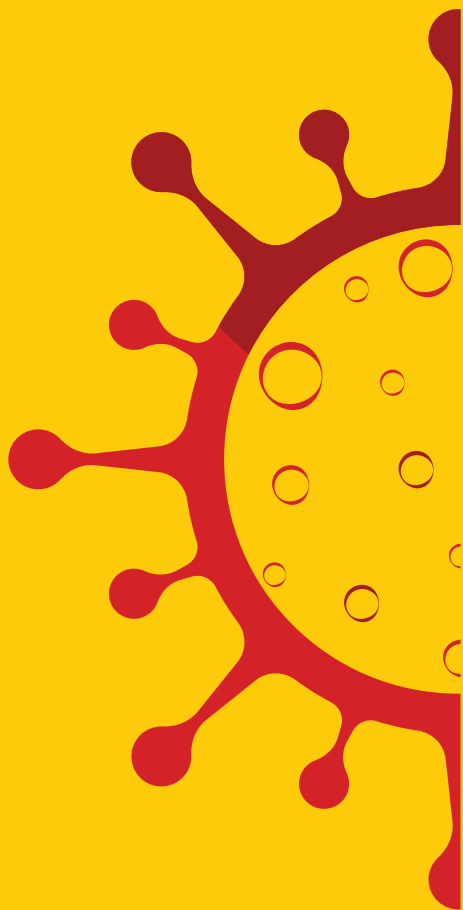
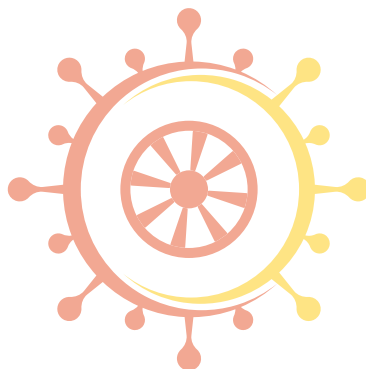




ROMA INTEGRATION
Regional Cooperation Council



**THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC IMPACT OF
COVID-19 ON ROMA
IN THE WESTERN BALKANS**



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** This designation is without prejudice to positions on status and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.*

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1. INTRODUCTION

Since the Covid-19 pandemic was declared in March 2020, many economies had to adjust to the new reality by introducing specific measures and recovery plans for the upcoming years. The spread of the ongoing Covid-19 caused unforeseen affairs for governments, businesses, and ordinary people, and in relatively short time brought to the surface many inefficiencies of the hierarchies and human-made systems. This made the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic multidimensional and far reaching. Health crisis, coupled with the ongoing economic and climate crises, generates high complexity, uncertainty, and unpredictability in our societies. Accordingly, the subsequent policy-making thinking is in a search for effective models of integration and coordination of social, economic, and environmental policies and strategies.

We are all witnessing vast transformations of practically every single area of governmental, economic, social, and cultural policy landscapes. The measures against the Covid-19 pandemic have hastily reduced the economic opportunities and social interactions at local, national, and international levels. Economic production and trade distribution channels are disrupted, as well the public and private services which, after being temporary stopped, have introduced conditions that have additionally hindered citizens' access. The immediate concerns of many people generated massive entanglement regarding the future of work, income, schooling, health, and all fundamentals needed for decent life. These are legitimate concerns given that in a short time the unemployment and social exclusion forces pushed many people into poverty. On the other side, many governments, institutions, and scientists hold real concerns that most of the large-scale effects may last longer in our societies if the percentage of vaccinated citizens worldwide remains below 40%. The tensions between institutional and ordinary people's concerns brought back the need for strong and all-encompassing policies. More than ever the world needs global leadership and efficient multilateral cooperation to remedy the ongoing health, economic and climate crisis.

The Western Balkan has been similarly exposed to the pandemic with the legacy of the previous predicament and challenges characteristic for developing economies. As such, due to lesser economic capacities, the Western Balkan has been more vulnerable to the detrimental unforeseen challenges while addressing restrictive measures against Covid-19. All Western Balkan economies have experienced a significant decline in 2020, followed by increased unemployment rates, and full or temporary closure of businesses and services. The governments have introduced several measures supposed to stimulate businesses and support socially disadvantaged groups. Nevertheless, these measures did not or could not sufficiently support citizens active in informal economy or those out of the unemployment records. Knowing that Roma¹

¹ The term "Roma" within the action is used in line with the EU terminology, as an umbrella term which includes groups of people who have more or less similar cultural characteristics, such as Roma, Ashkali, Egyptians, Dom, Lom, Sinti, Travellers, Kalé, Gens du voyage, etc., whether sedentary or not.

are highly present in informal economy, consequently being ineligible for government support, it is very likely that deprived groups of Roma suffered most due to no income opportunities nor support from the government programmes.

The consequences of Covid-19 pandemic have been studied in different sectors, in different geographical regions and from different perspectives. This survey is the first one designed to measure the socio-economic impact of Covid-19 on Roma in the Western Balkan economies and as such shares the same purpose with mainstream studies and research – to advise future policy-making decisions and design measures related to Roma integration strategies. The survey is an opinion-based data collection of Roma perceptions about the effects of Covid-19 measures in education, employment, health, and housing.

The socio-economic status is a composite measure of an individual or community's social and economic position in relation to the others in society. It is often measured as a combination of education, income (wealth) and occupation, to which geographic and gender are considered as additional factors of influence to the quality of people's lives. Surveys of socio-economic status regularly make known disproportions in access to resources, including topics related to privilege, power, and control. By the same token, it is very important to consider the existence of previous inequalities and drivers of social exclusion/poverty in the region, institutional capabilities for recovering from the ongoing health and economic crisis, including the current stagnation of the EU accession processes. These are critical mainstream factors that need to be considered in the future policy plans for Roma integration. For example, austerity measures, funding cuts for social programmes, higher prices, and different forms of discrimination have been seen before the pandemic. When considering previous policy initiatives for Roma and ongoing Covid-19 crisis, the overall enquiry should look at how the pandemic is going to impact Roma communities and what must be done/changed in the future policy design.



2. METHODOLOGY

This analysis uses quantitative method which promotes a wide range of outreach and representation of the target community. Taking into consideration the large regional coverage, the sample of 3,000 respondents equally matches the sampling size, which was complemented with other forms of data and information gathering such as discussions and interviews with representatives of target community and other stakeholders.

2.1 Survey

For the purposes of this analysis, data collection was performed through the CAPI (Computer Assisted Personal Interview) method. The system used pre-selected municipalities (communes) as the first step in selecting respondents. Anytime a representative of Roma origin was approached, a screening questionnaire was used to determine whether the respondent was eligible for the sample requirements. Once the criteria were met, the interview took place. Field research was conducted from April to May 2021.

2.2 Sampling distribution

Sample distribution for the analysis has been based on official data from EU enlargement region (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo*, Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Serbia). The following tables show the proportion of Roma population in each respective economy based on the official available data. Based on these data, the interviews per each economy have been projected through the following demographics:

- a. Economy
- b. Location/Municipality: where Roma community is mostly concentrated

Random sampling method has been used for this study which allowed for an effective representation of the target community. The strategy employed within the selected method was that a family representative, preferably the head of the household, was interviewed and all components of the questionnaire regarding education, employment, health, and housing have been answered accordingly (whenever relevant) for other family members as well. For more details for each of the selected demographics, please see the tables and approach below.

Table 2.2.1 Sample distribution by economy

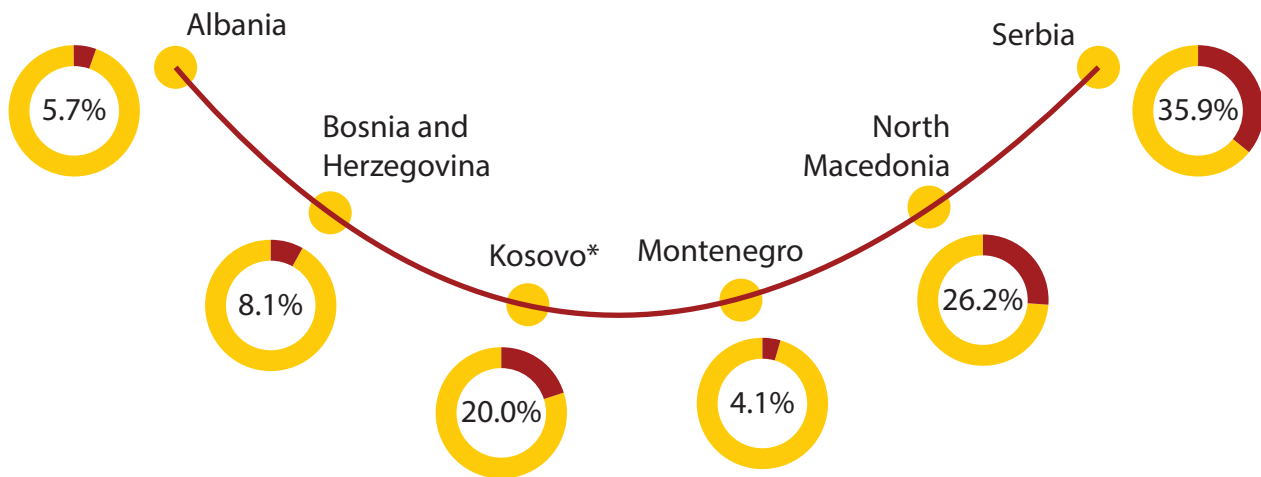
Economy	Data year	Total population	Roma	Sample %	Sample per economy
Albania	2011	2,800,138	11,669	4.26	170
Bosnia and Herzegovina	2010	3,837,732	16,771	6.12	244
North Macedonia	2002	2,022,547	53,879	19.66	786
Kosovo*	2011	1,739,825	35,784	13.06	600
Montenegro	2011	620,029	8,305	3.03	122
Serbia	2011	7,186,862	147,604	53.87	1078
Total		18,207,133	274,012	100	3,000

The size of the Roma population in each economy is uncertain and disputed. The table above provides an overview of the available data on the size of the Roma population.

Data show that there are nearly 300,000 Roma representing somewhat around 1.5% of the total population in the region.

Inclusion of respondents in this analysis is intended to be based evenly due to better sample representation. The aim of such distribution design is to ensure that the Roma population is well represented in each economy and the above data serve as guidance in the sampling technique. The table below displays the actual sample size of surveyed participants by percentage in each economy.





2.3 Distribution by Municipality

The aim of the project was to take into consideration a number of municipalities (representing the largest Roma based community) that would provide for a better representation of the actual situation on the ground in each economy.

Selection of municipalities in each economy has been done according to the density of Roma population based on available official data (i.e. population censuses, articles, data from stakeholders such as civil society organisations or international organisations and other publications). It is worth mentioning that in the case of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Roma community is not included in the latest population census. However, data that have been taken into consideration for each municipality, city and canton are those that have the most minorities categorised under “others”.

Similarly, the Albanian population census from 2011 does not clearly state the concentration of the Roma community in the respective municipalities. Hence, the data presented are taken from various available sources and the estimated Roma population in each city or municipality has been compared and adapted accordingly. In the case of the North Macedonia, the data are taken from the 2001 census, as there was no census in 2011, while the results of the 2021 census will be published in the first half of 2022.

During the enumerator selection phase, a diverse group of enumerators was engaged in all six economies, with special attention to female enumerators, who made the process of data collection easier, especially in cases when dealing with female respondents.

Table 2.3.1 Sample distribution by municipality in each economy

<i>Economy</i>	<i>Municipality</i>	<i>Total Roma population by municipality</i>	<i>Sample %</i>	<i>Sample per municipality</i>
<i>Albania</i>	Tirana	5,000	40%	68
	Fier	2,200	18%	30
	Lezhe	2,000	16%	27
	Durres	1,750	14%	24
	Elbasan	1,500	12%	20
	Total	10,950	100%	170
<i>North Macedonia</i>	Centar	3,651	13%	103
	Shuto Orizari	13,311	48%	375
	Gostivar	1,904	7%	54
	Bitola	2,594	9%	73
	Shtip	2,195	8%	62
	Kumanovo	4,256	15%	120
	Total	44,150	100%	786
<i>Bosnia and Herzegovina</i>	Sarajevo	36,198	55%	135
	Tuzla	11,431	18%	43
	Zenica	6,987	11%	26
	Banja Luka	6,507	10%	24
	Kakanj	1,846	3%	7
	Bijeljina	2,326	4%	9
	Total	65,295	100%	244
<i>Kosovo*</i>	Gjakove	6,468	24%	147
	Prizren	4,417	17%	100
	Fushe Kosove	3,948	15%	89
	Ferizaj	3,857	15%	87
	Peje	3,836	14%	87



	Lipjan	2,158	8%	49
	Mitrovice	1,181	4%	27
	Prishtina	621	2%	14
	Total	26,486	100%	600
<i>Montenegro</i>	Podgorica	3,988	47%	57
	Berane	531	13%	16
	Bijelo Polje	334	11%	13
	Bar	203	8%	10
	Niksic	483	12%	15
	Herceg Novi	258	9%	11
	Total	5,215	100%	122
<i>Serbia</i>	Belgrade	27,325	46%	500
	Nis	11,499	20%	210
	Bujanovac	4,576	8%	84
	Leskovac	7,700	13%	141
	Subotica	2,959	5%	54
	Novi Sad	2,500	4%	46
	Valjevo	1,413	4%	44
	Total	58,959	100%	1078

3. REGIONAL OVERVIEW

The focus of regional data analysis primarily concentrates on immediate consequences of Covid-19 pandemic. As such, it brings aggregated results into a single dataset, finds similarities and differences between economies' datasets for each sector, and subsequently detects regional patterns/trends for a specific topic of inquiry. The analysis finds that opinions on the pandemic are primarily driven by the economy context and individual experiences of the respondents. This dichotomy does not hold when moving the results and effects to regional level as the economy-based samples bring different share in and different contribution to the overall findings. Following this approach, the examination of key regional findings draws most important regional developments/observations, while in parallel it suggests that the set of conclusions and recommendations regarding the formulation of future policy planning for Roma are adequately processed within each respective economy.

3.1 Education

The aggregated results show **high awareness** of respondents about the effects of the pandemic and ongoing changes in education. **More than two thirds of the respondents agree** that the **studying time and format of studying has been changed**. The effects on studying time are **greater for males in segregated areas** than males in desegregated areas, **49%** versus **25%** respectively. On the other side, the effects on studying time **are greater for females in desegregated areas than females in segregated areas**, **45%** versus **17%** respectively. Online classes are **more difficult to understand** for **every second child**, both in segregated and desegregated settlements. Teachers and classmates have helped **one out of four children** during online lectures. The pandemic has adversely **impacted school results/ achievements of every second child** in the region, hence more than **50% of the parents** want to **send their children back to school**, believing in better school performance through personal presence in the classrooms.

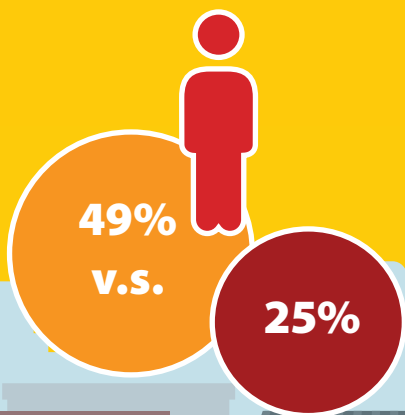
Four out of ten children have benefited from preventive pandemic measures supporting learning, dominantly in receiving digital tools (40%), learning materials (38%) and learning accessories (15%). **Local organisations and local governments have been most active** in providing educational support in the last 12 months. Central governments and private donors have provided lowest amount of educational support, 8% and 7% respectively. Overall the **dropout rate increased** by almost **11% at regional level**, mostly **due to difficult financial situation** of the families (62%).

Compared to past developments, the pandemic crisis caused additional barriers which triggered substantial negative effects on previously poor education performances of Roma children. Pre-existing poverty, food insecurity, teachers' bias, poor home environment and digital divide are additionally fuelled by the pandemic restrictive measures. Dis-

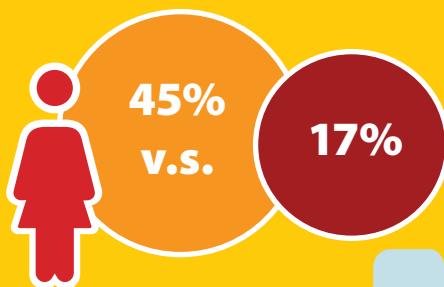


tance learning remains to be regional challenge for education systems as it has been never practiced or considered as an option by the public institutions. **Lack of time and resources of mainstream institutions caused cumbersome adjustments and delayed responses** to the pandemic crisis. The quality of teaching has additionally declined as both **teachers and parents lack skills and experience** in using **IT tools for teaching**. Finally, the **worsening financial situation** of Roma respondents has not been **addressed by the introduced learning measures**. Though highly promising, **mobilisation of support by local governments and organisations**, due to limited capacities, **has been insufficient and inconsistent** with the actual needs of disadvantaged pupils.

The effects on studying time are **greater for males in segregated areas** than males in desegregated areas.



The effects on studying time are **greater for females in desegregated areas** than females in segregated areas.



Online classes are **more difficult to understand for every second child**, both in segregated and desegregated settlements.



Teachers and classmates have **helped one out of four children** during online lectures.

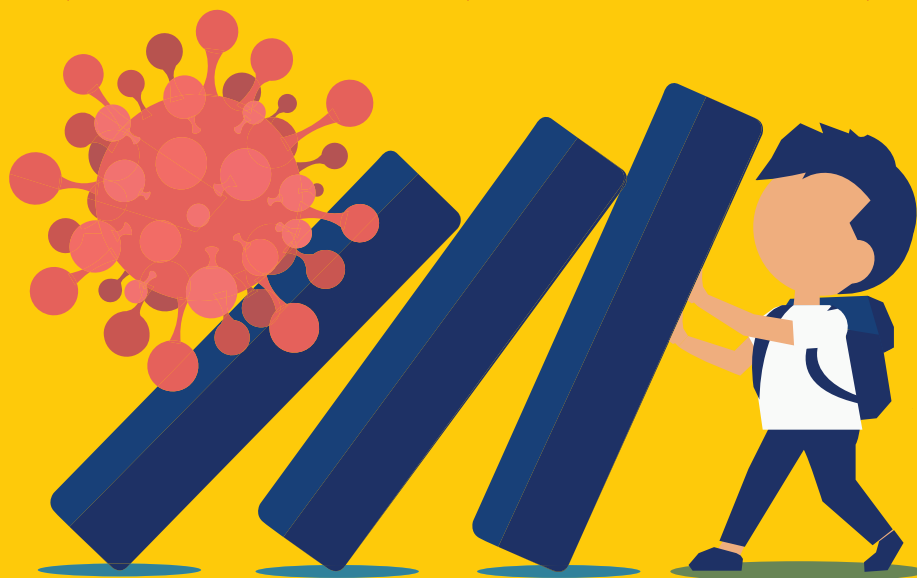


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Central governments and private donors have provided **lowest amount of educational support, 8% and 7%** respectively.

Overall the **dropout rate** increased by almost **11%** at regional level, mostly due to difficult financial situation of the families (62%).

3.2 Employment

The pandemic restrictive measures have **reduced the income to every second** Roma respondent. Consequently, **64%** of them are **concerned** about losing their jobs in the next 12 months, in segregated and desegregated neighbourhoods alike. Almost **three out of ten** respondents were able to partially **move their work to online** platforms, while the **working hours increased** for **two out of ten respondents** (for the same amount of income). Due to the restrictions **7% of surveyed participants lost their jobs**, while **every second** remained **unregistered** in the government records. Every **third respondent** believes that **limited number of available jobs in the region is the main cause for unemployment**. **One out of ten** respondents has been **supported through employment related measures**, in which 42% received direct financial aid and 22% deferment of loans/payments.

Every second respondent is being late with payments for **utility bills**. More concerning outcome is that **three out of ten respondents** are **late with payments of their food**. The survey shows **late payments** for **hygienic products and medicine**, 36% and 21% respectively.

In sum, regional survey results indicate worsening environment for employment/working activity of Roma in the Western Balkan region. The immediate effects of health restrictive measures have reduced economic activity and income, and long-term poor Roma communities continue to cope with **increased malnutrition, debts, unemployment, and health related risks**. Widening income gap has by default **increased the inequalities** in the region, but also **significantly harmed the opportunities and choices** of respondents in the field of education, health, and housing. Anti-Covid-19 employment-related measures have been **insufficient and inadequate in addressing the needs** of Roma population bearing in mind their large presence in the informal economy and earning income on a daily level. The online transfer of businesses/work is left to individual and ad hoc initiatives, with a lack of governmental support in the region for advancing demand and supply channels in the labour market, in particular for supporting micro and small-size companies.





The pandemic restrictive measures have reduced the income to **every second Roma** respondent.



64%

64% are concerned about **losing their jobs in the next 12 months**, in segregated and desegregated neighbourhoods alike.



Almost **three out of ten** respondents were able to partially move their work to online platforms.



Working hours increased for two out of ten respondents (for the same amount of income).

Due to the restrictions, **7%** of surveyed participants **lost their jobs**, while **every second remained unregistered** in the government records.



Every third respondent believes that **limited number of available jobs in the region** is the main cause for unemployment.



One out of ten respondents has been supported through employment related measures, in which **42%** received direct financial aid and **22%** deferment of loans/payments.



Every second respondent is being **late** with **payments for utility bills.**



Three out of ten respondents are **late** with **payments of their food.**



The survey shows late payments for **hygienic products** and **medicine**, **36%** and **21%** respectively.

3.3 Health

Most accessible protective supplies in the region are **face masks (60%)**, which have been **barely accessible for 22%** of the participants. **Least accessible** supplies in the region are disinfectants (38%) and gloves (35%). Some **40%** of the respondents have **been tested** and additional **23%** have **been vaccinated** against Covid-19 (in May, 2021). **Seven out of ten respondents rate positively** the performances of health services they received, while the remaining **one third** of participants have **negative opinion**.

Forty-six percent of the respondents, or in total 1,387 individuals, received hygienic and medicine package of support. **One third of respondents are not willing to get vaccination**, while **every third respondent** is **neutral** whether to get the vaccine. Looking at both of these categories, 45% have concerns about potential side effects of the vaccine, 18% do not believe the vaccine is effective, while 18% are against vaccination.

The **pandemic consequences** on mental, emotional, and physical health **are significant** and ranging from **medium to major effects**. Lockdown measures have had **medium effects on every third** person's mental, emotional, and physical health, while **mental health** is most affected with **major effects** for 14% of the participants.

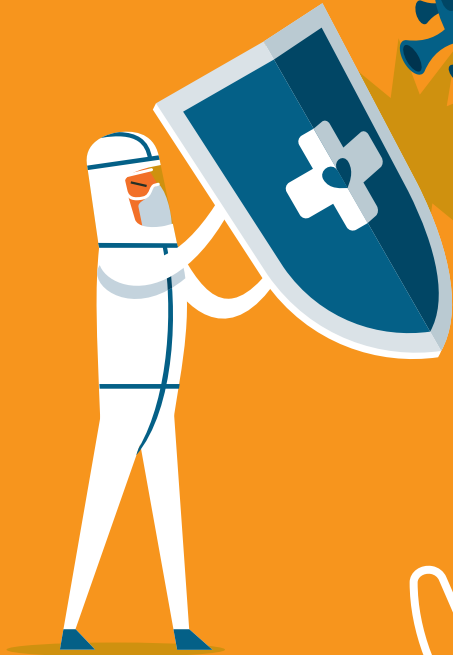
Some **17%** of survey participants have **been infected with Covid-19** with **majority of them treated at home (83%)**. Combined with the results in the area of housing, where 40% of the respondents claim to not having suitable conditions for self-isolation in case of Covid-19 infection, these results show that Roma have been treated in inappropriate conditions and such situation exposed others to the risk of getting the virus.

The most **notable observation** is that a **large portion** of respondents **respected the compulsory health measures** even though the measures generated additional expenditures and income loss on a daily level. The aggregated survey data at regional level show **23% of fully vaccinated Roma respondents** (in May, 2021), which is below the regional level. Fake news and diversity of scientific information nurture anti-vaccine attitudes and indecisiveness in the region, including among the Roma population. The opinion gap on pros and cons of the vaccine among respondents are mirroring the general public opinion in the region. It is closely linked with the effects of the pandemic to the mental and emotional health, as part of the broader public opinion entanglement and political divide in the region.



Least accessible supplies in the region are

disinfectants (38%)
and **gloves (35%).**



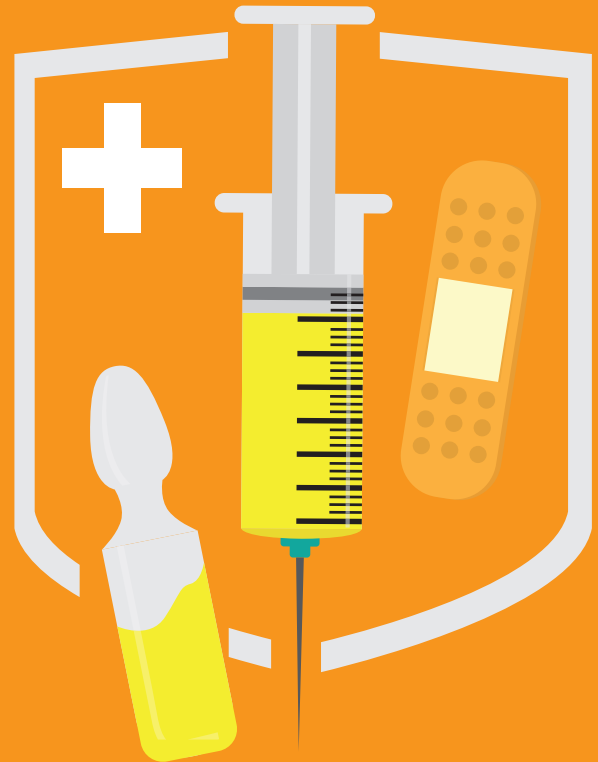
Most accessible protective supplies in the region are **face masks (60%)**, which have been barely accessible for **22%** of the participants.

46%

of the respondents, or in total 1,387 individuals, received **hygienic and medicine package of support.**

One third of respondents are **not willing to get vaccination,** while every third respondent is neutral whether to get the vaccine.

45% have concerns about potential side effects of the vaccine, **18%** do not believe the vaccine is effective, while **18%** are against vaccination.



Lockdown measures have had **medium effects** on every **third person's mental, emotional, and physical health,** while mental health is most affected, with major effects for 14% of the participants.

17% of survey participants have been infected with Covid-19 with majority of them **treated at home (83%).**

40% of the respondents claim to not having suitable conditions for self-isolation in case of Covid-19.



Seven out of ten respondents rate positively the performances of health services they received.

3.4 Housing

The housing situation looks rosier from regional perspective when compared to economy-level data. The ratio of segregated versus desegregated residents at regional level is 41% and 59% respectively. In the last 12 months some **80% of participants had regular access to electricity and water, while 6% had no access to electricity and 9% no access to water.**

The dwelling ownership is claimed by 79% of respondents but only 55% can provide legal ownership documentation. **Two out of ten participants** have initiated the **process** for **legalisation** of their property regarding which just **10% consider that the pandemic hinders** the process.

The **housing situation** has changed for **less than 7%** of surveyed participants. At regional level, **53 households reported forced evictions, 90 households moved to new dwellings, 21 households received housing aid, and 17 households legalised their housing units.**

As regards the **living conditions**, the survey results show that the most **critical situation is with unfavourable humidity** conditions in respondents' dwellings. **Five out of ten households** are living in high humidity home environment, which is proven to be **fertile environment for bacteria and viruses causing respiratory infections. Four out of ten households** have **bad quality of roofs**, making it **second worst condition in the area of housing.**

In case of **Covid-19 infection** approximately **six out of ten households have conditions for self-isolation.** Only **5%, which is very small number** of respondents, **benefited from housing-related measures.** Out of **163 households 79 families** from the region received **social housing support**, the **utility bills have been reduced** for **47 families**, another **28 families have been exempted from paying utility bills** and **9 families received rent subsidy.**

Principally, the survey results find indirect causal effects between pandemic and housing domains. The overall housing situation and policies did not drastically change as the size and scope of forced evictions, bad living conditions and segregation are well-known ongoing domestic issues for many decades. A **small number** of respondents **considers that the pandemic is delaying the legalisation** procedure. More importantly, the ongoing **sharp income decline** has **direct effects on the already bad housing conditions.** In longer term, the outcomes of the **economic decline** may **produce new setbacks** to housing conditions.



The ratio of **segregated**

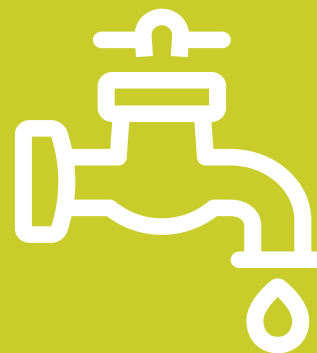
versus **desegregated** residents at regional level is

41%



59%

80% of participants had regular access to electricity and water, while **6%** had no access to electricity and **9%** no access to water.



The dwelling ownership is claimed by **79%** of respondents but only **55%** can provide legal ownership documentation.

Two out of ten participants have initiated the process for **legalisation** of their property.



The housing situation has changed for less than **7%** of surveyed participants.

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Five out of ten households are **living in high humidity** home environment.



Four out of ten households have **bad quality of roofs.**



- **5%** benefited from housing-related measures.
- **79 families** from the region received social housing support, out of 163 households,
- the utility bills have been reduced for **47 families**,
- another **28 families** have been exempted from paying utility bills, and
- **9 families** received rent subsidy.

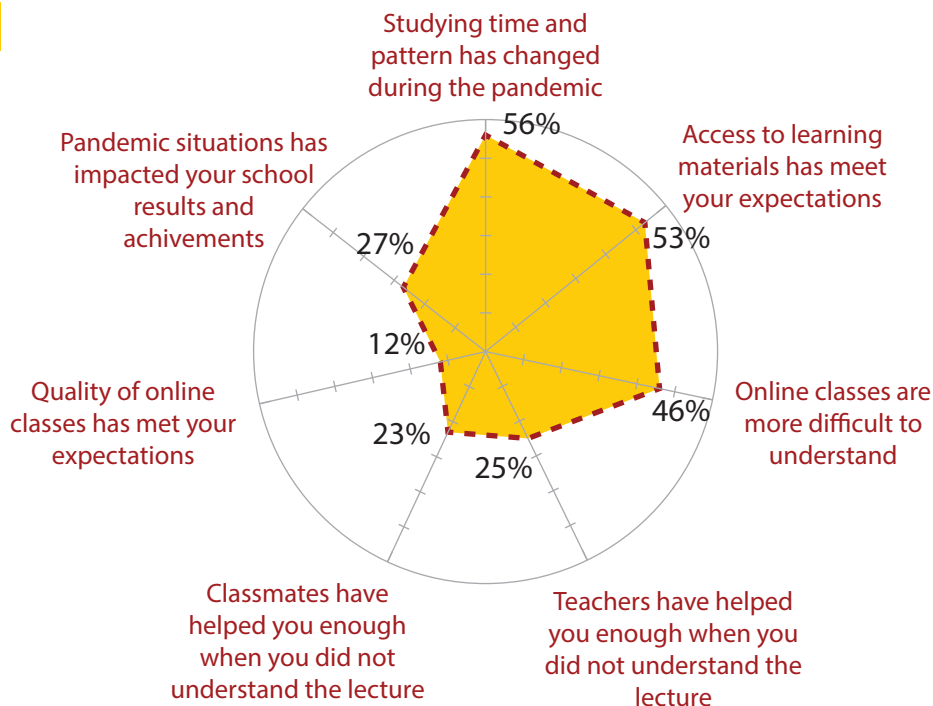
4. Findings

4.1 Albania

4.1.1 Education

According to the survey results, approximately 56% of the respondents in Albania are of an opinion that the pandemic has changed the studying time and pattern. Majority of the respondents have scored in the range strongly agree (27%) and agree (28%). The gender analysis shows that the pandemic has significant effects on studying time among female respondents, about 63% compared to 51% of male respondents. In addition, the pandemic has higher consequences in segregated settlements (30%) compared to those integrated (26%), which further increases the educational attainment gap between segregated and integrated settlements. One third of the respondents from segregated settlements have

Figure 1



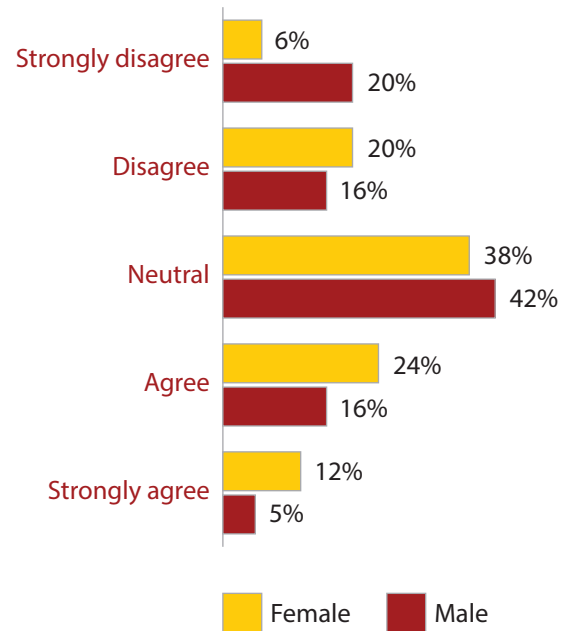
difficulties to understand online classes while 25% of the respondents from integrated settlements face the same problem. By the same token, 29% of female respondents and 25% of male respondents have difficulties in understanding online classes. The quality of online classes did not meet the expectations for majority of Roma respondents in Albania, 22% and 19% stated that they disagree and strongly disagree, respectively.

Figure 2 shows the gender ratio regarding the pandemic impact (positive or negative) on school results and achievements. The impact is higher among females, 36% in contrast to 21% males (cumulative for agree and strongly agree).

46% of the respondents in Albania are willing to send their children back to school, while 30% are neutral and 24% do not agree with their children going to schools during the pandemic. It is important to clarify the high percentage of neutral answers across education related questions (above 40%) which mirrors the sample demography of surveyed participants – a) the questions are not relevant to some of the respondents, b) respondents are indecisive to most education related questions. Forty-seven percent of the respondents confirm having received learning support in the last 12 months, while almost 53% did not receive any kind of support. Majority of the learning support is provided in learning materials (books, notebooks), including computers or internet access for online schooling received by 20% of the respondents. Noticeably, local governments in Albania have been very active in providing educational support to Roma (59%). One third of the respondents disagree about being helped by teachers in cases they did not understand the lecture, while 12% claim to have been helped. The drop-out rates increased by 5% during the pandemic due to difficult financial situation (82%).

Figure 2

Pandemic situation has impacted your school results and achievements



4.1.2 Employment

The distribution of employed respondents is almost equal in each type of employment (full time 30%, part time 32%, and seasonal work 38%), irrespective of whether formal or informal work. Figure 3 shows that the pandemic has reduced the salaries (income) of 81% of the respondents. Statistically speaking, this change has significant difference as 4 out of 5 respondents lost their earnings due to the pandemic restrictive measures.

Correspondingly, 83% of the surveyed Roma have concerns about losing their jobs in case the pandemic continues in the next 12 months. Concerning the gender breakdown, 85% males and 80% females have concerns about losing their jobs/income. The proximity of concerns is quite similar in segregated and desegregated settlements of Roma, 82% and 84% respectively.

Figure 4 shows how Covid-19 restrictions impacted the work of Roma: 27% reported increased working hours, 24% started to work partly online, 17% have reduced working hours, and 5% have been dismissed. Roughly 21% of respondents' work is not affected by the pandemic.

Figure 3

Has your salary/income changed during the pandemic?

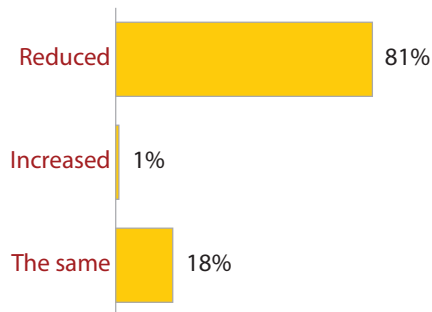
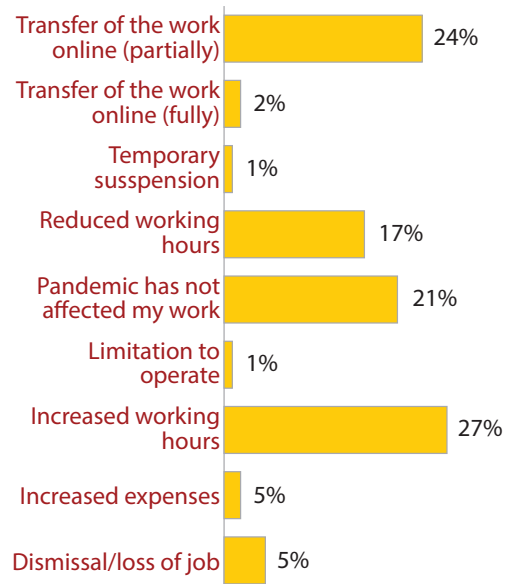


Figure 4

How has Covid-19 pandemic impacted your work?

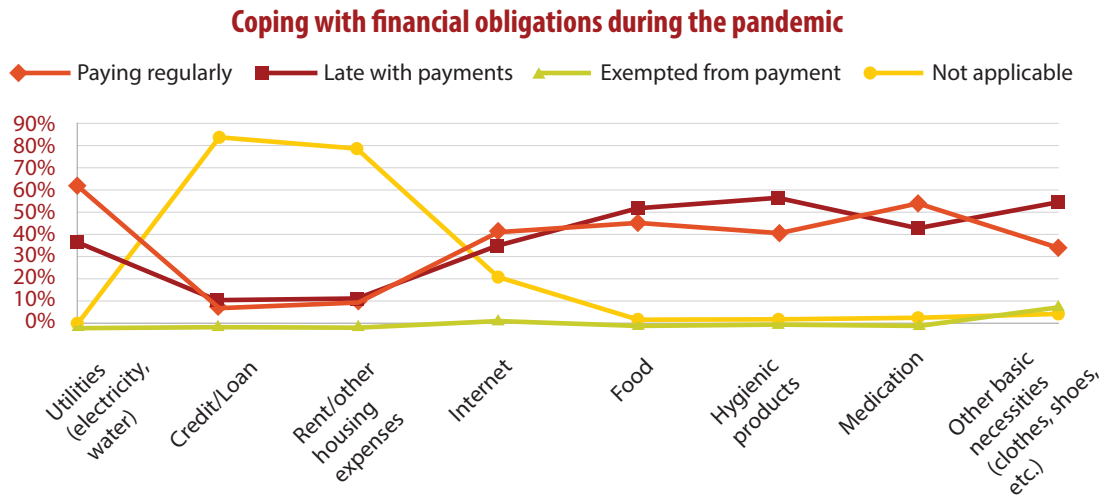


Regarding the formal type of employment, 84% have been unemployed for more than 12 months. It means likely engagement and presence in the informal economy as alternative form of making income. Out of them, 43% are registered as unemployed while the remaining 57% are out of unemployment records. Those who seek job believe that the reason for their unemployment is discrimination (43%), limited number of available jobs (21%), lack of experience (15%), lack of skills (11%), etc.

Regarding the employment measures, less than 3% of the respondents have been supported by receiving wage subsidy (0.6%), direct financial aid (1.2%), additional working tools (0.6%), and deferment of loans/payments (0.6%). The rest of surveyed Roma (97%) did not receive any package of support regarding employment measures. Figure 5 illustrates how Roma families handle the living subsistence costs for different goods/services.

The results show late payments for food, hygienic items and clothing for above 50% of the respondents. The line for exempted payments is zero, meaning that none of the respondents had access to government subsidy measures.

Figure 5



4.1.3 Health

According to Figure 6, most accessible protective supply are the face masks (51%). Between 12 to 18 percent of respondents do not have any access to other Covid-19 protective supplies which is a significant risk indicator on the spread of the virus.

Only 8% of respondents confirm that Covid-19 medical facility has been established close to their area. This means that one in ten Albanian Roma do not have medical facilities in their neighbourhoods dealing with the pandemic. 14 out of 170 Roma have been offered medical services. The responses on health services and measures are critically low according to the survey results. Only 4 Roma received health-related package in the last 12 months, out of which 2 Roma got hygiene packages, 1 medicine, and 1 something else. Such circumstances generate high mistrust by the Roma communities towards the health system in the economy.

Figure 7 illustrates the effects of the pandemic on mental, emotional, and physical health of the respondents. One third of the respondents have medium effects on all three types of health, 20% have moderate effects and 10% have major effects. Regarding the willingness to take the vaccine against Covid-19, 54% of the surveyed participants do not want to be vaccinated. When asked why, 54% of respondents answered the question, whereas 46% did not explain the reasons for refusing the vaccine. From those who responded negatively, 29% do not believe in the efficiency of the vaccine, 28% do not want it due to potential side effects, 24% are against vaccines in general, and less than 10% believe not to be exposed to Covid-19. As regards the gender proportion on willingness to receive vaccine, females are more conservative, 21% are willing to get vaccine, while 32% males would like to be vaccinated. According to the survey, 13 respondents stated being exposed to Covid-19 virus. Twelve infected persons have been treated at home and only one in hospital.

Figure 6

How accessible are Covid-19 protective supplies?

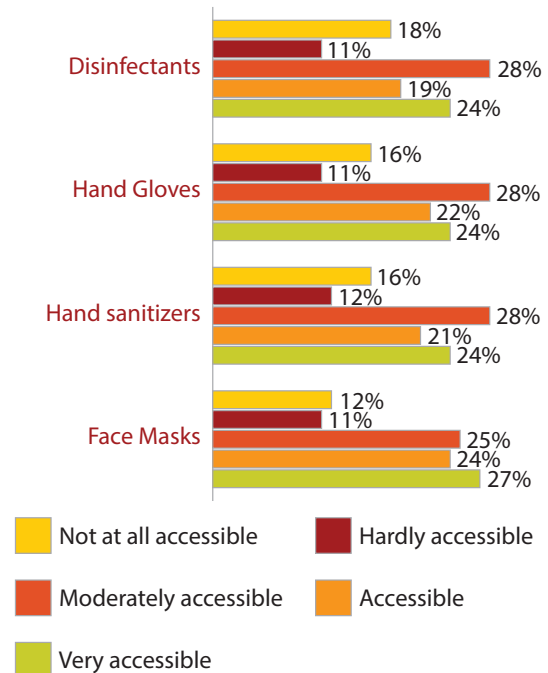
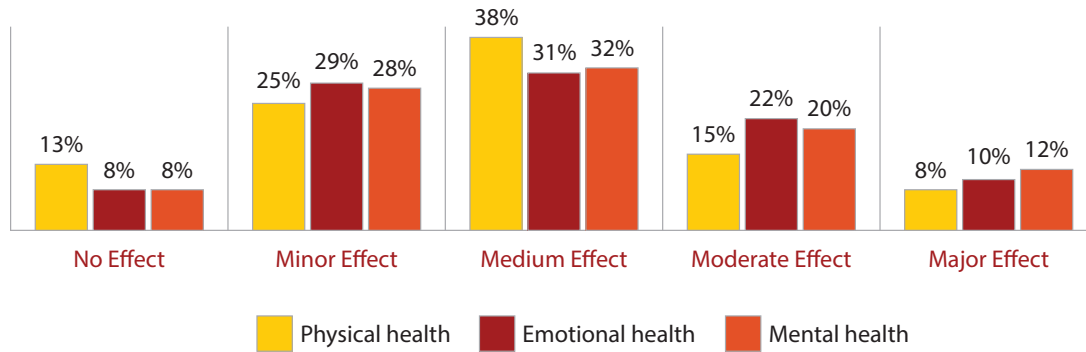


Figure 7

Effects of Quarantine on Mental, Emotional and Physical Health

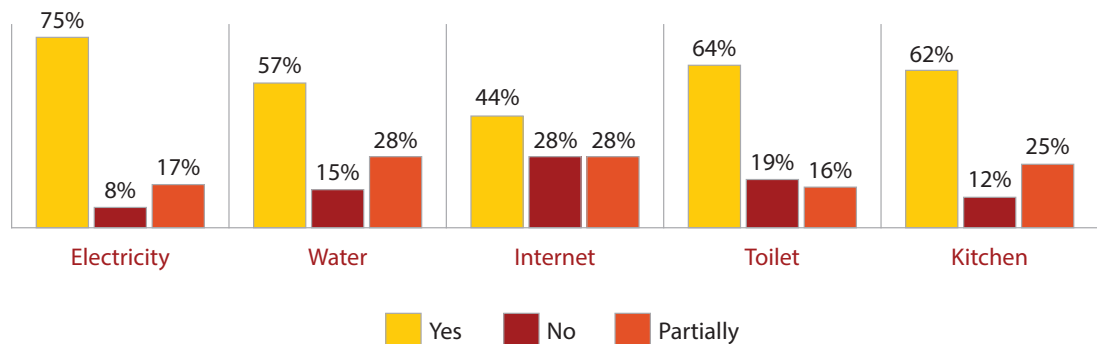


4.1.4 Housing

The survey results show that Roma in Albania dominantly reside in houses (87%), while smaller portion of the population is living in apartments (10%) and temporary dwellings (3%). The ratio between segregated and desegregated residents is 51% to 49% respectively. The survey aimed to identify whether Roma households had access to basic facilities, such as electricity, water, etc. in the last 12 months. It is quite concerning that between 10 and 20 percent of the respondents do not have access to basic infrastructural facilities, as illustrated in Figure 8.

Figure 8

Access to basic amenities



Almost one third of the respondents (29%) have started the legalisation process of their dwellings, while 44% did not. Those that applied for legalisation find bureaucratic regulations (51%) as the major barrier, which has been additionally delayed by Covid-19 measures (9%). In the last 12 months, the housing situation has changed for 4% of Roma, out of which 3% moved to other places and 1% have been forcibly evicted.

More than half of the respondents report bad housing/living conditions, 12% very bad and 46% bad condition. Due to very bad living conditions 76% of the respondents do not have minimum conditions for self-isolation in case of Covid-19 infection. None of the respondents benefited from any housing measures during Covid-19 pandemic.



4.2 Bosnia and Herzegovina

4.2.1 Education

The sample of respondents in Bosnia and Herzegovina includes 69% males and 31% females, living in segregated (60%) and desegregated (40%) settlements. By education degree, 48% have finished primary school and 4% secondary school. 74% of respondents are unemployed while 22% declare unregistered work. Figure 9 indicates the range of Covid-19 consequences as well the awareness concerning changes to studying time in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The access to learning materials did not meet the expectations of 46% of respondents. Additionally, online classes are more difficult to understand for 59% of respondents, while 41% of students did not receive any help from teachers during online teaching. Subsequently, 60% of respondents are of opinion that the pandemic has impact on their school results. Approximately 80% of parents are willing to send their children to school once they reopen.

Figure 9

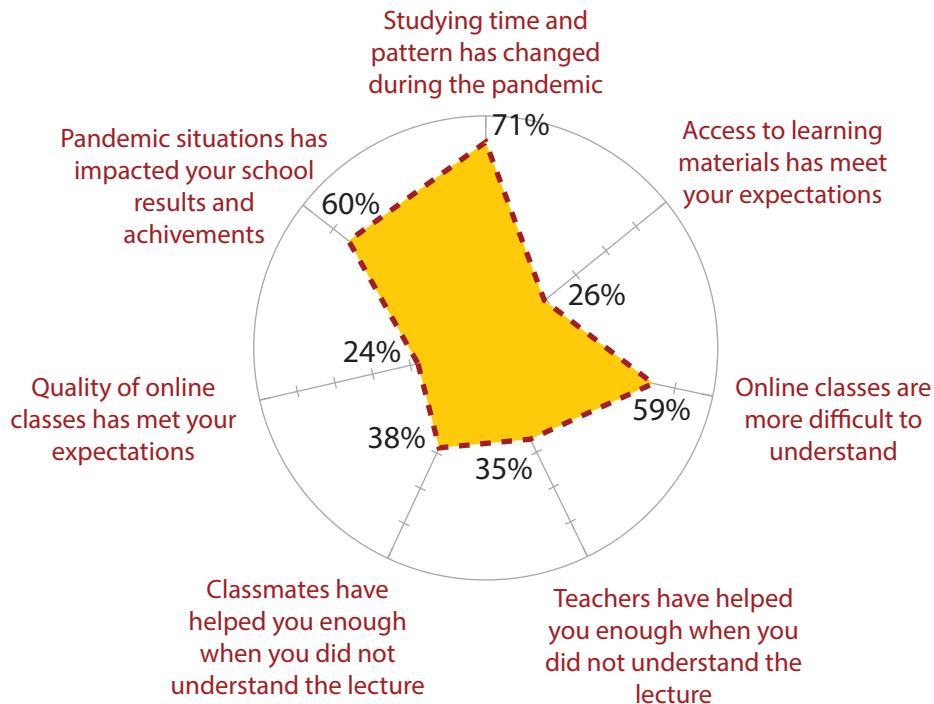
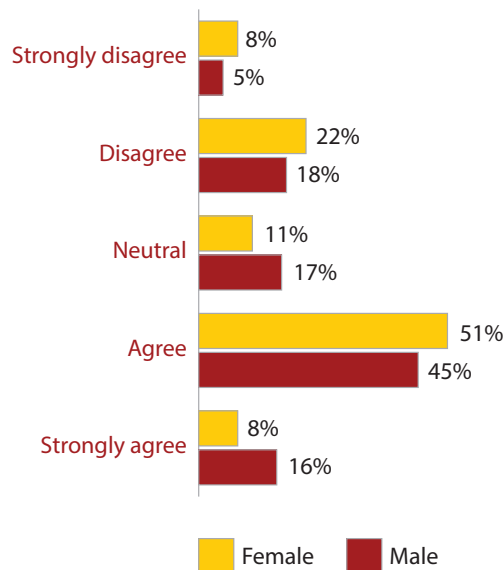


Figure 10 shows the impact of the pandemic on school results of male and female students. The results show slightly higher impact on males (61%) than females (59%), meaning that the pandemic effects have equally influenced school performances of both genders.

When asked about the type of support provided for education, 63% said they received digital tools and 23% got learning materials. Local organisations have been hyperactive in Bosnia and Herzegovina as they provided 64% of the educational support, followed by support of private donors to 26% of respondents. Unfortunately, the dropout rates increased by 19% as a result of difficult financial situation (73%) and absence of family support (10%). The dropout rates are higher for males (13%) than females (6%), and higher in segregated settlements (11%) relative to those integrated (8%).

Figure 10

Pandemic situation has impacted your school results and achievements



4.2.2 Employment

The immediate Covid-19 effects on income are not so critical according to the survey in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The income remained the same for 86% of respondents. However, 46% are concerned they might lose their job/income in the next 12 months.

Eleven percent have been dismissed, out of which 48% have not registered unemployment. Figure 11 shows Covid-19 effects on employment.

According to the respondents, limited number of available jobs in the market is the main reason for high unemployment (49%), while 20% believe it is the lack of experience and 9% feel discriminated while seeking job. The negative answer to the question of whether they benefited from any employment related measures is very high (95%). Only 12 Roma have benefited from employment measures.

Figure 11

How has Covid-19 pandemic impacted your work?

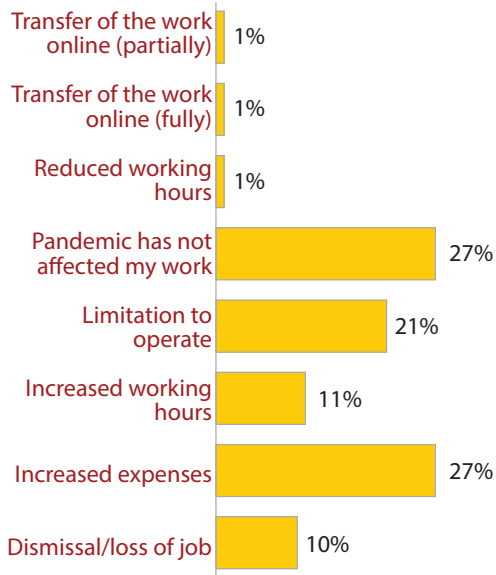
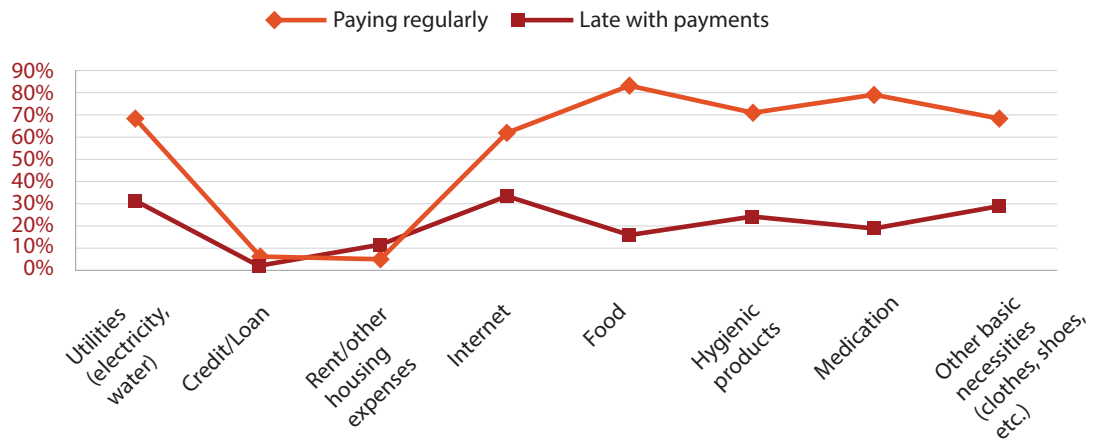


Figure 12 illustrates the correlation between regular and delayed payments in the last 12 months. Evidently, Roma are capable of covering their living subsistence expenses on a regular basis despite facing high unemployment rates and restrictive Covid-19 measures. Dominantly, they regularly pay the costs for food (84%), medication (80%), hygienic items (71%) and utilities (68%).

Figure 12

Coping with financial obligations during the pandemic



4.2.3 Health

The survey data reveals that Roma have limited access to Covid-19 protective supplies. Figure 13 illustrates the respective situation regarding accessing protective supplies. They consider face masks (69%), hand sanitisers (49%), hand gloves (46%) and disinfectants (45%) hardly accessible. The percentage of females having difficult access to medical supplies stands at 88% compared to 82% of males facing the same issue. Our crosstab analyses show that segregated settlements have difficult access to all Covid-19 protective supplies.

There is no Covid-19 medical facility established close to Roma settlements for 90% of respondents. However, they are familiar with the types of medical services provided in mainstream medical facilities, thus 43% of them are offered Covid-19 tests, 31% vaccination, and 19% medical check-ups.

The perceptions of respondents regarding health service performances fluctuate between negative (49%) and positive (27%). Up to 94% of respondents have benefited from health-related packages in the last 12 months. They received two types of support, hygienic materials (57%) and medicines (43%).

One third of the respondents (31%) is eager to receive the vaccine against Covid-19, around 44% do not wish to receive the vaccine, whereas 25% are indecisive. From those who do not want to receive the vaccine, 36% are against vaccines in general, 31% do not believe are exposed to Covid-19, and 27% have concerns about potential side effects of vaccine. Following the same strand, the restrictive measures have medium to moderate effects on mental, emotional, and physical health (see Figure 14). According to the field data collection, around 6% of respondents (14 persons) have been exposed to Covid-19 virus. Nine have been hospitalised while the remaining 5 have been treated at home.

Figure 13

How accessible are Covid-19 protective supplies?

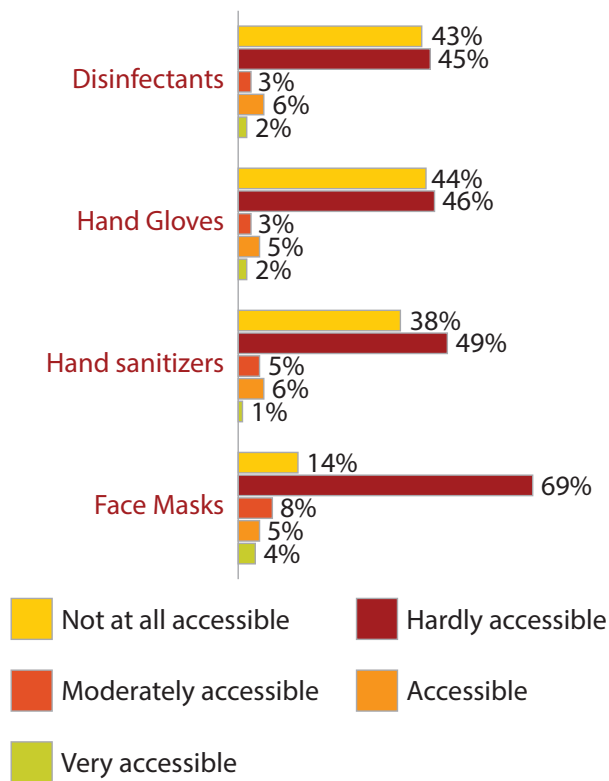
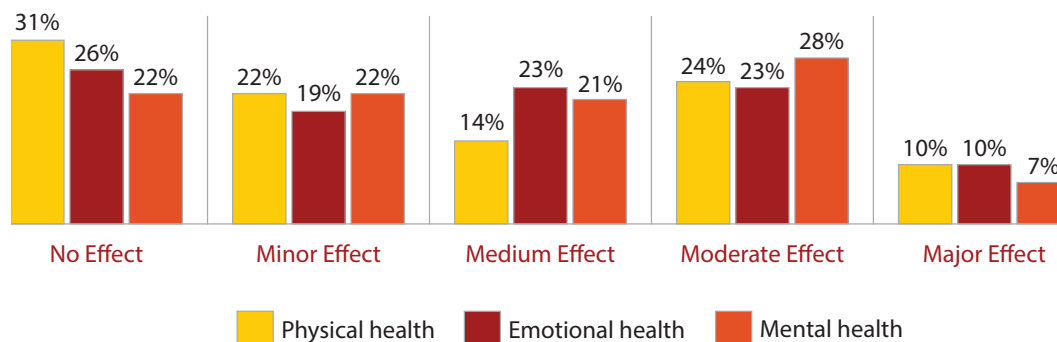


Figure 14

Effects of Quarantine on Mental, Emotional and Physical Health

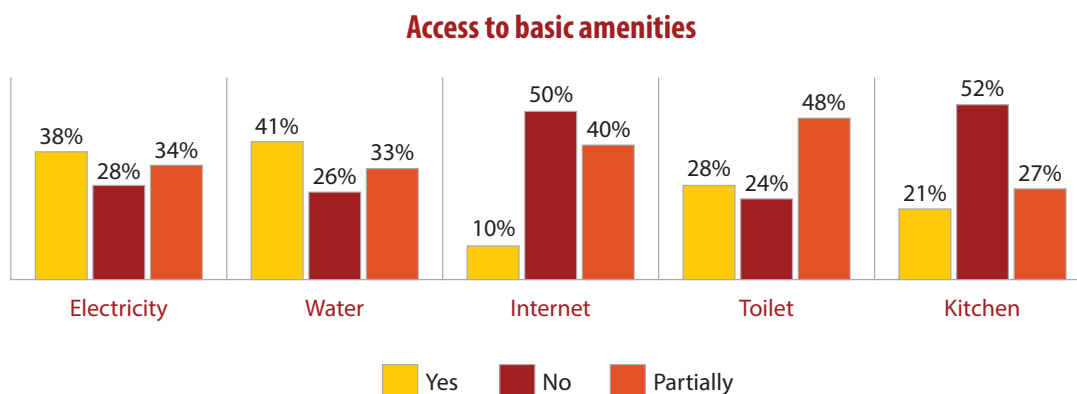


4.2.4 Housing

Majority of Bosnia and Herzegovina respondents live in houses (89%), both in segregated (60%) and desegregated (40%) settlements. Data analysis shows that the pandemic has very minor, if any, effects on the housing situation. The previous housing situation and problems remained status quo since. Two households have been forcibly evicted, and four households moved to a new place.

Regarding the access to basic housing amenities, Figure 15 shows the current situation. As shown by data analyses, Roma continue to have poor access to water, electricity and toilets and kitchen. The immediate assumption is that on medium to long-term these shortages will leverage health risks, including the spread of the Covid-19 virus.

The number of Roma that initiated legalisation process for their houses is very small (15), out of which only one respondent links the obstacles to legalisation with the ongoing pandemic. The housing conditions of Roma in Bosnia and Herzegovina are scoring mostly in the range bad/very bad, whereas the cumulative scores are most critical regarding heating, roof, humidity, etc. Under such poor-quality circumstances, 57% of the respondents do not have conditions for self-isolation compared to 43% claiming capacity to self-isolation in case of exposure to Covid-19. None of the surveyed participants have benefited from governmental housing-related measure since the start of the pandemic.

Figure 15

4.3 Kosovo*

4.3.1 Education

Majority of respondents state that the pandemic has changed their studying time (76%), while 37% claim that the learning materials did not meet their expectations. By the same token, online classes are more difficult to understand for 36% compared to 22% of respondents having no issues in understanding online classes. Considering the modest assistance from teachers/classmates to students having problems in understanding online classes, including cumulative perceptions that the pandemic has impact on school results (49%), the difference in school achievements is very likely the result of measures taken against Covid-19. The majority of Roma parents (66%) are willing to send their children to back to school once they reopen, while 28% are neutral. Seventy-five percent of the respondents have benefited from education-related measures.

Figure 17 shows the pandemic effects on school results for both genders. The pandemic has impacted higher percentage of females (54%) than males (47%). Regarding the type of support received in last 12 months, employment measures are noticeably higher compared to other interventions. In this regard, it is important to highlight that 104 out of 600 respondents received support (17%). The assistance has been provided by local governments (30%), central government (23%), local organisations (24%) and international organisations (19%). According to the survey results, the dropout rates of surveyed participants increased by 5% during the pandemic.



Figure 16

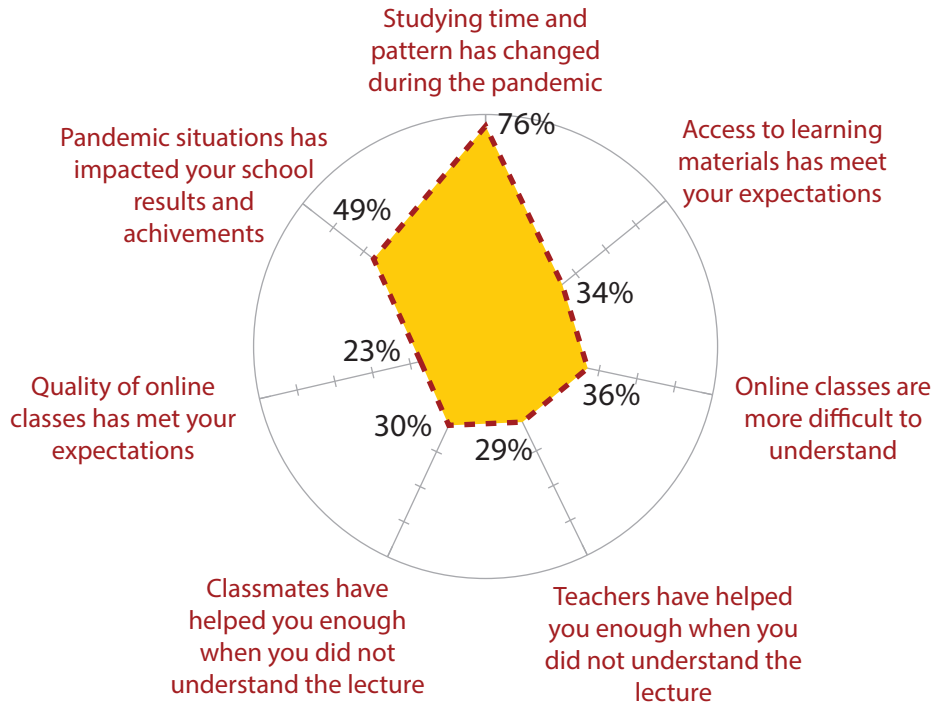
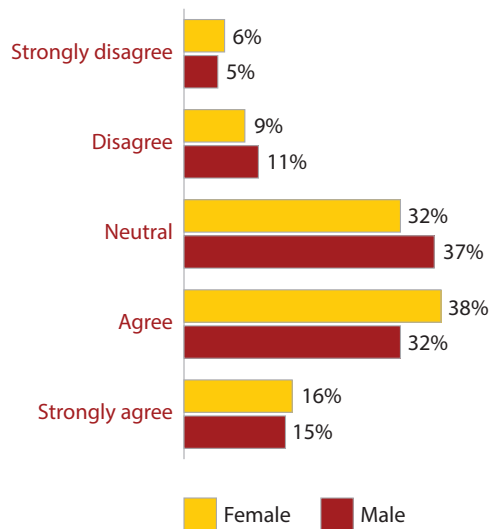


Figure 17

Pandemic situation has impacted your school results and achievements



4.3.2 Employment

The majority of Roma respondents from Kosovo* report being seasonal workers (45%), followed by full time employed (43%), and part time employed (12%). During the pandemic the salaries/income of 58% of the respondents have decreased, meaning that in the last 12 months the income has decreased for every second respondent. Seventy-five percent are concerned about losing their job in case the pandemic continues in the next 12 months.

Figure 19 shows various forms of impact on respondents' work since the implementation of pandemic measures. When asked about the reason for their unemployment, respondents seeking (formal) job attributed the highest score to limited number of available jobs in the market. Only 6% of respondents benefited from employment measures introduced in Kosovo* (in total 36 respondents). Eleven persons received wage subsidies, 18 persons received direct financial aid, while 4 have been provided with rent subsidy.

Figure 20 shows the findings related to respondent's monthly financial payments for different living subsistence expenses. According to the findings, Roma regularly cover their expenses of food (78%), medicine (78%) and utilities (71%). The size of respondents being late with payments is between 40% (internet) and 7% (rent). It is important to highlight that 21% of respondents are late with payments for food and 36% for hygienic products.

Figure 18

Has your salary/income changed during the pandemic?

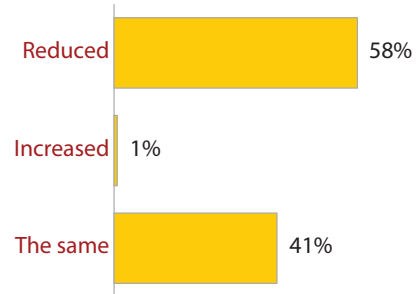


Figure 19

How has Covid-19 pandemic impacted your work?

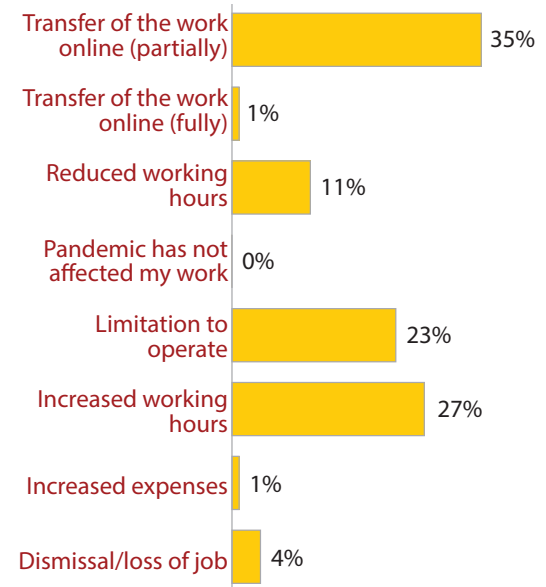
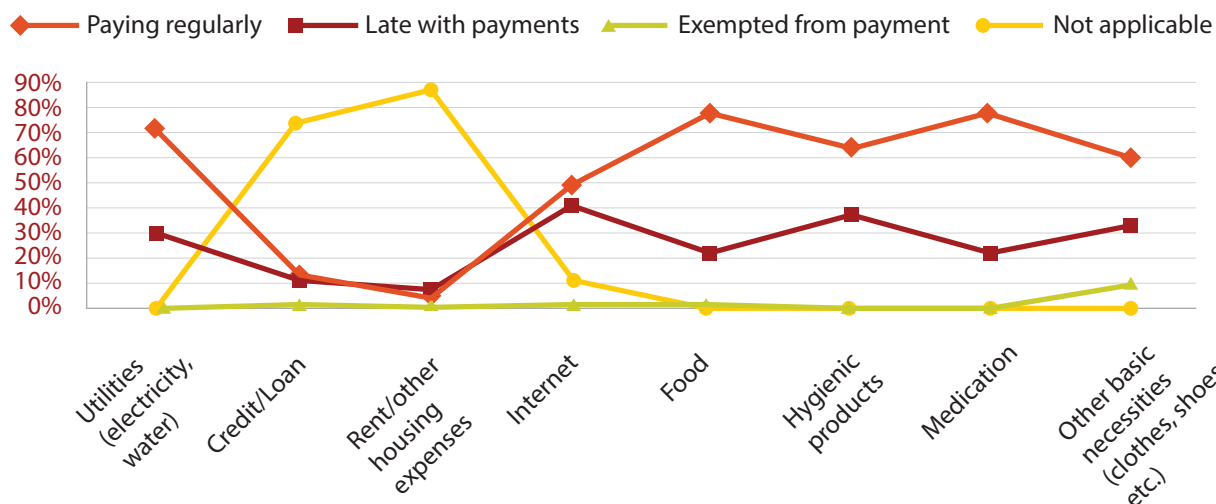


Figure 20**Coping with financial obligations during the pandemic****4.3.3 Health**

The survey results disclose that 96% of respondents said that no single Covid-19 medical facility had been established close to the Roma neighbourhoods, even though 72% of Roma are living in desegregated settlements. The access to Covid-19 protective supplies is shown in Figure 21.

Most accessible supplies are the face masks and hand sanitisers, which indicates good practice of following preventive Covid-19 measures. Nonetheless, very small number of respondents have been offered medical services (20 persons out of 600) against Covid-19. Medical check-ups have been provided to 13 persons, 6 got information related to medical care and only one had a Covid-19 test. Irrespective to the modest health support against Covid-19, Roma respondents rated positively the performances of health services, excellent 15%, very good 23% and good 38%. Twenty-seven percent of respondents received health-related packages of support, out of which 139 persons got hygienic items and 9 persons received medicines. Similarly, 27% are willing to be vaccinated, 54% are against and 18% are neutral. 47% have concerns about the side effects of the vaccine, and 38% do not believe in its effectiveness.

According to the results presented in Figure 22, the Covid-19 pandemic lockdowns have had effects on mental, emotional, and physical health of respondents, which are of medium level according to the central tendency of the data. Since the beginning of the pandemic 7% of the respondents (42 persons) have been infected by the virus, of which 89% have been treated at home and only 10% at public clinics/hospitals.

Figure 21

How accessible are Covid-19 protective supplies?

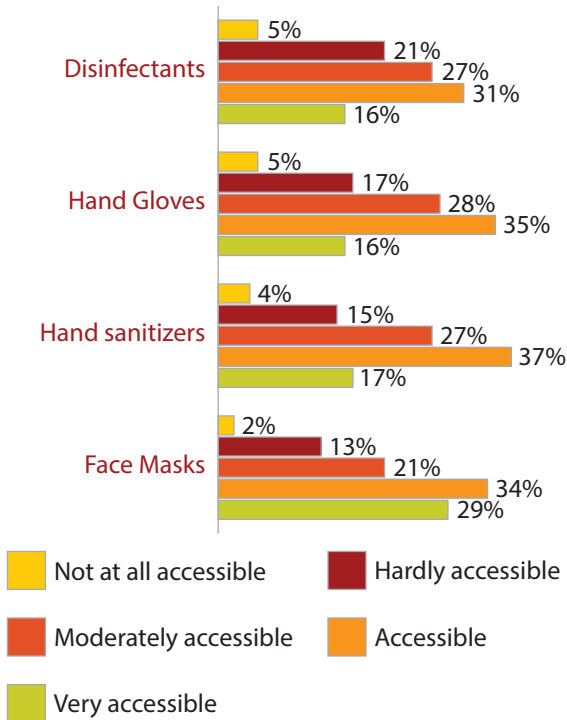
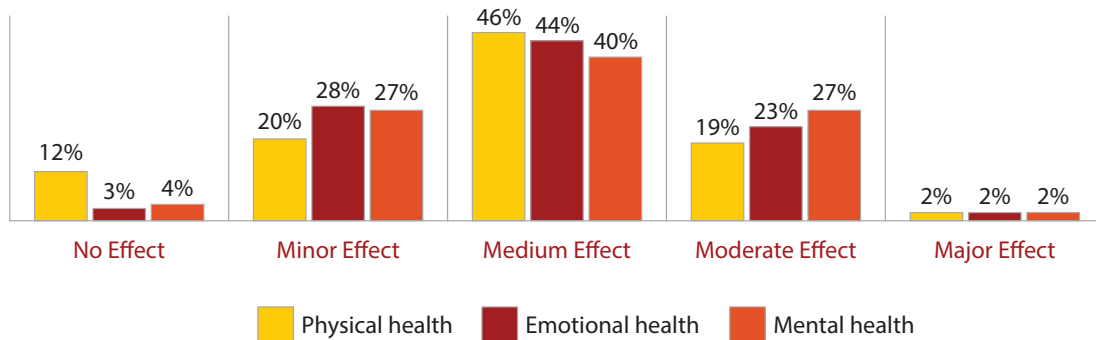


Figure 22

Effects of Quarantine on Mental, Emotional and Physical Health



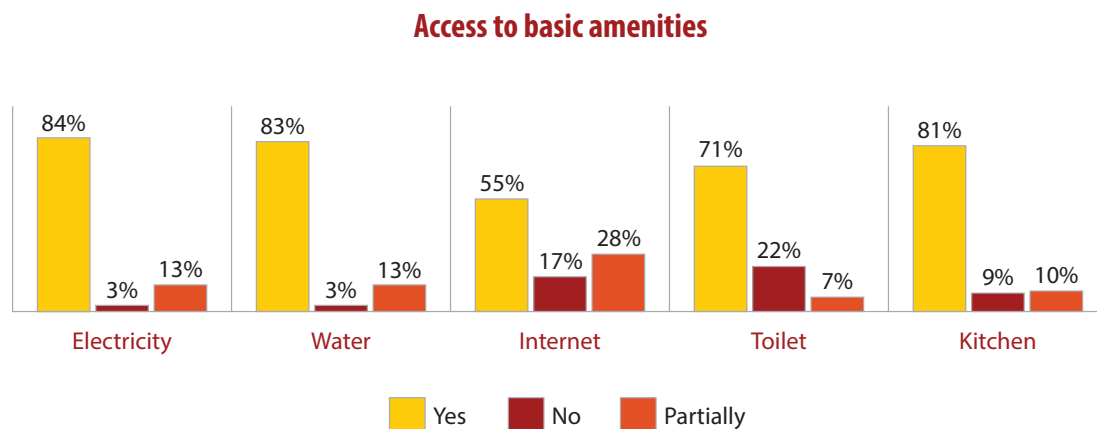
4.3.4 Housing

As stated in the health section, the majority of Roma are residents of integrated settlements (72%). A large majority lives in houses (92%), 5.5% in temporary establishments and 2% in apartments. Figure 23 illustrates the access to basic infrastructure amenities in the last 12 months.

Given the evidence, the majority of Roma have good access to basic amenities, but still, the access to toilets remains critical as 22% of respondents do not have access to toilets at all. This is significant risk of the spread of Covid-19. Seventy-nine percent of the respondents claim to have ownership of the current living establishments, but 76% and 51% of them can provide legal ownership documents for houses/apartments and land respectively. 24% of respondents stated being in the process of legalisation of their dwellings, to which the main obstacle seems to be incomplete documentation (66%) bureaucratic regulations (16%) and Covid-19 restrictions (11%).

There is no substantial change to the housing situation in the last 12 months, though 4 persons have been evicted and 11 respondents moved to another place. Between one quarter and one third of the respondents reported bad living conditions concerning the basic infrastructure. The average score of responses regarding neutral and good living conditions is 37% and 29% respectively. The range of scoring responses for living in very good housing situation is between 2% and 4%. In case of infection with Covid-19, 82% do not have conditions for self-isolation. No single respondent has been a beneficiary of any governmental housing measures during Covid-19 pandemic.

Figure 23



4.4 Montenegro

4.4.1 Education

The majority of Montenegrin Roma respondents (79%) agree that the studying time and pattern has changed, but the access to learning materials has met the expectations for 66% of the respondents. Even though 68% are of opinion that online classes are more difficult to understand, 57% report being supported by teachers and 62% by classmates when they did not understand the lecture. Additionally, 54% are satisfied with the quality of online classes. The majority of respondents (59%) agree that the pandemic has influenced their school results. Figure 24 is a cumulative illustration of the respondents' sentiments on education situation.

Figure 24

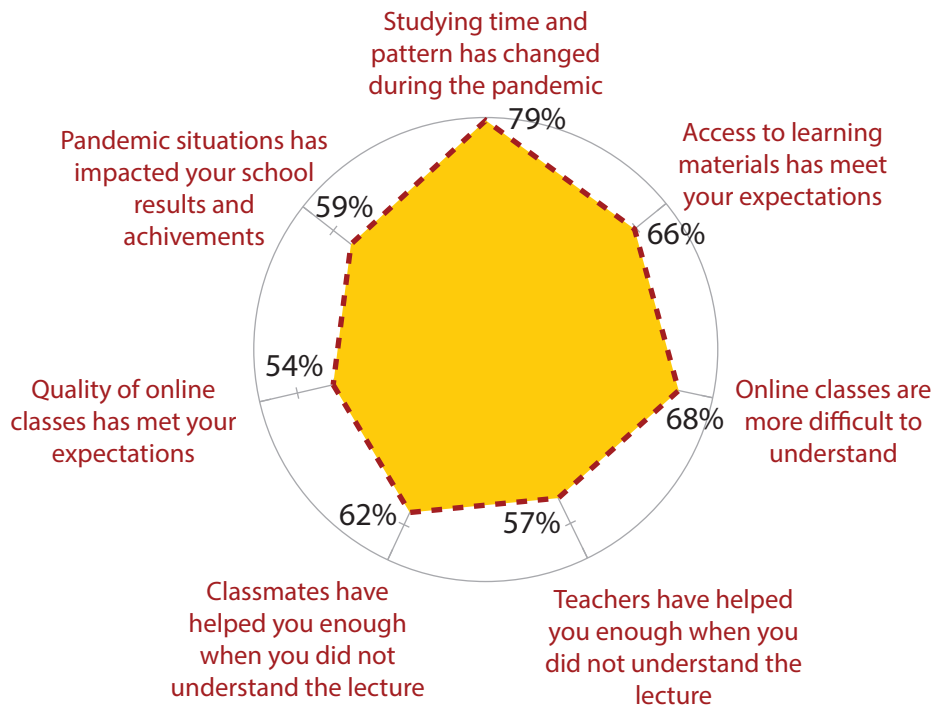


Figure 25 shows the impact of the pandemic on school results of both genders. According to the results, the impact is higher for females (61%) than for males (57%). Following the same pattern, 60% of respondents are comfortable letting children to back to school once they reopen. In total, 15 respondents got learning support in the last 12 months, 7 respondents received digital tools, 3 learning materials and 3 learning accessories.

Similarly to the other economies in the region, local governments and local organisations have provided most of the educational support, 33% and 27% respectively. However, 20% of the respondents dropped out from schools during the pandemic dominantly due to bad financial situation.

4.4.2 Employment

The employment situation of the Montenegrin sample is relatively low as 18% are employed, 38% unemployed and 40% are informal workers. There is almost equal distribution of full-time, part-time and seasonal employment, 34%, 32% and 34% respectively. The pandemic measures have reduced the income for 52% of respondents, while 57% are worried about losing their job in the next 12 months. By the same token, the pandemic has dual impact on respondents, income decrease and being stressed from losing the job/income in the upcoming months of the pandemic.

Figure 27 shows the impact of pandemic measures on the work of the respondents: 3% lost their job which is the lowest score

Figure 25

Pandemic situation has impacted your school results and achievements

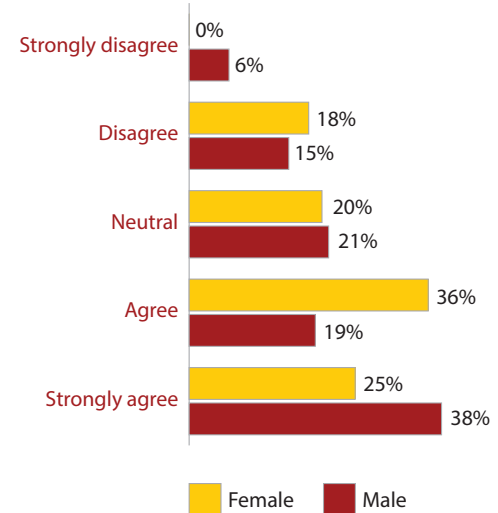
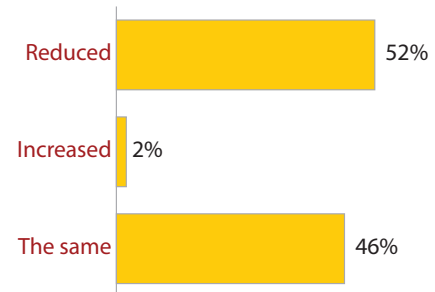


Figure 26

Has your salary/income changed during the pandemic?



in the region. On the positive side, one third of respondents were able to move their work to online platforms, thus ensuring income continuity for their families. From those that lost their jobs, only 25% registered their unemployment status. When seeking a job, 59% believe that the main reason for their unemployment is the limited number of available jobs. Majority of respondents (79%) did not take part in any employment related measures in Montenegro. From the remaining 21% being supported in this sector, 46% received direct financial aid, 19% wage subsidies, and 15% deferment of loans/or other type of payments.

Figure 28 indicates the capability of Roma respondents to pay their living expenses. 80% of them prioritise and regularly cover their expenses for food, hygienic products (50%) and utilities (45%). Still, utility costs are the biggest issue for 37% of the respondents as they have delays in covering these costs.

Figure 27

How has Covid-19 pandemic impacted your work?

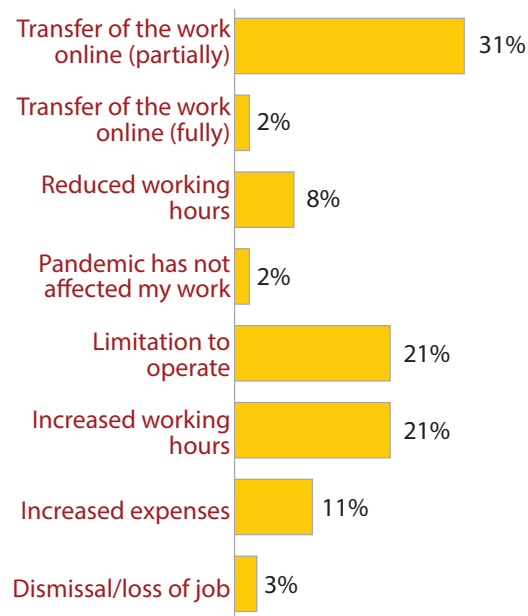
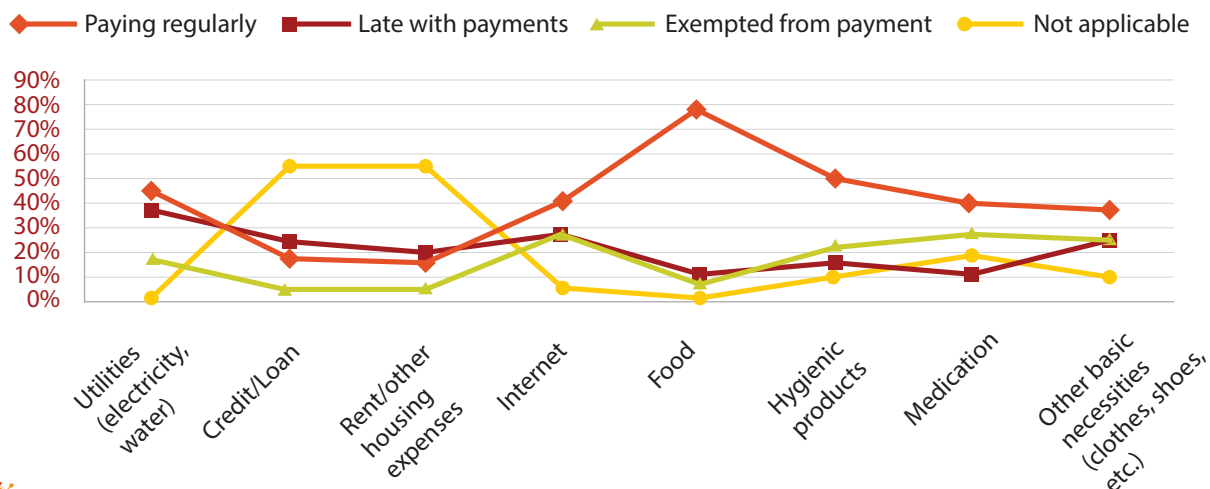


Figure 28

Coping with financial obligations during the pandemic



4.4.3 Health

The access to Covid-19 protective supplies is highest (or easiest) for face masks, 82% cumulatively. Ranging between 20% and 30%, the respondents have good access to other types of protective supplies. Only 24.6% confirm establishment of Covid-19 medical facility close to their neighbourhood, thus in total 30 persons have been offered different types of medical support. One third of them had medical check-ups, 23% Covid-19 tests, 7% information related to medical care, and 3% received Covid-19 vaccination. Almost 80% of responses range between good and excellent with regard to the performance of health services they received. Close to 46% have benefited from health-related measures, mostly getting hygienic and medicine items. The same percentage, 46%, is willing to receive Covid-19 vaccine while 21% are not and 33% are neutral. From both groups (disagree and neutral), 32% do not believe in the effectiveness of the vaccines, 26% have concerns about the side effects, and 21% do not believe they are exposed to Covid-19.

Figure 29

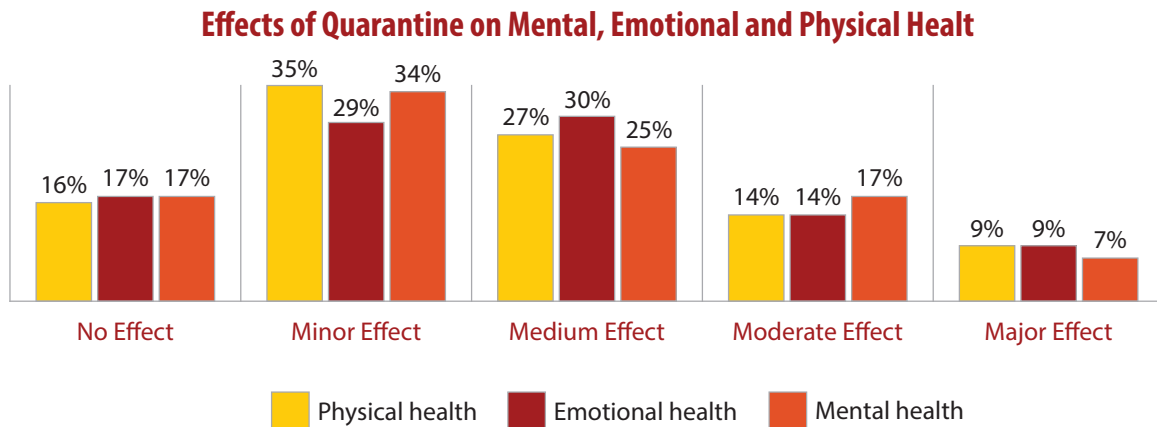
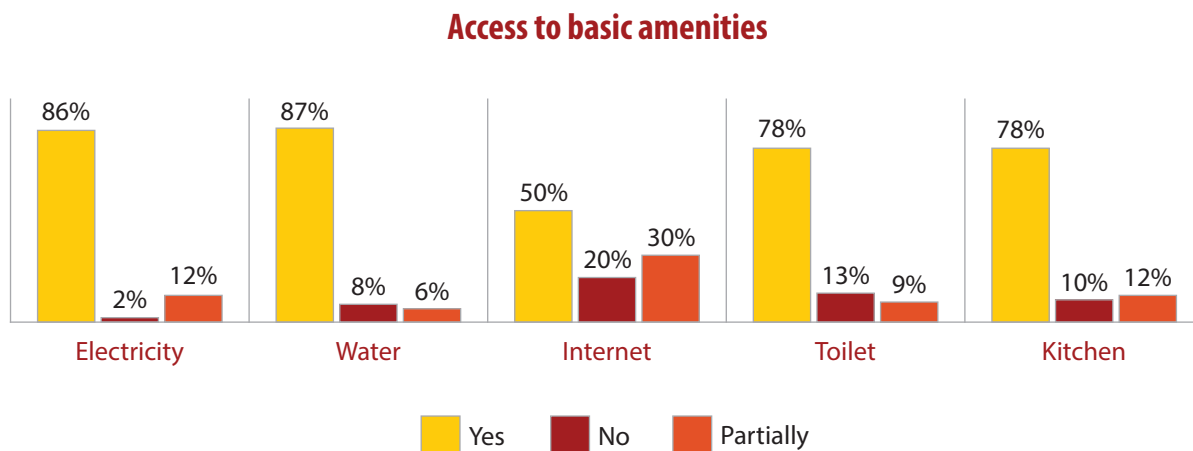


Figure 29 shows the size of affected respondents regarding the mental, emotional, and physical health caused by restrictive measures. The results show highest percentage on each type of health, ranging between minor to medium effects in the last 12 months. Until the moment of survey data collection, 21% of the respondents got infected with Covid-19, from which most were treated at home (92%) and just 8% at public hospitals.

4.4.4 Housing

The ratio of segregated and desegregated housing is 66% vs. 34%. Dominantly, 85% of respondents live in houses, 11% in temporary establishments and 3% in apartments. The results of the question related to the access to basic amenities are illustrated in Figure 30 below.

Figure 30



The overall findings reveal regular access to basic amenities, noting that approximately 10% of the respondents have no access to toilets, kitchen, and water. The ongoing Covid-19 pandemic did not influence the housing situation in Montenegro, both regarding ownership and legalisation procedure. The number of evictions is less than 1% of the sample, while most problematic issue in respect to legalisation process is attributed to bureaucratic regulations (67%). The ratings for housing/living conditions are leaning towards good range, though the size of neutral responses is significantly high (mode score is around 35%). On the other side of the spectrum, one quarter of respondents report bad living conditions in their houses, where humidity and running water are most critical. Consequently, 32% do not have conditions for self-isolation in case of being infected with Covid-19. Vast majority of respondents (95%) did not benefit from any governmental house-related measures during the pandemic. Two persons received social housing support and 4 persons received rent subsidy.



4.5 North Macedonia

4.5.1 Education

The pandemic has influenced the studying time for 59% of respondents, as online classes are more difficult to understand for 58%. Consequently, according to the opinion of 49% of respondents the pandemic has had an impact on the school results. Evidently, while examining the responses in the field of education, the highest percentage of responses is neutral, which specifies the dominant attitude of the surveyed participants in North Macedonia.

Figure 31

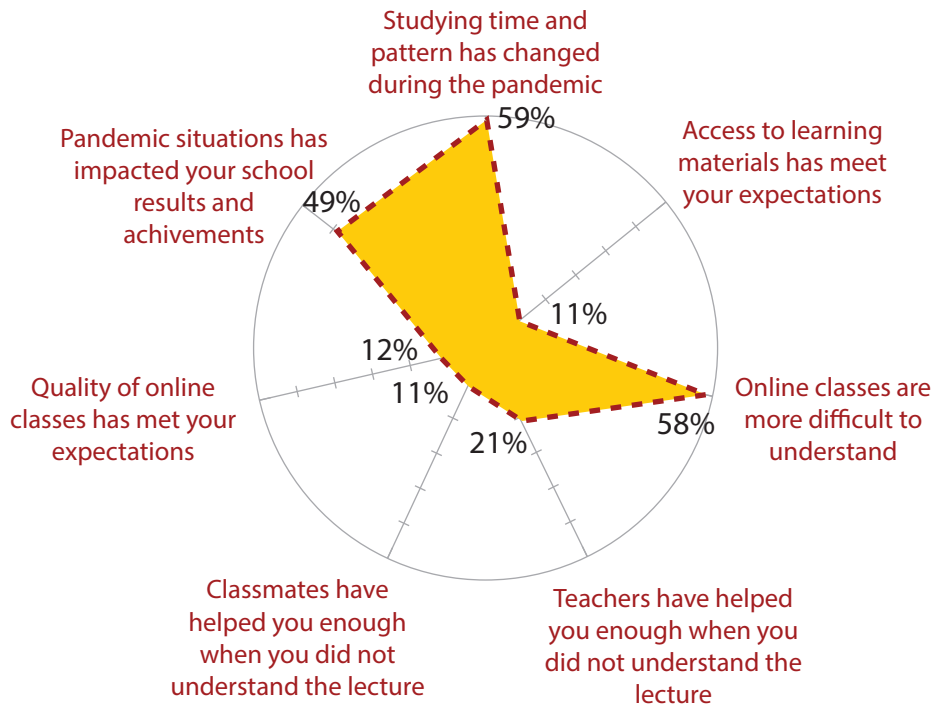
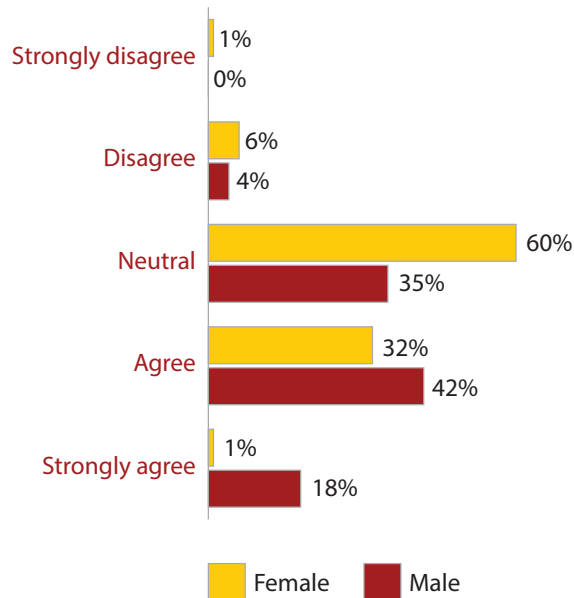


Figure 32 shows the gender ratio regarding the impact of the pandemic on school results of the survey participants. In this case, the higher effect is among males (60%) in contrast to the females (33%). Thirty-six percent of respondents will let their children go to school once they reopen, whereas 17% are against physical attendance during the pandemic. Sixty-eight percent have benefited from measures to support school learning, out of which 50% received digital tools, 23% learning materials and 16% learning accessories. International and local organisations are most active supporters in this regard providing support to 45% and 24% of the beneficiaries respectively. Nine percent of the respondents dropped out of school since the pandemic started, primarily due to difficult financial situation.

Figure 32

Pandemic situation has impacted your school results and achievements



4.5.2 Employment

Survey results on employment situation in North Macedonia disclose work engagement on full-time basis (48%) and seasonal work (47%). The remaining 5% have part-time jobs. The pandemic situation decreased the salaries/income for 59% of the respondents, thus 61% of the respondents are concerned about the possibility of losing their job in the next 12 months.

Figure 33

Has your salary/income changed during the pandemic?

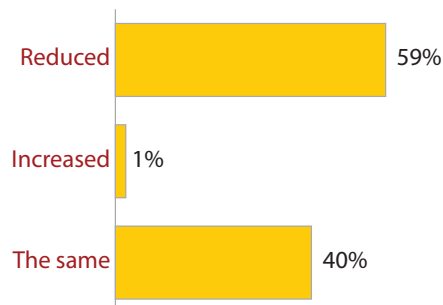


Figure 34 shows the impact modalities on respondents' job, irrespectively of formal or informal jobs. Sixty-one percent of those being dismissed have registered their unemploy-

ment status to the institutions in charge. When asked about the main reasons for their unemployment, 26% believe it is due to the lack of skills, 23% due to limited number of available jobs. Approximately 12% of respondents have benefited from employment-related measures in the last 12 months, 42% received deferment of loans/payments, 36% got direct financial aid, around 14% received wage subsidy and 8.5% rent subsidy.

Figure 35 shows the balance of payment of monthly financial obligations for the costs of living. As shown, 63% are late with payments for utility costs, 54% for necessities such as clothes, shoes, 46% for paying the food, 40% for hygienic products and 33% for medications. In comparison to the other economies, North Macedonia respondents are in the worst situation regarding late payments for most of the living expenses. The percentage of exempted payments through government measures is rather minor, thus insufficient to mitigate the highly critical issue of late payments.

Figure 34

How has Covid-19 pandemic impacted your work?

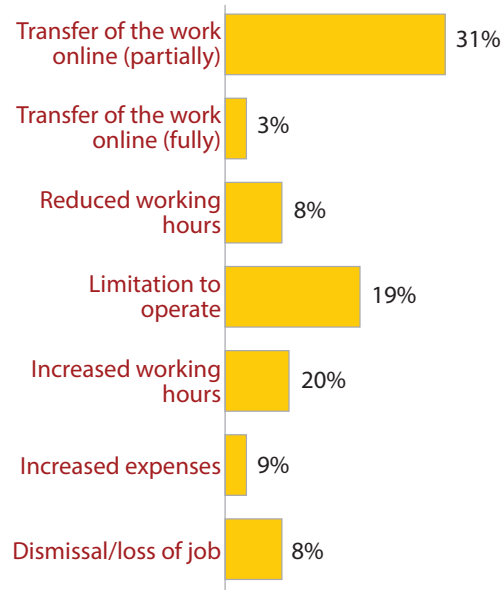
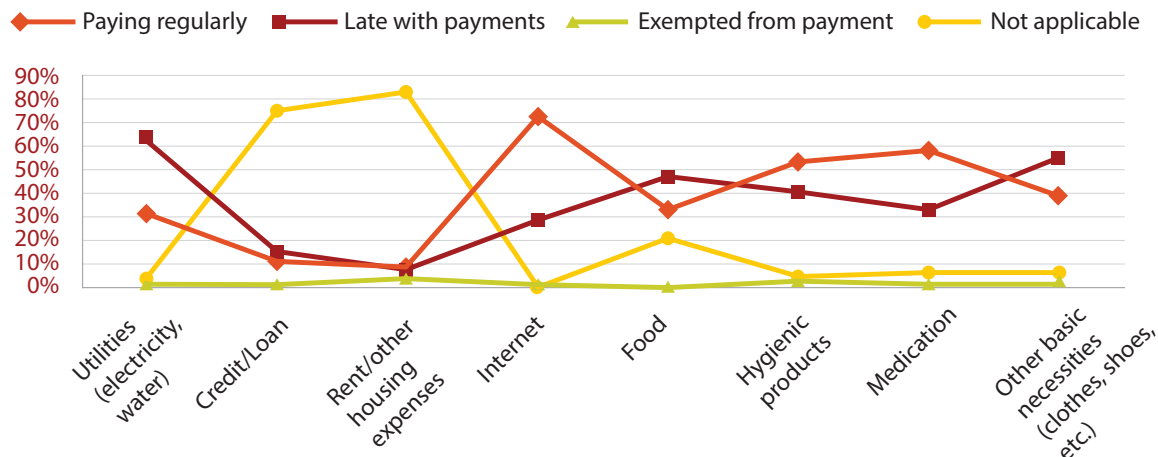


Figure 35

Coping with financial obligations during the pandemic



4.5.3 Health

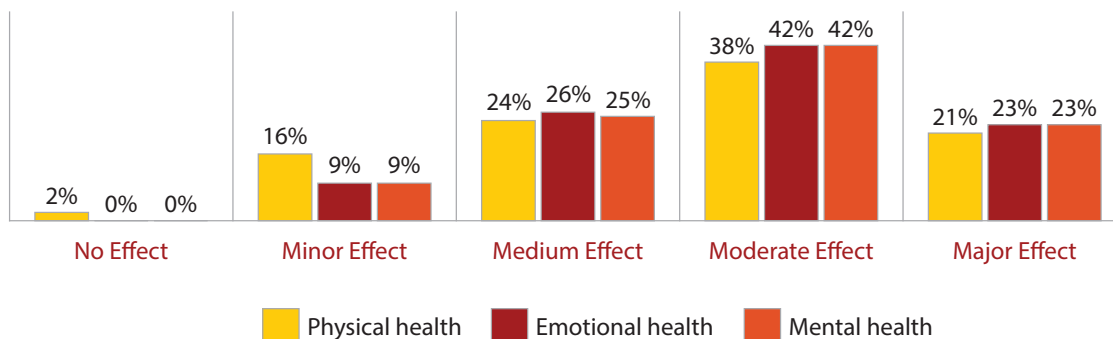
Survey results show highest access to face masks (40%) while similar percentage of respondents claim moderate access to hand sanitisers. Difficult access is reported to disinfectants and gloves, 48% for both. Fifty-eight percent of the respondents say that Covid-19 medical facility has been established close to their living area, thus most of them have been offered different types of medical services. Sixty-nine percent had Covid-19 tests, 13% have been informed about medical care, 12% had medical checks and 6% received Covid-19 vaccination.

Satisfaction perceptions regarding the performances of health services is 50-50, meaning that half of them scored good performances and the other half scored not good. Sixty-seven percent of the respondents have been beneficiaries of health-related measures in receiving hygiene products and medicine. Forty percent of them are keen to be vaccinated against Covid-19, 25% do not want and 35% are undecided. Fifty-seven percent are concerned about the side effects of the vaccine, while additional 16% do not believe in their effectiveness.

Figure 36 presents the percentage of respondents experiencing the impact of restrictive measures on mental, emotional, and physical health. The results show highest percentage of moderate impact for all types of health (mean=40%), and approximately 24% having medium/major effects. Twenty-four percent of the respondents have been infected with Covid-19, from which 90% have been treated at home and the remaining 10% at hospitals.

Figure 36

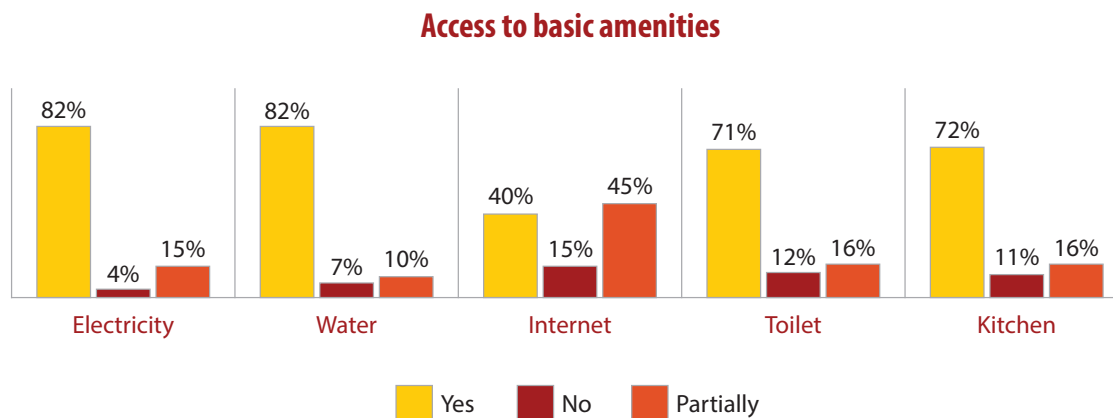
Effects of Quarantine on Mental, Emotional and Physical Health



4.5.4 Housing

Most of the Roma in North Macedonia live in houses (87%). From the total number of respondents, 37% live in segregated settlements. Figure 37 shows the current access to basic housing amenities. The results show no access to water (7%), toilet (12%) and kitchen (11%). No access to water and toilets during the pandemic crisis is decreasing the effectiveness of measures against the virus, while increasing the risks of continuous spread of the disease.

Figure 37



Sixty-five percent of the respondents claim ownership of the current living establishments, while 54% can provide documents for legal ownership of the houses and 37% for land. Nineteen percent of the respondents have initiated the legalisation process for their property, while 45% did not. Those being in the process of legalisation complain about bureaucratic documentation (50%), incomplete documentation (26%) and Covid-19 restrictions (5%). Within the last 12 months the housing situation has changed for 12% of those surveyed, out of which 43% have been evicted and 39% moved to a new place.

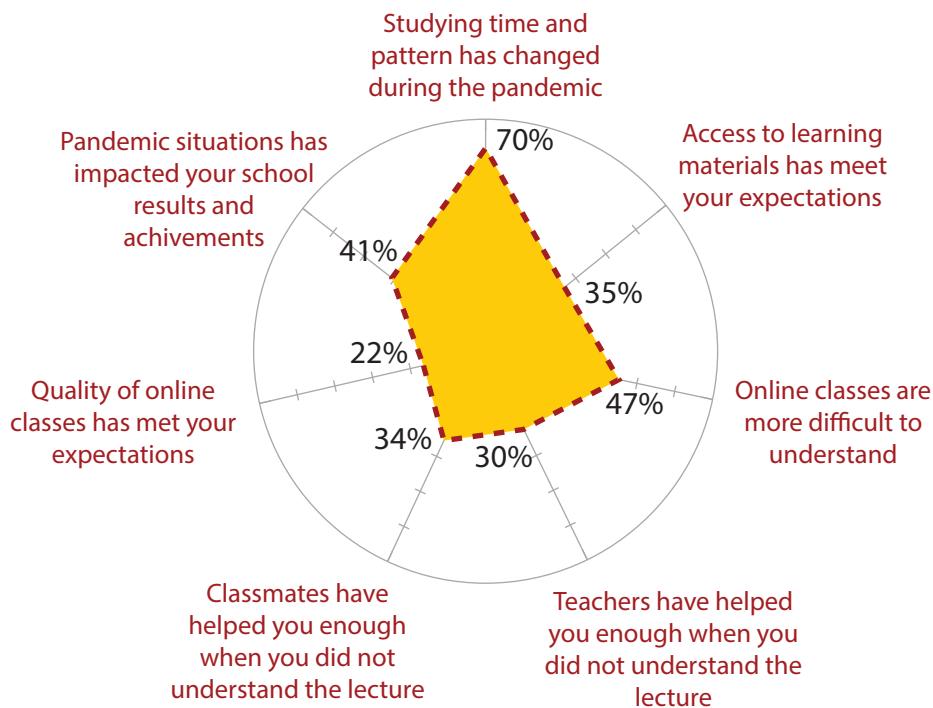
Forty-three percent of the respondents do not have housing conditions for self-isolation in case of Covid-19 exposure. The survey results show that 96% of respondents have not been included in any housing-related measure. From those being supported, 19 persons got reduced utility bills, 7 persons received social housing support, 5 have been exempted from paying utility bills, and 2 persons received rent subsidy.

4.6 Serbia

4.6.1. Education

Figure 38 provides visual overview of the impact of the pandemic on education. By the same token, 70% of respondents believe that the pandemic has influenced the studying time and format, while biggest support has been provided by classmates (34%) compared to teachers' support (30%). Online classes are more difficult for almost 47% of respondents and the quality of online classes has met the expectations of approximately 22% of participants. Forty-one percent of the respondents believe that the pandemic has impacted their school results and achievements.

Figure 38



Notably, Serbian sample is the single one with majority of female respondents compared to the other economies of the region (56% female and 44% male respondents). Nonetheless, Figure 39 displays the impact of the pandemic on school results/achievements separately for each gender. According to the results, the pandemic has higher impact on male respondents (47%) in contrast to female respondents (36%).

Concerning primary education, 51% of the respondents will let their children go to school once they reopen. Forty-seven percent of the surveyed participants have been supported through education-related measures, out of which 37% received learning materials, 28% digital tools and 27% learning accessories. Local organisations and local governments have been most supportive in the field of education, 40% and 37% respectively. During the pandemic 102 students/pupils, accounting for 9% of the total surveyed participants, dropped out from primary education, mostly due to bad financial situation (72%).

4.6.2 Employment

Serbian survey results show 50% of full-time employment and 44% of seasonal work among participants. The remaining 6% have part-time jobs. The pandemic restrictions have reduced the income/salaries for 33% of the respondents while 62% are worried about losing their employment in the next 12 months.

Figure 41 shows the how the pandemic has impacted participants' work. The work of 32% of participants has been partially transferred to online platforms, 19% face limitations to work, and most critically, 8% (88 workers) lost their jobs. Thirty-five percent of those who lost their jobs have registered their un-

Figure 39

Pandemic situation has impacted your school results and achievements

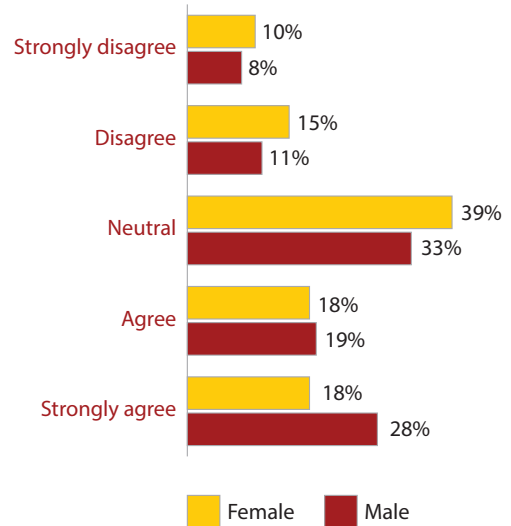
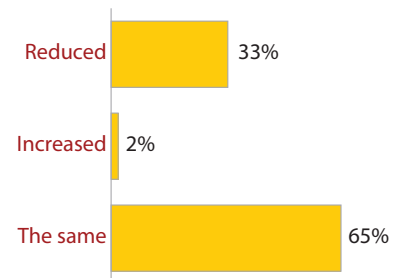


Figure 40

Has your salary/income changed during the pandemic?



employment status. As the main cause of their unemployment, 28% of respondents mentioned limited number of available jobs in Serbia, 19% lack of skills, and 13% limited information. Ninety-one percent of the survey participants have not received any employment support in the last 12 months. Out of 99 participants being assisted in this area, 42 persons received direct financial aid, 26 additional working tools, 13 deferment of payments, 11 wage subsidies, etc.

Figure 42 shows how the surveyed participants have dealt with their financial obligations during the pandemic crisis. The analysis shows that less than 10% of the respondents have been exempted from paying their living expenses. Concerning the late payments, most critical situation is in utility costs (49%) and basic necessities (45%). One quarter of the surveyed participants have delays in covering their food expenses.

Figure 41

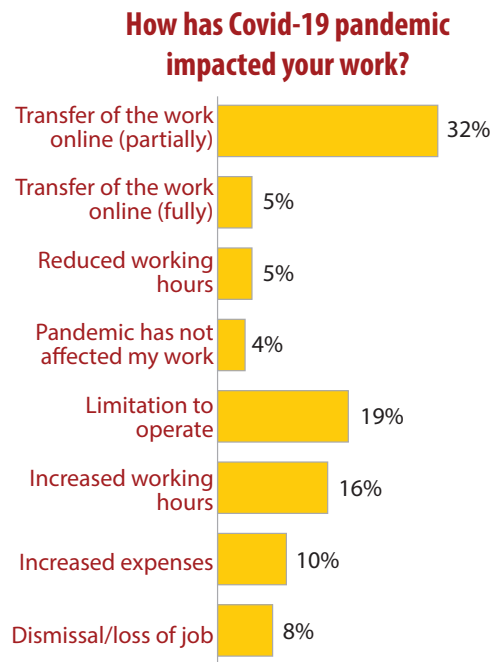
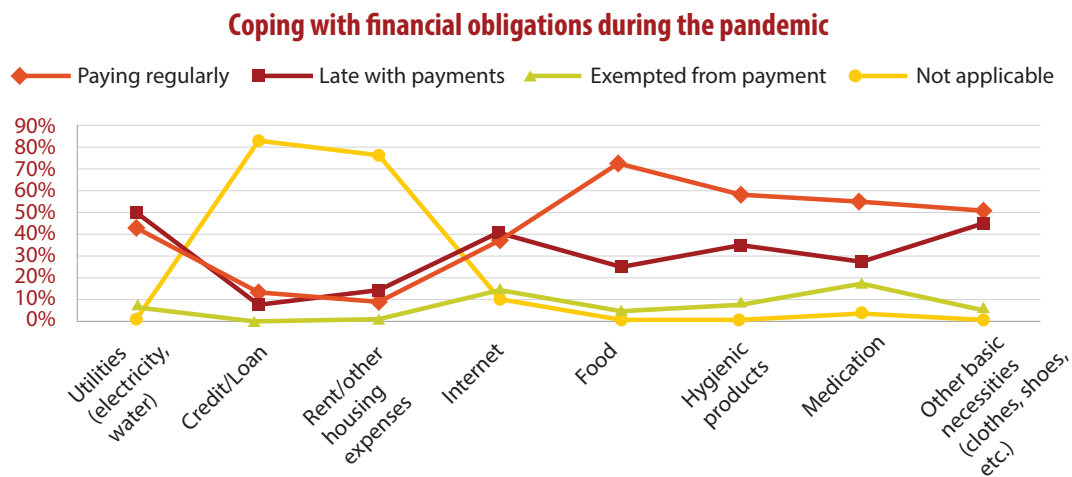


Figure 42



4.6.3. Health

The results on access to health protective supplies is relatively good in Serbia. Most accessible are the face masks for 82% of participants, hand sanitisers for 70%, gloves for 57% and disinfectants for 59%, which on the other side are hardly accessible for 26% of respondents (Figure 43).

In total, 834 persons have benefited from medical services offered in Covid-19 facilities. Thirty-four percent of them had medical check-ups, 32% got vaccinated, 23% had Covid-19 tests and 11% were informed about medical care. The overall rate for the performance of health care institutions is good for 82% of the participants. Thirty-seven percent or 401 persons received health-related support in the last 12 months, mostly hygienic products (49%) and medicines (34%). Forty-three percent of those surveyed are keen to get vaccinated, 34% are indecisive and around 23% do not want to be vaccinated. The biggest concerns are around side effects of the vaccine (43%), 27% are against and 12% do not believe in the effectiveness of the vaccine.

Figure 44 is a visual comparison of the impact of quarantine restrictions on mental, emotional, and physical health of respondents. Twenty percent of the sample have been infected with Covid-19 out of which 56 persons have been treated in hospitals and the remaining 159 stayed at home.

Figure 43

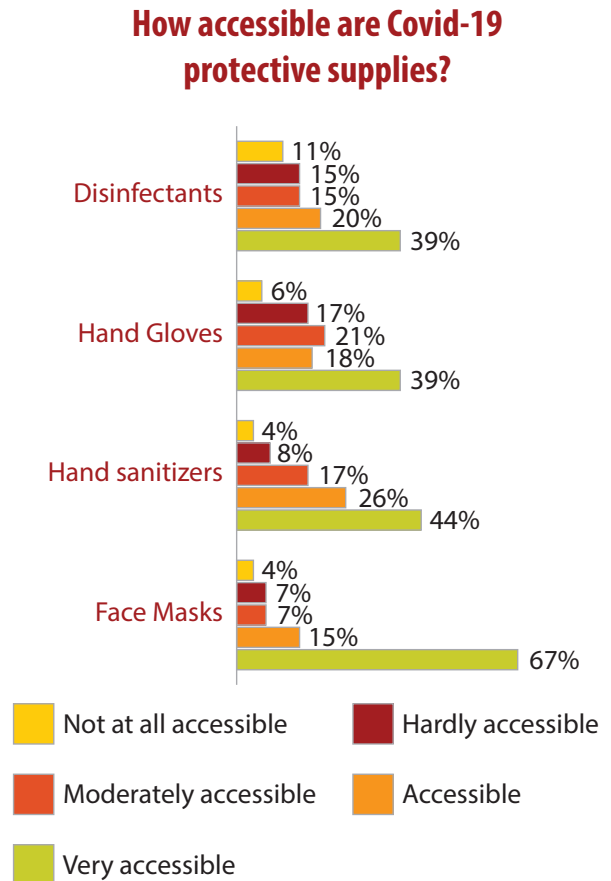
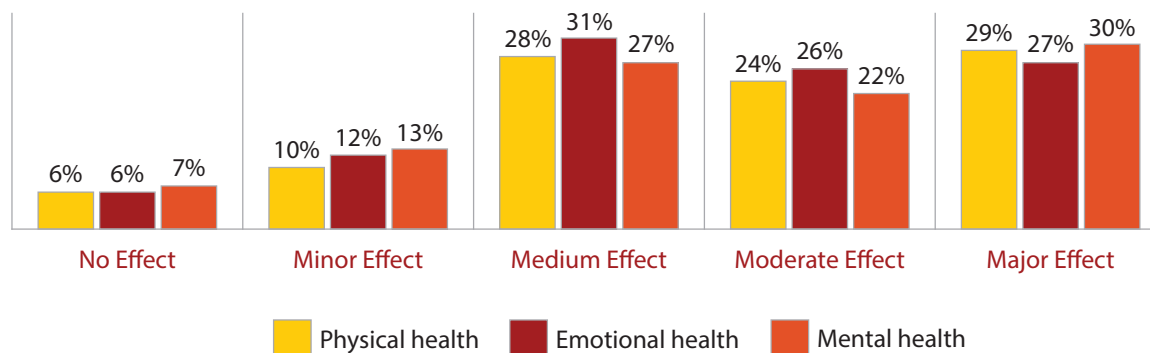


Figure 44

Effects of Quarantine on Mental, Emotional and Physical Health

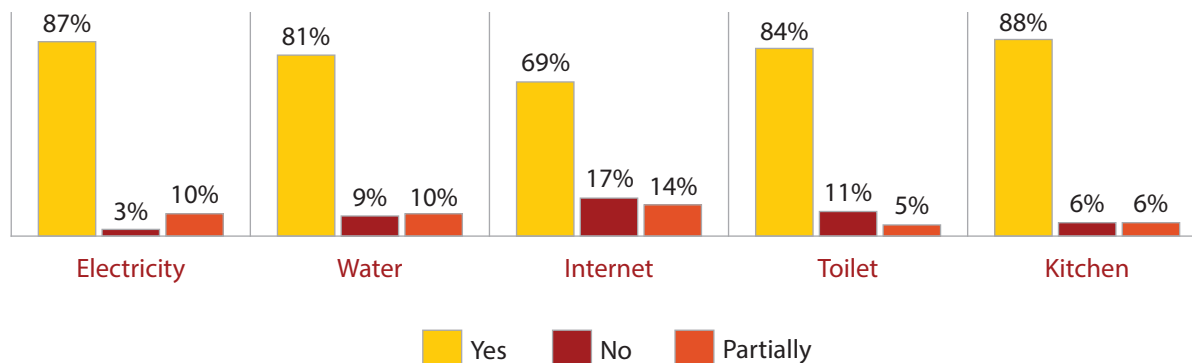


4.6.4 Housing

According to the survey results, 73% of respondents live in houses, 15% in apartments and 12% in temporary establishments. The ratio between segregated and desegregated settlements is 44 versus 56 percent. Figure 45 shows the access to basic amenities during the pandemic crisis. Toilets (11%) and water (9%), as crucial amenities for decent life and fight against the pandemic, are still not accessible to more than 100 respondents.

Figure 45

Access to basic amenities



When asked about the ownership of their living properties, 71% claim to own the houses/apartments, but only 52% can provide ownership documentation for their houses, including 30% for the land where they reside. Twenty-one percent of the respondents have submitted applications for legalisation of their property, regarding which 57% complain that bureaucratic regulations affect the process, 24% have incomplete documentation and 11% believe that the procedure is delayed due to pandemic crisis. The housing situation did not change in the last 12 months as reported by 94% of the participants. Five persons/families have been evicted, 33 moved to a new place, and 20 received housing aid. When rating the living conditions of their homes, highest number of participants declare bad humidity situation (35%). Just 11% of the survey participants received housing-related support since the pandemic started. Seventy persons received social housing support, 28 families had their utility bills reduced, and 23 persons have been exempted from paying utility bills.

5. Conclusions

The survey collected evidence is just the very first step of the learning process about the Covid-19 impact(s). The survey outcomes presented here provide early documentation of the socioeconomic impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on Roma. The collected opinions portray local, first-hand experiences and challenges encountered in the respective economies. While interpreting survey results, we considered number of limiting factors in making concluding remarks, which are important to reference at this stage of learning. First, the pandemic is still an evolving process without foreseeable end-date while the fight against Covid-19 is still in a making-stage. Second, the speed and intensity of the pandemic are unpredictable features, but given the ongoing dynamics, at the time of writing the report this collection of opinions might be easily outdated. Third, the results are likely to be exposed to further processing and treatment from various instances, thus it is very important when and how this dataset of opinions will be used and integrated in the upcoming policies for Roma integration. These are the main conclusions drawn from the survey:

Conclusion 1.

Since the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic **the overall situation of Roma has been worsening rather than improving.**

The Covid-19 pandemic is a major contributor to such development. The multidimensional traits of the pandemic are posing particular dangers to the poor people. The initial results of the survey show that the **pandemic is a new road-block** to the ongoing social inclusion policy efforts in the Western Balkans economies. As such, the pandemic has **worsened** all forms of (pre)**existent inequalities**. In the medium to long run, **if not timely and suitably adjusted**, it is very likely that current **social inclusion policies will fail to deliver** their objectives, which will further increase negative public opinion due to **inefficient use of public funds**.

Conclusion 2.

The **under-resourced Roma communities remained under-supported** by anti-Covid-19 measures.

Evidently, the measures against the pandemic have ambitiously targeted a wide range of social groups, without paying **attention to their specifics**. Even though each economy from the region budgeted specific measure for supporting vulnerable groups, the **implementation of the measures is low**. From today's perspective it is clear that the institutions in charge have **insufficiently met** the **expectations and needs** of the poor due to modest administrative capacities



and politically controlled institutions (both central and local). Residents of **segregated settlements**, women, children, and elders, are **to a large extent “forgotten”** by the provided measures as the survey percentage of unsupported ranges between 90% (employment) and 60% (education and health). The **mobilisation and activity** of local structures is a **positive example** of how to organise and act during the mass crises. Yet, this **initial enthusiasm and solidarity was short-lived** due to the **limited resources and power** of local authorities, despite the fact that the actions of self-organisation were initiated sincerely.

Conclusion 3.

The pandemic has **disproportionately affected** the survey participants.

The largest (negative) consequences are detected in the area of **employment and education**. For example, both formal and informal workers lost their income, with difference that **informal workers’ earning is based on a daily level opportunities**, which indicates **no savings or reserves to cover the costs of food** and other basic needs during the stay-at-home order. On the other side, those who **lost their formal employment** are **eligible to benefit** from different **welfare programmes and government subsidies** while **informal workers do not hold such entitlements in most of the cases**. Expectedly, lost income has negative implications to other living essentials.

Similar patterns of **disproportional implications** are observed in the area of education. Aiming to mitigate the implications on studying time and teaching format, the **importance of home learning environment and parents’ engagement** became more important than ever. Decent home environment prerequisites included quiet and warm room, access to electricity, stable internet connection and parents’ assistance in managing IT devices. This is **hard to make reality in segregated households**, as it requires comprehensive and continuous institutional investments. The key point is that one-off and short-term measures have different effects on the reality of segregated and integrated settlements.

A common pattern of **mental and emotional stress** is **highly present** among the surveyed participants, irrespective of **age, gender, or employment status**. Those who lost their jobs live **under stress** due to **lack of income**, those who kept their jobs live with the **fear of losing their jobs** in case the pandemic goes on, while those who are long-term unemployed **lost any hope of being soon employed or hired**. Living under **continuous mental and emotional stress** damages general human health and wellbeing.

The main conclusion is that the **pandemic has caused a setback in employment, education, and health** issues, while the **housing situation has remained stagnant** in the last 12 months. In general, this is a **grave setback** in the agenda for **social and economic equality of Roma** in the economies of the Western Balkans.

6. Recommendations

The proposed set of recommendations considers the ongoing policy efforts and initiatives for post-Covid-19 recovery. As the pandemic has both global and local implications, it is clear that the recovery plans require collaborative environment amongst key stakeholders and consequent translation of global plans to national and local context. Evidently, health and safety (will) continue to be of primary importance in adjusting future policy-design and policy-execution responses, which on the other side requires robust governance and accountability metrics at each level of policy implementation. The key recommendation to the Western Balkan governments, which they most probably already recognised, is to consider the Covid-19 crisis as a game changer in all aspects of institutional and political leadership. The lessons learnt from the varying degree of mitigating measures against the pandemic must be further examined and aligned with citizens' needs. Based on the survey findings and conclusions, the following set of recommendations is suggested to the key stakeholders in each sector.

6.1 Sector-specific recommendations

6.1.1 Education

- a. Governments and school leadership should ensure continuity of learning by investing all means and institutional capacities for removing system inadequacies and inequities in education.
- b. Advance institutional resilience and efficiency for delivering inclusive knowledge transfer and be better prepared to operate under uncertain and turbulent circumstances.
- c. Widen the access, including support structures, to digital learning resources to children and their parents coming from disadvantaged communities.
- d. Ensure social interaction and teachers' support in case of distance learning, tailored according to the age and gender of pupils.
- e. Provide fair and adequate financial subsidies for pupils from poor families aimed at accelerating learning through catch-up classes.
- f. Western Balkan governments are called upon to conceptualise and contextualise the ten OECD Principles for Effective and Equitable Educational Recovery from Covid-19 at national and local level (the OECD Principles provide guidelines on how to recover and reshape education systems to meet the needs of every child during and after a pandemic crisis).



6.1.2 Employment

- a. Governments should take immediate actions to standardise the support measures for business owners and workforce in the sense of setting timeline and continuity in the next three to five years.
- b. Establish local facility structures for better matching of jobs (demand) and skills (supply).
- c. Introduce Universal Basic Income norms and tools for socially disadvantaged and long-term unemployed citizens (instead of ongoing poorly funded welfare support).
- d. Incentivise transformation of informal work to formal jobs by minimising or fully removing taxes.
- e. Advance legal and operational mechanisms for fighting racism and discrimination in the labour market, including exploitation of women and child labour in the chains of grey economy.
- f. Regulate work-from-home standards, payments and working hours.

6.1.3. Health

- a. Public health institutions should ensure all Roma communities have fair and equitable access to health services and resources, including providing culturally and linguistically appropriate resources for childcare, women, and elders.
- b. Increase availability and accessibility of Covid-19 tests and vaccination for Roma population in segregated settlements.
- c. Help household members exposed to Covid-19 to isolate, and where necessary establish self-quarantine facilities.
- d. Provide clear and accurate information on regular basis regarding anti-Covid-19 measures and health services in Roma settlements.
- e. Introduce free treatment and free medicines for persons with Covid-19, especially households without health insurance, persons without birth certificates and the long-term unemployed.
- f. Partner with local Roma civil society organisations for channelling the public health information to Roma communities, monitoring the quality of health services, including early-warning mechanism for reporting explicit/implicit biases of health service delivery.
- g. Provide free of charge masks, hand sanitisers, gloves, and disinfectants to households being poor or settled in segregated settlements.

6.1.4 Housing

- a. Provide government guarantees through institutional subsidies to cover utility costs (electricity, water) for social cases, persons not registered in the registry of births, unemployed and under-employed families.

- b. Introduction of regulatory norms for protection of tenants from forced eviction and gentrification for social cases, persons not registered in the registry of births, unemployed and under-employed families.
- c. Provide free legal aid for the legalisation process, including tax exemptions for poor households.
- d. General urban planning should integrate detailed plans for segregated / remote Roma settlements, including continuous investments in basic infrastructure.

6.2 Roma strategic frameworks for equality, inclusion and participation and Covid-19 recovery plans recommendations

The next planning cycle of Roma strategic frameworks for equality, inclusion and participation in the region should by default coordinate and synchronise policy efforts with the **NextGenerationEU** investment plan for accession economies. In addition, the lessons drawn from the two previously implemented cycles of strategies (2007-2013 and 2004-2020) should serve the core thinking in adjusting and improving the effectiveness and efficiency of Roma-focused policies in the region.

First, Roma strategic frameworks for equality, inclusion and participation and related programmes/policies need **strong ownership, both political and institutional**. The basic preconditions for such ownership require a set of **competent and effective institutional structures** at central and local level, **funding mechanisms** as well sufficiently capable **capacities/instruments for implementation**.

Second, responsible institutions should do **regular needs assessments** at local and national level in order to ensure **data-based evidence and measurability** of implementation progress. **Monitoring and evaluation** structures should be established at local and central levels, **with uniformed set of indicators and measurement tools**.

Third, national platforms should define **top priorities** according to the urgency and development dynamics of the conditions of Roma in each economy in order to ensure **sustainable solutions** for the given problem. This means **mid-to-long-term investments** and focus to maximum two priority areas (i.e. employment and education) with prospect that economic advancement will decrease the problems in health and housing.

Fourth, given that no public institution or organisation possess sufficient capacities to address collective problems of Roma, it is high time to **advance the collaboration platforms** in which **shared leadership, responsibility and accountability metrics** shall be in place. In this regard, **international (bilateral and multilateral) organisations** will continue to have crucial contribution but also **intentional focus on accountability metrics** towards their own governments/citizens. Thus, Roma strategic frameworks for equality, inclusion and participation will gain both **vertical and**



horizontal institutional support for planning, programming, and implementation of Roma related policies. In other words, this means that Roma strategic frameworks for equality, inclusion and participation will have both **centralised and decentralised decision-making structures**, holding **legal and financial means** for mobilising different actors for specific programme initiative.



ROMA INTEGRATION

Regional Cooperation Council



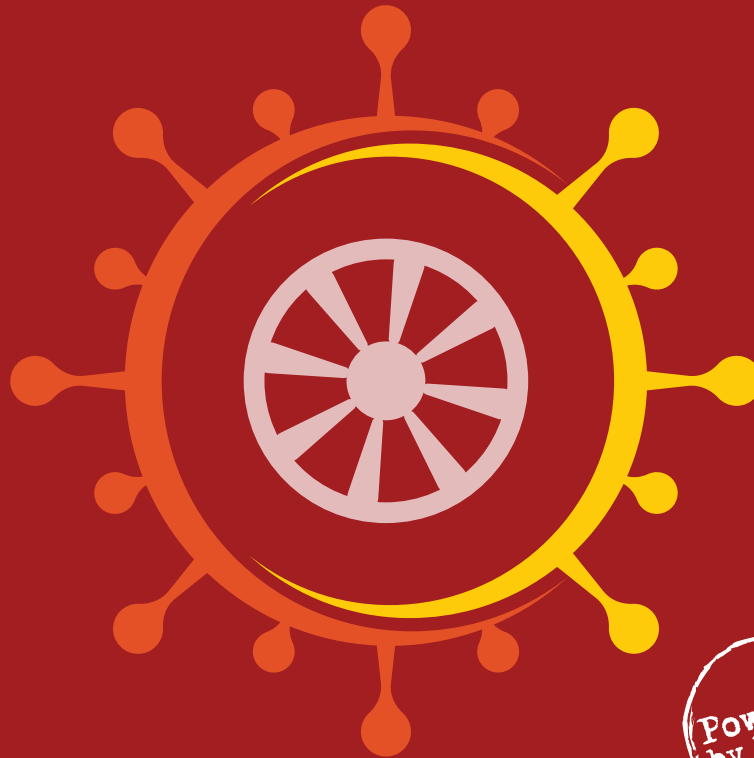
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