

2019

Survey on under-reporting discrimination among Roma



European Roma Information Office

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The European Roma Information Office (ERIO) is a European anti-discrimination and advocacy organisation which promotes political and public discussion on Roma issues by providing information to the EU institutions, civil society and governments. Through its wide network, it aims to combat racist discrimination against Roma through awareness raising, lobbying and policy development.

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Introduction

This report presents the findings of an online survey on under-reporting discrimination among the Roma.

ERIO developed and published a 25 questions survey between October 2018 and January 2019 with the aim of obtaining data from Roma regarding their experiences of discrimination. The survey was disseminated via ERIO's social media profiles (i.e. Facebook and Twitter) and electronically to a wide audience throughout the EU and beyond through ERIO's mailing list. Moreover, some responses were also obtained individually and in person through ERIO's networking mission trips. The survey was available in English, Romanes, Bulgarian, Spanish and French. It was sent to more than 300 Roma. At the end, it was completed by 105 persons.

A majority of the respondents represented Roma (90%), followed by Sinti (6%) and Travellers (4%). The sample was mostly gender balanced, 52% of our respondents were female and 48% were male of which 52% were aged 18-39 and 48% were aged 40-59.

The survey gathered 105 responses from 13 EU member states: Belgium, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Finland, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Netherlands, Portugal, Romania, Spain and UK. 10 responses came from 6 candidate and neighbourhood countries (Moldova, Montenegro, Republic of North Macedonia, Serbia, Turkey and Kosovo¹). A large part of the respondents lives in a non-segregated area (69%), in a big city (51%).

Key findings



The main reason for under-reporting is the respondents' belief that nothing will change followed by their unawareness of what to do.

¹ 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.

What does under-reporting mean?

The act of reporting a case of discrimination can be presented through various forms and channels. Under-reporting happens when the case of discrimination is not reported to an official body such as an Equality Body, an NGO, the police, a governmental office, etc.

The existence of under-reporting is common knowledge. Multiple studies in the field of discrimination have shown that *“the amount of people actually being discriminated is much higher than the one presented in official data”*.² For instance, a study led by the Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA) in 2010 revealed that 82% of the respondents to the survey who had been discriminated against *“did not report their most recent experience of discrimination anywhere”*³. In a different survey, the FRA found that between 66% and 92% of Roma (depending on the country surveyed) did not report their most recent experience of discrimination⁴. In addition to impact the data, under-reporting can often be a sign of underlying issues such as *“low levels of awareness of rights within the Roma and Traveller communities, time limits on the presentation of cases and issues of trust between the communities and the authorities”*.⁵

As demonstrated in this survey, the reasons for under-reporting among the Roma are various, going from a lack of awareness to the belief that reporting discrimination would not change anything. It is important to know these factors as they determine the type of policies and actions needed.

² European Network for Equality Bodies; *“Tackling the ‘Known Unknown’ – How equality bodies can address under-reporting of discrimination through communications”*, *Equinet Report*, 2012, available : http://www.equineteurope.org/IMG/pdf/tackling_the_known_unknown_final_merged.pdf

³ European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, *“Rights awareness and equality bodies” – Strengthening the fundamental rights architecture in the EU III*, 2010, available: <https://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2012/eu-midis-data-focus-report-3-rights-awareness>

⁴ European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, European Union Minorities and Discrimination Survey, *“The Roma”*, 2009, available: <https://rm.coe.int/ecri-general-policy-recommendation-nos-3-13-key-topics-fighting-racism/16808b763c>

⁵ European Network for Equality Bodies, *“International Roma day”*, available: <http://www.equineteurope.org/8-April-International-Roma-Day-835>

Profile of respondents

In terms of **gender**, the sample was fairly gender balanced with 50 men respondents (48%) and 55 women (52%). In terms of **age**, 55 respondents (52%) were aged 18-39 and 50 respondents (48%) were aged 40-59. In terms of **ethnicity**, 94 respondents reported themselves as Roma (90%), 7 as Sinti (6%) and 4 as Travellers (4%).

In terms of **nationality**, the respondents were nationals from 19 countries. 51% were Bulgarian, 12% Romanian, 7% Belgian, 5% Spanish, 3% Macedonian, 3% Hungarian, 3% Dutch, 3% Portuguese, 2% Moldovan, 2% Kosovan, 2% Czech, the remaining respondents (7%) were nationals from Finland, Greece, Italy, Ireland, Montenegro, Serbia, Turkey and the United Kingdom.

In terms of **country of residence**, most of the respondents live in Bulgaria (48%), followed by Belgium (14%), Romania (6%) and Spain (5%). Some respondents live in Hungary (4%), the Netherlands (3%), Portugal (3%), France (2%), Germany (2%), Ireland (2%), Czech Republic (2%), Moldova (2%). The remaining part of the respondents (7%) live in Finland, Italy, Kosovo, Macedonia, Poland, Serbia, Sweden, Turkey and the United Kingdom.

Living area (segregated/non-segregated): 72 respondents live in a non-segregated area (69%) and 54 respondents (51%) live in a big city.

In terms of **education**: 52 respondents have been to school for 11 to 19 years (49%), 28 respondents have been to school for over 20 years (27%), 22 respondents have been to school for 6 to 10 years (21%), the remaining respondents (3%) have been to school for less than 5 years.

Finally, in terms of **employment**, 61 respondents are currently in paid work (59%), 15 respondents are unemployed (14%), 13 are self-employed (12%), 12 are in education (11%), 2 are looking after their family/home (2%) and 2 are retired (2%).

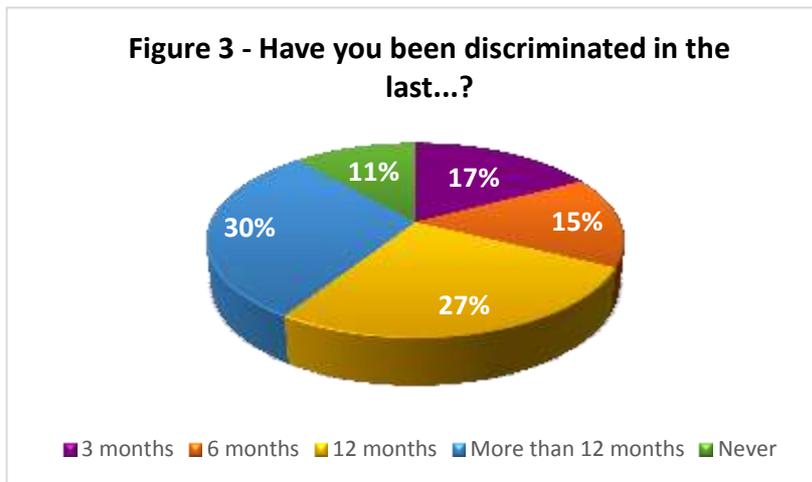
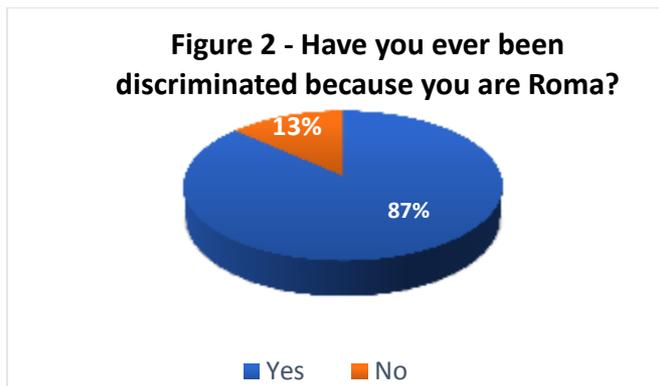
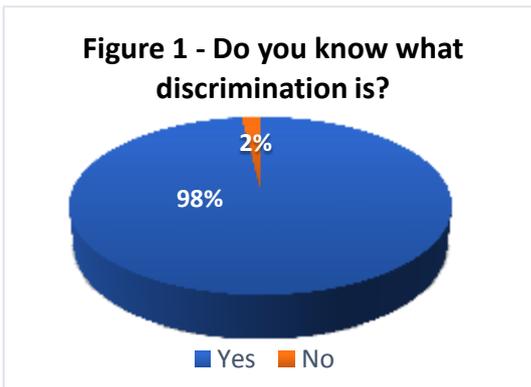
1. FINDINGS

1.1. Awareness and experience of discrimination

The graphs below correspond to the first three questions of the survey which aimed to gather information of the participants' awareness about discrimination and their experience with it. Most respondents (98%) reported knowing what discrimination is (Figure 1). Moreover, a large majority of respondents (87%) believe they have been discriminated against as a consequence of being Roma (Figure 2).

Among the respondents who said they have not faced discrimination (13%), it is interesting to note that a majority are women (79%). The gender difference seems to be in accordance with the results of the FRA Second European Union Minorities and Discrimination Survey published in 2017⁶ that indicates that "in Bulgaria, the Czech Republic and Spain, no gender differences are observed. In other countries in which Roma were surveyed, more Roma men than women felt discriminated against based on ethnic origin or skin colour".

The survey also informs us that most of the discrimination cases reported took place over 6 months ago (57%) (Figure 3).

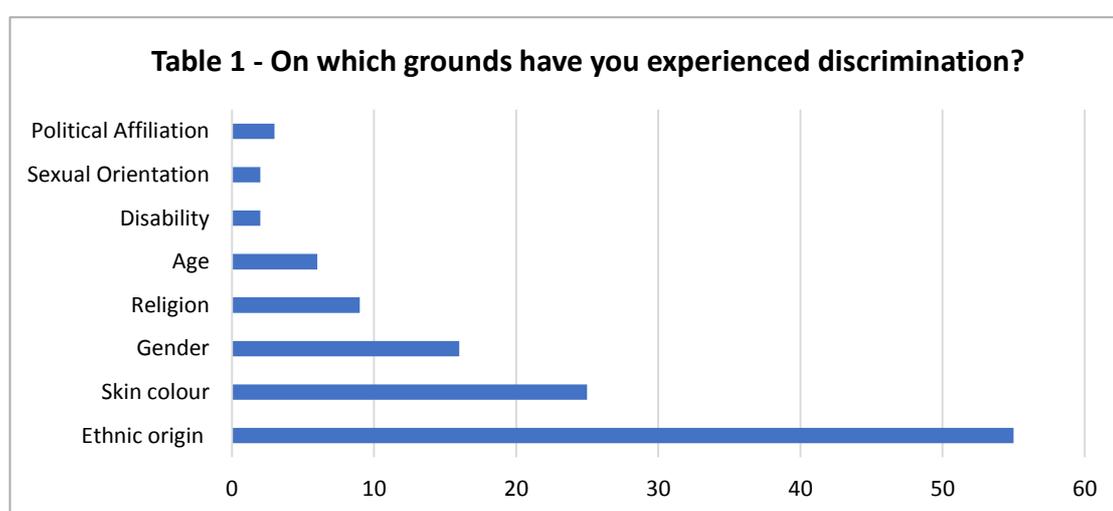


⁶ European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, *Second European Union Minorities and Discrimination Survey, 2017*, available: <https://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2017/eumidis-ii-main-results>

1.2. Multiple discrimination

The survey also looked for the possible existence of multiple grounds of discrimination. Here respondents were divided in their answers. Approximately half of them (48%) reported that they have been discriminated in more than one ground whereas 52% considered the discrimination they felt was exclusive on one ground.

52% of those reporting being discriminated on multiple grounds, feel one of their grounds of discrimination is their ethnic origin (Table 1). This suggests that being Roma is the most common ground on which they feel discriminated, followed by skin colour (24%), gender (15%), religion (9%), age (6%), political affiliation (3%), disability (2%) and sexual orientation (2%).



These results appear to be in accordance with the FRA Second European Union Minorities and Discrimination Survey published in 2017⁷ indicating that “*ethnic origin or immigrant background*” is the most common ground for discrimination in respondents’ daily lives, followed by religion and skin colour.

On the other hand, it seems interesting to note that only 15% of the respondents felt discriminated on gender. More precisely, less than a third of the women respondents (29%) felt discriminated against based on their gender in addition to their ethnic origin. This result may seem surprising considering the actual situation of Roma women in employment or education. Indeed, according to a survey led by the FRA in 2016, the employment rate of Roma women was only 16% whereas it is 34% for Roma men. Furthermore, there is also a large gender gap in education or training where 72% of Roma women are neither in employment nor in education or training, the rate is of 55% for Roma men⁸.

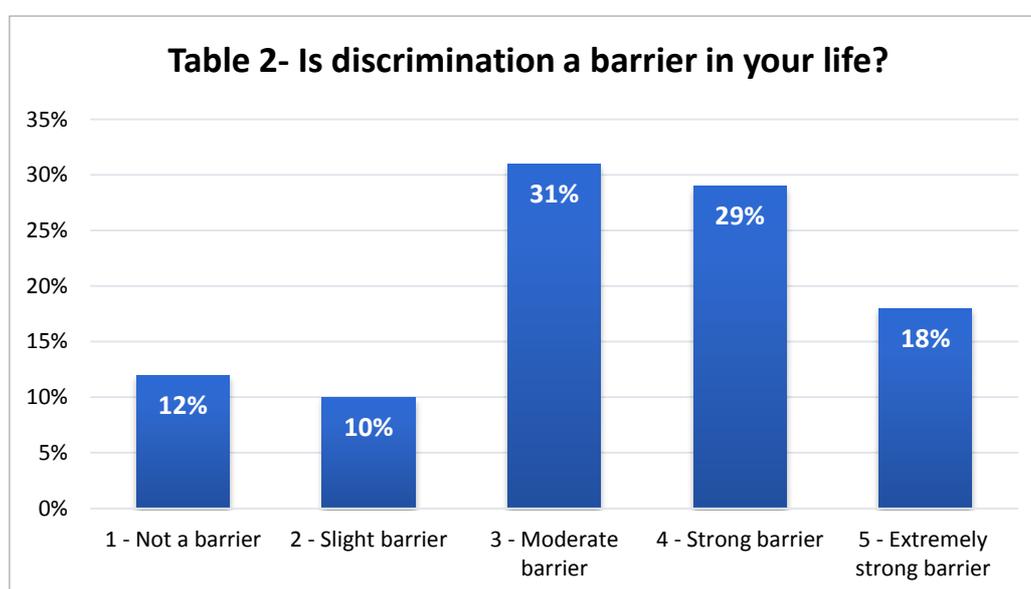
⁷ European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, *Second European Union Minorities and Discrimination Survey*, 2017, available: <https://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2017/eumidis-ii-main-results>

⁸ Second European Union Minorities and Discrimination Survey. Roma – Selected findings. European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2016: http://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/fra-2016-eu-minorities-survey-roma-selected-findings_en.pdf

That being said, the diversity of the results obtained show that discrimination is felt differently by the different members of the Roma community. Hence, there is a need to take these disparities into account when drafting legal and political responses.

1.3. Areas of discrimination

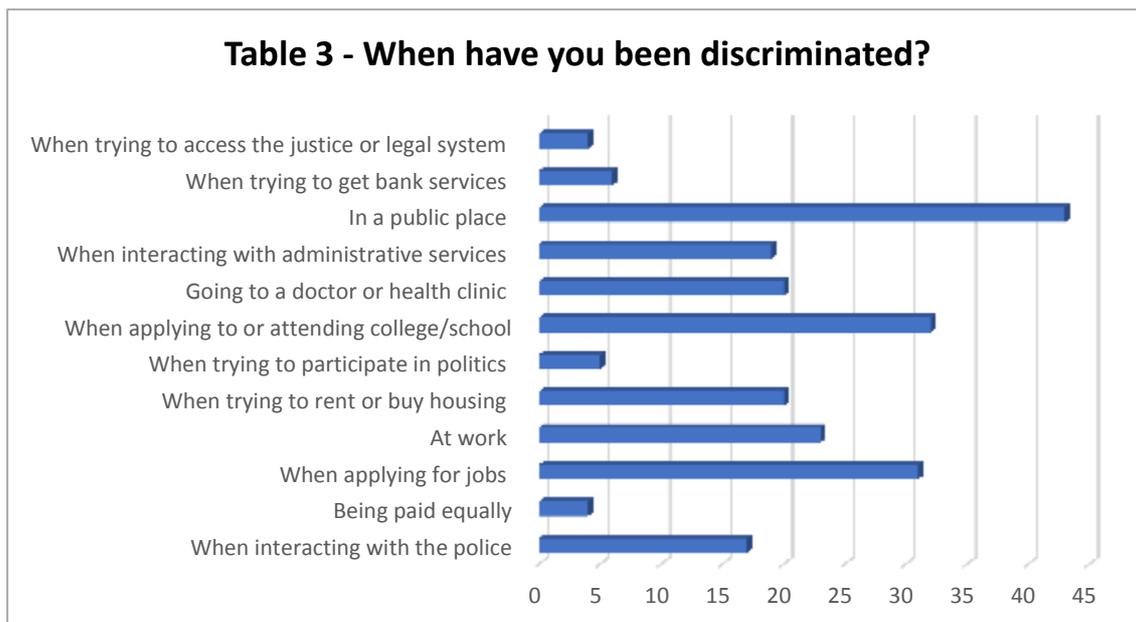
The survey also examined the subjective feeling of discrimination being a barrier in a person’s life when trying to access the most basic public services. We asked the respondents to rate their feeling on a scale from 1 to 5. 1 being discrimination is “not at all a barrier” and 5 being discrimination is an “extremely strong barrier”. As table 2 demonstrates, **47% of the respondents feel like discrimination is either a strong or an extremely strong barrier in their life**. 31% feel like it is a moderate barrier, 10% feel like it is a slight barrier and the remaining 12% do not feel discrimination as being a barrier in their life.



The main experiences of discrimination reported by respondents occur in **public places** (42%) (Table 3). This includes restaurants, cafés, bars, hotels, cinemas, swimming pools and other highly visited public places for leisure or entertainment. This similarly coincides with the results from the paper *Human Rights of Roma and Travellers*⁹ published by the Council of Europe where these public places were found to be very prone to directly and indirectly discriminate Roma and Travellers as well as to permit harassment.

⁹ Commissioner for Human Rights, “Human Rights of Roma and Travellers in Europe”, *Council of Europe publications*, 2012, available: <https://rm.coe.int/the-human-rights-of-roma-and-travellers-in-europe/168079b434>

Table 3 - When have you been discriminated?



Relevant cases of discrimination can also be found “when **applying/attending college or school**” (32%), “when **applying for jobs**” (30%) and “**at work**” (23%). According to the European Roma Rights Centre (ERRC) and their article on Systemic exclusion of Roma from Employment¹⁰, “the most prevalent incidence of employment discrimination against Roma is at the job search stage and in the recruitment practices that companies apply”. Many companies have a total exclusion policy of Roma when recruiting, which leaves Romani job-seekers outside of the application process regardless of their qualifications and competences. The same article also states that discrimination at work appears to be lower when analysed, but that is often because proving and reporting discrimination cases is significantly difficult due to the fear employees have to jeopardize their current employment status.

Employment discrimination is also demonstrated by the numbers. Indeed, according to a FRA survey looking at poverty and employment of Roma in 11 member states, unemployment rates are about three times higher for Roma than for the rest of the population¹¹.

Trying to access housing is another area of concern since 20% of the respondents have claimed to be discriminated when trying to rent or buy housing. The same percentage of respondents (20%) has been discriminated when trying to **access health services**. Housing and healthcare access are key elements to develop and integrate effectively in society and they remain one of the biggest challenges for Roma. As stated by the European Public Health Alliance, “Roma across Europe face disproportionate barriers to access to health services, which is exacerbated by the lack of insurance or ID documents but also due to

¹⁰ Hyde Ann, Systemic exclusion of Roma from employment, *ERRC*, available : <http://www.errc.org/roma-rights-journal/systemic-exclusion-of-roma-from-employment>

¹¹ European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, “Poverty and employment: the situation of Roma in 11 Member States”, *Roma Survey – Data in focus*, 2011.

distance, discriminatory attitudes and significantly higher financial barriers”.¹² When it comes to discrimination in access to housing, the results of the special Eurobarometer 296 conducted by the European Commission are telling. Indeed, it shows that “around a quarter (24%) of Europeans would feel uncomfortable having a Roma neighbour” whereas 6% would feel uncomfortable having a neighbour from a different ethnic origin in general¹³.

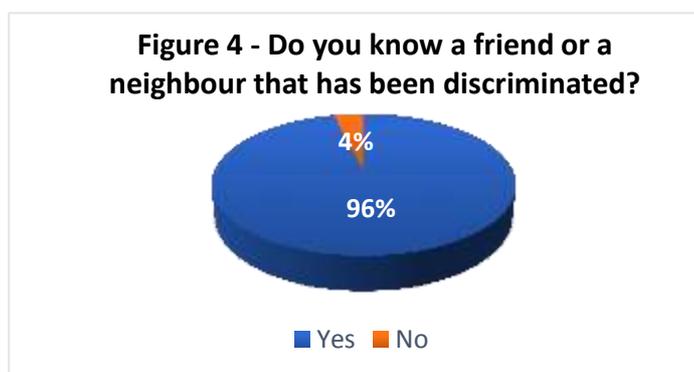
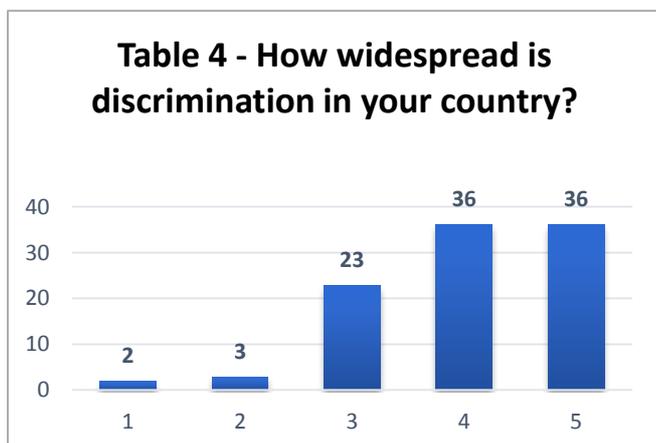
1.4. Perception of discrimination

Respondents then reported on the prevalence of their feelings of discrimination. To find out, we asked them to rate how widespread they considered discrimination to be in their country on a scale from 1 to 5. 1 being “not widespread at all” and 5 being “extremely widespread”.

As table 4 shows, **36% of the respondents consider discrimination to be extremely widespread, the same number (36%) consider it to be very widespread.** 23% consider discrimination to be moderately widespread and only the remaining 5% consider it to be either slightly widespread (3%) or not widespread at all (2%).

90% of respondents living in Bulgaria consider discrimination to be either very or extremely widespread there. On the other hand, only 40% of the respondents living in Belgium consider discrimination to be very or extremely widespread there. Finally, on the respondents living in Portugal and in Netherlands, it is interesting to note that none of them consider discrimination to be very or extremely widespread in their country.

To illustrate, figure 4 shows that 96% of the respondents have a friend or a neighbour that has been discriminated.

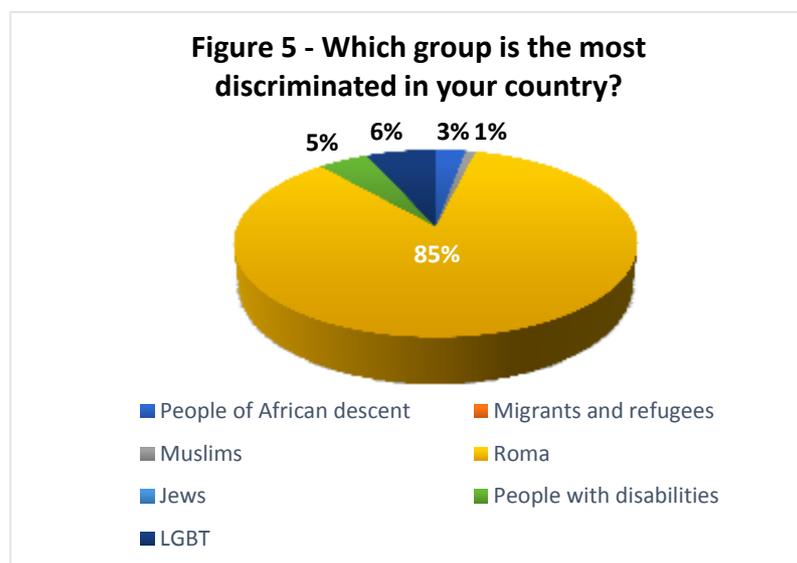


¹² EPHA, “The European Semester and Roma Health”, Briefing paper, November 2016, available: <https://epha.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/Roma-health-sem-report-EPHA.pdf>

¹³ European Commission, Special Eurobarometer 296, “Discrimination in the European Union: perceptions, experiences, attitudes”, July 2008, available: <https://tinyurl.com/y6d4fu3a>

As a follow up, we asked respondents whether they would intervene if they saw someone of their community being discriminated against. A large majority of them (89%) said they would intervene. Hence, it appears that respondents are more likely to do something if discrimination is happening against someone of their community rather than if the discrimination is directed against themselves. For the 11% who said that they would not intervene, the main reasons are that there would be no change (30%) and that they fear intimidation from the perpetrators (30%).

Discrimination against Roma was regarded to be the most widespread form of discrimination in the respondents' countries. Figure 5 shows that 85% of the respondents consider Roma to be the most discriminated group in their country, followed by LGBT (6%), people with disabilities (5%), Jews (3%) and Muslims (1%).



The FRA's "Second European Union Minorities and Discrimination Survey" shows that, on average, 24% of their respondents felt discriminated against because of their ethnic or immigrant background in 12 months preceding their survey. Within these 24%, Roma were the second group feeling the most discrimination, coming after people of North African origin and slightly ahead of people with Sub-Saharan African origin.¹⁴

Finally, the *Pew Research Center*, an American fact tank, has published a survey in 2014 in which they asked respondents from 7 member states about their feeling towards different communities. According to the study, there is more negative attitude towards Roma than Muslims or Jews. Indeed, in Italy 85% of the respondents surveyed indicated having an unfavourable view of Roma, the rate was at 66% in France, over 50% in Greece and in the UK and over 40% in Spain, Germany and Poland¹⁵.

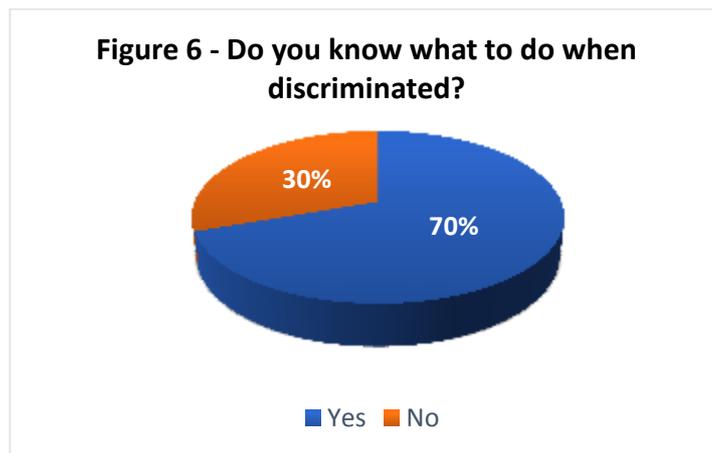
¹⁴ European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, *Second European Union Minorities and Discrimination Survey*, 2017, available: <https://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2017/eumidis-ii-main-results>

¹⁵ Pew Research Center, "A fragile rebound for EU Image on Eve of European Parliament Elections", Chapter 4 – Views of Roma, Muslims, Jews, 2014: http://www.pewresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2014/05/2014-05-12_Pew-Global-Attitudes-European-Union.pdf

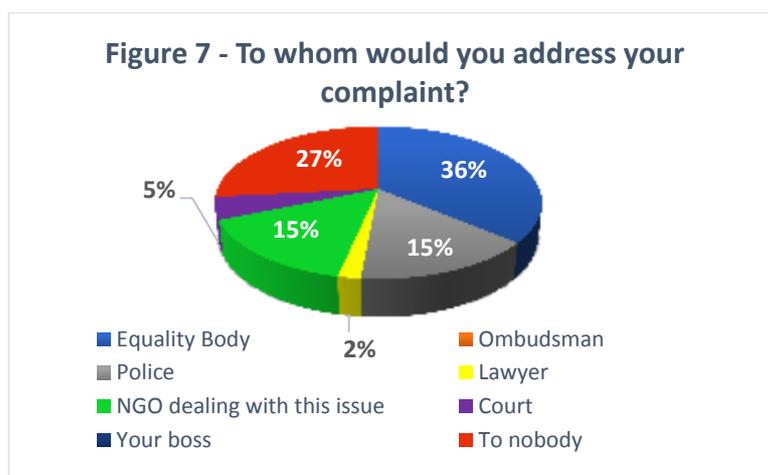
These results show the **widespread anti-Gypsyism and discrimination against Roma in the European Union.**

1.5. Reporting discrimination

A **large majority (70%)** of the respondents claimed to know what to do when discriminated (figure 6).



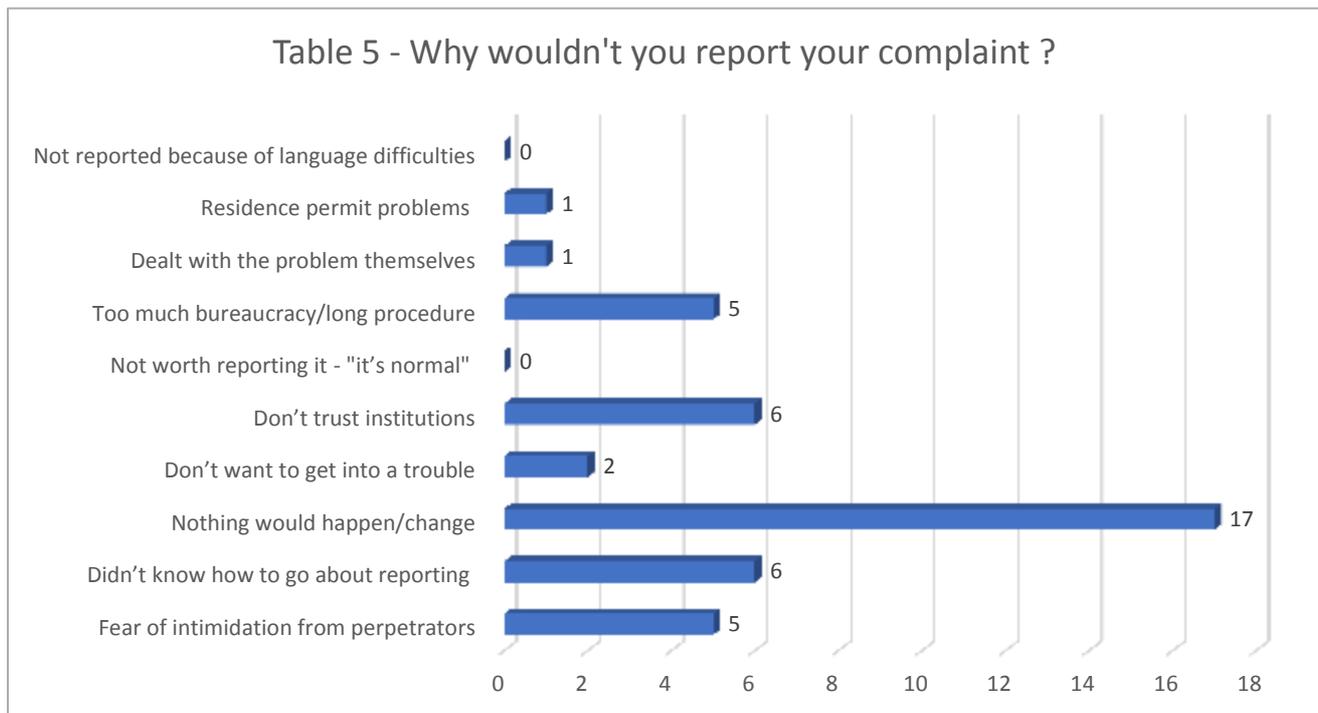
36% of these respondents claimed they would address their complaint to an **Equality Body**. This contrasts with findings from other surveys showing that few members of the Roma community were aware of the existence of bodies. On the other hand, **over a quarter of the respondents (27%)** claimed they would address their complaint **“to nobody”**. Among those not reporting discrimination, 71% are women.



These results seem consistent with the latest findings of the FRA where it was found that Roma *“continue to report the most recently experienced incident less often than the average*

victims of discrimination do". The percentage of under-reporting varies depending on the country surveyed but seems to be fairly consistent with the average. Indeed, 28% of people living in Bulgaria would not report, the number is slightly lower for people living in Belgium where 23% would not report. In addition, we can observe both in this survey and in FRA's survey that there is no substantial differences in the levels of reporting between different age groups.

Table 5 - Why wouldn't you report your complaint ?



Among the respondents who would not report a case of discrimination (28% of the sample), **the main reason is that they believe "nothing would change"** (picked by 61% of the respondents to that question, hence representing 40% of the total of answers). This finding is consistent with other surveys, including one conducted by the Fundamental Rights Agency in 2009 that found that 78% of their Roma respondents would not report discrimination because they believed "nothing would change".¹⁶ Hence, it appears that almost ten years later the situation remains the same.

Other reasons for not reporting discrimination are **respondent's unawareness about what to do or where to report discrimination** (14% of the answers) and **issues with the procedures such as their length or too much bureaucracy** (12%).

Another reason reported by the respondents is their fear of repercussion from the perpetrators. On the same line, some respondents expressed that they did not report because they "didn't want to get into trouble" (respectively 12% and 4%).

¹⁶ European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, European Union Minorities and Discrimination Survey, "The Roma", 2009, available: <https://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2009/eu-midis-data-focus-report-1-roma>

Some respondents (14%) declare a lack of trust in the institutions which correlates with their belief that reporting would not change the situation.

Finally, the survey demonstrates that the respondents believe that cases of discrimination should be reported as none of them answered that their instance of discrimination was “*not worth reporting*”. **This suggests that the respondents would be eager to report cases of discrimination** if the other issues they face were to be eliminated. Moreover, the sample surveyed does not seem to show resignation when it comes to discrimination against Roma as no respondents said that such cases were “*normal*”.

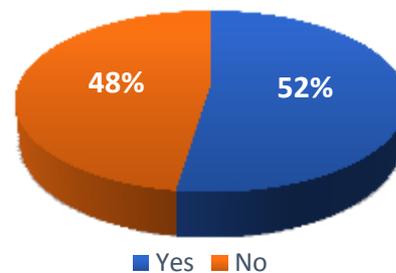
To sum up, it appears that, for most of the respondents who would not report cases of discrimination, such cases are not deemed “*normal*” but at the same time the respondents do not seem to have confidence in the fact that the situation could change.

1.6. Awareness of anti-discrimination legislation

The results show that only half of the respondents are aware of anti-discrimination legislation.

Amongst the respondents that are not aware of EU/national anti-discrimination law, all levels of education are represented. Indeed, 45% of the respondents who are not aware of such legislation have been to school for 11 to 19 years, 31% for 6 to 10 years, the remaining have been to school either for over 20 years (18%) or for less than 5 (6%).

Figure 8 - Are you aware of any EU/national anti-discrimination law?



68% of those not aware of EU/national anti-discrimination law are 18 to 39 years old and 32% are more than 40 years old. It seems that older respondents tend to be more aware of EU/national legislation regarding anti-discrimination law.

These results show that the EU legislation in the field of anti-discrimination, most notably the Racial Equality Directive (2000/43/EC) or the Employment Equality Directive (2000/78/EC) are still not well known throughout the population, especially not throughout the most vulnerable groups. This is consistent with the 2014 European Commission report on the application of the Racial Equality Directive, which states that lack of awareness of anti-discrimination legislation remains widespread. This lack of knowledge of national and European legislation participates in a way in the high number of under-reporting since some victims of discrimination may not even be aware of their rights and, consequently, of their violation.

In addition, it has been shown that the enforcement of anti-discrimination rights for the Roma varies depending of the country they live in. According to the European network of legal experts in gender equality and non-discrimination, the overall situation “*appears rather negative in the majority of countries due to some persisting gaps in legislation and policy and in the wider political and societal context*”.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

For the European Commission

- Pressure member states to effectively use their national anti-discrimination law to eradicate anti-Roma racist behaviour. The Commission should focus their attention on both member states with large Roma populations as well as member states that Roma populations increasingly seek to migrate to.
- Assist member states to use EU funds in a suitable manner. The funds allocated by member states specifically for Roma inclusion should be comprehensively monitored.

For member states

- Comply with your commitments under the Council Recommendation on effective Roma integration, including under Point 3.6 concerning the requirement to ensure Equality Bodies have adequate resources to effectively provide assistance to Roma. Sufficient funding is a necessary prerequisite for Equality Bodies to effectively fulfil their role as ‘watchdogs for equality.’
- Make sure that National Roma Integration Strategies include sufficient anti-discrimination measures and that they are effectively implemented. Work closely with partners such as Equality Bodies as they can play a key role in tackling anti-Roma discrimination. National Roma Integration Strategies and Race Equality Directive should complement one another to prevent discrimination against Roma in the member states.

For Equality Bodies

- Increase awareness about anti-discrimination legislation, especially among marginalised groups (including the Roma) who are more likely to be targets of discrimination. Find ways to increase the reporting of discriminatory acts.
- Place less emphasis on formal complaints procedures. Instead, adapt to Roma in order to better understand their experiences of discrimination. The value of anecdotal evidence should not be underestimated.

For Roma civil society

- Actively engage with opportunities for capacity building such as trainings and seminars on anti-discrimination legislation, rights, etc. The knowledge acquired by Roma during these activities should be transmitted to the members of local communities to ensure sustainability.
- Facilitate mediation as a way to build trust between Roma and state institutions. Mediation can function most effectively when Roma go directly to their communities after having received training in legal procedures and the role of Equality Bodies.

