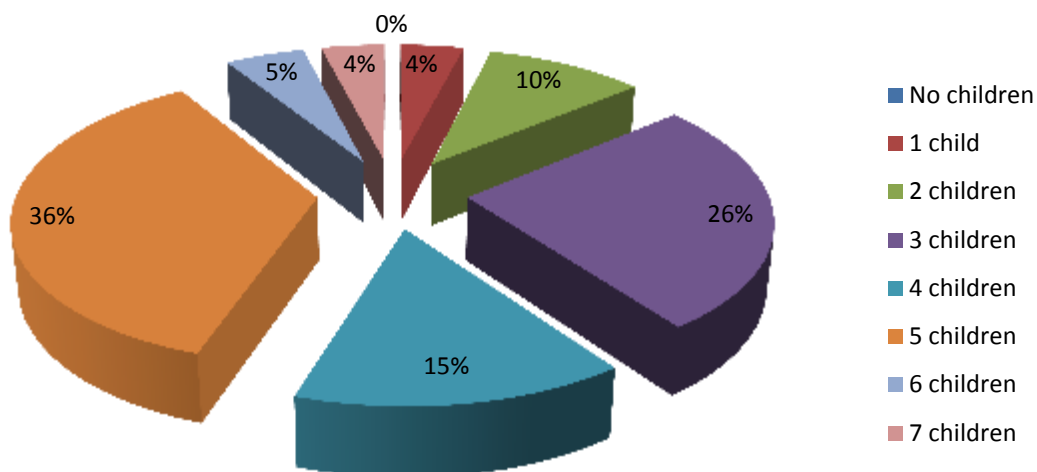
The results from the survey shows that the average number of children in a family is of 3,70. According to ISTAT<sup>59</sup> the general trend of birthrate of Italian women is of 1,30. For what concerns the families interviewed for our survey, the rate of children in Roma families is still very high. In order to understand if the number of children is decreasing we should compare this figures among generations, which is not possible by now.

As we will see forward, Roma youngster, and their parents, tend to start their families after having accomplished education and after having found a job, which means later than previous generations.

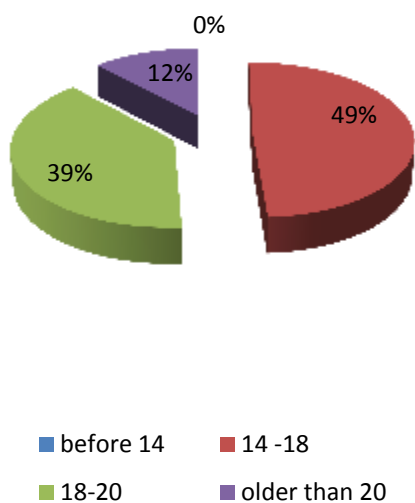
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<sup>59</sup> Istituto Nazionale di Statistica (National Institute for Statistics)

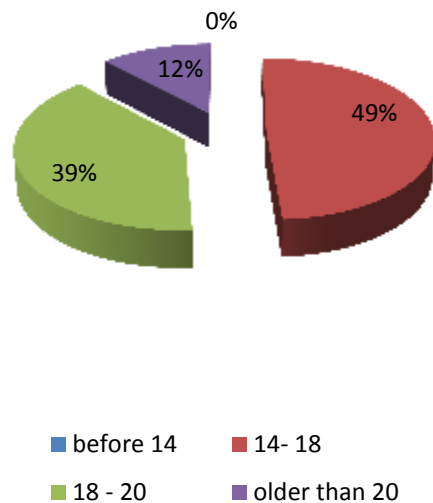
### NUMBER OF CHILDREN



### AGE OF FIRST CHILD- men



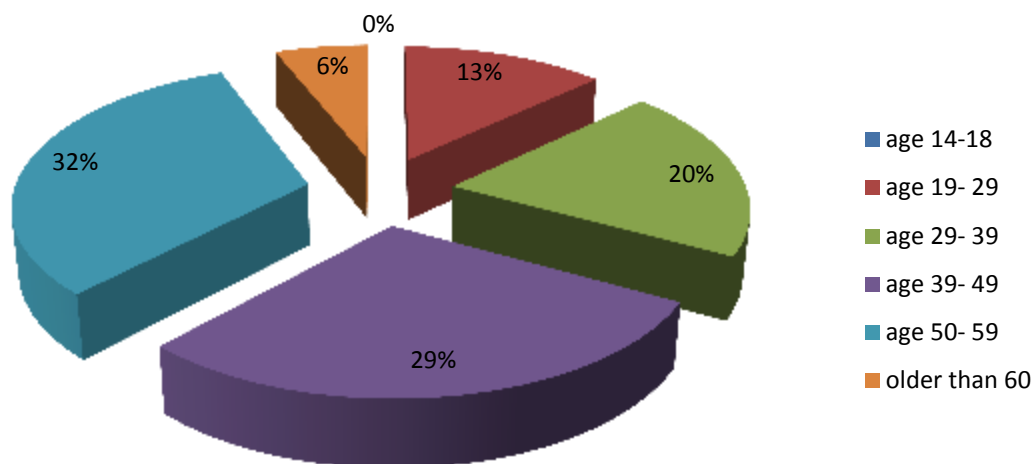
### AGE OF FIRST CHILD- women



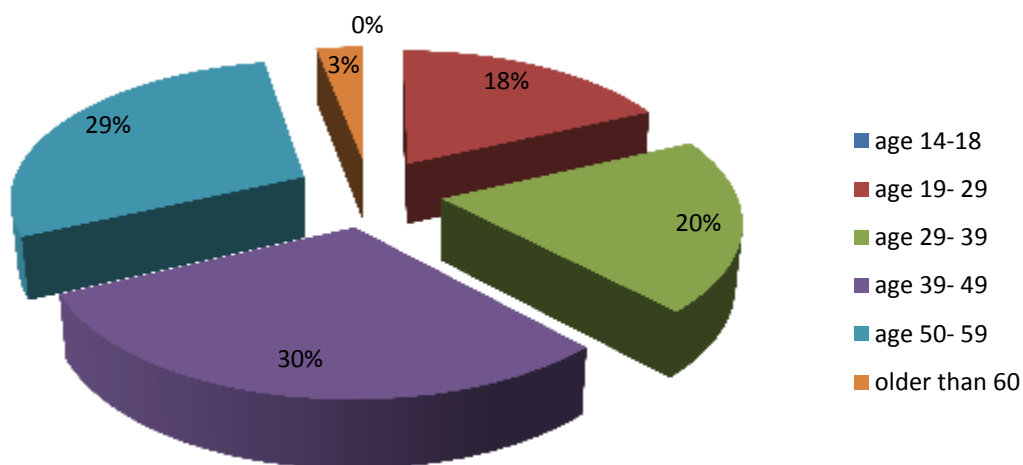
The average age of Italian population for having the first child is: 34,6 years for men and 30,8 for women<sup>60</sup>. In order to compare the former data with the sample of Roma population we have interviewed, we need to take into consideration, once again, the current age of respondents; that is to say that in order to define general trends of the population interviewed (see graphics below), the data regarding the age of first child needs to be combined with data on the current age of respondents.

<sup>60</sup>[http://demo.istat.it/altridati/IscrittiNascita/2004/T1.1\\_a.pdf](http://demo.istat.it/altridati/IscrittiNascita/2004/T1.1_a.pdf)

### AGE OF MALE RESPONDANTS



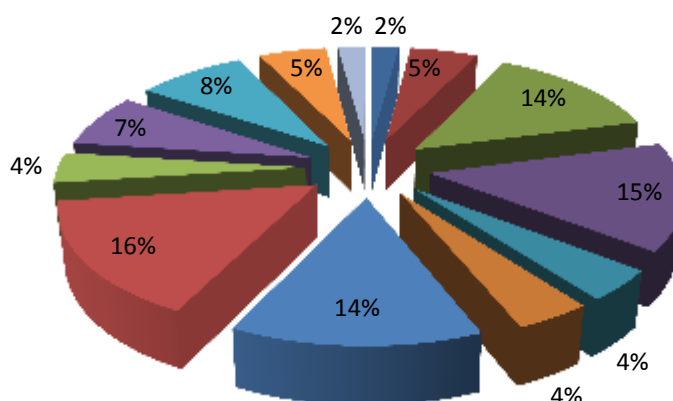
### AGE OF FEMALE RESPONDANTS



Taking into consideration that 79% of women and 81% of men interviewed are older than 29 years old, and that the figure about first child indicates that 49% of men and women had their first child in the age range of 14-18, it is possible to assume that the phenomenon of having children before 18 has been deeply rooted in the past, it has been wide spread within generations from the rage "older than 60" downward, slightly decreasing to the generations that are currently in the range age of 19-29.

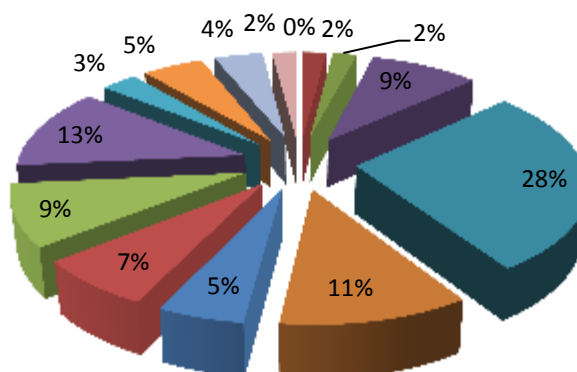
### AGE OF FIRST GRANDCHILD- men

■ 33 years old ■ 35 years old ■ 36 years old ■ 37 years old  
 ■ 38 years old ■ 39 years old ■ 40 years old ■ 41 years old  
 ■ 42 years old ■ 43 years old ■ 44 years old ■ 45 years old  
 ■ 46 years old



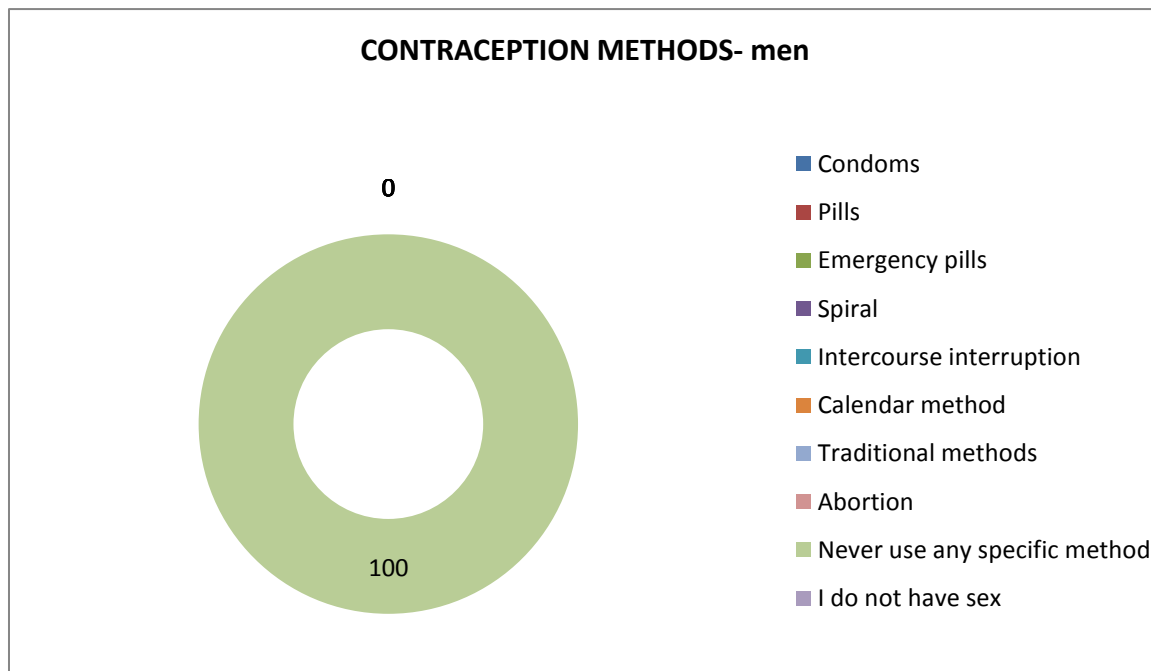
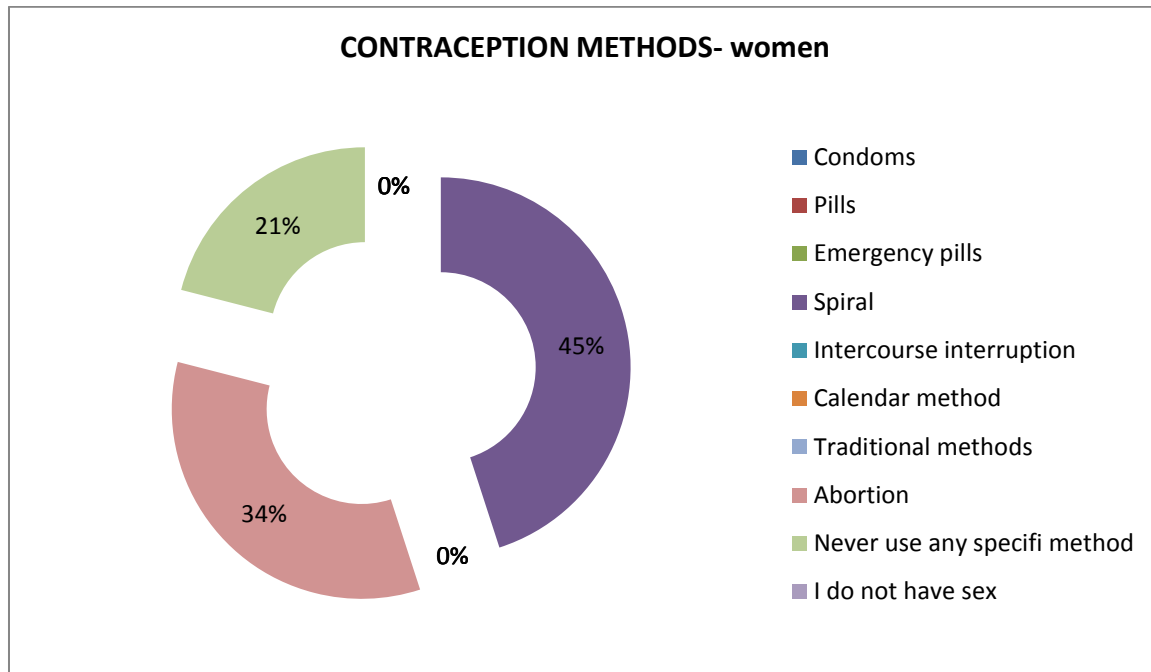
### AGE OF FIRST GRANDCHILD- women

■ 33 years old ■ 34 years old ■ 35 years old ■ 36 years old ■ 37 years old  
 ■ 38 years old ■ 39 years old ■ 40 years old ■ 41 years old ■ 42 years old  
 ■ 43 years old ■ 44 years old ■ 45 years old ■ 46 years old



The totality of men declared of not using any particular contraception method. When they were asked why, the majority said that children are a blessing, therefore the family and the community are happy with every new birth. This thought is widespread and largely endorsed by women as well. Concerning men, it is however possible that the reason of this uniformity in the answers is due to the idea that this is a matter for women. On the other side, interviewing young women, often at their first or second pregnancy, the general impression is that they tend to expect their husbands to “take care” of the contraception method, and that they would accept any decision about it. In

the case of older women, married for longer and with older children (e.g. from 6 years old on), contraception seemed to be a very well know matter, of which they themselves take care of. They are generally well informed and refer to medical staff to get help and information about it.



100% of men said generally that they do not use any contraception method. 6,3% of them think that using contraception methods is against tradition, in comparison with 5% of women. 0,8% of men said that they do not use it because of their culture and 4% of women think it is up to the fate. 39% of men said that they do not need it, without specifying why. 23,5% of women said that it is a decision of the husband, while almost 50% said that it was a shared decision. 1,3% of men said that it is against religion;



another 1,3% of men specified that they started using pills or spiral after the third child. 1,3% men do not think it is important. 1,3% people affirmed that they do not use any contraception because they like having many children.

To the question “Where you should get information about contraception” 6,7% of men said that they got information from friends. School seems to be the place where most of the men of our sample got information about contraception (56,8%); nevertheless, many of them (29%) got information from medical staff. 67% of men and 43% of women heard of contraception on television. 37% of women got information at school but everyone has talked about it with their doctor. This is highly likely because in Italy it is compulsory to have a medical prescription for most of contraception. 4,7% of women said that they found information on the internet. Only one woman said that she was told by her husband.

12,5% of women declared of having had abortion, of these around 50% had one abortion, while 42% had two and 8% had 3 abortion. On the contrary 23,6% of men said that their wives had an abortion: only once (11%); twice (almost 10%) or three times (0,8%). 6,5% of men told to have had a spontaneous abortion, while 30% of women said that they had a miscarriage. Only 6% of the interviewed felt to answer the question about the age of their (or their wife's) age at first abortion<sup>61</sup>. Considering women and wives of men interviewed who had an abortion, it is possible to affirm that miscarriage occurred, in most of cases, when women were just married. In general, talking to women many have expressed the feeling that abortion is not tolerated when there are no children, or just few children in a family; however, people have shown a softer attitude when taking into consideration women with “enough” children.

## VALUES

	WOMEN			MEN		
	YES	NO	I DON'T KNOW	YES	NO	I DON'T KNOW
a) Marriage is out of date	33%	67%	-	85,7%	11%	-
b) People who have not get married have the right to live together if they want to	67%	33%	-	100%	-	-
c) Marriage is a life commitment and cannot	56%	44%	-	49,5%	50,4%	-

<sup>61</sup> Only 23 people answered this question:

4 people were between 14 and 16 years old at the time of their first abortion;

5 were between 16 and 18 years old

14 people were older than 20

be broken						
d) It is the parents who should arrange the marriage of their children	56%	44%	-	36%	63%	-
e) The girl should get married at the earliest possible age in order to preserve her purity	33%	67%	-	20%	80%	-
f) People who are not happy with their marriage have the right to get divorced	89%	11%	-	100%	-	-
g)The woman has to have children in order to be a real woman	33%	67%	-	50,4%	48,2%	1%
h)The man has to have children in order to be a real man	44%	56%	-	55%	45%	-
i) In order for the child to be happy, it needs to be raised together with his mother and father	100%	-	-	100%	-	-
j)A woman can have a baby even if she is not married (to be a single mother)	11%	78%	11%	19%	79%	1,3%
k)When children become 18 - 20 they have to start living independently from their parents	78%	22%	-	91%	6%	3%
l) A mother who works can have the same warm and giving relation with her child as the mother who does not work	100%	-	-	100%	-	-
m)It is more appropriate for the mother to take care of the child herself instead of sending it to a kindergarten	44%	56%	-	32%	67%	
n)Older children should take care of the younger	56%	44%	-	100%	-	-
o) A boy/a girl should first finish school and then	100%	-	-	98,3%	1,7%	-

start a family						
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	WOMEN			MEN		
	YES	NO	I DON'T KNOW	YES	NO	I DON'T KNOW
a) An abortion if the woman is under 16	11%	78%	11%	18%	75%	4%
b) An abortion when the woman is married and already has children	33%	67%	-	50,4%	48,2%	1,3%
c) An abortion if the baby is of a man she does not love?	11%	67%	22%	72%	28%	-
d) A woman having a relation with another man than her husband	11%	78%	-	13%	84%	-
e) A man having a relation with other woman then his wife	11%	78%	11%	14%	83%	2,6%
f) A woman and a man living together as a couple without being married	44%	56%	-	93%	6%	1%
g) Divorce	78%	22%	-	100%	-	-
h) A single woman to give birth to a child and raise it alone	22%	67%	11	25%	75%	-
i) Sexual relations before the age of 14	-	100%	-	5%	90%	5%
j) Sexual relations before the age of 18	44%	56%	-	61%	37%	2%
k) Sexual relations before marriage	11%	89%	-	41%	57%	2%
l) Prostitution	-	100%	-	3,5%	96,5%	-
m) the parents have to decide whom their child should get married	50%	50%	-	32%	67%	-
n) The girl should elope if	44%	56%	-	51%	49%	-

she doesn't love the man she has to marry with?						
o) The parents should ask for money from the groom's side if their daughter is a virgin before the marriage	33%	67%	-	70%	30%	-
p) The girl and the boy should elope if they do not have the permission of their parents	22%	78%	-	49%	51%	-
q) The girls and the boy should elope if the boy's parents do not have the money asked from the girl's parents	22%	78%	-	43%	56%	1%

Answers to these questions are related to many concepts as: marriage and family, early marriage and womanliness/ manhood.

### On marriage

85% of men and 33% of women affirmed that **"marriage is out of date"**; when asked to explain this position, most of people said that in their culture is not so important to register officially a marriage to public institution, what really counts is to be considered married by the community. The couple can make their union official later, often when they are asked to provide specific documentation for children.

It has been asked if **"People who have not get married have the right to live together if they want to"**; all the men answered that they agree with this assumption, and 67% of women agreed. It is important to underline that couples living together are considered "married" by the community. On the contrary, in the mirror question, 56% of women report to be against cohabitation outside marriage, while men mainly confirmed their previous answer.

Opinions about marriage being a life commitment are disparate: women seems to be more convinced of this assumption (56%), while men are split. However, when asking if **"People who are not happy with their marriage have the right to get divorced"** the totality of men and the majority of women agrees.

Opinion about if **"The girl should elope if she doesn't love the man she has to marry with?"** are differentiated both among men and women, nevertheless women tend to think that a girl should not elope (56%), while men seems to be more open to that solution (51%). Women tend to think that when the opinion of parents is clear, boys and girls should not disobey: only 22% of women, against 49% of men stated that **"The girl and the boy should elope if they do not have the permission of their parents"**.

### On combined marriage and early marriage

On combined marriage, women again seem to be more open to it (56%) in respect of men (36%). From this data it is possible to affirm that, in our sample, women are favorable or, at least, inclined to accept a spouse chosen by parents; on the contrary men are generally against this practice (63%). This trend is confirmed by the “mirror question” **“the parents have to decide whom their child should get married”**, where 50% of women and 67% of men disagrees.

Purity seems to be a very important matter for the sample of people interviewed, any way, the statement that **“The girl should get married at the earliest possible age in order to preserve her purity”** is no longer shared by the majority: 80% of men and 67% of women, do not consider early marriage as the only valid mean to protect purity. However there is a considerable gender gap that sees 33% of women favorable to early marriage. This data should be taken into account when considering how to approach the issue of early marriage.

Virginity is no longer considered by 67% of women as a reason to ask the groom’s family for money, on the contrary 70% of men states that is legitimate for the family of the girl asking for money in case she is still a virgin. Accordingly to what we have seen before, 78% of women think that the young couple should not elope if the parents of the boy cannot afford the price asked by the family of the bride. 43% of men agree with the statement **“The girl and the boy should elope if the boy’s parents do not have the money asked from the girl’s parents”**, 56% disagree.

#### On definition of womanliness and manhood

Having children seems to be an important aspect that defines womanliness and manhood (**The woman has to have children in order to be a real woman / The man has to have children in order to be a real man**). In particular we can see that women consider having children even more important for men than women (44% against 33%). This assumption is confirmed by men as well: 50,4% thinks that women must have children to be considered real women, and 55% believes that real men have children.

#### On Family

There is a strong conviction that children must be raised together by the mother and the father and also that a **“A mother who works can have the same warm and giving relation with her child as the mother who does not work”**. 67% of men and 56% of women do not see as **“more appropriate for the mother to take care of the child herself instead of sending it to a kindergarten”**.

There is a widespread agreement also on the idea that **“A boy/a girl should first finish school and then start a family”**. As we have seen interviewing people, even generations which have not observed this principle are nowadays convinced that young generations should “settle down” before having children. Nevertheless, the majority of people (78% of women and 91% of men) think that **“When children become 18 – 20 they have to start living independently from their parents”**.

It interesting to see how women are split on the assumption that older siblings should take care of younger, while men seems to be concordant on it.

Regarding the case for a woman of having a child as a single mother, 11% of women (against 1,3% of men) said that they do not know. The mirror question, confirm that the



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majority of men and women are not favorable to this option. Moreover, considering the story of Mara and Marco, many have suggested that the child of the single mother could be adopted by her mother or the grandmother.

Abortion seems to be avoided by most of respondents. It seems to be slightly more tolerated by women when they already have children; in cases when the girl is under 16, 11% of women said that they would not know if abortion is a good answer, while 22% do not know what to do if the baby is from a man whom they are not in love with.

Slightly more men, on the other hand, consider abortion “legitimate” in the case of married women who already have children (50%) as well as women having an abortion if the baby is from a man whom they are not in love with. Majority of men (75%) are against abortion when a girl is under 16.

Adultery is not admitted by most of people interviewed (78% of women and 84% of men); however 11% of women said that they do not know if it is right or not when men have an extramarital relationship.

#### On sexual freedom

The totality of woman and 90% of men declared to be against “**Sexual relations before the age of 14**”; sex before the age of 18 is seen differently between men and women: 56% of women are against, while only 37% of men are of the same opinion.

Regarding “**Sexual relations before marriage**” 89% of women disagree; opinions of men are more divided: 41% are in favor and 57% are against.

Prostitution is condemned by both men (96,5%) and women (100%).

#### **CONCLUSION**

Through this journey among different generations and various origin of Roma groups, this brief report has highlighted a number of issues that seems to be developing in new cultural routes. Firstly, there is a clear pattern of young people living in apartments as nuclear families. Many people has considered to marry officially later than traditionally mainly because they have developed knowledge about Italian welfare and of its categorization; that is to say that Roma who have been in Florence since the 80's have changed some of their habits in order to get benefits. On the other side, their tradition has slightly changed accordingly. Slowly in few generations, young people who have been attending school in Florence have got closer to their Italian counterpart. It is important to underline that this process has been underpinned by parents, who often see the accomplishment of education and/or employment as a priority. Accordingly, we have seen that the level of education is closely related with the marital age. In particular, women have stressed the importance for their daughters and their daughters in law to have job before starting having children.

To what concern freedom of choosing one 'own spouse, we have seen that the opinion of the family is still highly considered, but also that older people seems to be more inclined to accept a “marriage for love” than once.



## MAIN CONCLUSIONS

Early/arranged/forced marriages still exist among many Roma people today although they can be less and less considered a “Roma” tradition. The problem exists to a different extent among different Roma groups and social strata in the different regions and in the different countries: early marriages are not characteristic for all Roma communities in the three partner countries! In addition, there is a clear trend for overcoming early marriages, which takes place together with the process of modernization of the community. This trend is common for the three countries: Slovenia, Bulgaria and Italy.

At the same time family and marital attitudes of Roma in Slovenia, Bulgaria and Italy are presently characterised by several main trends:

1. **The age of early cohabitation and marriage is being raised:** the Roma that reject early cohabitation (under the age of 16) are now much more than those who accept it. The percentage of the Roma, for whom cohabitation under the age of 14 is acceptable, is very small as this age is not considered appropriate.

2. **Education proves to be the most important factor, influencing the raised age of early cohabitation:** the higher the education level is, the later the family is created.

Other important factors are the **economic status** and the **living conditions**: poor Roma people and those living in bad conditions create families earlier.

3. **It is becoming a more common trend for the family to be created by the young people, not by the parents:** the idea that the parents should decide who their children will marry is becoming increasingly unacceptable. However, still around one third of the respondents approve it, which is an evidence of the patriarchal mentality still living in a considerable part of the Roma community.

The practice of the girl to run away with the boy if the parents do not give their consent may be defined today as acceptable. The payment of dowry today is widely disapproved by the Roma even when the girl is virgin: in this respect there is a substantial difference between the Roma groups and the different countries, as in some of them this practice is still very common.

4. **Today simple family households unquestionably prevail over extended families:** similarly to the majority population of the given countries, today the Roma live in a nuclear, not extended family, as was the case not so long ago.

5. **There is a trend of overcoming the traditional family and marital attitudes and acceptance of modern ones:** this has been confirmed by all major trends, described above. The Roma community is on the way from patriarchy to modernity, and still large strata of it have traditional family attitudes but the share of Roma people with more liberal and modern attitudes is increasing and is already prevailing.