

HONOUR RELATED VIOLENCE

Summary report

Main findings from a nationally representative survey among the Bulgarian population



Commissioned by: Center for Sustainable Communities Development

Conducted by: Association „Korektivi“

July 2020

The current summary report is part of the *National representative study of the population on the basis of face-to-face interviews and in-depth interviews among experts* under the project ACF/13 „Social and legal action to combat honor related abuse“ implemented with the financial support submitted by Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway under the EEA Financial Mechanism 2014-2021 under the Active Citizens Fund. The entire responsibility for the content of the document lies with the Center for Sustainable Communities Development and under no circumstances can be assumed that this document reflects the official opinion of the EEA FM and the Operator Active Citizens Fund Bulgaria.

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I. MAIN CHARACTERISTICS OF THE STUDY

1. Goals of the study

As part of the activities under the project ACF/13 „Social and legal action to combat honour related abuse“, implemented under the “Active Citizens” Fund of the Financial mechanism of the EEA 2014-2021 Center for Sustainable Communities Development commissioned Association “Korektivi” to conduct a nationally representative study of the population on the basis of face-to-face interviews and in-depth interviews with experts.

The current summary sums up the findings from the nationally representative survey among the Bulgarian population aged 16 or older.

The main goals of the nationally representative survey are the following:

- To **establish what the public attitudes in Bulgaria are** towards honour-related violence, including early forced marriages;
- To **outline vulnerable social groups and risk factors in the spread** of honour-related abuses in the country;
- To **ascertain how widespread the different forms of honour-related violence are in the country** as well as to **describe the socio-demographic profile of the groups most at risk** of such forms of violence;
- To probe into the **public attitudes towards potential reporting** of honour-related violence acts to the institutions in charge

2. Characteristics of the nationally representative survey and sample structure

1) Characteristics of the survey

| | |
|-----------------------------|---|
| Commissioned by | Center for Sustainable Communities Development |
| Conducted by | Association „Korektivi“ |
| Methodology | Nationally representative quantitative survey with a booster sample with people of Bulgarian, Turkish, Roma and Armenian ethnicity and of Jewish origin |
| Fieldwork period | 13 th June – 3 rd July 2020 |
| Representative for | The Bulgarian population aged 16 y.o. or above |
| Sample size | N=1007 |
| Sampling methodology | Two-stage stratified sample |
| Interviewing method | Face-to-face |

2) Sample structure

The sample has the following structure:

| Type of settlement | Col % | Education | Col % |
|---------------------------------------|--------------|--|--------------|
| Sofia (capital city) | 21% | University | 22% |
| Regional administrative centre | 39% | High school | 47% |
| Small town | 17% | Primary or lower | 31% |
| Village | 23% | Ethnicity | Col % |
| Age group | Col % | Bulgarian | 79% |
| 16 – 30 y.o. | 25% | Turkish | 5% |
| 31 – 40 y.o. | 15% | Roma | 10% |
| 41 – 50 y.o. | 15% | Armenian | 4% |
| 51 – 60 y.o. | 17% | Jewish | 3% |
| 60+ y.o. | 27% | Household income divided between the HH members | Col % |
| Gender | Col % | Below 300 BGN | 20% |
| Male | 47% | 301 – 500 BGN | 32% |
| Female | 53% | 501 – 800 BGN | 27% |
| | | 801 – 1000 BGN | 12% |
| | | Above 1000 BGN | 8% |

Проектът "Противодействие на злоупотребите в името на честта в социален и правен аспект" се изпълнява с финансова подкрепа, предоставена от Исландия, Лихтенщайн и Норвегия по линия на Финансовия механизъм на ЕИП.
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II. MAIN FINDINGS FROM THE NATIONALLY REPRESENTATIVE SURVEY AMONG THE BULGARIAN POPULATION

1. Impact of traditions and moral norms on individual behaviour. Organisation of family life and decision making

- **IMPACT OF TRADITIONS AND COMMUNAL MORAL NORMS ON INDIVIDUAL BEHAVIOUR** is much stronger among the ethnic groups that are different from the Bulgarian – Turkish, Roma, Armenian and Jewish. With the increase in age and decrease in educational level attained there is a larger share of people for whom communal traditions are crucially defining for their behaviour.
- **ORGANISATION OF FAMILY LIFE AND DECISION MAKING** – co-habitation of several generations in the same dwelling, division by gender of domestic chores and preservation of the “good” family name by all means are much more common among the Roma and the Turks in the country and among people of low financial means and education. Taking all important decisions concerning the family by a single person is more widespread among the Roma and low-educated people of scarce income. The most vulnerable in terms of organisation of family life are those people who strictly adhere to their roles and duties in the family and are unaware of their rights as citizens.
- **CHOICE OF MARITAL PARTNER AND REACTION IN CRISIS SITUATIONS (FROM A PERSPECTIVE OF FAMILY LIFE)** – we can find a much stronger correlation between the way the future marital partner has been chosen and potential exercising of honour-related violence or early marriages (especially if the marital partner is the sole

choice of parents). Such is the stance of 1.9% of the respondents. This position has been much more shared by the Roma and the Turks. The low educational status is again a leading factor in such views. However, the income levels are not a determining driver. Those who follow strictly family and communal traditions are more vulnerable when it comes to how the marital partner is chosen. Moreover, the survey tracks gender inequality in the fact what reactions are perceived as normal by men and women in case of infidelity. More frequently, such positions of inequality are shared by people of Roma origin.

- **Relationships in the family are an indirect indicator that can help us ascertain which social groups are most at risk for acts of honour-related violence and in particular, its most widespread form in Bulgaria - early marriages. The groups that most strictly abide by traditions and allow them to determine their individual behaviour are the ethnic groups different from the Bulgarian – Roma, Turkish, Armenian and Jewish. When it comes to indicators with a focus on different forms of inequality, the group where such an unfair attitude is present are the Roma. Other demographic groups at risk are those with low income and of low educational status. It comes as no surprise that it is the older generations that more frequently stick to traditions and try to transmit them to future generations.**

2. Level of information and spread of forms of honour-related violence in close family circle. Risk factors for honour-related violence

- **The results from the nationally representative survey confirm the observations made by experts in the course of the conducted in-depth interviews that the most "problematic" form of honour-related violence in Bulgaria are early forced marriages. The share**

of citizens who believe that early marriages are spread in the country is 89%; 13% have come across an early marriage in their family or other families they know. 1.4% of the population have fallen victim to early marriages before they had turned 16 y.o. That is why, it is of crucial importance to shed light on the issue concerning early marriages and their forced character. In addition, preventive measures should be taken among the most vulnerable groups – people of Roma ethnicity, minors below 16 y.o., people having low-educational levels or those tightly connected with traditions and rights of the community.

- **Between half a percent and 13% of the Bulgarian population confess that they know about forms of honour-related violence in their own family or other families they keep in touch with.** The most widespread is the most fluid form of violence – restrictions of social contacts with friends, relatives and others done as a preventive measure to avoid the risk that someone might tarnish family honour (stated by 13% of the Bulgarians). Respectively, the least common are the most hurtful forms of violence which are characterised by extreme cruelty like murder attempts, acid attacks due to tarnished family honour or female genital mutilation.
- **The survey has found out that a combination of risk factors foster honour-related violence acts. These are the low educational level of the victim, marginalisation of the social group combined with adherence to extremely traditional way of life.** As these factors do not come into play separately, measures aiming prevention and tackling of honour-related violence should be simultaneously directed at overcoming all these agents. Part of these risk components are related to nurtured deep motivations and socio-cultural traditions. For this reason, their change over time would be very slow and would require a lot of efforts.

- **The social groups that are most at risk to fall victim to honour-related violence are minors, people of Roma and Turkish origin, people of insufficient financial means and with almost no educational background. Another vulnerable group are the representatives of marginalised communities who adhere to extremely traditional way of life.** Therefore, targeted work with minors is needed to prevent or at least reduce the acts of sexual violence and early marriages that they may succumb to. The data from the current survey show that an equal share of boys and girls become victims of early marriages.
- **As violence in general (and honour-related violence in particular) is not tolerated by citizens, the majority of the Bulgarian population (93%) consider honour-related acts to be inadmissible forms of cruelty that cannot be justified by any arguments.** Bulgarian citizens are much more ambivalent in their evaluation of early marriages. Some people realize their destructive impact on future social chances of the individual. Other people, however, regard early marriages as a crucial element of cultural traditions of certain communities. Therefore, for them early marriages should be accepted by the society. The lack of unanimous position and understanding of early marriages both among experts and the general public may pose a significant problem in the fight against honour-related violence. In fact, it may hinder public awareness campaigns on the nature of the phenomenon.
- Between 3% and 4% of Bulgarian citizens declare that they would exercise an act that is in reality some form of honour-related violence in order to protect the family's reputation. On the other hand, 12% have imposed restrictions or prohibitions in situations in which they believed that the family's good name had been threatened.

3. Public attitudes to reporting honour-related violence

- **Although early and forced marriages are almost identical in nature, a different share of Bulgarians would react if they are familiar with a case of an early (26%) and forced marriage (21%).** The fact that the marriage may be forced is less alarming than an early marriage for the respondents, as if it concerns an adult, marriage in general is a personal matter, where the individual is responsible for their own actions. Another argument for non-interference is the position that issues like early marriages are typical of specific socio-cultural traditions and relationships in certain communities in Bulgaria.
- **The emergency telephone number (112) and the police are the institutions in whom citizens have the highest level of trust and to whom would direct a report concerning a situation of honour-related violence.** 54% and 61%, respectively, would alert the police or call the emergency telephone number. This means that a public awareness campaign on honour-related violence must necessarily entail police officers. In such a way these experts on field may further learn to identify correctly signs of honour-related violence and would acquire the skills to communicate efficiently about the problem with the victim and other stakeholders.
- If they become victim to honour-related violence, **41% of the population in the country would share this information with a relative whom they trust vs. 37% of the citizens who would alert the police. The high share of people willing to confess about the cruelty with relatives is a manifestation that people misunderstand the nature of such acts of honour-related violence.** This form of violence is generally committed by family members. Thus, sharing with a close relative may further aggravate the

problem. That is why, information campaigns are extreme vital to raise awareness about the social groups most at risk, explain about the nature of this type of violence and educate citizens where they can signal if they fall victim to honour-related violence.