

Key social inclusion and fundamental rights indicators in Bulgaria

Summary of main results

Project “Novel Approaches to Generating Data on hard-to-reach populations at risk of violation of their rights” funded under the EEA/Norwegian Financial Mechanism Programme under call BGLD-3.001, Programme “Local Development, Poverty Reduction and Enhanced Inclusion of Vulnerable Groups”

This report was drafted in the framework of the Project “Novel Approaches to Generating Data on hard-to-reach populations at risk of violation of their rights” funded under the EEA/Norwegian Financial Mechanism Programme under call BGLD-3.001, Programme “Local Development, Poverty Reduction and Enhanced Inclusion of Vulnerable Groups”. BNSI and FRA developed the survey tool and defined the list of indicators. BNSI calculated the indicators. The Centre for the Study of Democracy (FRA’s Franet partner in Bulgaria) put together the first draft. FRA checked the indicators and provided comments and edits in various stages of drafting.

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Introduction

Background

This report – first in a series of five thematic reports¹ – was developed under the project BGLD-3.001-0001 “Novel Approaches to Generating Data on hard-to-reach populations at risk of violation of their rights”. The project was funded by the Financial Mechanism of the European Economic Area 2014 – 2021 (EEA FM) under the programme “Local development, poverty reduction and improved inclusion of vulnerable groups”, and implemented in partnership between the Bulgarian National Statistical Institute (NSI) (*Национален статистически институт*, НСИ) and the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA). The main goal of the project is to provide data for key national, international and EU indicators on social inclusion and related fundamental rights, covering the general population and specific vulnerable groups at risk of social exclusion and violation of fundamental rights. The data can inform the planning of adequate social policy measures and the development of target indicators for the operational programs of the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF). Moreover, the indicators populated with data from the survey can serve as a baseline for assessment of the progress in important policy areas, such as the UN Sustainable Development Goals, the European Pillar of Social Rights, the new EU Roma strategic framework for equality, inclusion and participation. Other Member States facing similar social and economic challenges might also benefit from the outputs of the project and the experience gained throughout its realization.²

The formulation of adequate policies at all levels of governance requires precise examination of the social and economic context in which the risks of poverty, social inclusion and violation of fundamental rights can materialize. The Bulgarian legal framework lacks a specific definition of ‘vulnerable group’ or ‘vulnerability’. Nevertheless, there are elements throughout national acts in different areas, EU and international legal instruments with such reference. In order for policymakers to tackle efficiently and improve the situation of people in vulnerable situations, it is therefore necessary to define indicators and methods that can identify who is ‘vulnerable’, thus identify the key determinants of vulnerability.

Defining ‘vulnerability’ and groups at risks

The report and the wider project address ‘vulnerability’ as a multidimensional phenomenon from the perspective of interrelated risks an individual may face. It looks into three dimensions of risk: the risk of poverty and social exclusion, the risk of experiencing discrimination, and the risk of bias-motivated harassment and violence (both of which are often bias-motivated). These dimensions are often related: when a risk has materialized in one dimension, it may increase the probability of risks materializing in other dimensions. The indicators applied in this report capture situations of materialised (not hypothetical) risks in one or more of the three dimensions captured by the survey.

Throughout the report, the term ‘vulnerable’ is used to denote those individuals or groups for which the probability of these risks materializing is higher than for the general population. In extreme cases, the overlap of various risks may lead to ‘marginalisation’ – in social or geographic terms or both. This term is used to denote the situation of living on the margin of society, with severed social interactions and vertical mobility affecting both individuals and groups.

¹ Thematic reports on the situation of Roma, of children, of old people and on people with in their usual activities due to health problems. An overview of key SDG indicators is also among the deliverables of the project.

² For more information, see the [project website](#).

Filling the data gap

The preparatory research preceding the survey³ revealed an important gap in Bulgarian policy documents aiming at improving the situation of groups at particular risk of poverty, social exclusion and fundamental rights violations: they rarely make use of or refer to statistical data. This is largely because single-source data sets reflecting the individuals' status across all three the dimensions are scarce making it difficult to apply indicators disaggregated by socio-demographic and economic characteristics in policy formulation or monitoring policies' impact.

The survey conducted in the framework of the project fills this gap and generated data on all three dimensions: the risk of poverty, the risk of social exclusion, and the risk of discrimination, harassment and violence. It will allow a comprehensive overview of the situation in Bulgaria to estimate risks of vulnerability at national and regional level (NUTS3, the 28 districts of the country). The indicators can be further disaggregated by socio-economic and demographic characteristics, including but not limited to age, sex, ethnicity based on self-identification, risk of poverty, residence type, educational attainment, employment status, financial situation, number of children, etc.⁴ In this way, the analysis allows the identification of those groups that experience most severe risks of poverty, social exclusion, and violation of rights as well as the key correlates of their vulnerability.

In addition to the twenty-two indicators used in this study, data from other sources are used to put the survey results in broader context. These sources include international organisations such as the World Bank (WB), the European Union (Eurostat), national sectoral programmes and projects, non-governmental organisations, and other independent national or international studies.

The survey in a nutshell

The representative survey designed and implemented specifically for the project was conducted between 19 May and 17 September 2020. Information on the situation of over 26,600 individuals aged 15 and over and 3,600 children up to 14 years of age was collected. Participation in the survey was voluntary and despite the complicated situation in the country due to the anti-pandemic measures in response to the COVID-19 outbreak, the response rate reached 80.6%.

The sample of the households surveyed was designed applying two stage stratified cluster sampling with random probabilities proportional-to-size. The sample contained 15,000 private households in 2,500 clusters representing the Bulgarian population living in private households. All members of the households aged 15 and over were interviewed. Proxy interviews were not allowed. Questions referring to children younger than 15 years were included in the interview with the children's mother; if that was not possible, another legal representative (parent or guardian) was providing the information. Data were collected via face-to-face in computer assisted interviews (CAPI).

The survey puts specific focus on four groups identified as at high risk of poverty, social exclusion and violation of fundamental rights:

- 1) Roma (persons who self-identify being Roma)
- 2) children (persons below the age of 18)
- 3) older persons (who are 65 years and older)
- 4) people with disabilities (persons who answered that they are limited or severely limited in their usual activities in the last 6 months due to health problems).

³ Ilcheva, M. and Kuneva, L. (2019), [Overview of the legal and policy frameworks addressing 'vulnerability' to poverty, social exclusion and violation of fundamental rights in Bulgaria](#), Sofia, National Statistical Institute (report developed under BGLD-3.001-0001 Project "Novel Approaches to Generating Data on hard-to-reach populations at risk of violation of their rights").

⁴ Annex 1 provides a list the analysed indicators grouped by thematic areas and the variables of disaggregation used while Annex 2 provides the list of questions used for the disaggregation variables

The situation of these four groups will be subject of four thematic reports to be produced in the framework of the project. The specific criteria used for defining these four groups as facing particular vulnerability risks were derived from an expert overview of the existing legal and policy frameworks referring to vulnerable groups and of the operational criteria applied for defining the concept of ‘vulnerability’ elaborated during the first stage of the project.⁵

For the purpose of this report, the dimensions of vulnerability are measured by the following questions:

1) Risk of **poverty and social exclusion**. The risk of poverty is measured with three indicators:

- a. an approximation of the EU-SILC at risk of poverty measurement. People are living at risk of poverty if their household income is below the national risk of poverty threshold, which is set at 60 % of the national median equivalised disposable income of all persons.
- b. Prevalence of cases of hunger caused by poverty, which is captured through the question: “In the past month, have you or someone in your household gone to bed hungry because you didn't have enough money for food? If so, how often this has happened in the last month?”
- c. The satisfaction of the respondents with their financial situation, which was captured by the assessment to the question “Overall, what is your level of satisfaction with your financial situation” on a 10 point scale, where “1” means “completely dissatisfied” and “10” means “completely satisfied”.

The risk of **social exclusion** is captured through the self-assessment of the respondents of the question “In general, to what extent would you say that you feel excluded from society?” on a 10 point scale, where “0” means “I am not excluded from society at all” and “10” - “I am completely excluded from society”

2) Experiencing **discrimination**: The survey captured discrimination by asking respondents if they felt discriminated against based different grounds (skin colour, ethnic or immigrant background / ethnic origin, religion or religious beliefs, sex, age, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, other reason) in the past 5 years and in the past 12 months and covers in different areas of life: when looking for work, at work, when in contact with anyone from the school(s) as a parent or a student, when using healthcare services, when trying to rent or buy an apartment or a house, when in contact with administrative offices or public services and when trying to enter a night club, a bar, a restaurant or hotel, using public transport, being in a shop or trying to enter a shop. It is the subjective assessment of the respondents if they felt being discriminated against because of the reasons stated above. In this report which deals with the general population, discrimination based on any of the asked grounds is reported in the figures.

3) Harassment and violence: The questionnaire captures the subjective observation of the respondents, i.e. their assessment whether their experience of harassment or violence was based on any of aforementioned grounds.

- a. Harassment has occurred if someone has experienced the following acts in the 12 months preceding the survey
 - i. somebody made offensive or threatening comments to the respondent in person such as calling her/him names
 - ii. somebody threatened the respondent with violence

⁵ Markov, D. and Kuneva, L. (2019), Overview of data and indicators for monitoring “vulnerability” of groups at risk in Bulgaria ([*Преглед на данните и индикаторите за мониторинг на „уязвимостта“ на рисковите групи в България*](#)), Sofia, National Statistical Institute (report developed under BGLD-3.001-0001 Project “Novel Approaches to Generating Data on hard-to-reach populations at risk of violation of their rights”).

- iii. somebody made offensive gestures to the respondent or stared at her/him inappropriately
 - iv. somebody sent the respondent emails or text messages (SMS, IMs) that were offensive or threatening
 - v. somebody posted offensive comments about the respondent on the internet, for example on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, etc.
- b. Violence occurred if somebody physically attacked the respondent – for example hit, pushed or kicked her/him in the 12 months preceding the survey.

Structure and focus of the report

The present report examines eight thematic areas: (1) education, (2) employment, (3) poverty and social exclusion, (4) health, (5) housing, (6) discrimination, (7) harassment and violence and (8) participation, building cooperation and trust.

The report applies three levels of analysis: national and regional, and disaggregated further within. Each thematic chapter starts with a background outlining of the respective thematic area. The presentation of the results along key indicators at national and districts (NUTS3) level follows, with the exception of the indicators, which could not be disaggregated due to low case numbers. All such cases are flagged following standard procedure (results based on 20 to 49 unweighted observations in a group total are flagged, while results based on fewer than 20 unweighted observations in a group are not published). The third section of the thematic chapters disaggregates the national level results further by a number of individual and household-level characteristics (for a detailed list of the indicators used in the report and the variables of disaggregation, see Annex 1). The bi-variate analysis offers additional insight into the challenges faced by respondents with particular socio-economic or demographic characteristics.

1 Education

Background

Educational attainment is among the key determinants of sustainable employment and good overall wellbeing throughout one's lifetime, thereby playing a central role in poverty alleviation. For the 2019/2020 school year, almost 573,000 students were in public and/or private general education and some 137 000 professional or specialized schools in Bulgaria, without any considerable gender gap in enrolment. Nonetheless, there is a decrease in the number of students in general primary and secondary education. According to official data, during the school year 2019/2020, 8,763 fewer boys and girls were enrolled compared to the preceding one (2018/2019) despite the overall population size among this age group did not shrink.⁶ As a result, the net enrolment rates⁷ declined from 88.4% in 2018/2019 to 86.2% to 2019/2020 for primary education, and from 82.5% to 82.3% for lower and upper secondary education.⁸ Furthermore, in 2019 the share of young people aged 20-24, who have at least a high-school diploma, was 84.4%, while 44% of young people aged 19-23 were enrolled in tertiary education. Among the persons aged 30-34, more women (40.8%) than men (27%) have a university degree.

A key component of any educational system is pre-school education. At EU level, a number of studies show that effective pre-school education is not only a tool for preventing early school leaving,⁹ but has broader implications personal development, employment, poverty, inequality, social cohesion and inclusion, health and well-being, crime and justice, etc.¹⁰ Based on these findings, EU policy documents, such as the 2019 Council Recommendation on high quality early childhood education and care systems outline the relevant EU priorities.¹¹ In Bulgaria, the net enrolment rate in pre-school is notably lower than the EU average (94.8% in 2018¹²), although minimally rising from 78.4% in 2018/2019 to 78.7% in 2019/2020.

These data should be analysed in context considering the age for compulsory pre-school education, the available capacity of kindergartens and their territorial distribution. According to the Bulgarian Pre-school and School Education Act, in 2020 (the year when the survey was conducted), enrolment in pre-school education was compulsory from the age of five.¹³ During school year 2019/2020, the available capacity at national level is higher than the number of children, reaching 108 available places per 100 children (with higher ratios in the northern Bulgaria, and lower ratios in the southern part of the country.¹⁴ However, the uneven territorial distribution of kindergartens and their often-inadequate overall capacity with respect to the population of certain larger cities (including the capital city Sofia),

⁶ National Statistical Institute (2020), [Students in general schools by grade groups, sex and ownership](#), 24 April 2020.

⁷ The number of boys and girls of the age of a particular level of education that are enrolled in that level of education, expressed as a percentage of the total population in that age group. For more details see Eurostat, [Glossary: Net enrolment rate](#)

⁸ National Statistical Institute (2020), [Net enrolment rate of the population in the educational system in 2019/2020 school year](#), 24 April 2020.

⁹ European Commission (2014), [Study on the effective use of early childhood education and care \(ECEC\) in preventing early school leaving \(ESL\)](#), Luxembourg, Publications Office of the European Union.

¹⁰ Lenaerts, K., Vandenbroeck, M. and Beblavý, M. (2018), [Benefits of early childhood education and care and the conditions for obtaining them \(EENEE Analytical Report No. 32 prepared for the European Commission\)](#), Luxembourg, Publications Office of the European Union.

¹¹ Council of the European Union (2019), [Council Recommendation on High-Quality Childhood Education and Care Systems \(2019/C 189/02\)](#), OJ 2019 C 189.

¹² Eurostat, [Early childhood and primary education statistics](#).

¹³ Bulgaria, Pre-school and School Education Act ([Закон за предучилищното и училищното образование](#)), 13 October 2015 (last amended 18 September 2020), Art. 8. In September 2020, the law was amended and the age of compulsory pre-school education was decreased from five to four years.

¹⁴ National Statistical Institute (2020), [Kindergartens, children, pedagogical staff, places and groups in the kindergartens by statistical zones, statistical regions, districts and municipalities in 2019/2020 school year](#), 24 April 2020.

leads to a situation where many parents are unable to enrol their children in pre-school education. Besides, there are also persisting concerns related to the challenges in the engagement of children from hard-to-reach and/or segregated communities in pre-school education.

Another critical point of education and social integration policies in Bulgaria is the issue of early leavers and school drop-outs, where “early leavers” include persons having attained, at most, lower secondary education and not being involved in further education or training, and “drop-outs” cover all other cases of discontinued education. Early school leaving contributes makes young people’s transition from education to employment more difficult¹⁵ contributing to the high share of young people (18.1%) who are neither in employment nor in education and training according to 2020 Labour Force Survey.¹⁶ Survey results confirm the European Commission’s conclusion that the adult population needs to reskill and upskill to become relevant to the labour market.¹⁷

The latest available official data show that, during the 2018/2019 school year, 21,127 students, who were enrolled in the beginning of the school year, had left school (including 7,024 in primary education, 6,370 in lower secondary education, 7,545 in upper secondary education, 179 in vocational training after lower secondary education and nine in vocational colleges with selection after secondary education). In a small number of cases (1.2% and 2%), this was due to health reasons. In most cases however, students left school due to family reasons or because they emigrated. Although these two categories may also be linked to certain vulnerability risks, specific attention has to be paid to those who left school due to reluctance to study further. During the 2018/2019 school year, their share has been 4.7% in primary, 14.2% in lower secondary, and 24.7% in upper secondary education. Data at national level show that one in four of those who leave before graduating high-school do this due to lack of interest.¹⁸ In 2019, early leavers from education and training amounted to 13.9%, with a higher percentage of boys aged 18-24 with at most lower secondary education not continuing in further education or training.¹⁹

A variety of factors affects enrolment, retention and progression rates in education, including poverty, family responsibilities, impeded or unequal access to services, missing or inadequate physical infrastructure, social exclusion and marginalisation. Against this background, the suggested set of educational indicators populated with data from the survey conducted for this project gives an insight into the magnitude of problems such as exclusion from early childhood education, early school leaving and discrimination.

Results at national and district level

The share of children vulnerable to deprivation in education due to not being able to attend pre-school education and care is estimated using the ‘**early childhood education and care attendance**’ indicator. According to the survey results, in 2019/2020 school year, 77% of all children from the age of 3 up to the age for starting formal compulsory primary education were enrolled in any type of pre-school education (breakdown by district for this indicator is not published due to low case numbers). These figures are in line with the annual official data provided by BNSI, according to which, during the 2019/2020 school year, 78.7% of children from the respective age group (aged 3-6) were enrolled in

¹⁵ UNICEF (2015), [Assessment of the status and analysis of the profile of adolescents and young people not in employment, education or training \(NEETS\)](#), Sofia, UNICEF Country Office Bulgaria.

¹⁶ National Statistical Institute (2020), [Specific indicators, based on the Labour Force Survey](#), 2020, 15 March 2021.

¹⁷ European Commission (2019), [Education and Training Monitor 2019: Bulgaria](#), Luxembourg, Publications Office of the European Union.

¹⁸ National Statistical Institute (2020), [Students and drop-outs by reasons and level of education](#), 24 April 2020.

¹⁹ Eurostat, [Early leavers from education and training](#) [edat_lfse_14] accessed on 16/04/2021..

kindergartens²⁰ – alarmingly low compared to the EU-27 average of 92.2% in 2018.²¹ Small number of observations (880) does not allow for regional level disaggregation of this indicator.

Preschool education and care attendance rates depend on a range of factors as indicated in the previous section of the chapter, ranging from the availability and accessibility of preschool facilities and their capacity at the local level, to family decisions about early childhood education. Attending early childhood education and care can also improve the chances for higher education enrolment and, more broadly, lower drop-out rates in subsequent educational levels.

The share of children vulnerable to the risk of not being able to complete their school education (including the potential risk of falling into the NEET category) is estimated using the indicator ‘**early leavers from education and training**’. This indicator estimates the share of population aged 18-24 years who have attained, at most, lower secondary education (ISCED 2011 levels 0, 1 or 2) and are not involved in further education or training. A higher share of early school leavers can also be seen as an indication of increased risk of certain groups of young people falling into the “Not in employment, education or training (NEET)” category which will be analysed in chapter 2.

According to the survey, at national level, 15.5% of the young persons aged 18-24 have left education and training prematurely (breakdown by district for this indicator is not published due to low case numbers). This share is alarmingly high in itself and if seen in the context of previous studies re-confirms the conclusion that early school leaving is not a new phenomenon for Bulgaria but a persisting problem that has not yet been effectively addressed.²²

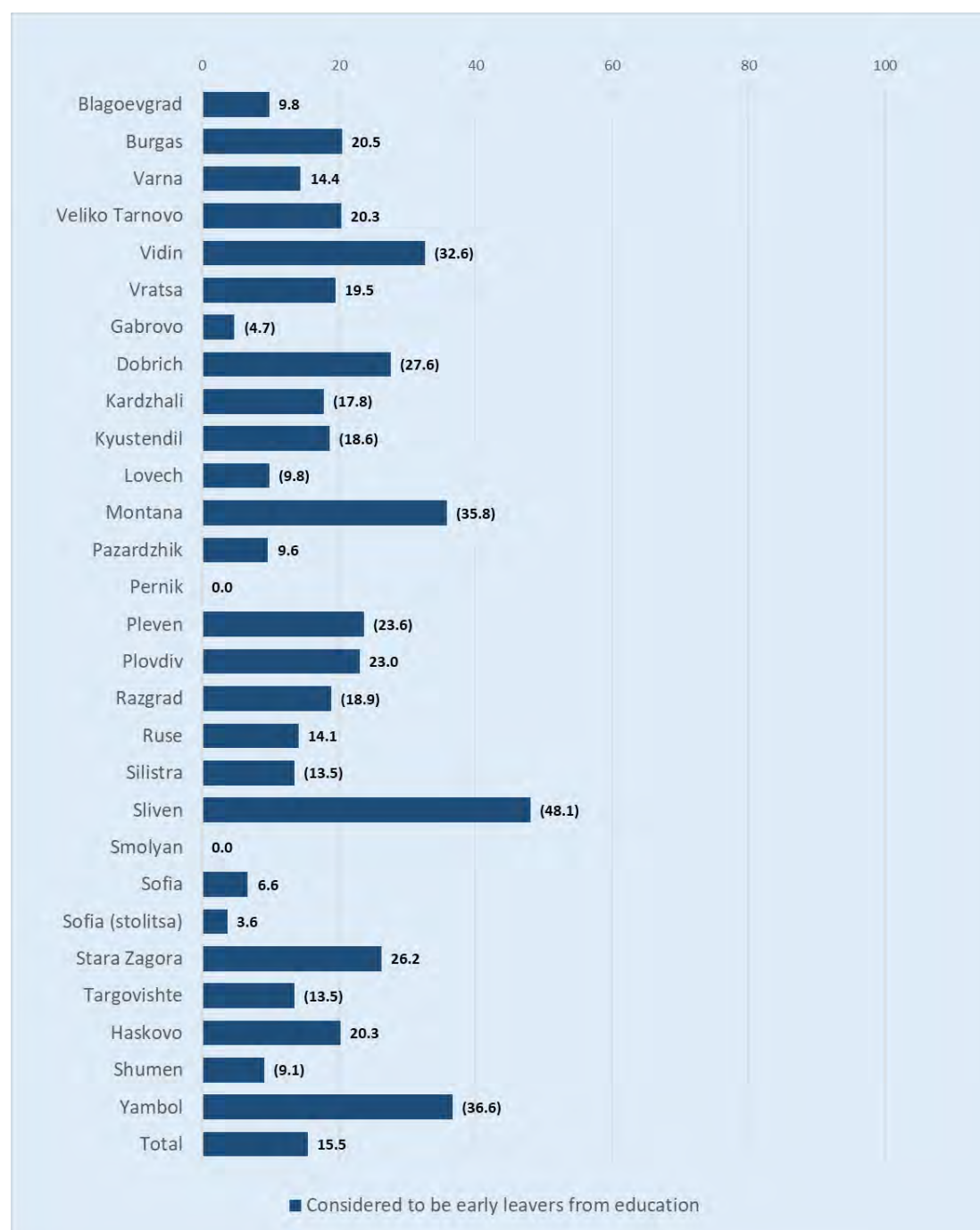
Low level of education attained is both a driver of vulnerability risks in other areas (such unemployment and poverty but also social class) and an outcome of other deprivations. These can include economic hardship in the household, socio-economic conditions within the household and/or the community, or impeded access to education due to infrastructural constraints, discrimination, etc. The feedback loops between various characteristics are complex. Studies show that discontinuing education is often indicative of the negative impact of structural determinants within the educational system, as well as of far-reaching local socio-economic processes that affect individual perceptions and choices ranging from income opportunities for low- and high-skilled labour, return on the investment in education (to what extent the efforts in that regard translate into better jobs and higher incomes), peer pressure or role models dominant in the respective individual’s social media ‘bubble’.

²⁰ National Statistical Institute (2020), [Group net enrolment rate of the children in kindergartens by statistical zones, statistical regions and districts](#), 24 April 2020.

²¹ Eurostat (2020), [Pupils from age 3 to the starting age of compulsory education at primary level by sex - % of the population of the corresponding age](#), September 2020.

²² Eurostat (2020), [Early leavers from education and training](#), April 2020. According to the data, in 2019, Bulgaria ranks fourth in EU-27 with a share of early school leavers substantially higher compared to EU-27 average of 10.2%.

Figure 1: Share of people aged 18-24 years that have completed at most lower secondary education and are not involved in further education or training ^{a,b,c,d} (%)



Notes:

^a Out of all household members aged 18-24 years (n = 1845); weighted results.

^b Based on questions: "Is the person studying at present?"; "Highest degree of education completed"; "How would you describe your current employment status?". The same definition used as for the general population "early school leavers", with the exception of participation in non-formal education or training. This was not asked about in the survey, but is considered by Eurostat for the general population (edat_lfse_14).

^c In compliance to Eurostat indicator (edat_lfse_14), participants in vocational training are not count as early leavers.

^d Remainder to 100% includes non-responses in the underlying question(s).

Source: National Statistical Institute, Household Survey on BGLD-3.001-0001 Project "Novel Approaches to Generating Data on hard-to-reach populations at risk of violation of their rights"

Ample data exist to show that discrimination negatively affects school retention rates. It concerns particularly children with ethnic minority background or children experiencing limitations in usual

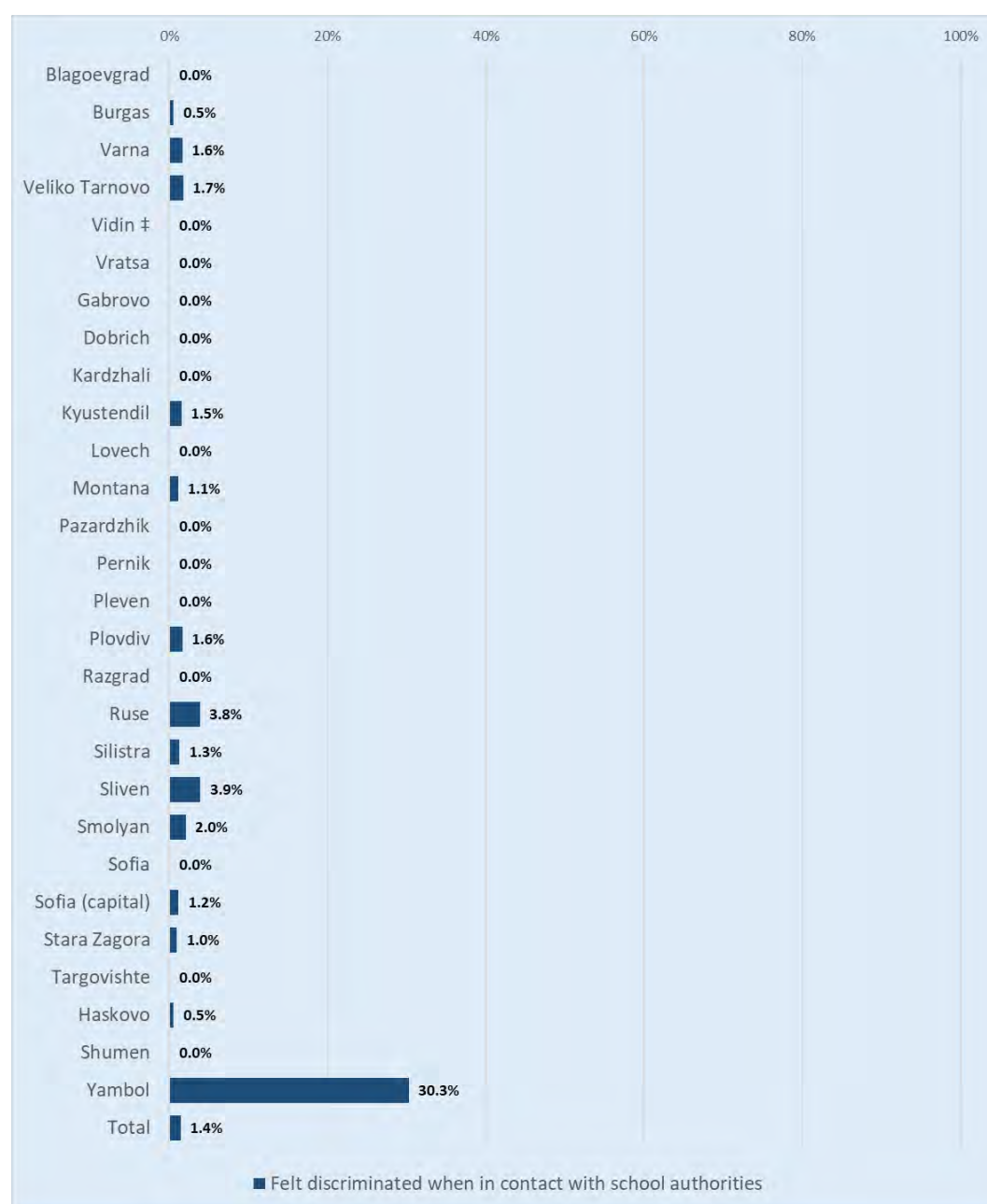
activities due to health problems. FRA's EU-MIDIS II survey showed in 2016 that, on average, 6% of the people from the interviewed groups in the 28 Member States surveyed experienced discrimination based on ethnic or immigrant background in contact with school authorities in the 12 months before the survey. In Bulgaria, where Roma were surveyed, this share was 6%.²³ The survey did not include in-depth interviews with children themselves regarding their discrimination experiences, therefore respondents' accounts of **discrimination²⁴ upon contact with school authorities** is used as a proxy. The indicator estimates the share of persons aged 16 years or more, who report that they have felt discriminated upon contact with educational authorities (as both parents/guardians and students) in the past 12 months.

Survey data at national level show that the share of persons aged 16 and over, who have been in contact with school authorities, and felt discriminated (because of any ground of discrimination) is 1.4% (Figure 2). This very low share, especially compared to the share of those discriminated in other areas such as looking for a job (17.2%) or housing (7.4%) and could be influenced by the respondents' (parents or guardians) lack of awareness of the discrimination in education the children in the surveyed households experienced. Thus, raising awareness of what constitutes discrimination in general and in education in particular should receive priority attention, since this is recognised at EU and global level as a specific problem affecting personal development, life-long welfare, and poverty alleviation efforts. It often leads to the exclusion of vulnerable children such as children with disabilities, children from ethnic minorities, migrant and refugee children, and children from communities that are hard-to-reach or severely marginalised in social and/or geographic terms. Data at district level show certain differences in the share of persons discriminated against upon contact with school authorities. The districts with the highest registered levels of discrimination are Yambol, Sliven and Ruse, while in half of the districts none of the respondents felt discriminated against.

²³ FRA (2017). Second European Union Minorities and Discrimination Survey. Main results, pp. 34 and 36.

²⁴ The survey asked respondents if they felt discriminated against on different grounds (skin colour, ethnic or immigrant background or ethnic origin, religion or religious beliefs, sex, age, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, other reason) in the past 5 years and in the past 12 months and in different areas of life: when looking for work, at work, when in contact with anyone from the school(s) as a parent or a student, when using healthcare services, when trying to rent or buy an apartment or a house, when in contact with administrative offices or public services and when trying to enter a night club, a bar, a restaurant or hotel, using public transport, being in a shop or trying to enter a shop.

Figure 2: Share of persons who felt discriminated against because of any ground in the past 12 months, when in contact with school authorities (as a parent/guardian or a student), 16+ by district ^{a,b,c,d} (%)



Notes: ^a Out of respondents older than 16 years who have been in contact with school authorities (as a parent/guardian or a student) in the 12 months before the survey (n = 4,852); weighted results.

^b Remainder to 100% includes non-responses in the underlying question(s).

^c ‡ Results based on a small number of responses are statistically less reliable. Thus, results based on 20 to 49 unweighted observations in a group total are flagged. Results based on fewer than 20 unweighted observations in a group total are not published.

^d The districts in all figures visualizing regionally-disaggregated data are sorted in alphabetic order in Cyrillic.

Source: National Statistical Institute, Household Survey on BGLD-3.001-0001 Project “Novel Approaches to Generating Data on hard-to-reach populations at risk of violation of their rights”

Segregation between and within schools is an aggravated form of educational discrimination and tackling this has long been a priority of legal and policy frameworks in Bulgaria. At the same time, the particular forms of discrimination in education (e.g. some teachers’ implicit bias based on prejudice towards children from an ethnic group), are more difficult to capture in surveys compared to

discrimination in employment, and this has to be taken into account when interpreting this indicator. The issue of school segregation and the very existence of segregated schools are also among the factors to be considered when analysing discrimination in school, as segregation may not always be perceived as a form of unequal treatment by parents and students. The issue is not straightforward: concentration of children from one ethnicity in a school in an ethnically diverse locality is different from similar concentration in a region where an ethnic minority has become a local majority due to demographic trends or migration. In each case, the underlying reasons behind such concentration should be taken into consideration to inform effective policy response to the fundamental drivers of segregation.

Bi-variate analysis

The survey results show that education is a key factor for avoiding vulnerability risks such as poverty and social exclusion and a prerequisite for sustaining a decent job, good living conditions and to some extent access to better quality healthcare. In that regard, pre-school education is important for decreasing the risk of dropping-out and increasing the chances of better school performance.

The share of children not attending early education and care is much higher among the groups of Roma (41.7%) and ethnic Turks (32.8%) than among ethnic Bulgarians (17%).²⁵ This may be due to variety of factors – economic (access to and affordability of early childhood care, female labour force participation rates) but also cultural (dominating gender roles, prevalence of multi-generational households) as well as to a language barrier in the case of households with main language different from Bulgarian face.²⁶

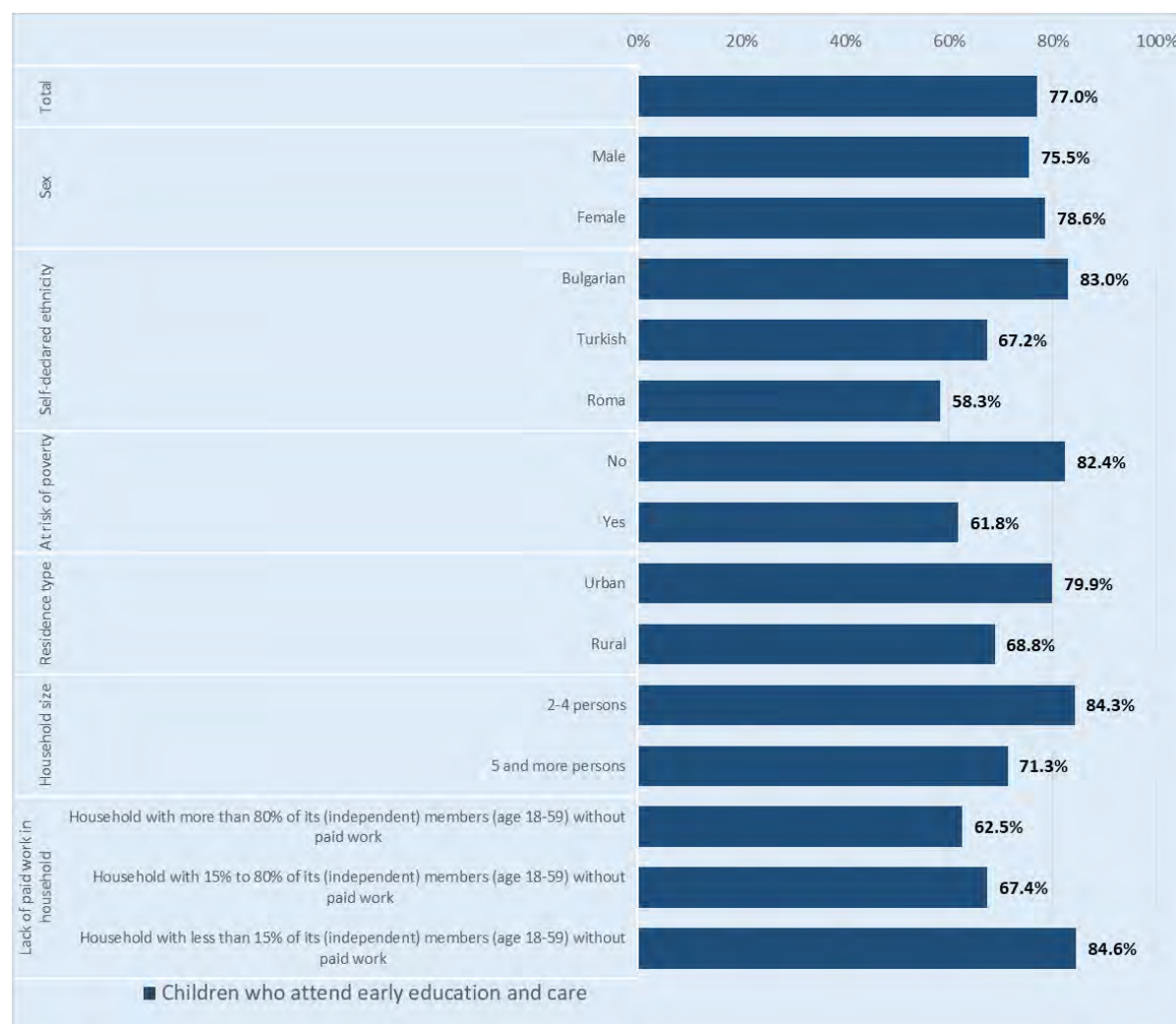
The share of children living in households at risk of poverty who do not attend early education and care is more than **twice as high** than among those from households that are not at risk of poverty (38.2% versus 17.6%). Joblessness has similar impact: 37.5% of children from households in which more than 80% of the independent household members are without paid work versus 15.4% of children in households where only 15% of household members are jobless. This could mean that parents, who stay at home due to lack of job, take care of their children, but could on the other hand also suggest that unemployed parents cannot afford to enrol their children in early education. The same reasons might be valid for large families (households of five or more members), where the share of children not attending early education or care (28.7%) is almost twice as high than that of children living in household of up to four members (15.7%).

The higher share of children not attending early education in rural areas (31.2%) compared to urban areas (20.1%) might indicate problems with the availability and accessibility of such services (mostly due to lack of staff in remote areas) (Figure 3).

²⁵ The ethnicity of the children was provided by the main respondent based on a single choice from a list of ethnic groups.

²⁶ For more information on the difficulties faced at school by children, whose mother tongue is not Bulgarian, see Radoslavova, P. (2019), [The importance of speaking the language of your school](#), Sofia, Teach for Bulgaria, 23 August 2019.

Figure 3: Share of children aged from 3 up to the age of starting compulsory primary education (6) who attend early childhood education and care, by sex, self-declared ethnicity, at risk of poverty rate, residence type, household size, and jobless intensity ^{a, b} (%)



Notes: ^a Out of all children aged between three and six years ($n = 880$); weighted results.

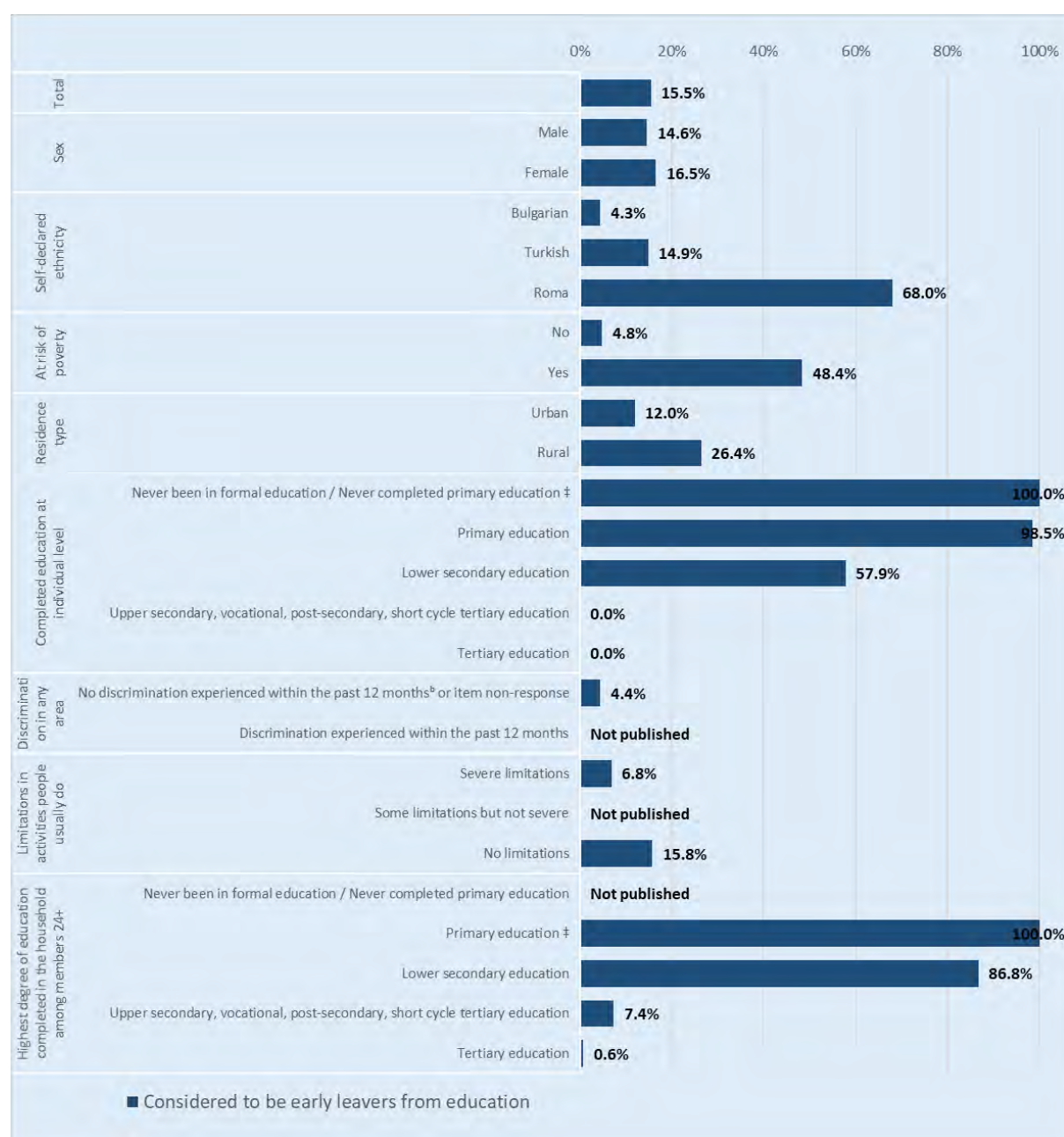
^b Remainder to 100% includes non-responses in the underlying question(s).

Source: National Statistical Institute, Household Survey on BGLD-3.001-0001 Project "Novel Approaches to Generating Data on hard-to-reach populations at risk of violation of their rights"

The data on early school leavers among persons aged 18-24 show considerable differences between the analysed groups. There is no notable difference between the share of female (16.5%) and male (14.6%) early leavers. The strongest predictors of leaving school early are educational level in the household, poverty, and ethnicity. The share of early leavers living in households, in which the highest level of education achieved is lower secondary or lower is 86.8% compared to just 7.4% in households, in which the highest level of education achieved is upper secondary, vocational or post-secondary suggesting how important cultural capital and role models in education are – and, respectively, how high is the risk of their generational replication. The share of early leavers is also high among people living below the poverty threshold (48.4% versus 4.8% among those above it). Rural/urban divide also translate into higher share of people leaving education earlier (26.4% in rural areas versus 12% in urban).

The socio-economic conditions and cultural patterns associated with ethnicity are drivers of leaving school early and a good example of overlapping deprivations that augment the risk in one particular area. The share of early leavers among Roma is 68% (five times higher than the group self-identified as ethnic Turks and about 16 times higher than the group of ethnic Bulgarians) exactly because of such overlaps (Figure 4).

Figure 4: Share of people aged 18-24 years that have completed at most lower secondary education and are not involved in further education or training, by sex, self-declared ethnicity, at risk of poverty rate, residence type, completed education, discrimination experience, limitations, and highest degree of education completed in the household among its members aged 24 years and more ^{a, b, c} (%)



Notes: ^a Out of all household members aged 18-24 years (n = 1,845); weighted results.

^b Remainder to 100% includes non-responses in the underlying question(s).

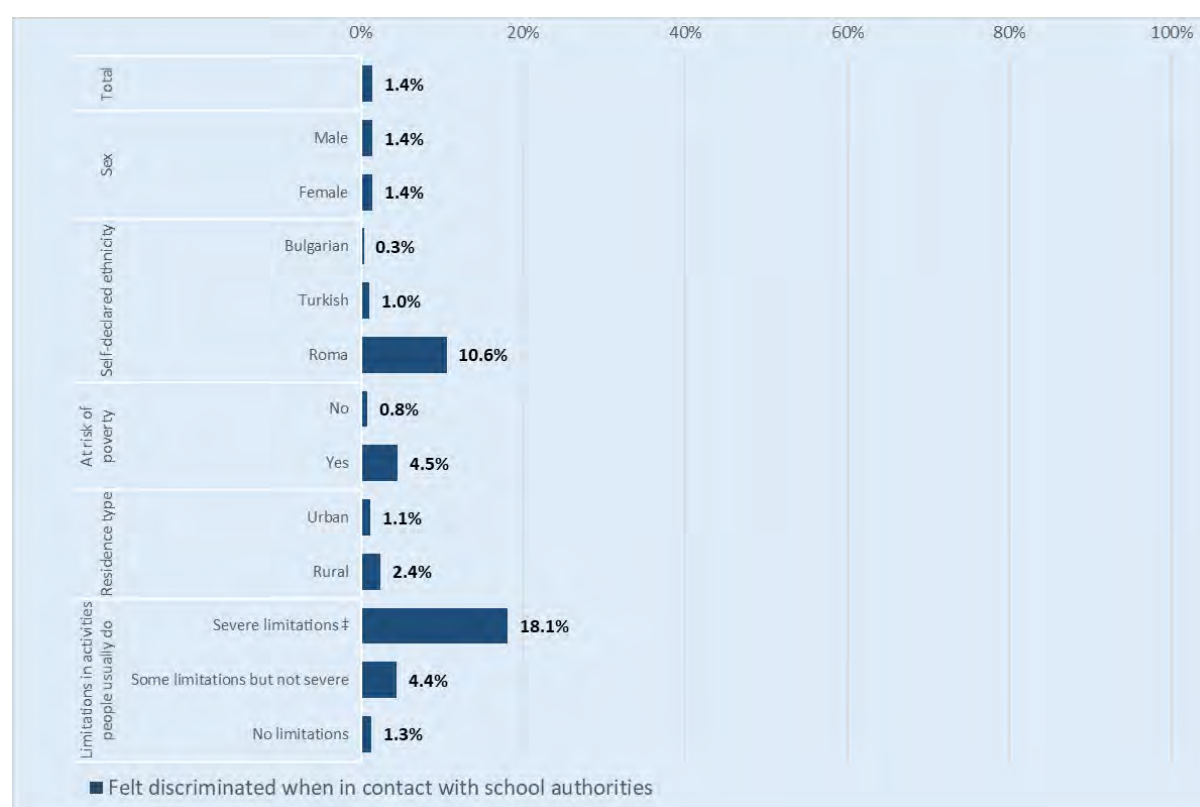
^c ‡ Results based on a small number of responses are statistically less reliable. Thus, results based on 20 to 49 unweighted observations in a group total are flagged. Results based on fewer than 20 unweighted observations in a group total are not published.

Source: National Statistical Institute, Household Survey on BGLD-3.001-0001 Project "Novel Approaches to Generating Data on hard-to-reach populations at risk of violation of their rights"

Although the overall share of people who have experienced discrimination when interacting with school authorities is relatively low, there are groups like Roma, people living in poverty and people with limitations in usual activities due to health problems, experiencing discrimination much more often than the average of the population. Persons of Roma background stand out with one in every ten having

experienced discrimination when in contact with school authorities. People living below the poverty threshold (4.5%) as well people living in rural areas (2.4%) are also among the groups with considerably higher share of discriminated persons than the survey average (1.4%), suggesting that the risk of being discriminated is more likely to occur in schools in distant areas. The data on people with limitations in their usual activities due to a health problem, although statistically less reliable due to the small number of observations, indicates that health-related limitations might also be among the factors leading to higher risk of discrimination. Sex does not seem to be a factor for discrimination when in contact with school authorities as the shares of men and women is practically equal (1.4%) (Figure 5).

Figure 5: Share of people aged 16 years and more who felt discriminated against because of any ground in the past 12 months, when in contact with school authorities (as a parent/guardian or a student), by sex, self-declared ethnicity, at risk of poverty rate, residence type and limitations



Notes: ^a Out of respondents older than 16 years who have been in contact with school authorities (as a parent/guardian or a student) in the 12 months before the survey (n = 4,852); weighted results.

^b The category includes non-responses in the underlying question(s).

^c [‡] Results based on a small number of responses are statistically less reliable. Thus, results based on 20 to 49 unweighted observations in a group total are flagged. Results based on fewer than 20 unweighted observations in a group total are not published.

Source: National Statistical Institute, Household Survey on BGLD-3.001-0001 Project “Novel Approaches to Generating Data on hard-to-reach populations at risk of violation of their rights”

2 Employment

Background

One of the key development axes of the national development programme “Bulgaria 2030” is the fostering of social inclusion with a specific focus on the situation of unemployed, economically inactive,

and discouraged working-age individuals. Reducing unemployment has been a long-term priority for Bulgarian government. Compared to 2018, the unemployed rate fell in 2019 from 5.2% to about 4.2% of the labour force.²⁷ For the same period, the average gross annual wage increased by 9.6% while income inequality between men and women remained high with women earning 19.7% less than men on average.²⁸ The economic activity rate was also on the rise (from 55.3% in 2018 to 56.6% in 2019)²⁹ as well as employment rates (from 52.4% in 2018 to 54.2% in 2019).³⁰ However, the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 onwards may have reversed this positive trend.

In Bulgaria, unemployment in general and among young people in particular is close to or higher than the average unemployment rates estimated by Eurostat and OECD.

Results at national and district level

The ‘**paid work as self-declared main activity**’ rate is a relevant proxy of the risks a person faces due to unemployment. It estimates the share of people (aged 20 to 64 years of age) whose main activity is ‘paid work’ (incl. self-employed, working in the family business without pay, internship or participate in forms of education for which payment was received; absent due to maternity leave, sick leave, annual leave or have worked in the past four weeks for money).

Survey data show that, at national level, 75% of those aged 20-64 report ‘paid work’ as their main activity (Figure 6**Error! Reference source not found.**). This corresponds to the trends in the annual employment rate for this age group, which is estimated by BNSI and covers the share of the population that has worked in exchange for payment for at least one hour over the course of the reference period, or have a regular job from which they are temporarily absent. In 2019, this coefficient stood at an average of 75% (79.3% for men and 70.7% for women), which was higher than the average rate of EU-27.³¹

Data at district level show considerable regional disparities. The share of persons who reported ‘paid work’ as their main activity is considerably lower in Vidin, Kardzhali, Yambol and Targovishte than in those at the opposite end of the spectrum (the capital city Sofia, the district of Sofia and Gabrovo).

²⁷ National Statistical Institute (2020), [Infostat: Population, labour force, employed persons, unemployed persons and persons not in labour force aged 15 years and over by place of residence and age groups](#), April 2020.

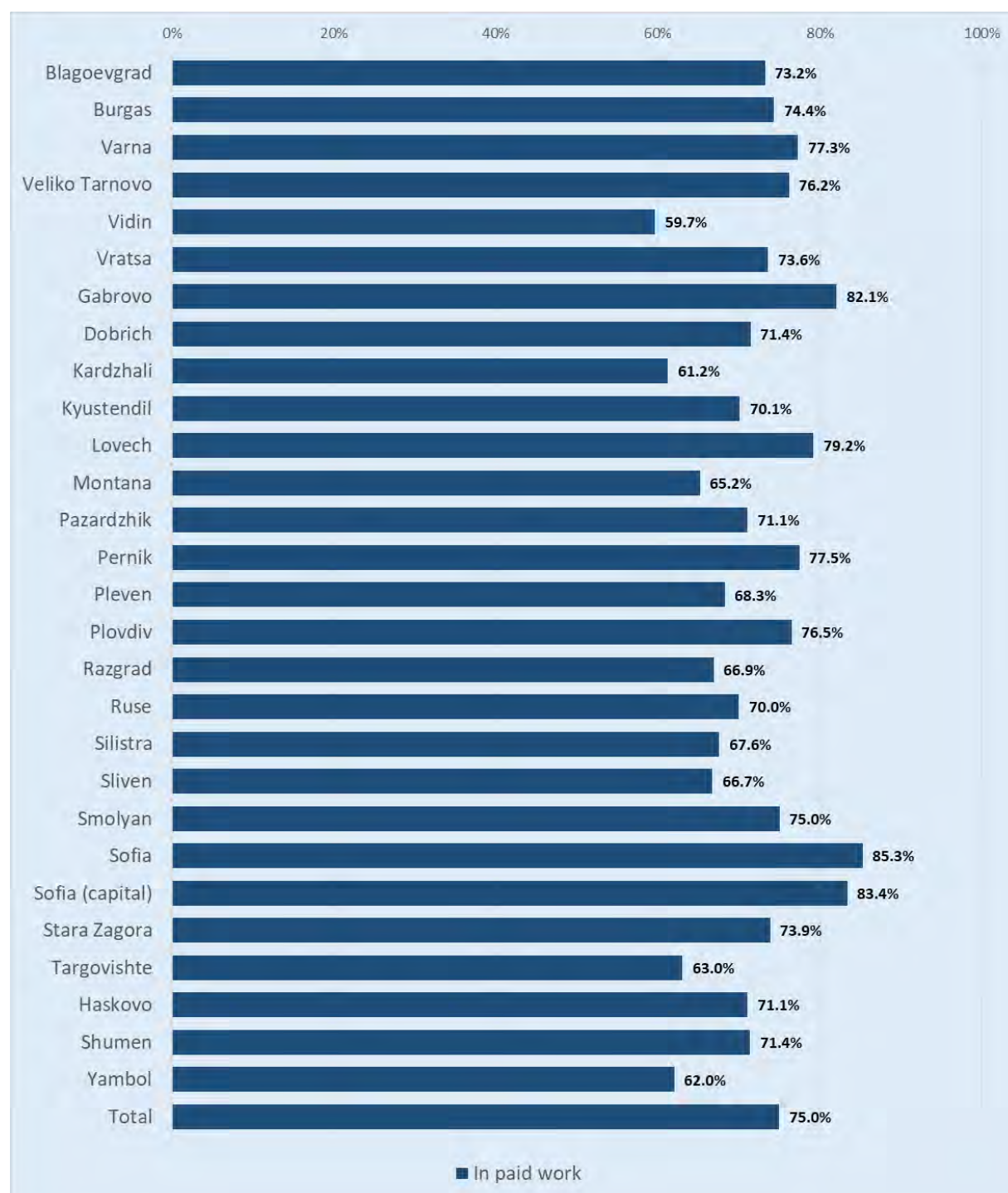
²⁸ National Statistical Institute (2020), [Infostat: Average annual wages and salaries of the employees under labour contract by economic activities and sex](#), November 2020.

²⁹ National Statistical Institute (2020), [Infostat: Activity rates by place of residence and age groups](#), November 2020.

³⁰ National Statistical Institute (2020), [Infostat: Employment rates by place of residence and age groups](#), November 2020.

³¹ Eurostat (2020), [Employment – annual statistics](#), April 2020. According to the data, in 2019, the unemployment rate in EU-27 has been 73.1%, which is the highest recorded rate since 2005 (with employment rate still 11.7 percentage points higher for men than for women).

Figure 6: Share of people who self-declared their main activity status as 'paid work' (including self-employed, working in the family business without pay, internship or participate in forms of education for which payment was received; absent due to maternity leave, sick leave, annual leave or have worked in the past four weeks for money), 20-64 years – by district ^{a,b,c} (%)



Notes: ^a Out of all household members aged 20-64 years (n = 17,308); weighted results.

^b Based on the questions: "How would you describe your current employment status?", "During the past 4 weeks, have you done any work for a fee in cash or other income?". The General population employment rate [lfsa_ergan] is based on the International Labour Organization (ILO) concept: Employed population, 20-64 years, consists of those persons who during the reference week did any work for pay or profit for at least one hour, or were not working but had jobs from which they were temporarily absent.

^c Remainder to 100% includes non-responses in the underlying question(s).

Successful transition from education to employment is critical. The share of persons aged between 15 and 29 years who are **neither in employment, education or training (NEET)** is indicative of their potential vulnerability to poverty, social exclusion or limited vertical mobility.

According to the survey data, NEET rate at national level, almost one in every five young persons aged 15 to 29, or 19.3% of the population in this age group, is not engaged in education, employment or training (Figure 7). Due to methodological differences as regards age groups and the definition of ‘employment, education and training’, the registered share of NEETs is not directly comparable to similar data from sources like Eurostat, the World Bank or the International Labour Organisation. Nevertheless, data from these sources clearly show that Bulgaria has consistently registered higher-than-average share of NEET, which raises concerns about the effectiveness and impact of national policies and measures.³²

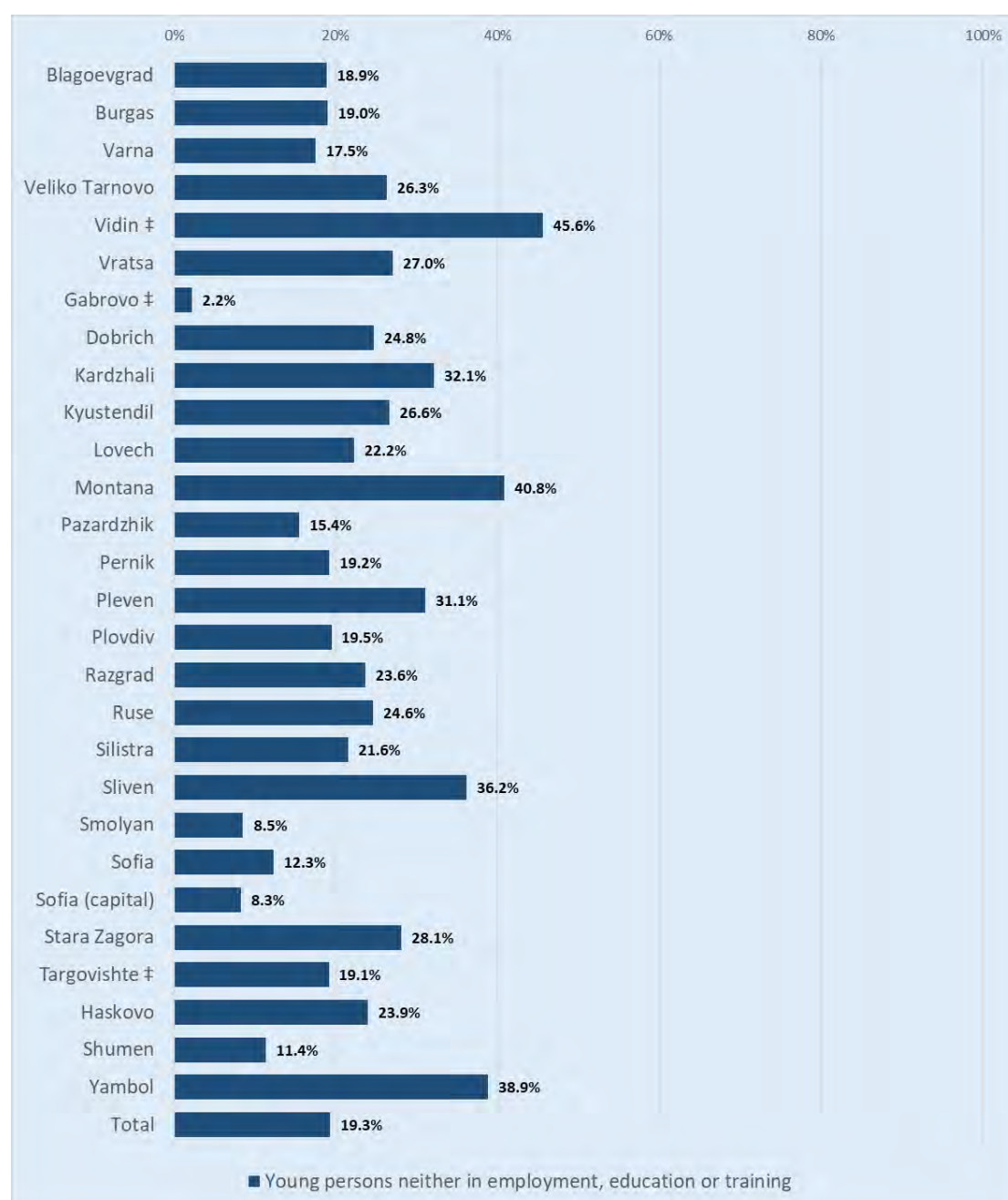
Moreover, with all the caveats, it is still worth putting the NEET rate based on the survey data in the context of LFS estimates. The survey data based estimate of ‘paid work’ rate (**Error! Reference source not found.**) does not deviate from BNSI labour force survey estimates from 2019. However, but survey-based proxy of NEET (19.3 %) does deviate from the LFS estimate for 2019 (16,7% with 13,2% for young men, and 20.3% for young women).³³ One might assume that the data from the present survey captures the pandemic’s first wave impact on youth with NEET rate of almost 20% among persons aged 15-29 (**Error! Reference source not found.**). It may suggest that the pandemic either has hit young people harder – or that the measures adopted by the government did not reach the young cohorts of the labour force) or both.

Broken down by districts, data show disproportionate distribution of the share of NEET across the country. The districts with the highest share of young people falling in the NEET category are Vidin, Montana (in both districts the share of NEET exceeds 40%), Yambol and Sliven. On the opposite end of the spectrum, the districts with the lowest registered shares of NEET (below 10%) are the capital city Sofia and the districts of Smolyan and Gabrovo (Figure 7).

³² Eurostat (2020), [Statistics on young people neither in employment nor in education or training](#), April 2020. For example, according to the data, which, however, refer to a different age group (20-34), in 2019, Bulgaria ranks sixth in the EU with a share of NEET substantially higher than the EU average.

³³ National Statistical Institute (2020), [Infostat: Young people neither in employment nor in education and training aged 15 - 29](#), April 2020.

Figure 7: Share of young persons, 15-29 years old with current main activity 'neither in employment, education or training' (NEET), by district ^{a,b,c,d} (%)



Notes: ^a Out of all household members aged 15-29 years (n = 4,030); weighted results.

^b Based on the questions: "How would you describe your current employment status?"; "During the past 4 weeks, have you done any work for a fee in cash or other income?"; "Is the person studying at present?". Comparability with the Eurostat NEET rate is restricted due to a different definition. The Eurostat NEET rate is based on the ILO concept, which refers to having worked at least one hour in the past week. The present survey also did not ask on participation in non-formal education or training.

^c Remainder to 100% includes non-responses in the underlying question(s).

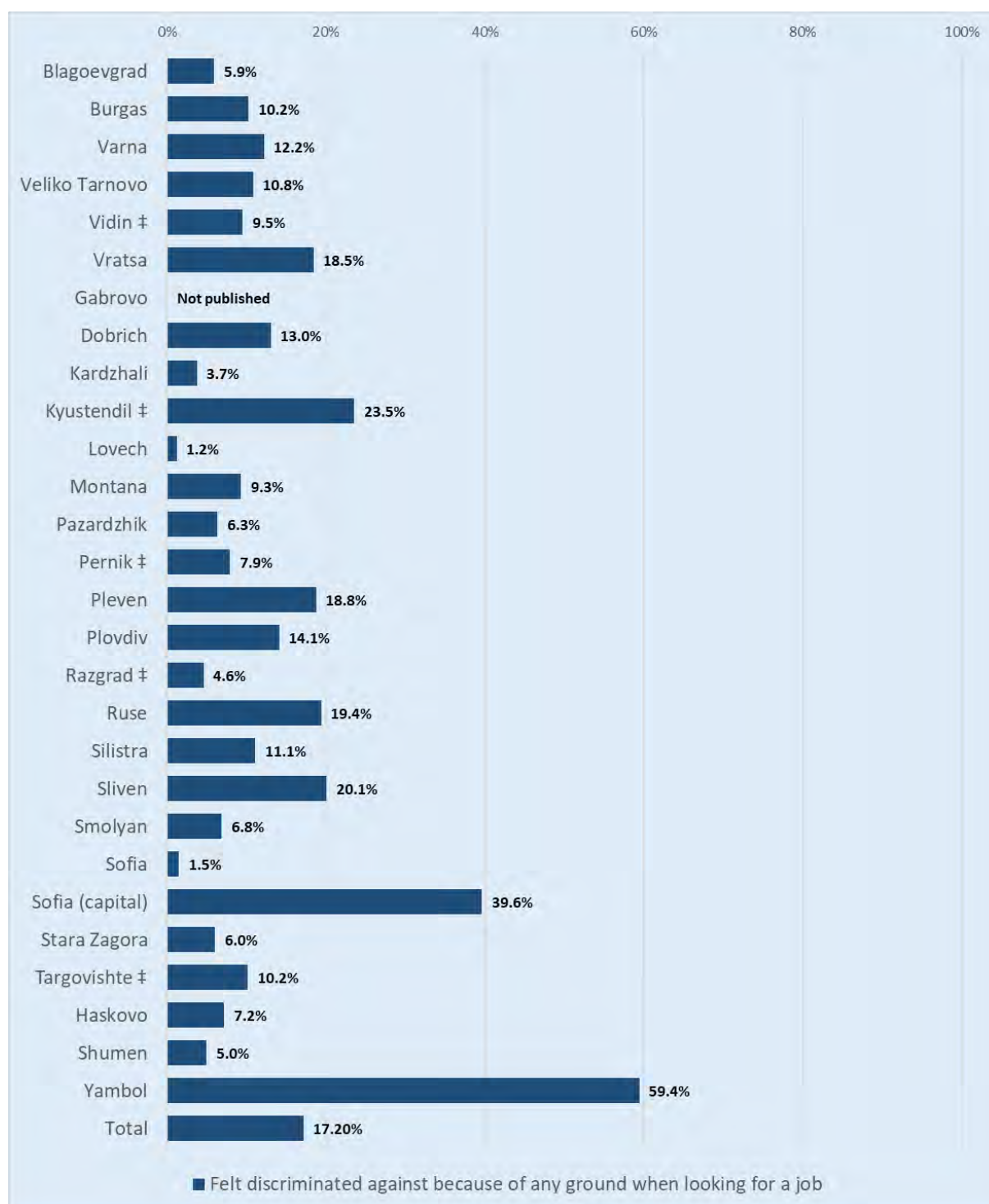
^d ‡ Results based on a small number of responses are statistically less reliable. Thus, results based on 20 to 49 unweighted observations in a group total are flagged. Results based on fewer than 20 unweighted observations in a group total are not published.

Source: National Statistical Institute, Household Survey on BGLD-3.001-0001 Project "Novel Approaches to Generating Data on hard-to-reach populations at risk of violation of their rights"

In a situation where unemployed rates and NEET rates are both high, ensuring equal access to employment opportunities becomes particularly important for protecting the most vulnerable groups of the population. The indicator '**discriminated when looking for a job**' captures unequal treatment in the labour market by estimating the share of those (aged 16 years or more) who felt discriminated because of any ground in the past 12 months.

According to the survey data, 17.2% of all respondents (aged 16+), who have been looking for a job in the past year, felt discriminated against (because of any ground). Of all discrimination-related indicators, the one estimating discrimination when looking for a job registers the highest rate. Broken down by districts, data show considerable local discrepancies. While in half of the districts the share of persons who felt discriminated when looking for a job is below 10%, in some districts it exceeds 20% (the capital city Sofia, Kyustendil and Sliven) reaching 59% in Yambol (Figure 8).

Figure 8: Share of the population who felt discriminated against because of any ground in the past 12 months, when looking for a job, by district ^{a,b,c} (%)



Notes: ^a Out of respondents older than 16 years who have been looking for a job in the 12 months before the survey (n = 2,745); weighted results.

^b Remainder to 100% includes non-responses in the underlying question(s).

^c ‡ Results based on a small number of responses are statistically less reliable. Thus, results based on 20 to 49 unweighted observations in a group total are flagged. Results based on fewer than 20 unweighted observations in a group total are not published.

Source: National Statistical Institute, Household Survey on BGLD-3.001-0001 Project "Novel Approaches to Generating Data on hard-to-reach populations at risk of violation of their rights"

Bi-variate analysis

Despite higher employment rates than the EU27 average, Bulgaria has not sufficiently addressed certain inequalities and vulnerabilities in its national employment strategies and policy measures. Groups at particular risk of unemployment, unstable employment and loss of economic activity due to various factors are women (who are more likely to work part-time and take breaks from working due to caring responsibilities), ethnic minorities (especially Roma, who are often engaged in seasonal, incidental or undeclared work), people with disabilities (who have fewer accessible employment opportunities), and persons in pre-retirement age (who encounter greater challenges when changing workplaces and are at higher risk of being made redundant).³⁴ If unemployed, these groups are potentially also more vulnerable to risks such as life-long and/or old-age poverty, as well as inadequate housing, education, healthcare and nutrition.

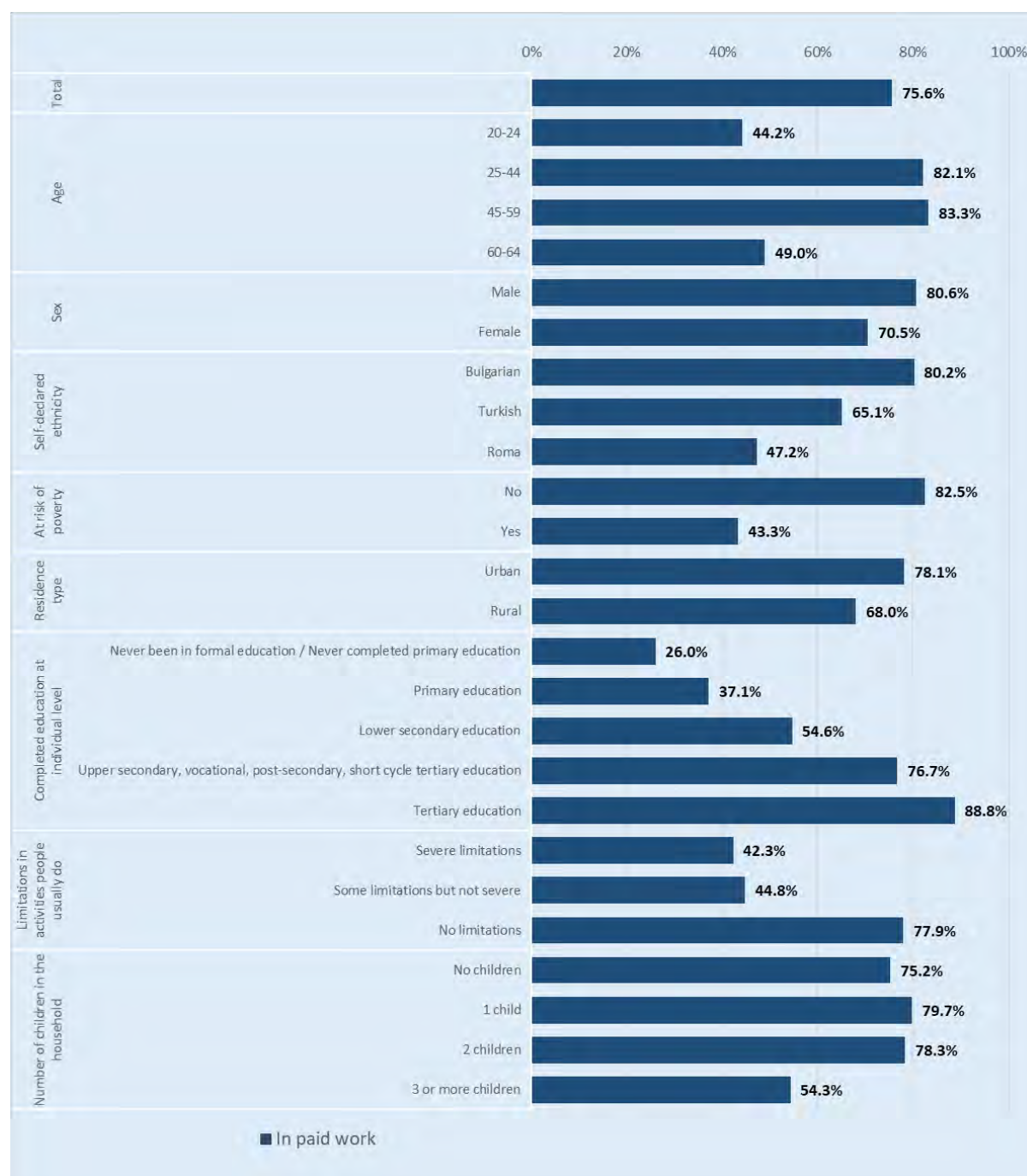
The survey data highlight the link between education, employment and poverty. Among people aged between 20 and 64, the share of people in paid work increases with the degree of education. The share of people in paid work during the past four weeks decreases from 88.8% among persons with completed tertiary education to 26.0% among those who have never been in formal education or have never completed primary education, increasing the risk of unemployment among those with lower educational attainment. Understandably, the risk is lower among people in active work age (between 25 and 59 years) where the share of people with a paid job is larger than 80% (82.1% among those aged 25-44 and 83.3% among those aged 45-59), and considerably higher compared to younger (44.2%, aged 20-24) or older people (49%, aged 60-64). The high share of young people not in paid work (55.8%) can be explained by the fact that it includes persons that are still in high school or university education as well as the young persons, who are not in employment, education or training. The share persons aged 60-64, who have are not in paid work (more than 50%), suggests that advanced age remains an obstacle for finding (or keeping) a job. The risk of being without a paid job is considerably higher among Roma as the share of Roma with no paid job (52.8%) exceeds the one of ethnic Turks (34.9%) and Bulgarians (19.8%). This can be explained by, among other factors, the lower level of education and the higher share of early school leavers among Roma, which puts this group in a disadvantaged position at the labour market. People with limitations in usual activities due to health problems are another group at increased risk of unemployment. Only 42.3% of persons with severe limitations and 44.8% of those with some but not severe limitations report to have been working during the past month, which is much lower than the share among those without such limitations, even considering the fact that the former tend to be generally older.

The number of (dependent) children also seem to increase the risk of not being in paid work. The share of persons not in paid work is considerably higher among people living in households with three or more (dependent) children – 45.7% compared to 21.7% in households with two children, 20.3% with one child and 24.8% with no children (Figure 9).³⁵

³⁴ For more information about the risk of unemployment among Roma, older persons and persons with disabilities and the policy measures to address this risk, see Ilcheva, M. and Kuneva, L. (2019), Overview of the legal and policy frameworks addressing ‘vulnerability’ of violation of fundamental rights and poverty and social exclusion and groups at risk in Bulgaria (*Преглед на правните и политическите рамки, отнасящи се до „уязвимостта“ от нарушаване на основните права и бедността и социалното изключване и рисковите групи в България – предварителна версия на английски език*), Sofia, National Statistical Institute (report developed under BGLD-3.001-0001 Project “Novel Approaches to Generating Data on hard-to-reach populations at risk of violation of their rights”). For more information about previous studies of the risk of unemployment among these groups, see Markov, D. and Kuneva, L. (2019), Overview of data and indicators for monitoring “vulnerability” of groups at risk in Bulgaria (*Преглед на данните и индикаторите за мониторинг на „уязвимостта“ на рисковите групи в България*), Sofia, National Statistical Institute (report developed under BGLD-3.001-0001 Project “Novel Approaches to Generating Data on hard-to-reach populations at risk of violation of their rights”).

³⁵ According to the official statistics, unemployment rate in villages is higher than the country’s average (7.8%), the share of unemployed people aged 25-34 (5.5%) exceeds the one of those aged 55+ (3.7%), and unemployment is higher among men (4.5%) than women (3.9%). For more information, see National Statistical Institute (2020), [Unemployed and unemployment rates - national level; statistical regions; districts](#), 16 March 2020. Comparability between the survey data and the official statistics is, however, limited due to methodological differences.

Figure 9: Share of people aged 20-64 years who self-declared their main activity status as 'paid work' (including full-time, part-time, ad hoc jobs, self-employment and occasional work or work in the past four weeks), by age, sex, self-declared ethnicity, at risk of poverty rate, residence type, completed education, limitations, and presence of children in the household ^{a,b} (%)



Notes: ^a Out of all household members aged 20-64 years (n = 17,308); weighted results.

^b Remainder to 100% includes non-responses in the underlying question(s).

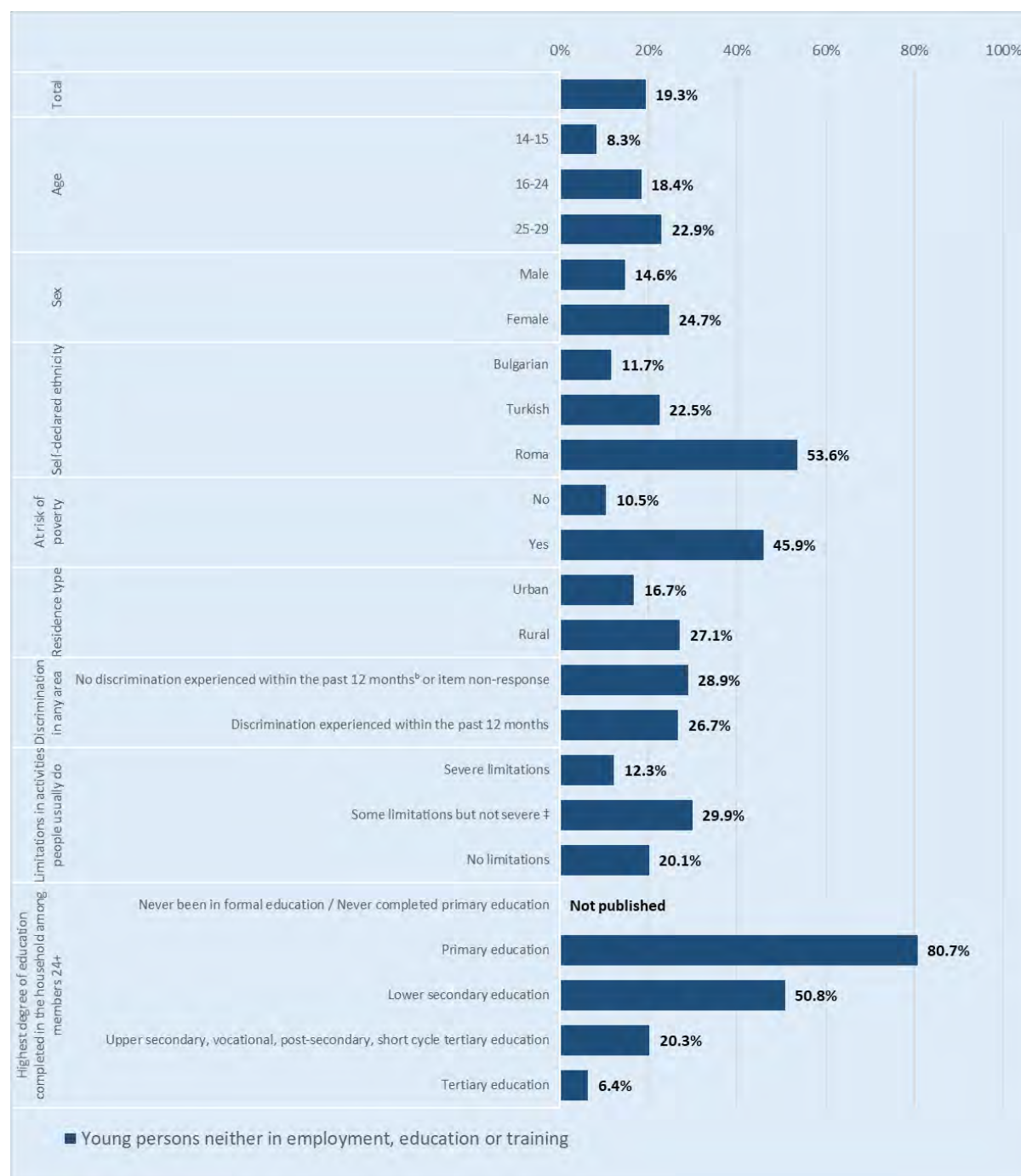
Source: National Statistical Institute, Household Survey on BGLD-3.001-0001 Project "Novel Approaches to Generating Data on hard-to-reach populations at risk of violation of their rights"

Various factors contribute to the high share of NEET in Bulgaria. These include educational attainment rates, family situation, poverty within the household, lack of access to education and employment services, lack of marketable skills, illiteracy, contacts with the criminal justice system, etc. Personal factors such as lack of motivation, insufficient knowledge of education and work opportunities,

discouragement from economic activity, perceptions of the relationship between education and work, unrealistic expectations of remuneration, etc. must also be accounted for. Seasonal and ad hoc work, undeclared employment, informal work (including unpaid care and domestic work, especially for girls and young women), recurring work-related immigration (especially short-term immigration) also contribute to the relative insecurity and the frequent change of status in education and employment status of young people.

The data on young people aged 15-29, who are not in employment, education or training (NEET), also show the impact of the educational level of other members of the household. The share of those falling in the NEET category is 80.7% of young people living in households with at most primary education level and 50.8% of those living in households with at most lower secondary education attainment. The share of young Roma, who are out of the educational system and the labour market, accounts for 53.6% (twice higher than the group of ethnic Turks and almost four times higher than young ethnic Bulgarians), which highlights the complex feedback loops between low education, unemployment and poverty – hence the need of addressing these vulnerability risks in parallel. Young girls seem to be at higher risk of falling into the NEET category, which might be due, among other factors, to leaving school early due to marriage or facing more difficulties to find a job than is the case of young men. Young people in rural areas are more vulnerable to falling in the NEET category, presumably due to the more difficult access to education and the less employment opportunities (Figure 10).

Figure 10: Share of young people aged 15-29 years whose current main activity is 'neither in employment, education or training' (NEET) – by age, sex, self-declared ethnicity, at risk of poverty rate, residence type, discrimination experience, limitations, and highest degree of education completed in the household among its members aged 24 years and more ^{a,b,c} (%)



Notes: ^a Out of all household members aged 15-29 years (n = 4,030); weighted results.

^b Remainder to 100% includes non-responses in the underlying question(s)

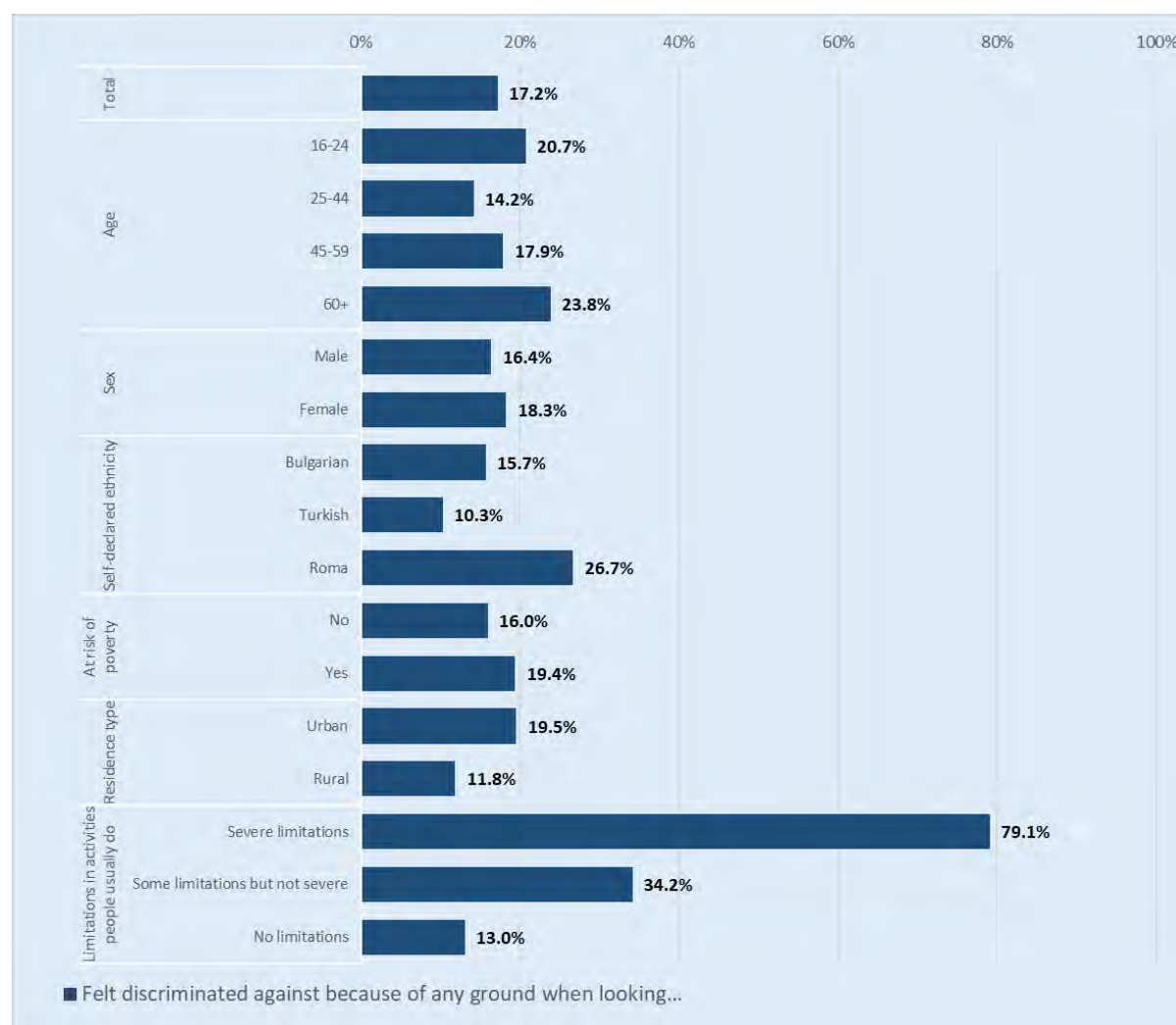
^c [‡] Results based on a small number of responses are statistically less reliable. Thus, results based on 20 to 49 unweighted observations in a group total are flagged. Results based on fewer than 20 unweighted observations in a group total are not published.

Source: National Statistical Institute, Household Survey on BGLD-3.001-0001 Project "Novel Approaches to Generating Data on hard-to-reach populations at risk of violation of their rights"

The data on discrimination outline disability, age and ethnicity as the key vulnerability predictors. People with limitations in their usual activities due to health problems stand out as a particularly vulnerable group to discrimination at the labour market. Almost four in every five persons with severe

limitations (79.1%) and one in every three persons with some but not severe limitations (34.2%) reported they had felt discriminated against when they had been looking for a job during the past year. Young people up to 24 years of age (20.7%) and older people of more than 60 years of age (23.8%) are the most discriminated age groups when looking for a job. Roma are the most discriminated ethnic group (26.7%), followed by ethnic Bulgarians (15.7%) and ethnic Turks (10.3%). These results might suggest that stereotyping Roma as “lazy” and Turks as “hardworking” is still in place.³⁶ The risk of discrimination in employment is also higher among people living in urban areas compared to rural (Figure 11).

Figure 11: Share of people who felt discriminated because of any ground in the past 12 months, when looking for a job, by age, sex, self-declared ethnicity, at risk of poverty rate, residence type, and limitations, 16+ ^{a,b,c} (%)



Notes: ^a Out of respondents older than 16 years who have been looking for a job in the 12 months before the survey ($n = 2,745$); weighted results.
^b Remainder to 100% includes non-responses in the underlying question(s).
^c ‡ Results based on a small number of responses are statistically less reliable. Thus, results based on 20 to 49 unweighted observations in a group total are flagged. Results based on fewer than 20 unweighted observations in a group total are not published.

³⁶ For example, see Alpha Research (2020), Majority and minorities: Attitude towards the different. December 2019 – January 2020 ([Мнозинство и малцинства: нагласи към различните декември 2019 – януари 2020](#)), Alpha Research, March 2020. According to the study, 23.1% of respondents perceive the representatives of the Turkish minority as “hardworking” and 26.7% perceive the Roma as “lazy” or “freeloaders”.

3 Poverty and social exclusion

Background

EU Member States apply both relative and multidimensional poverty concepts. The ‘at risk of poverty’ rate measures relative poverty with 60% of the yearly median household income as threshold. The related indicator ‘at risk of poverty **and** social exclusion’ combines three dimensions: monetary poverty (at-risk-of poverty calculated as 60% of the median income), severe material deprivation (deprivation of at least four out of nine predefined items) and low work intensity. For capturing the risk of extreme poverty among groups facing particular risks of marginalization and social exclusion, proxies of material deprivation or exposure to risk of hunger are applied to complement the standard poverty estimates.

Bulgaria has consistently topped Eurostat rankings in terms of severe material deprivation (one of the indicators most often used for measuring poverty), registering alarming rates of between 34.2% in 2015 and 19.9% in 2019 (vis-à-vis an EU-27 average of 5.6% in 2019).³⁷ Respectively, the country has consistently ranked among the countries with the highest at-risk-of-poverty rate in the EU.³⁸

At national level, the poverty threshold is calculated annually on the basis of a methodology approved by the government and reflecting the 60% of the medial income as captured by the EU SILC from the preceding year. For the year 2020, it was BGN 363 (approximately €186).³⁹

Unemployment is one of the major factors linked to the risk of poverty. According to BNSI data for 2019, remuneration for work constitutes as much as 70.1% of the household income followed by pensions (21.9%), other sources (5.4%) and unemployment benefits and family allowances (2.5% of the average household income).⁴⁰ In 2019, Bulgaria has registered an average unemployment rate of 4.2%, which, however, differs both between regions and between different groups of the population. The highest unemployment rate (18.9%) is registered among people with primary and lower education.

Education is a strong predictor of remuneration. In 2018, those with at most primary education had gross monthly earnings of BGN 743 (approximately €380), which is around a third of the gross monthly earnings of PhD graduates (BGN 1,973.8 or approximately €1,009).⁴¹

Unemployment and/or low remuneration may lead to a higher risk of poverty for households with more members outside the labour force (e.g. children). Another relevant factor is the level of urbanisation as big cities usually offer more employment opportunities and social benefits at lower transportation cost.

³⁷ Eurostat (2020), [Severe material deprivation rate, 2015-2019](#), April 2020. According to the data, Bulgaria has been the country with the highest rate of severe material deprivation every year since 2015.

³⁸ Eurostat (2020), [At-risk-of-poverty rate by poverty threshold, age and sex](#), 17 December 2020. According to the data, the share of people at-risk-of-poverty in Bulgaria has been consistently higher than the EU average since 2007 (the year in which Bulgaria joined the EU).

³⁹ Council of Ministers (2019), Decree No 275 of 1 November 2019 for determining the poverty line for the country in 2020 ([Постановление № 275 от 1 ноември 2019 г. за определяне на размера на линията на бедност за страната за 2020 г.](#)), 5 November 2020.

⁴⁰ National Statistical Institute (2020), [Poverty and Social Inclusion Indicators](#). According to the data, the share of the income from work in the structure of household income has increased from 63.7% in 2018 to 70.1% in 2019.

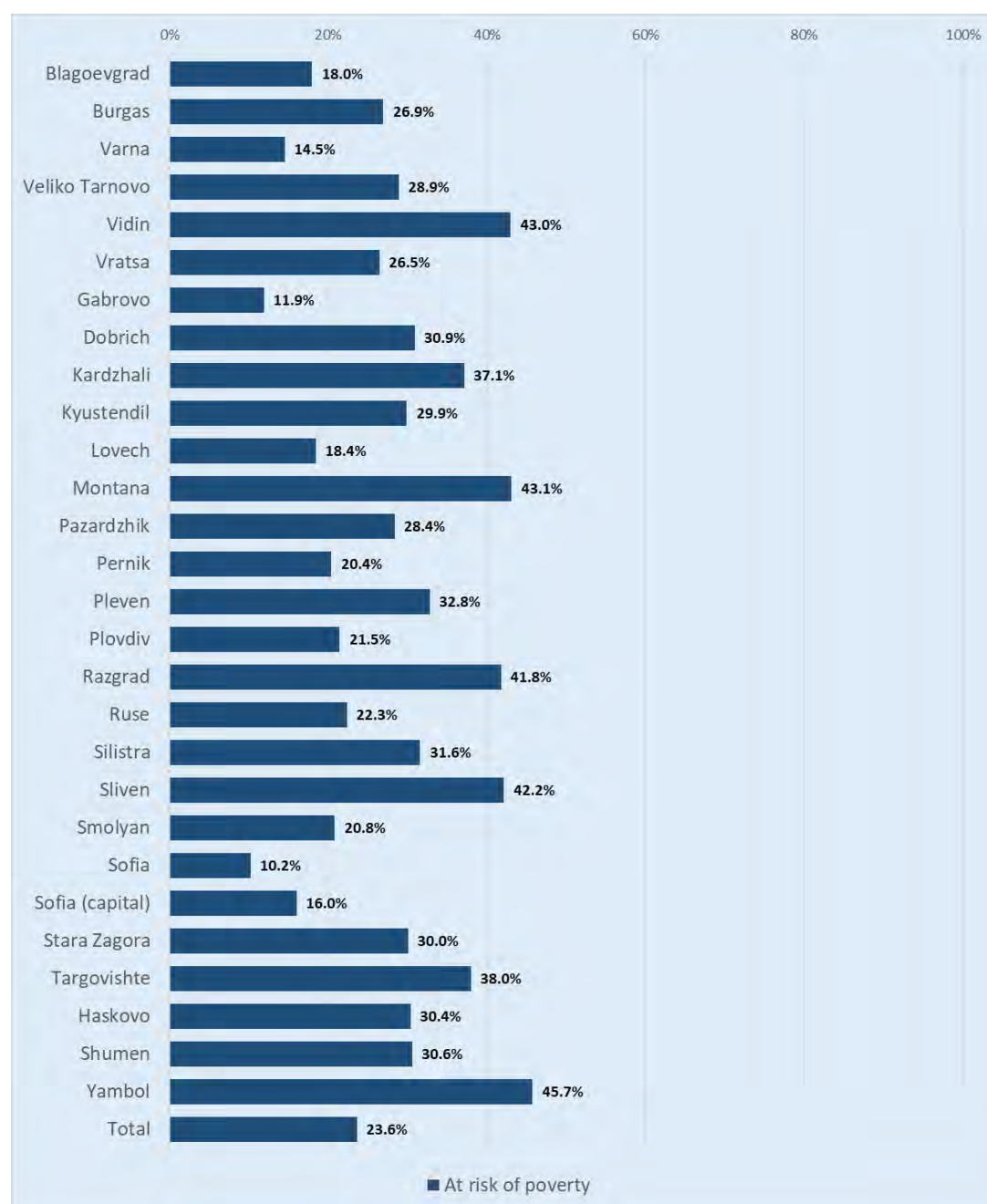
⁴¹ National Statistical Institute (2020), [Number of employees, average number of paid hours and average gross and net monthly earnings in October 2018 by gender and education – total full-time and part-time employees](#), 7 July 2020.

Results at national and district level

The ‘at-risk-of poverty’ rate calculated from the survey is 23.6%. These are people living in households with equivalised disposable income, after social transfers, below 60% of the national median average 2019.⁴² District level data show certain disproportionalities in the distribution of persons at risk of poverty. The districts registering the lowest at-risk-of-poverty rates (between 10% and 15%) are the capital city Sofia and the districts of Gabrovo and Varna. On the opposite end of the spectrum, with at-risk-of-poverty rates higher than 35% are the district of Yambol, Montana, Vidin, Sliven and Razgrad (Figure 12).

⁴² The EU SILC threshold was 211.17 EUR (413.04 BGN) in 2019 and 230.58 (450.98 BGN) in 2020 (Eurostat, [At-risk-of-poverty thresholds - EU-SILC and ECHP surveys](#)). The survey collects the monthly household income with one question while EU SILC has an extensive questionnaire on the yearly household income (including one time benefits, lump sum payments and income in kind, etc., which may not occur on monthly basis and thus are not captured in the survey). Therefore, it would be plausible to assume that the yearly household income estimated on the basis of the survey data would be underestimated. Respectively, if the EU SILC 2020 poverty threshold is applied, the ‘at-risk-of poverty rate’ would be overestimated. Applying the poverty threshold of 2019 instead of the one for 2020 (when the survey was conducted) is expected to counterbalance this overestimation.

Figure 12: At-risk-of-poverty rate (below 60% of median equivalised income after social transfers), by district ^{a,b} (%)



Notes: ^a Out of all household members in the surveyed household (n = 30,303); weighted results.

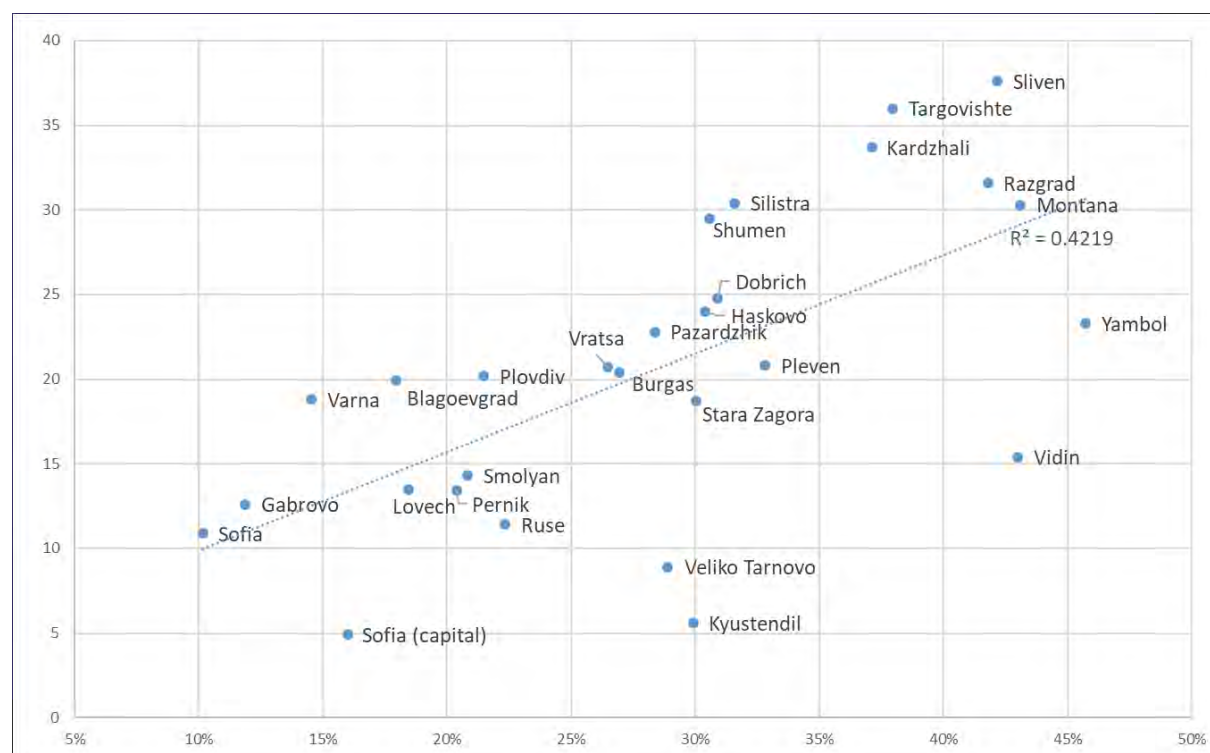
^b At-risk-of-poverty are all persons with an equivalised current monthly disposable household income below the twelfth of the national 2019 SILC at-risk-of-poverty threshold (published by National Statistical Institute; 413.04 BGN). The equivalised disposable income is the total income of the household, after tax and other deductions, divided by the number of household members converted into equalised adults; using the so-called modified OECD equivalence scale (1-0.5-0.3).

Source: National Statistical Institute, Household Survey on BGLD-3.001-0001 Project "Novel Approaches to Generating Data on hard-to-reach populations at risk of violation of their rights"

Correlates between survey based indicators and other (macroeconomic or social indicators at territorial level) can provide additional insights into the way territorial characteristics contribute to the risk of poverty. 'At risk of poverty' rate appears to be positively correlated with the share of the population aged between 25 and 64 with at most primary education ($R^2=0.4219$, Figure 13). The correlation with GDP/capita at district level is negative but weak ($R^2=0.2423$) and positive but weak with LFS-based

unemployment rate ($R^2=0.3149$). This suggests that economic growth per se does not automatically decrease the risk of poverty (the ‘trickle-down’ effect is weak) and that part of the people at such risk are out of the labour force and thus are not counted in the unemployment rate.

Figure 13: Relationship between ‘at risk of poverty’ rate (survey data, X axis) and relative share of the population aged between 25 and 64 with primary and lower education (official data, Y axis), %, 2019 ^{a,b}



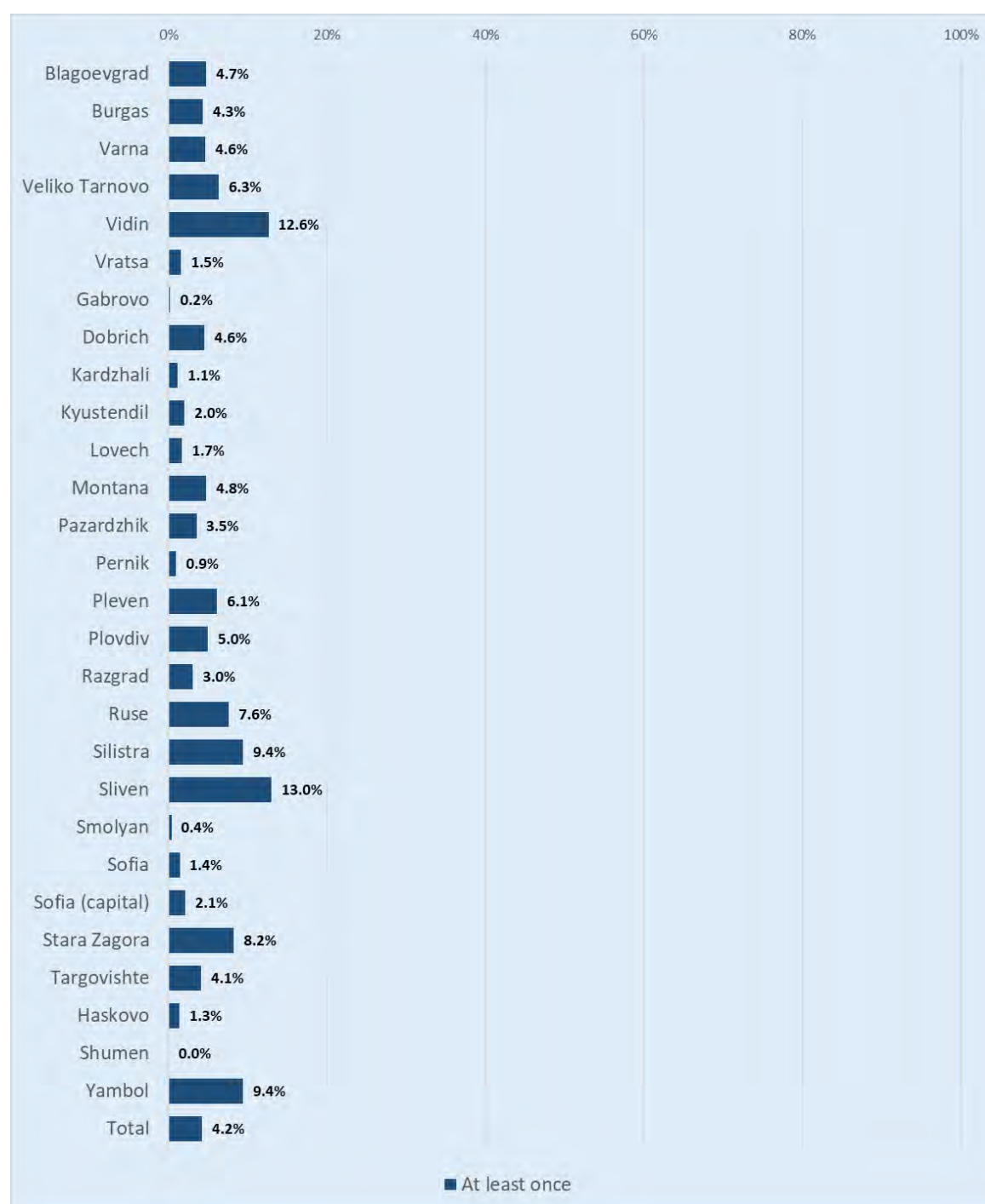
Notes: ^a Out of all household members in the surveyed household ($n = 30,303$); weighted results.

^b At-risk-of-poverty are all persons with an equivalised current monthly disposable household income below the twelfth of the national 2019 SILC at-risk-of-poverty threshold 2019 (published by National Statistical Institute; 413.04 BGN). The equivalised disposable income is the total income of the household, after tax and other deductions, divided by the number of household members converted into equalised adults; using the so-called modified OECD equivalence scale (1-0.5-0.3).

Sources: At-risk-of-poverty rate: National Statistical Institute, Household Survey on BGLD-3.001-0001 Project “Novel Approaches to Generating Data on hard-to-reach populations at risk of violation of their rights”
Share of the population aged between 25 and 64 with primary and lower education: NSI, [Key indicators of the demographic, social and economic development of the districts](#).

Food is an essential expenditure item and inability to secure sufficient food indicates a risk of extreme poverty. The ‘**Going to bed hungry**’ indicator – the share of persons living in household where at least one person in the household has gone to bed hungry in the past month due to lack of money to buy food – reflects the affordability of food. The data show that 4.2% of the population live in a household where at least one member has gone to bed hungry at least once a month. The data disaggregated by districts show considerable differences. In some districts the share of persons living in household where one person in the household has gone to bed hungry in the past month due to lack of money to buy food is close to or even above 10% (Sliven, Vidin, Silistra, Yambol and Stara Zagora), while in other districts this affects less than 1% (Pernik, Gabrovo, Smolyan and Shumen) (Figure 14). Unlike poverty, correlation of incidence of hunger and key macro-economic indicators at district level is insignificant ($R^2 < 0.1$) suggesting that hunger emerges as a risk for pockets of poverty at territorial level lower than NUTS3.

Figure 14: Share of persons living in household where one person in the household gone to bed hungry in the past month because there was not enough money for food, by district ^{a,b} (%)



Notes: ^a Out of all household members in the surveyed household (n = 30,303); weighted results.

^b Question : "In the past month, have you or someone in your household gone to bed hungry because you didn't have enough money for food? If so, how often this has happened in the last month?"

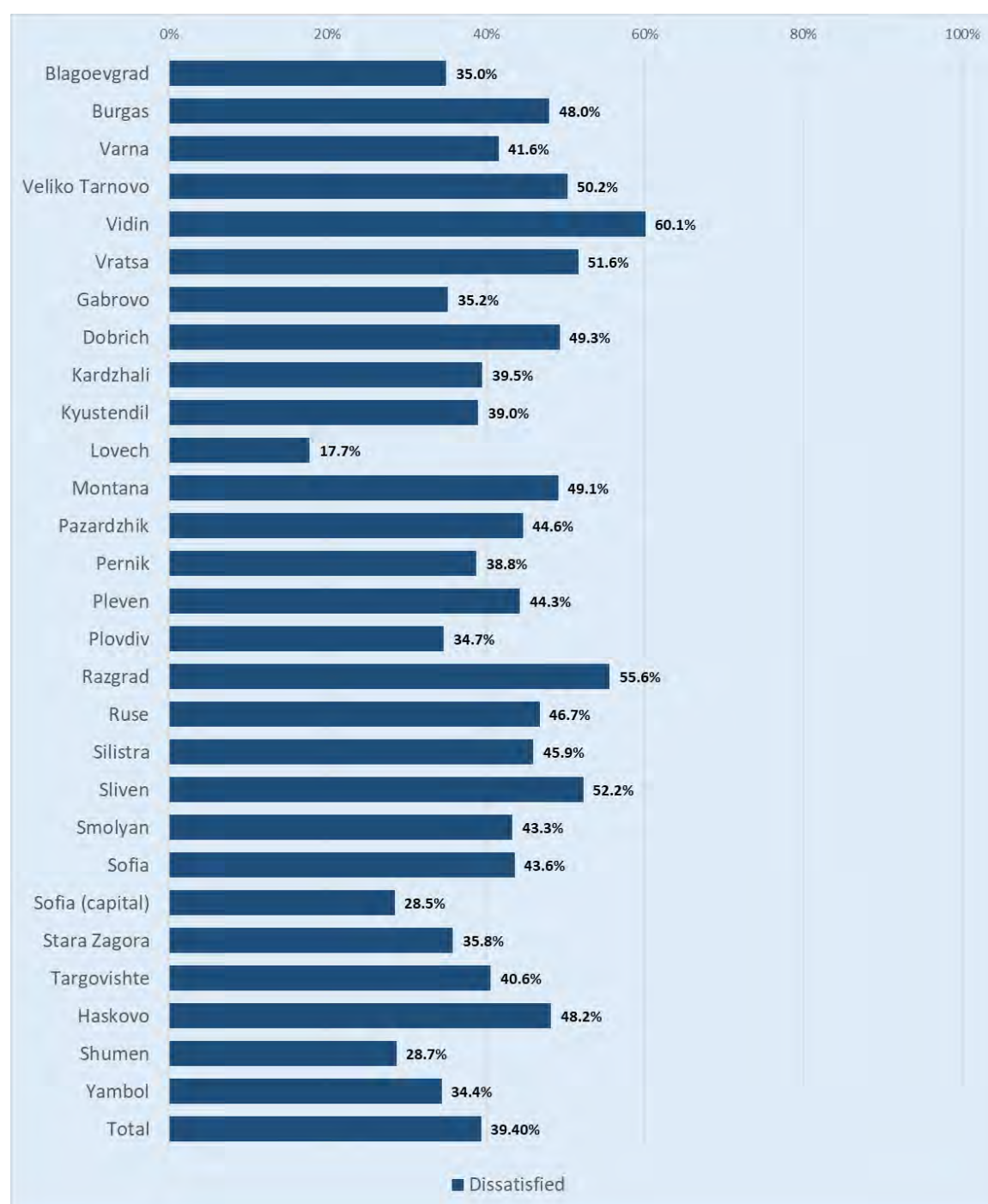
^c Remainder to 100% includes non-responses in the underlying question(s).

Source: National Statistical Institute, Household Survey on BGLD-3.001-0001 Project "Novel Approaches to Generating Data on hard-to-reach populations at risk of violation of their rights"

The survey provides also a subjective assessment of economic status through the indicator '**overall level of satisfaction with own financial situation**' indicator. The results show that the proportion of those who are dissatisfied with their financial situation is quite high (almost 40%). This high rate of

dissatisfaction is important to bear in mind when assessing the risks of vulnerability to poverty and social exclusion given the psychological burden on the individual and the link to possible demotivation. The data at district level show certain disproportionalities in the distribution of those who are not satisfied with their financial situation. Only three districts (Lovech, Shumen, and the capital city Sofia) register levels of dissatisfaction below 30%. At the opposite end of the spectrum, dissatisfaction levels exceed 50% in the districts of Vidin (dissatisfaction level of more than 60%), Razgrad, Sliven, Vratsa and Veliko Tarnovo (Figure 15). Similarly to the risk of hunger, correlation of subjective assessment of own financial situation with macroeconomic indicators at district level is weak.

Figure 15: Share of people aged 16 years and more **dissatisfied** with their financial situation, by district ^{a,b,c} (%)



Notes: ^a Out of all respondents aged 16 years and older (n = 26,380); weighted results.

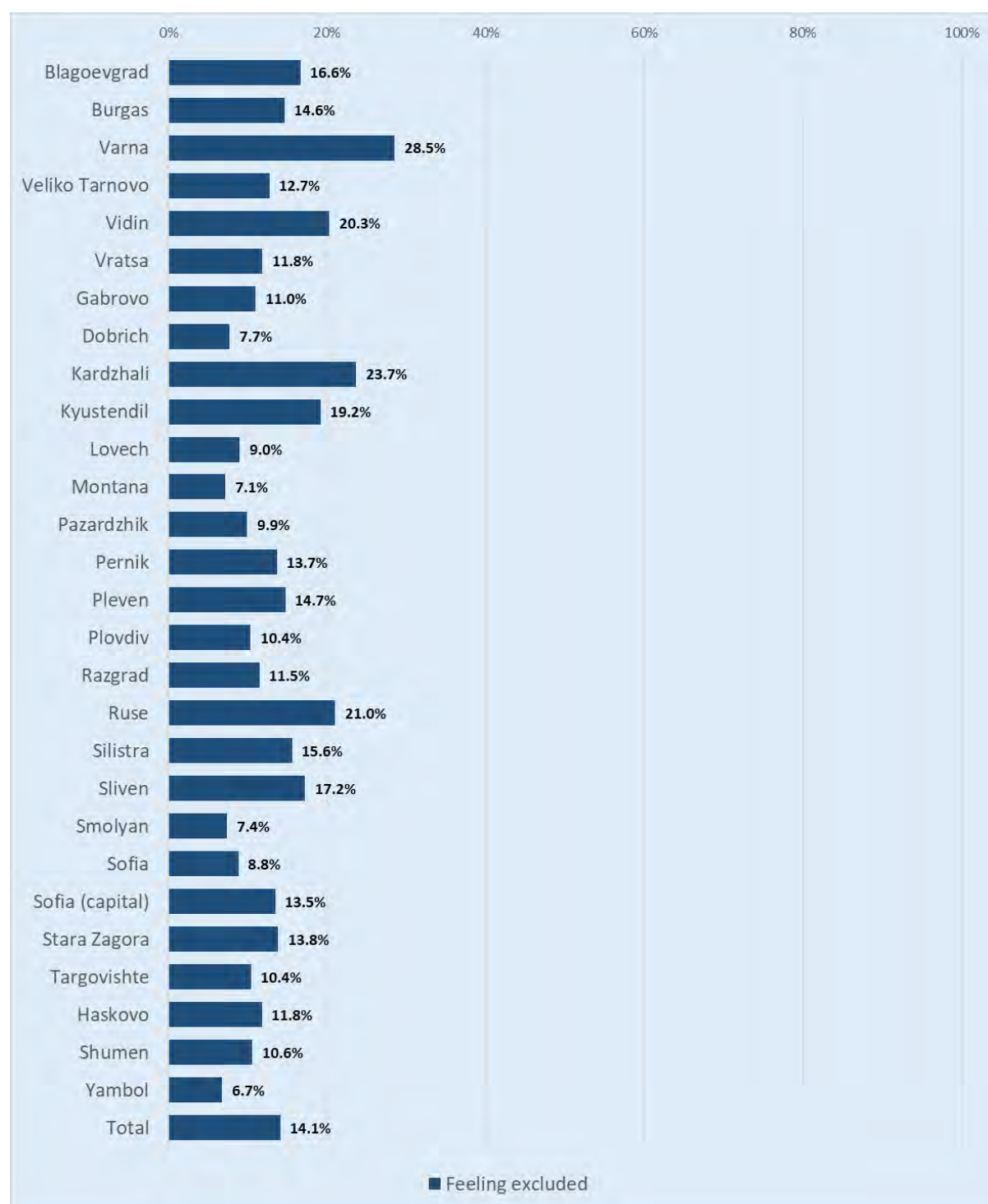
^b Question: "Overall, what is your level of satisfaction with: Your financial situation?; "1" means "completely dissatisfied" and "10" means "completely satisfied" "

^c Remainder to 100% includes non-responses in the underlying question(s).

Source: National Statistical Institute, Household Survey on BGLD-3.001-0001 Project “Novel Approaches to Generating Data on hard-to-reach populations at risk of violation of their rights”

People’s perceptions can also be used to measure the share of the population at risk of social exclusion through the indicator “**feeling of being excluded from society**” which uses a ten-grade scale from ‘not excluded at all’ to ‘completely excluded’. The survey results show that overall 14.1% of the population feels excluded from society. The results differ across districts. In seven districts the share of people who feel excluded from society is below 10%. These are the districts of Yambol (the only district with a registered level of social exclusion below 7%), Montana, Dobrich, Smolyan, Sofia, Lovech, and Pazardzhik. The districts with the highest share of those feeling socially excluded are Varna, Kardzhali and Ruse registering levels above 20% (Figure 16).

Figure 16: Share of people feeling of being excluded from society, by district ^{a,b,c} (%)



Notes: ^a Out of all respondents aged 16 years and older (n = 26,380); weighted results.

^b Question: "In general, to what extent would you say that you feel excluded from society?; where "0" means "I am not excluded from society at all" and "10" - "I am completely excluded from society" "

^c Remainder to 100% includes non-responses in the underlying question(s).

Source: National Statistical Institute, Household Survey on BGLD-3.001-0001 Project "Novel Approaches to Generating Data on hard-to-reach populations at risk of violation of their rights"

Bi-variate analysis

The bivariate analysis of the survey results suggests that the Roma face particularly high risk of poverty with seven of every ten people falling in this category. This share is much higher compared to the other ethnic groups (twice as high as the Turkish ethnic group and more than four times higher than the Bulgarian ethnic group). This difference can be attributed to the multiple and mutually reinforcing deprivations Roma face in various areas of life resulting. These results are in line with poverty estimates by ethnic groups based on 2019 SILC, which puts the share of people at risk of poverty and social exclusion among Roma at 82.6%, among ethnic Turks at 38.5% and among ethnic Bulgarians at 18.6%.⁴³

The influence of education is notable: the higher the level of education completed in the household, the lower are the shares of people living at risk of poverty. Only 6.6% of people in households with at least one person having tertiary level of completed education live at risk of poverty, while this share reaches 95.6% in households in which none of the members has completed primary education or ever been in formal education.

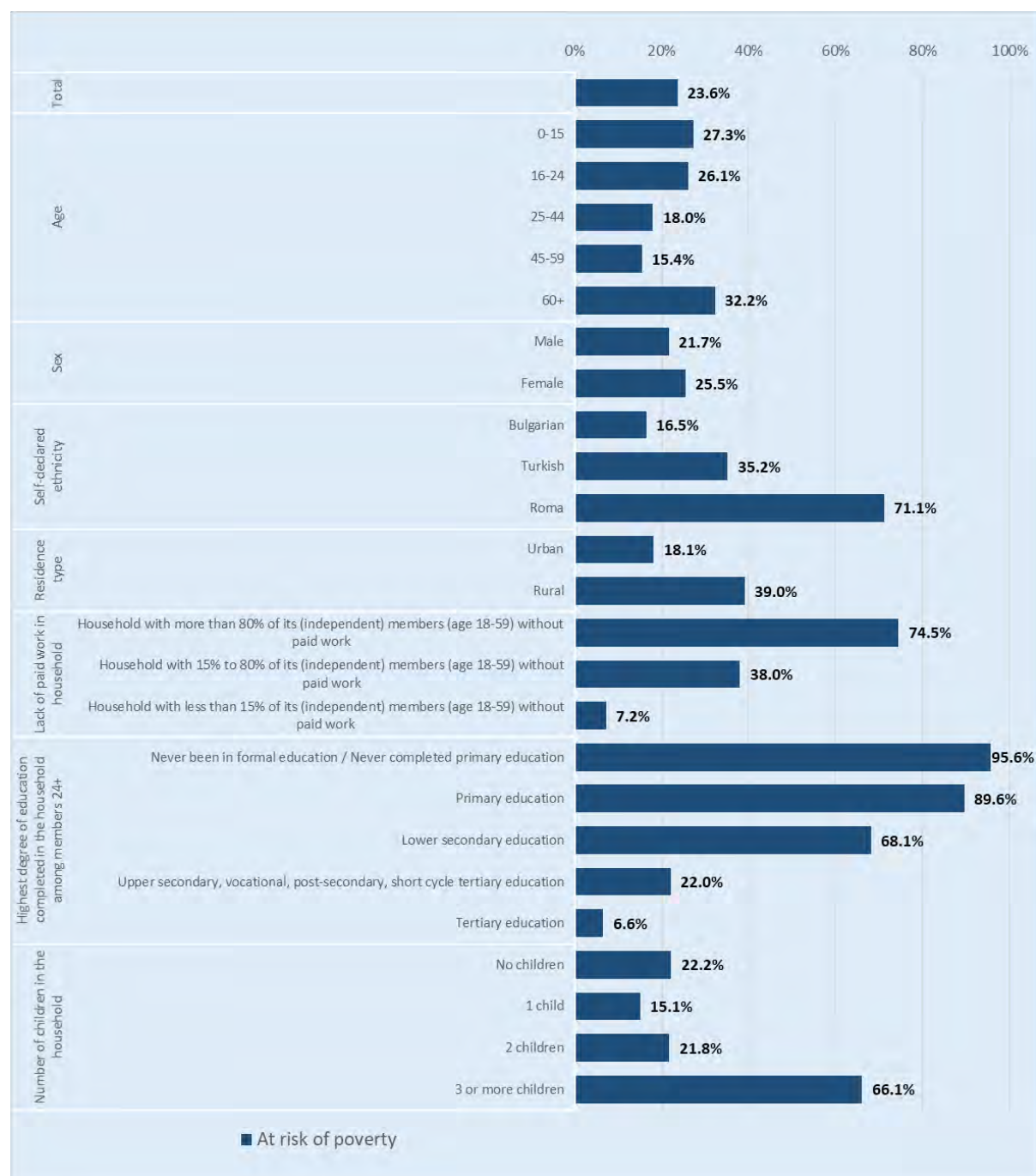
Joblessness is a factor with strong contribution to the risk of poverty. The survey results show a considerable difference in the share of people at risk of poverty depending on the number of jobless household members. The share of those at risk of poverty ranges from 7.2% among people living in households in which less than 15% of the (independent) household members have paid work, to 74.5% among those living in households in which the share joblessness is more than 80% of the (independent) members.

The place of residence seems to have an influence on the share of people living at risk of poverty, with people living in rural areas appearing twice as vulnerable to poverty as those living in urban areas. This, again, can be due to the overlap of deprivations in education and/or employment. As illustrated in the respective thematic sections of this report, the shares of early leavers from education (Figure 4), of people without paid work (Figure 9) and of young people neither in employment, education or training (Figure 10) are higher in rural areas than in urban.

In terms of age, every third person over 60 years is living at risk of poverty, suggesting that those living on social transfers (including pensions) live on income that is close to the poverty line. More than a quarter of children and young people up to the age of 24 also seem to be more vulnerable to poverty with shares almost twice higher compared to persons in active working age (Figure 17).

⁴³ National Statistical Institute (2020), [Poverty and Social Inclusion Indicators](#)

Figure 17: At-risk-of-poverty rate (below 60% of median equivalised income after social transfers), by age, sex, self-declared ethnicity, residence type, jobless intensity, highest degree of education completed in the household among its members aged 24 years and more, and presence of children in the household ^a (%)



Notes: ^a Out of all household members in the surveyed household (n = 30,303); weighted results.

Source: National Statistical Institute, Household Survey on BGLD-3.001-0001 Project "Novel Approaches to Generating Data on hard-to-reach populations at risk of violation of their rights"

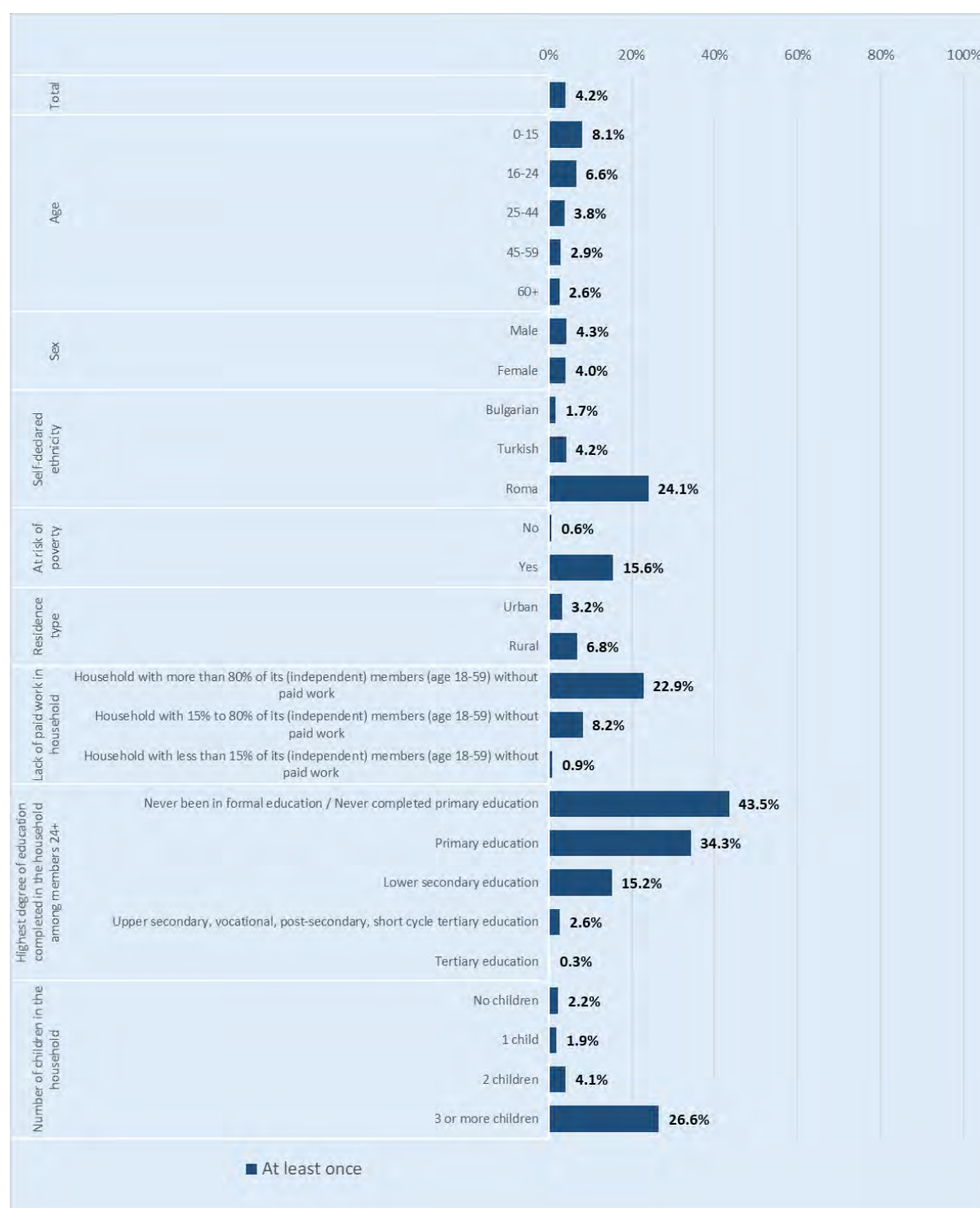
Similarly, the share of people who live in households where at least one person has gone to bed hungry during the last month because they did not have enough money for food is highest among Roma, people living at risk of poverty, people with at most primary education and households with 3 or more children. The share of Roma falling in this category (24%) considerably exceeds the one of the other ethnic groups (4% among the Turkish ethnic group and 2% among the Bulgarian ethnic group). The share of

the people experiencing hunger out of those living at risk of poverty provides an idea of the magnitude of extreme poverty in Bulgaria.

In Bulgaria, hunger, as well as poverty, seems to be closely linked to lower education achieved in the household and is a serious vulnerability risk for Roma, children and young people. The shares of children under 15 and young people below 24 years of age, who have experienced hunger in their household, is almost double than the shares among other age groups. These results suggest that large households and households with low income are much more vulnerable to the risk of hunger than the average. In the case of the older people of over 60 years of age (the age group for which this risk seems lowest), the distance from the average is 1.6 percentage points. The combination of low level of education and high unemployment in large households can increase the risk of hunger even further.

Joblessness is another factor that stands out when it comes to the risk of hunger. More than one in five persons (22.9%) living in households in which more than 80% of the (independent) members (do not have a paid job, are at risk of hunger, as opposed to less than one percent of those living in households, in which the majority of the (independent) members have a job (Figure 18).

Figure 18: Share of people living in a household where at least one person has gone to bed hungry in the past month because there was not enough money for food, by age, sex, self-declared ethnicity, at risk of poverty rate, residence type, jobless intensity, highest degree of education completed in the household among its members aged 24 years and more, and presence of children in the household ^{a,b} (%)



Notes: ^a Out of all household members in the surveyed household (n = 30,303); weighted results.

^b Remainder to 100% includes non-responses in the underlying question(s).

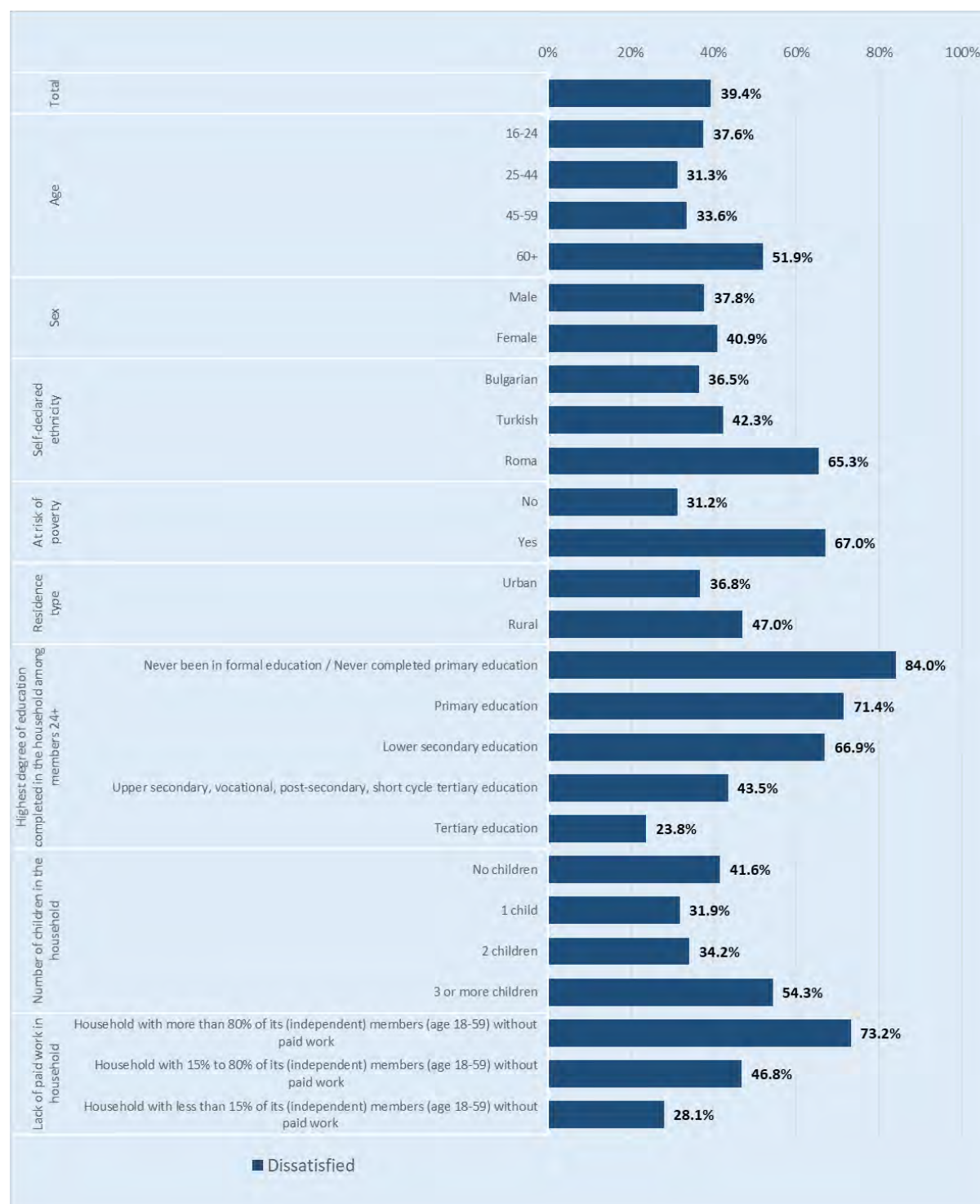
Source: National Statistical Institute, Household Survey on BGLD-3.001-0001 Project "Novel Approaches to Generating Data on hard-to-reach populations at risk of violation of their rights"

The average level of dissatisfaction with own financial situation in Bulgaria seems relatively high (almost 40%). The relationship with 'at risk of poverty' rate is clear – but, again, with nuances. Not all respondents living at risk of poverty are dissatisfied with their financial situation and vice versa – as many as 31.2% of those who are not at risk of poverty are dissatisfied. This might indicate both higher level of aspirations as well as narrow opportunities to realise them.

The clear relationship between dissatisfaction with own financial situation and highest completed education in the household is also indicative. The higher the education – the higher the level of satisfaction, which might be an important incentive for personal development, provided that realistic opportunities for that are available.

In terms of ethnicity, Roma (who are also more often living in poverty) seem to be less satisfied with their finances compared to the Bulgarian and the Turkish ethnic group. However, the level of dissatisfaction of Roma (reflected in the 65.3% of people dissatisfied with their financial situation) is lower than the share of people living at risk of poverty (71.1%, Figure 17). This might suggest the existence among Roma of people a sub-group who do not see realistic chances of improving their situation and thus closing themselves in a vicious circle of low level of aspirations. Sex and age do not seem to have a major impact on financial satisfaction with the only exception registered among adults in retirement age (more than half of the people of over 60 years are not satisfied with their income), which can be linked to the low amount of cash income from pensions (Figure 19).

Figure 19: Share of people aged 16 years and more **dissatisfied** with their financial situation, by age, sex, self-declared ethnicity, at risk of poverty rate, residence type, highest degree of education completed in the household among its members aged 24 years and more, presence of children in the household, and jobless intensity ^{a,b} (%)



Notes: ^a Out of all respondents aged 16 years and older (n = 26,380); weighted results.

^b Remainder to 100% includes non-responses in the underlying question(s).

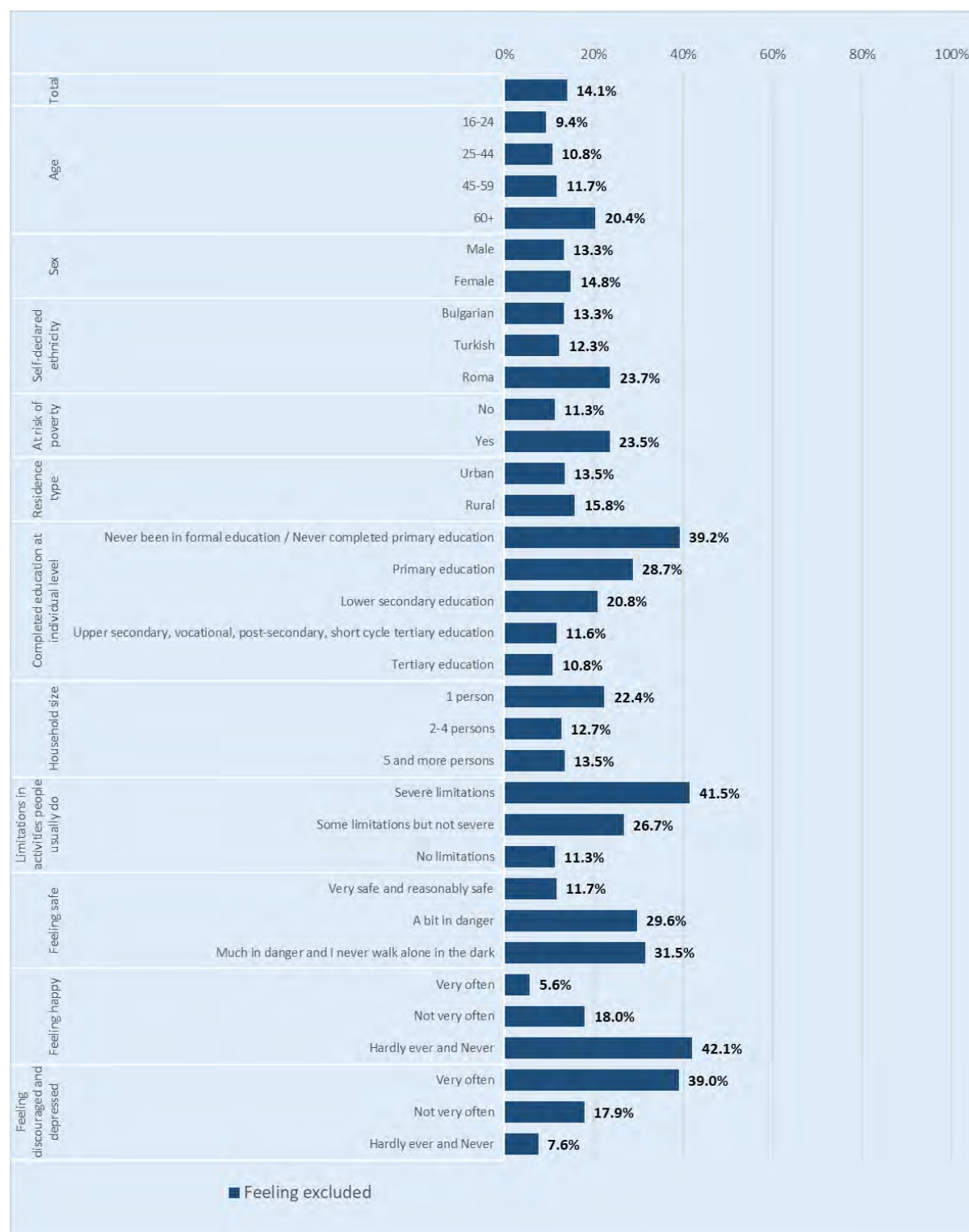
Source: National Statistical Institute, Household Survey on BGLD-3.001-0001 Project "Novel Approaches to Generating Data on hard-to-reach populations at risk of violation of their rights"

The data on social exclusion (based on respondent's self-assessment) seem to generally correspond to the data on poverty. Despite the relatively low share of people who feel excluded from the society

compared to the share of those at risk of poverty, the groups that stand out as particularly vulnerable remain the same: people living in poverty, Roma, people with primary or lower education, , people with limitations due to health problems, and older people. The level of perception of social exclusion among people who have never been in education or who have not completed primary education is close to 40%, and among people with primary education is close to 30%. This result confirms the role of education as key factor for social inclusion. Availability of financial resources (not being at risk of poverty) another important factor as almost a quarter of the people living at risk of poverty feel socially excluded (Figure 20).

Low education and poverty might also explain the relatively high levels of perception of social exclusion among Roma (23.7%) and people of over 60 years of age (20.4%) – but, again, with nuances. The intensity of ‘feeling excluded’ among Roma is lower than intensity of poverty suggesting that intra-community and intra-family bonds might compensate to certain extent the impact of poverty in regards ‘feeling excluded’. In the case of older people, this perception could be driven, in addition to poverty, also by loneliness, reduced mobility or fractured bonds with children and grandchildren. These factors could also be among the main reasons behind the relatively high levels of perceived social exclusion among people with limitations in their usual activities due to health problems: 41.5% of those with severe limitations and 26.7% of those with some but not severe limitations reported they were feeling socially excluded.

Figure 20: Share of people aged 16 years and more who feel excluded from society, by age, sex, self-declared ethnicity, at risk of poverty rate, residence type, completed education, household size, limitations, feeling safe, feeling happy, and feeling discouraged and depressed ^{a, b} (%)



Notes: ^a Out of all respondents aged 16 years and older (n = 26,380); weighted results.

^b Remainder to 100% includes non-responses in the underlying question(s).

Source: National Statistical Institute, Household Survey on BGLD-3.001-0001 Project "Novel Approaches to Generating Data on hard-to-reach populations at risk of violation of their rights"

4 Health

Background

Timely and equal access to healthcare is essential to good health and quality of life. The availability of healthcare infrastructure (hospital and outpatient) with sufficient personnel is crucial for the provision of quality healthcare to all citizens. According to the latest available official data (2019), Bulgaria has one doctor per 235 people and one dentist per 942 people. 341 health establishments provide hospital services with 53,997 hospital beds, and 2,079 outpatient health facilities.⁴⁴ Both medical facilities and medical personnel are unequally distributed across the country.

Health problems associated with aging, combined with income reduction for those who retire, constitute an important vulnerability risk overlapping with limited availability and accessibility of health services. It should be noted that the average age of Bulgaria's population has been constantly rising during the last decade, reaching 43.9 years in 2019, an increase of two years compared to 2010. At the same time, according to official data, pensions formed an average cash income per person of BGN 518.98 in the third quarter of 2020 (when the data were collected), almost half of the average salary income of BGN 968.82.⁴⁵ Poverty aggravates risks; for example, failure to pay more than three monthly social insurance contributions within three years results in suspension of access to free health services covered by the National Health Insurance Fund.

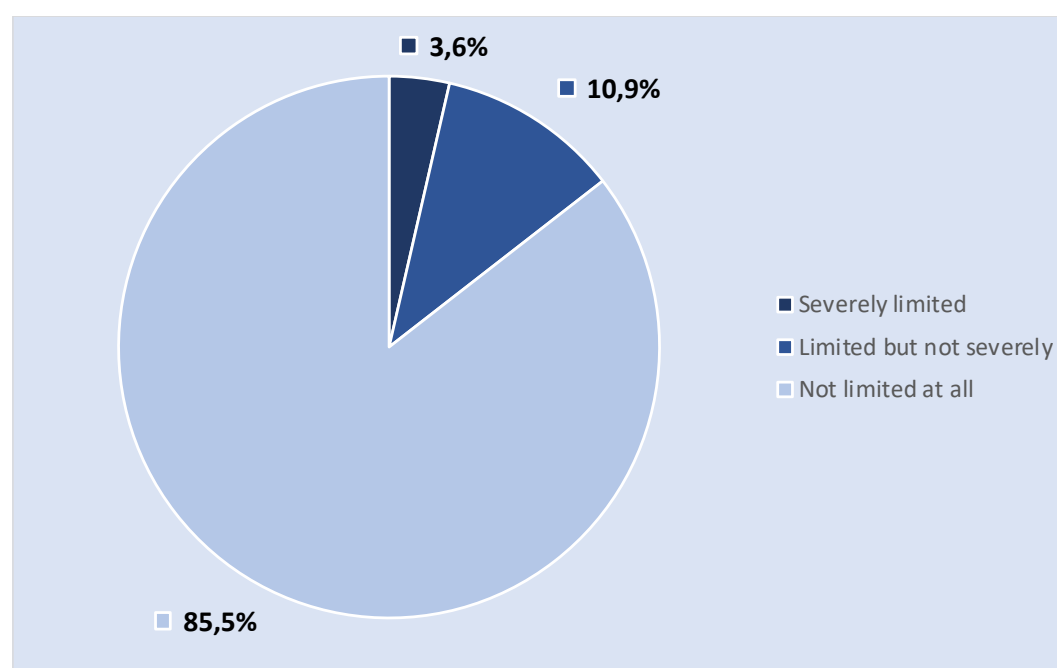
Results at national and district level

Problems concerning the availability and accessibility of healthcare services affect everyone who relies on the public health care system, but particularly those with serious health problems. The indicator '**long-standing limitations in usual activities due to health problems**' is indicative of the number of persons potentially affected. It measures the share of the population (aged 16 years or more) that reports suffering from one or more long-standing (at least six months) health problems limiting, severely or not, their usual activities (Figure 21).

⁴⁴ National Statistical Institute (2019), [Population per physician and per dentist by statistical zones, statistical regions and districts](#)

⁴⁵ National Statistical Institute (2020), [Total household income by source for third quarter of 2019 and 2020](#), 17 November 2020.

Figure 21: Share of persons with self-reported long-standing limitations in usual activities due to health problems, respondents 16+ ^{a,b} (%)



Notes: ^a Out of all respondents aged 16 years and older ($n = 26,249$); weighted results.

^b Question: In the past 6 or more months, have you been limited in performing normal activities due to a health problem?"

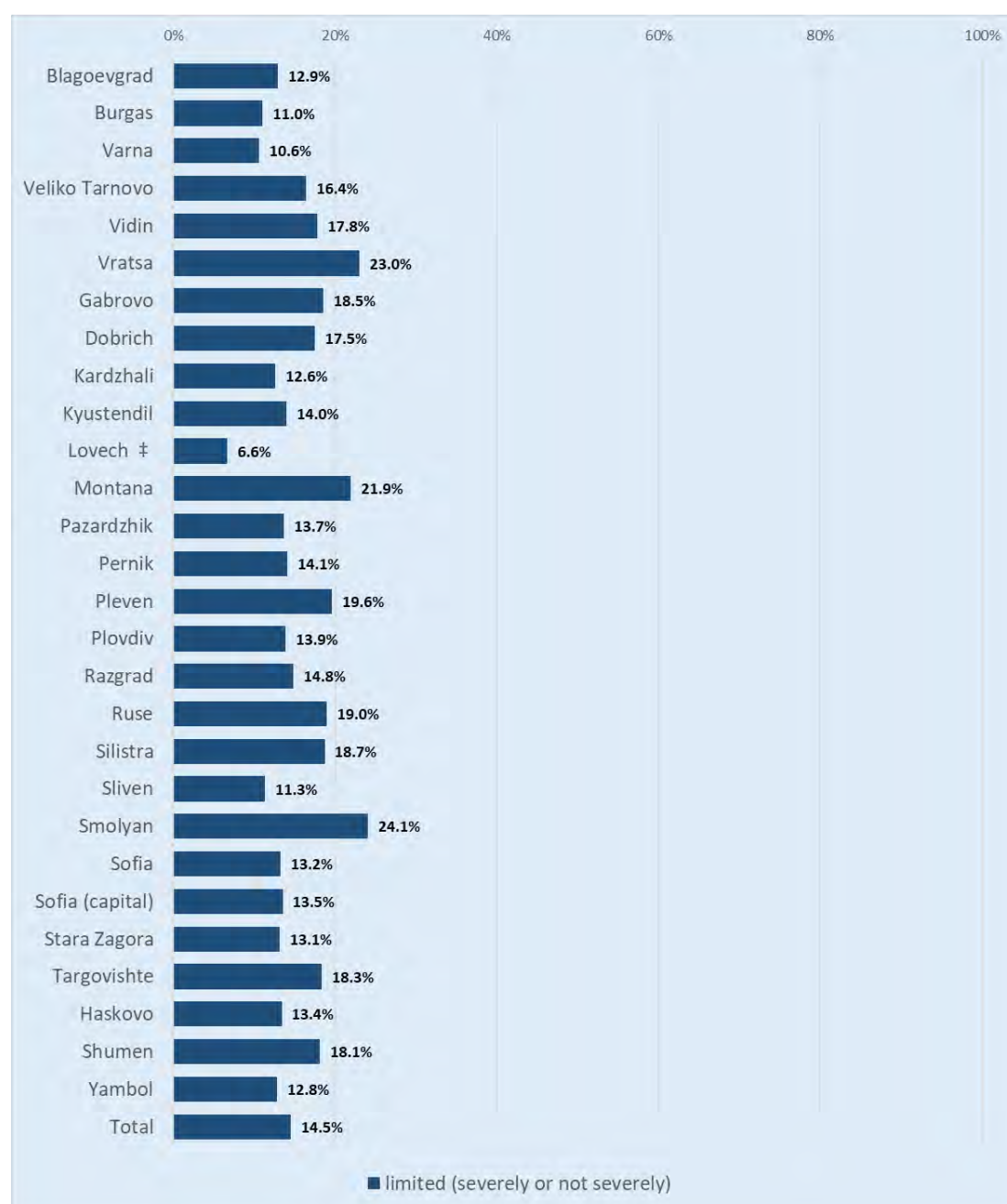
Source: National Statistical Institute, Household Survey on BGLD-3.001-0001 Project "Novel Approaches to Generating Data on hard-to-reach populations at risk of violation of their rights"

The survey results show that almost 15% of the population in Bulgaria reports (at least some) limitations in their usual activities due to health problems. While 10.9% do not consider the impact of these problems as severe, 3.6% say that their health condition causes them severe limitations.⁴⁶

Results for this indicator shows, unlike for most of the other indicators relatively, only small differences across districts with most having shares of people reporting such limitations between 10% and 20%. However, in three districts (Smolyan, Vratsa and Montana), the shares exceed 20%, while in one district (Lovech) it is below 10% (Figure 22). Larger differences are observed when it comes to the share of persons with severe limitations, where the districts of Targovishte and Pleven register the highest shares (above 6.5%), although in both districts the overall share of people with limitations in usual activities due to health problems is close to the average. The analysis finds no significant correlations with other district-level indicators, e.g. on education. There was also no correlation with the number of doctors in medical and healthcare establishments per 10,000 ($R^2=0.0304$) while the correlation with the share of people 15 - 64 years of age in employment, 2019 was weak ($R^2=0.2215$).

⁴⁶ Eurostat (2020), [Self-perceived long-standing limitations in usual activities due to health problems by sex, age and income quantile](#), 17 December 2020. According to the data for 2019, the share of persons with non-severe limitations in Bulgaria is estimated to 12.9% and the share of those with severe limitations to 3.2%.

Figure 22: Share of persons with self-reported long-standing limitations in usual activities due to health problems, by district ^{a,b} (%)



Notes: ^a Out of all respondents aged 16 years and older (n = 26,249); weighted results.

^b Question: In the past 6 or more months, have you been limited in performing normal activities due to a health problem?"

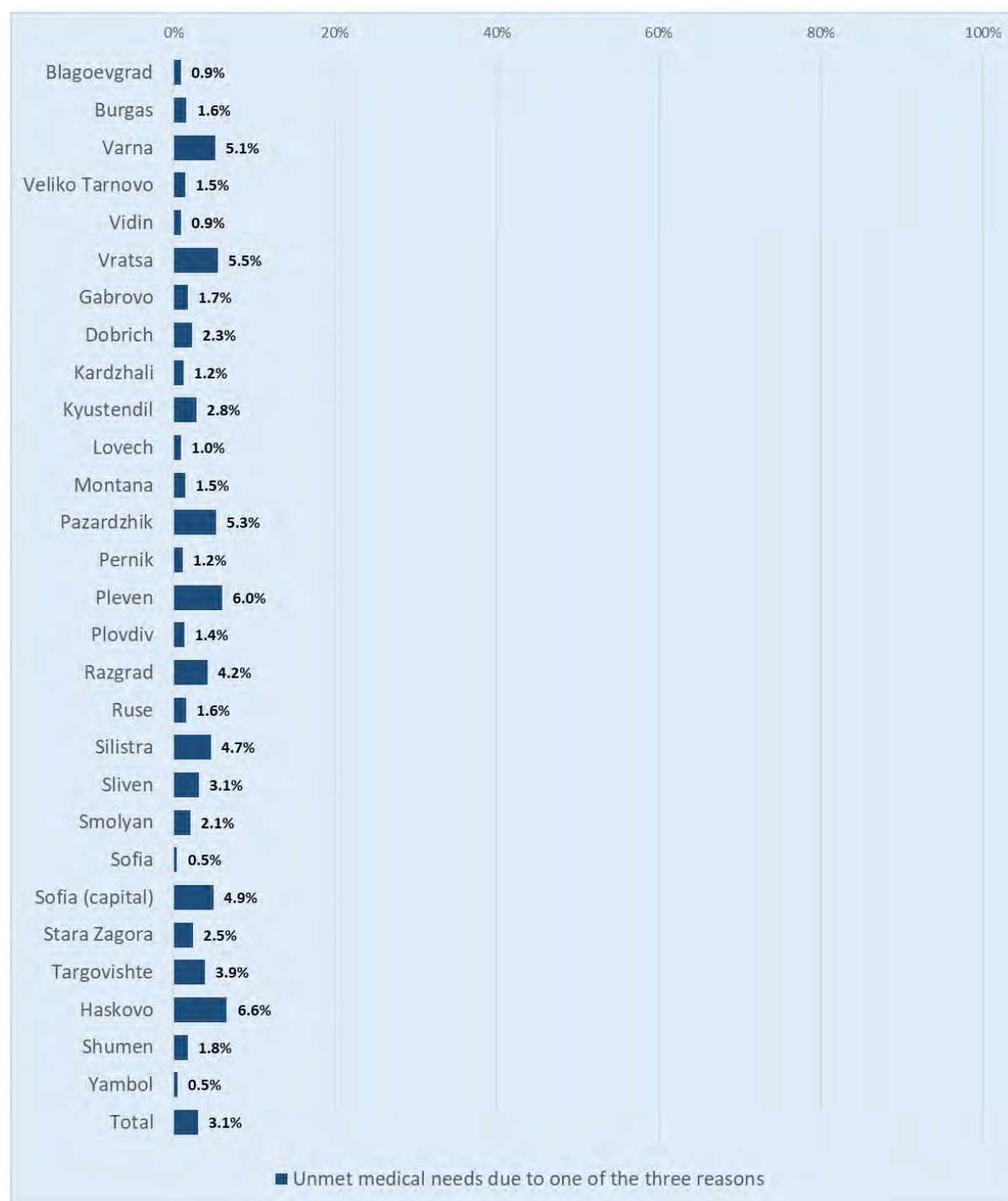
^c ‡ Results based on a small number of responses are statistically less reliable. Thus, results based on 20 to 49 unweighted observations in a group total are flagged. Results based on fewer than 20 unweighted observations in a group total are not published.

Source: National Statistical Institute, Household Survey on BGLD-3.001-0001 Project "Novel Approaches to Generating Data on hard-to-reach populations at risk of violation of their rights"

Various factors may lead to increased vulnerability in health, such as poverty (inability to cover healthcare cost), low capacity of the healthcare system in terms of facilities and staff, limited mobility due to age, disability, lack of public transport, etc. The indicator '**unmet medical needs**' captures some of these factors. It is based on the self-assessment of respondents of their own need of medical

examination or treatment, which was not received or was not sought due to one of three reasons: financial reasons, waiting list or too far to travel. In total, 3.1% of the population (aged 16 years or more) reports unmet needs for medical care. The data at district level show considerable differences in the distribution of persons reporting unmet medical needs. The highest share is in the districts of Haskovo, Plevna, Vratsa, Pazardzhik and Varna (above 5%), and the lowest in Yambol, Sofia, Vidin and Blagoevgrad (below 1%) (Figure 23).

Figure 23: Share of the population aged 16 and over reporting unmet needs for medical care due to one of the following reasons: 'Financial reasons', 'Waiting list' and 'Too far to travel' (all three categories are cumulated) by district ^{a,b,c} (%)



Notes: ^a Out of all respondents aged 16 years and older (n = 26,380); weighted results.

^b Question: "Was there any time during the past 12 months when you needed a medical examination or treatment but did not have one?"; if yes: "What was the main reason for not consulting a doctor? - Could not afford to/too expensive/not covered by health insurance OR Waiting list/did not have the referral letter OR Too far to travel/no means of transportation"

^c Remainder to 100% includes non-responses in the underlying question(s).

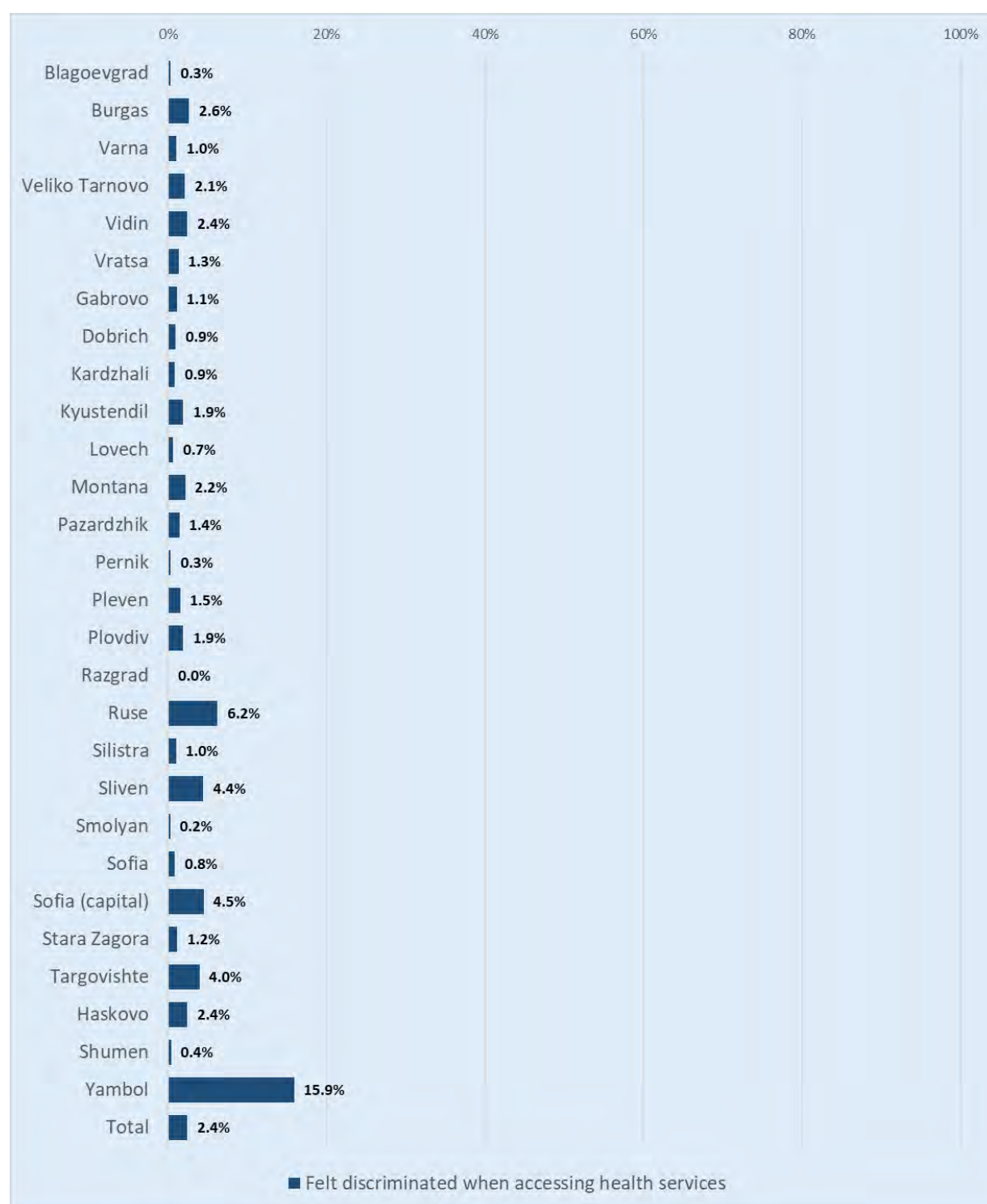
Source: National Statistical Institute, Household Survey on BGLD-3.001-0001 Project "Novel Approaches to Generating Data on hard-to-reach populations at risk of violation of their rights"

No significant correlation was found at district level between 'unmet medical needs' indicator and other characteristics of health services access (such as number of doctors in medical and healthcare establishments per 10,000 population or number of hospitals in the respective district). This suggests that other – group-specific – factors analysed in the 'bivariate analysis' section of this chapter may contribute to the limited access to health services. Poverty might be one of them.

Another factor contributing to an increased health vulnerability risk is discrimination. Its negative effect can be particularly strong in situations, when the availability of health services does not meet existing needs (e.g., due to low capacity), because in such cases unequal treatment can easily lead to partial or full deprivation of the right to healthcare (as proclaimed in Article 35 of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights). The indicator '**discrimination when accessing health services**' captures the magnitude of this phenomenon. It estimates the share of the population (aged 16 years or more) that felt discriminated against because of any ground in the past 12 months when accessing health services. According to the survey results, 2.4% of the Bulgarian population felt discriminated when accessing health services in the past 12 months. The bi-variate analysis below shows that this share can be higher among population groups which are more vulnerable to unequal treatment.⁴⁷ The data at district level show certain differences in the distribution of persons who felt discriminated when accessing health services with notably higher shares registered in the districts of Yambol, Ruse, the capital city Sofia, Sliven and Targovishte (Figure 24).

⁴⁷ For example, according to FRA's EU MIDIS II survey (carried out between October 2015 and July 2016), about 3% of Bulgarian Roma felt discriminated against when accessing health services because of their ethnicity.

Figure 24: Share of people who felt discriminated against because of any ground in the past 12 months, when accessing health services, 16+, by district ^{a,b} (%)



Notes: ^a Out of respondents older than 16 years who have been accessing the health services in the 12 months before the survey ($n = 17,988$); weighted results.

^b Remainder to 100% includes non-responses in the underlying question(s).

Source: National Statistical Institute, Household Survey on BGLD-3.001-0001 Project "Novel Approaches to Generating Data on hard-to-reach populations at risk of violation of their rights"

Bi-variate analysis

Data confirms that the experience of long-standing limitations in usual activities due to health problems is related to age. One in three persons aged 60 years or more report about such limitations, including 7.2% with severe limitations and 25.5% with non-severe limitations. In addition to age, characteristics such as living in poverty, living in rural areas, as well as people in households with more than 80% of the active members not having a job, also increase the risk of experiencing higher shares of health-induced difficulties.

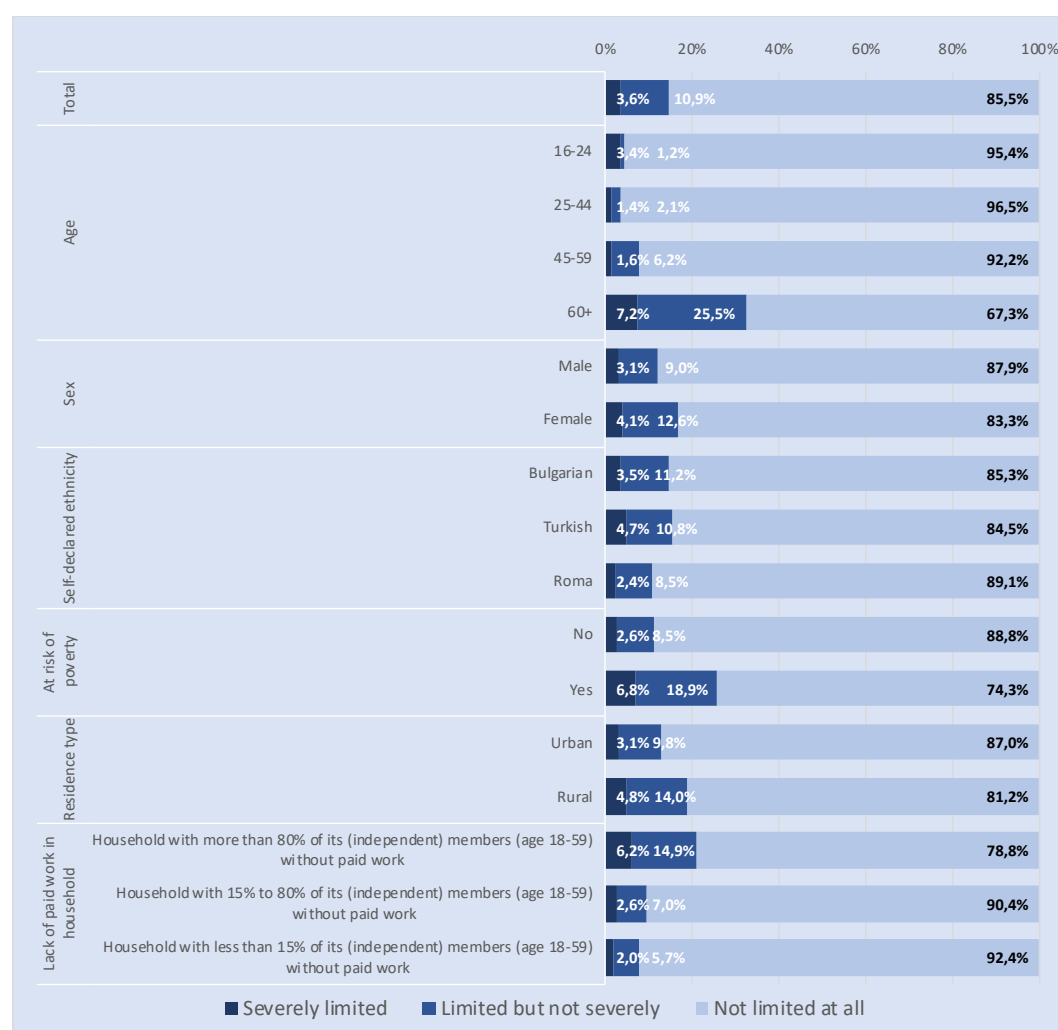
The share of people who reported long-standing limitations due to health problems is understandably higher among older people. Apart from age, may be due to financial reasons because these people increasingly rely on pensions as the main (and sometime the only) source of income. At the same time, they devote significant amounts for health (the out-of-pocket expenditure on health in Bulgaria was 39.33% of current health expenditure in 2017⁴⁸) which could have negative implications for their access to healthcare. The same 'low incomes – out-of-pocket expenditure – unaffordability of healthcare' nexus applies also to people at risk of poverty, 25.7% of which reported long-standing limitations in usual activities due to health problems compared to 11.1% among those who are not living at risk of poverty.

The lower share of Roma reporting limitations in usual activities due to health problems than that among the other ethnic groups should be put in context. The health status of the majority of the Roma population is poor⁴⁹ but facing the challenge to secure daily bread, they might not afford not doing their daily activities despite the limitations they face. The low share of Roma reporting limitations might also be an indication that Roma are on average younger but also less aware of their health condition and health problems (Figure 25).

⁴⁸ Eurostat, [Healthcare expenditure by financing scheme, 2018](#).

⁴⁹ For example, see Tomova, I. (2009), Health and the Roma community, analysis of the situation in Europe, preliminary national report – Bulgaria ([Здравето и ромската общност, анализ на ситуацията в Европа, предварителен национален доклад – България](#)), Sliven, Roma Health Foundation.

Figure 25: Share of people aged 16 years and more with self-reported long-standing limitations in usual activities due to health problems, by age, sex, self-declared ethnicity, at risk of poverty rate, residence type, and jobless intensity ^{a,b} (%)



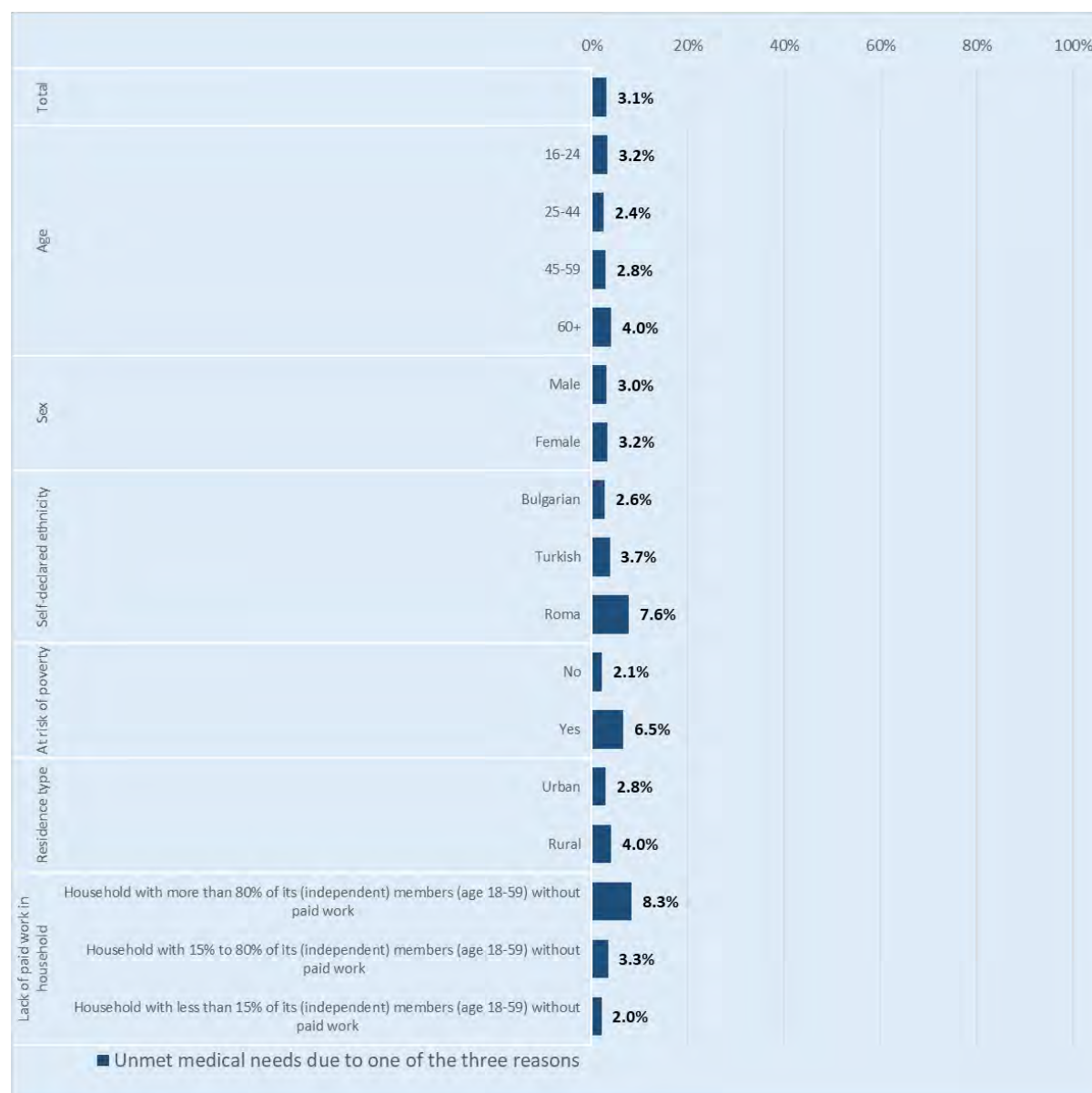
Notes: ^a Out of all respondents aged 16 years and older (n = 26,249); weighted results.

^B The share of persons reporting "limited but not severely" limitations in the age group 16-24 (1.2%) is based on small number of observations.

Source: National Statistical Institute, Household Survey on BGLD-3.001-0001 Project "Novel Approaches to Generating Data on hard-to-reach populations at risk of violation of their rights"

In terms of accessibility and affordability of healthcare services, the Roma register the highest share of persons with unmet medical needs due to financial or accessibility reasons among the ethnic groups covered in the survey. Poverty and unemployment are the other two factors closely related to accessibility of healthcare services through the income and out-of-pocket expenditure on health channel. People in households with more than 80% of the members in active age are jobless (8.3%), as well as those at risk of poverty (6.5%), stand out when it comes to unmet medical needs, suggesting that poor economic status and low income are key vulnerability factors for healthcare deprivation. In terms of accessibility, there are no major differences in the number of people with unmet medical needs belonging to different age groups with shares ranging between 2.4% among those between 25 and 44 years (who are generally in better health condition) to 4% among people of 60 years or more (who are generally in greater need of medical care). The small difference between the level of reported unmet medical needs between urban (2.8%) and rural (4%) areas could lead to the conclusion that financial situation is a stronger vulnerability factor than distance and territorial distribution of medical services (Figure 26).

Figure 26: Share of the population aged 16 and over reporting unmet needs for medical care due to one of the following reasons: 'Financial reasons', 'Waiting list' and 'Too far to travel' (all three categories are cumulated), by age, sex, self-declared ethnicity, at risk of poverty rate, residence type, and jobless intensity in categories, 16+ ^{a,b} (%)



Notes: ^a Out of all respondents aged 16 years and older (n = 26,380); weighted results.

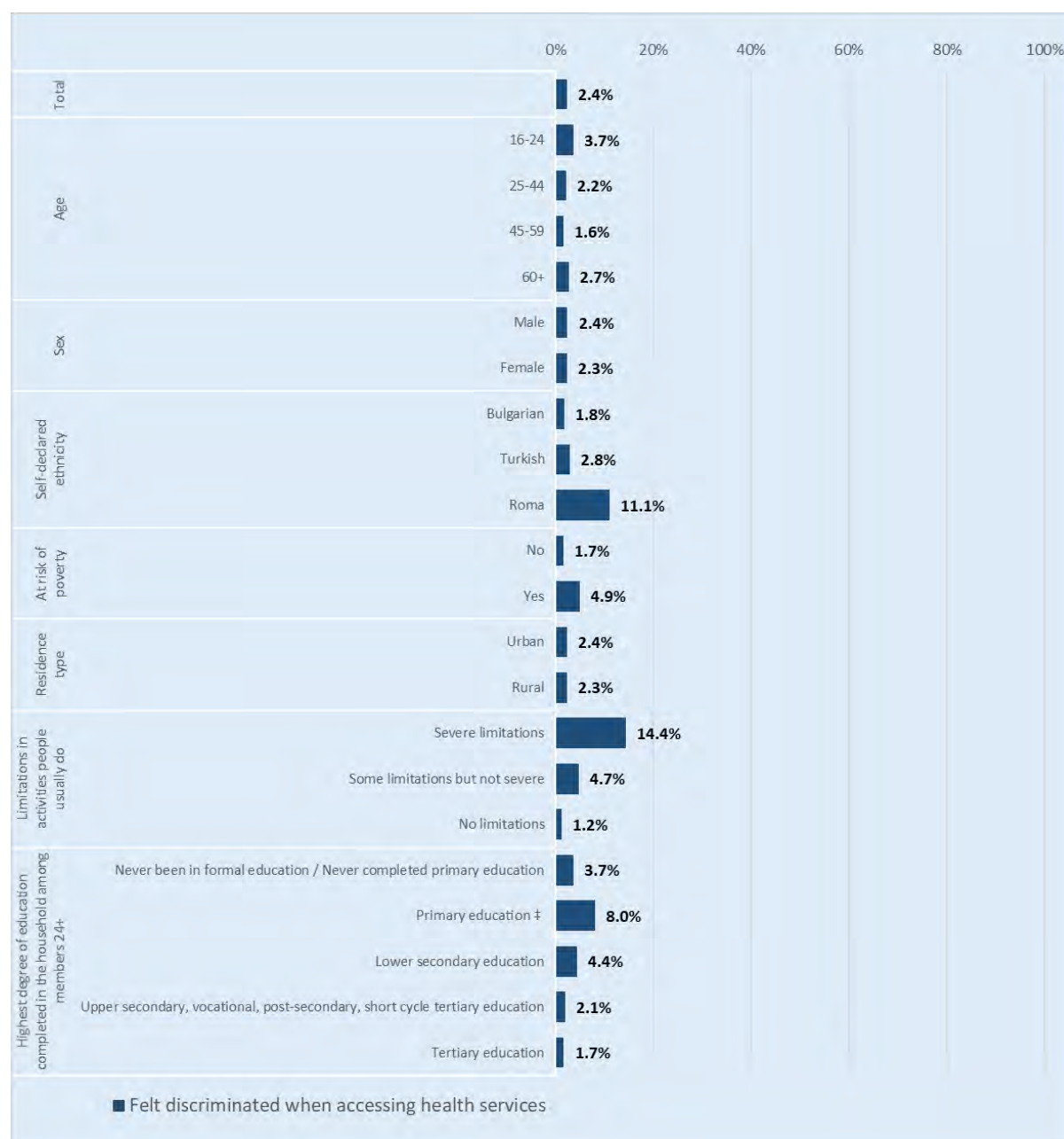
^b Remainder to 100% includes non-responses in the underlying question(s).

Source: National Statistical Institute, Household Survey on BGLD-3.001-0001 Project "Novel Approaches to Generating Data on hard-to-reach populations at risk of violation of their rights"

When it comes to discrimination in healthcare, Roma clearly stand out as a particularly vulnerable group. The share of Roma, who felt discriminated when accessing health services during the past year (11.1%), exceeds by a large factor those of ethnic Turks (2.8%) and ethnic Bulgarians (1.8%). As with discrimination in other areas of life (education and employment), disability appears to be a factor linked to unequal treatment in healthcare too. A relatively high share of people with limitations in their usual activities due to health problems (14.4% of those with severe limitations and 4.7% of those with some but not severe limitations) reported they had felt discriminated against when accessing health services. As far as the need of timely and quality healthcare would be higher among people with health-related limitations, any barrier to their equal access to health services may put them in a particularly vulnerable situation. The level of education also seems to be a factor, as persons with lower education register

higher shares of being discriminated against when accessing health services. Unlike sex, which does not seem to be a major factor for the equal access to healthcare, poverty is clearly a vulnerability risk as people living in poverty report to have felt discriminated when seeing a doctor almost three times more than those not in poverty. Overall, however, ethnicity, in particular Roma background, as well as disability seems to be the most important factor associated to discrimination in healthcare (Figure 27).

Figure 27: Share of people who felt discriminated against because of any ground in the past 12 months, when accessing health services, by age, sex, self-declared ethnicity, at risk of poverty rate, residence type, limitations, and highest degree of education completed in the household among members 24+, 16+ ^{a,b,c} (%)



Notes: ^a Out of respondents older than 16 years who have been accessing the health services in the 12 months before the survey (n = 17,988); weighted results.

^b Remainder to 100% includes non-responses in the underlying question(s).

^c ‡ Results based on a small number of responses are statistically less reliable. Thus, results based on 20 to 49 unweighted observations in a group total are flagged. Results based on fewer than 20 unweighted observations in a group total are not published.

5 Housing

Background

Article 11. I of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966)⁵⁰ and several other international human rights provisions guarantee the right to adequate housing as one of the pillars for a life in dignity. According to Article 34 of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, in order to combat social exclusion and poverty, the Union recognises and respects the right to social and housing assistance as one of the means of ensuring a decent existence for all those who lack sufficient resources.

In Bulgaria, housing prices have consistently increased since 2013.⁵¹ A recent evaluation of the housing sector in Bulgaria, carried out by the World Bank, shows that in 2017, housing was not affordable for a considerable share of the population for either purchase or rent. Housing costs are a major burden for many, affecting in particular, young people who as a consequence have to stay longer in their parents' homes. Inadequate maintenance and repair of old buildings contributes to a lower quality of available housing stock and living conditions.⁵² According to official data, 90.2% fewer people have expressed intention to build or acquire residential property during the next 12 months in July 2020 (the closest data point to the survey's fieldwork) compared to the share of people a year before. Of those who own a dwelling, 74.4% fewer people have expressed their intention to spend a large amount of money on home improvements (repairing or maintaining heating, sanitation, etc.) than a year before.⁵³

In a situation of consistent and substantial increase of house prices, many people (in particular those living below or close to the poverty threshold) cannot afford decent housing due to inability to get a mortgage loan or rent a dwelling. Unemployed and young families are facing highest risk in that regard as their income rarely allows buying or renting a home. The level of urbanisation is another factor that adds to living conditions discrepancies among different groups of the population. While people living in towns and cities enjoy better employment opportunities and higher remuneration, their disposable living area is smaller compared to the one of people living in rural areas, where a considerable share of the residential dwellings are houses.⁵⁴ At the same time, houses, although generally larger in terms of living space, are often in worse condition due to the higher costs for renovation.

For some population groups, such as Roma and people with disabilities, the vulnerability risks as regards housing are higher due to insufficient financial resources. In the case of people with disabilities, specific accessibility needs (usually associated with additional costs and/or limited availability at the

⁵⁰ [International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights](#). Adopted and opened for signature, ratification and accession by General Assembly resolution 2200A (XXI) of 16 December 1966 entry into force 3 January 1976, in accordance with article 27.

⁵¹ Eurostat (2020), [Annual deflated house prices](#). According to the data, since 2013, house prices in Bulgaria have been increasing at an annual rate of between 0.4% and 6.6%. For national data, see National Statistical Institute (2020), [House price indices at national level](#), 29 December 2020. The data show that, for the past five years (since 2015), the house price index has marked an increase of 34.07% (30.06% for new dwellings and 36.43% for existing dwellings).

⁵² World Bank (2017), Evaluation of the housing sector in Bulgaria (*Оценка на жилищния сектор в България*), Sofia, World Bank. According to the report, only persons from the first two or three income deciles can afford to buy a house in a city, and persons below the fifth income decile cannot afford any house on the market. One of the problems, highlighted by the evaluation, is the lack of public support and assistance for the impoverished and marginalised communities.

⁵³ National Statistical Institute (2020), [Consumer survey](#), 5 February 2020.

⁵⁴ Eurostat (2020), [Average number of rooms per person by degree of urbanisation](#), 2 December 2020. According to the data, in 2019, the average number of rooms per person in Bulgaria is 1.1 in cities, 1.3 in towns and suburbs, and 1.4 in rural areas. In all three degree of urbanisation categories Bulgaria stands substantially below the EU-28 average.

rental or housing market) augment the risk of housing deprivation further. As the World Bank report highlights,⁵⁵ the lack of adequately funded support measures additionally aggravates the situation of the most marginalised and impoverished communities. Finally, the risk of eviction and the risk of homelessness are two factors that have to be accounted for when analysing the vulnerability risks associated with housing.

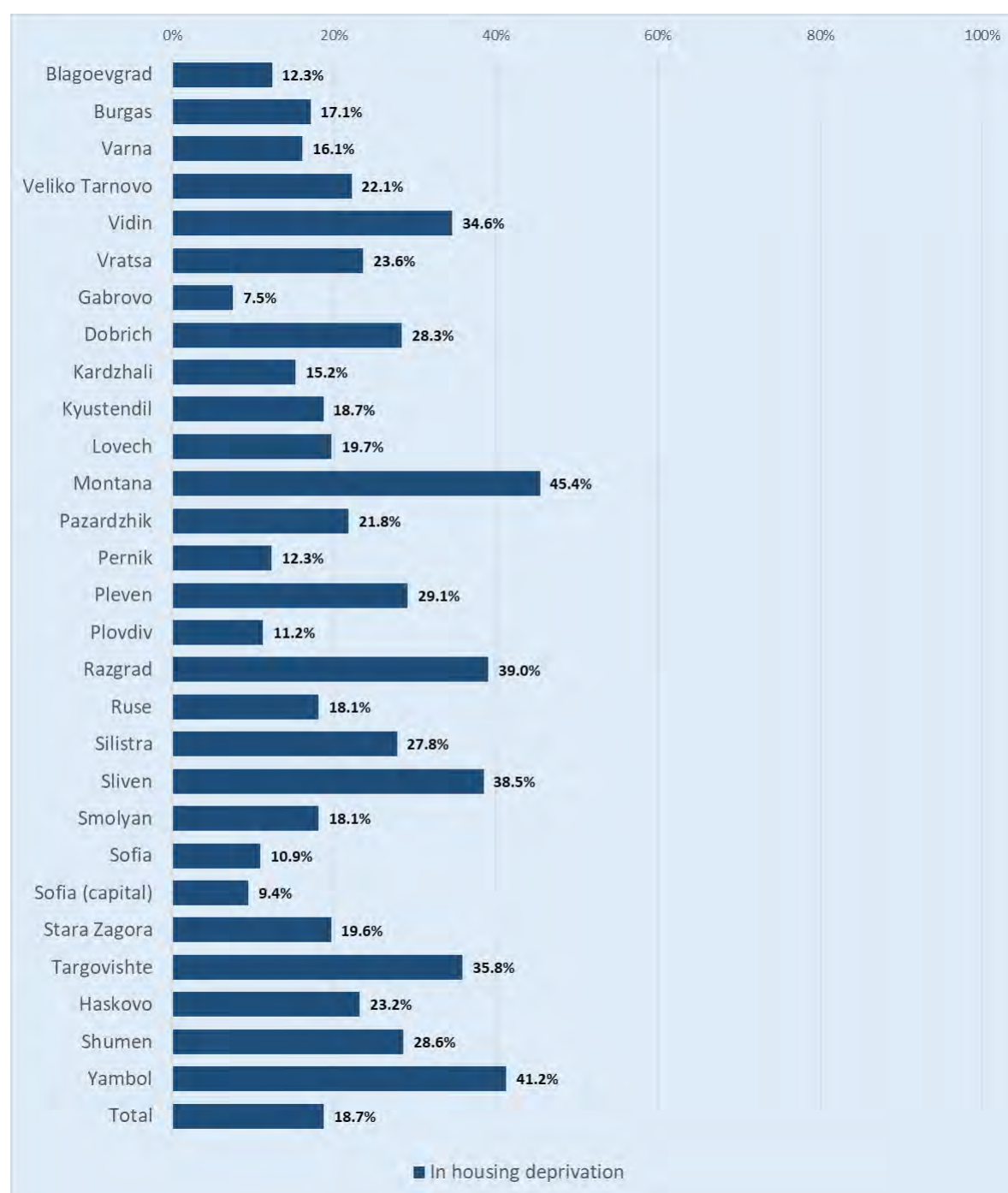
Results at national and district level

The ‘**housing deprivation**’ indicator provides an estimate of the share of people living in dwellings that are either too dark (insufficient daylight coming in through the windows), have leaking roof and/or damp walls or floors, have no shower or bathroom indoors, or have no toilet indoors. According to the data, a considerable share of the population at national level (18.7%) lives in conditions of housing deprivation (i.e., in dwellings that have at least one of the problems included in this indicator). The combined share of the population living in at least one of the housing deprivation situations is alarmingly high at almost 20%, and it can be assumed that this will be even higher among particularly vulnerable population groups.⁵⁶ The data at district level show considerable differences when it comes to housing deprivation. The share is six times higher in Montana than in Gabrovo (Figure 28). In two district (Montana and Yambol) the share of persons living in dwellings that are either too dark, have leaking roof and/or damp walls or floors, have no shower or bathroom indoors, or have no toilet indoors exceeds 40%. In other four districts (Razgrad, Sliven, Targovishte and Vidin), this share is beyond 30%.

⁵⁵ World Bank (2017), Evaluation of the housing sector in Bulgaria ([Оценка на жилищния сектор в България](#)), Sofia, World Bank, pp. 18-19.

⁵⁶ World Bank (2017), Evaluation of the housing sector in Bulgaria ([Оценка на жилищния сектор в България](#)), Sofia, World Bank. According to the evaluation, people at risk of poverty and Roma are the two groups, which are most vulnerable to housing deprivation.

Figure 28: Share of people living in housing deprivation (in an apartment too dark or leaking roof/damp walls, floors or no bath/shower or no indoor toilet), by district ^{a,b,c} (%)



Notes: ^a Out of all household members in the surveyed households (n = 30,303); weighted results.

^b Questions: "Do you have any of the following problems connected to the dwelling?: Darkness, insufficient light OR Leaking roof, damp walls, foundations, etc."; "Are there in the dwelling: Bathroom with a shower or bathtub OR Toilet with a running water - Yes, inside the dwelling OR Yes, outside the dwelling". Corresponding to Eurostat's indicator Tessi291.

^c Remainder to 100% includes non-responses in the underlying question(s).

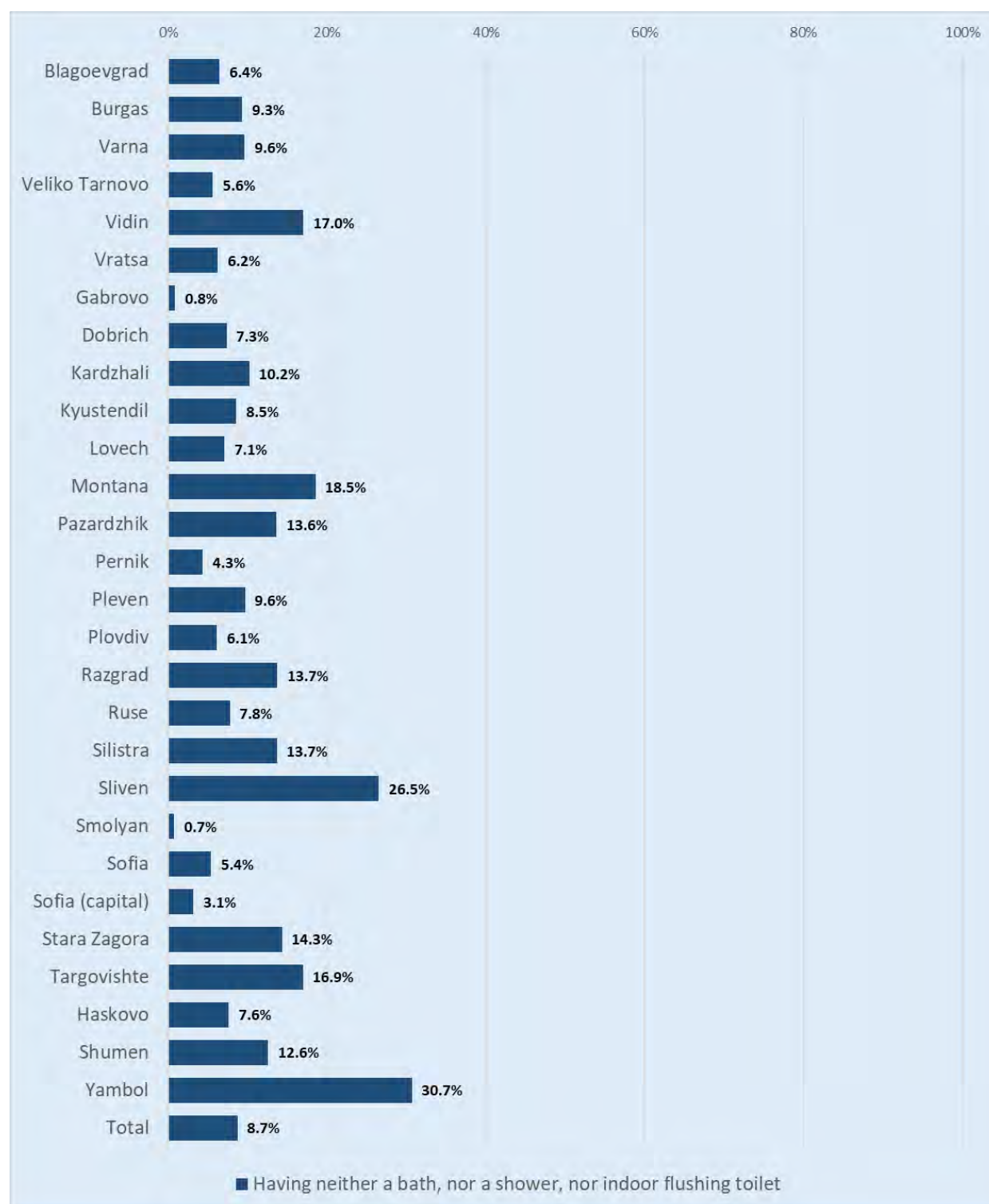
Source: National Statistical Institute, Household Survey on BGLD-3.001-0001 Project "Novel Approaches to Generating Data on hard-to-reach populations at risk of violation of their rights"

Among the different housing deprivation characteristics, the lack of indoor shower, bath and toilette is the one most closely related to health-related vulnerability risks, particularly in the context of the recent

coronavirus outbreak across the world. This characteristic is captured by the ‘**lack of indoor shower, bath and flushing toilette**’ indicator, which estimates the share of the population living in dwellings without any of these utilities. According to the survey data, overall 8.7% of the Bulgarian population lives in dwellings with no bath, shower and flushing toilet inside the house (Figure 29). The lack of basic water supply services is a persisting problem in Bulgaria, as data from other sources also indicates.⁵⁷ There are considerable differences between districts with some, e.g. Yambol and Sliven having much larger shares of people living without a bath, a shower and an indoor flushing toilette in their household compared to Gabrovo and Smolyan. Districts with substantially higher shares than the national average are Montana, Vidin and Targovishte (all with shares of more than 15%).

⁵⁷ Eurostat (2020), [Housing deprivation](#). According to the data, the share of people with neither a bath, nor a shower, nor indoor flushing toilet in their household, is consistently decreasing during the past decade. Nevertheless, as of 2019, it is still five times higher than the EU-28 average.

Figure 29: Share of people living in households having neither flushing toilet, nor shower, nor bathroom inside the dwelling, by district ^{a,b,c} (%)



Notes: ^a Out of all household members in the surveyed households (n = 30,303); weighted results.

^b Questions: "Are there in the dwelling: Bathroom with a shower or bathtub OR Toilet with a running water - Yes, inside the dwelling OR Yes, outside the dwelling". Corresponding to Eurostat's indicator *ilc_mdho05*.

^c Remainder to 100% includes non-responses in the underlying question(s).

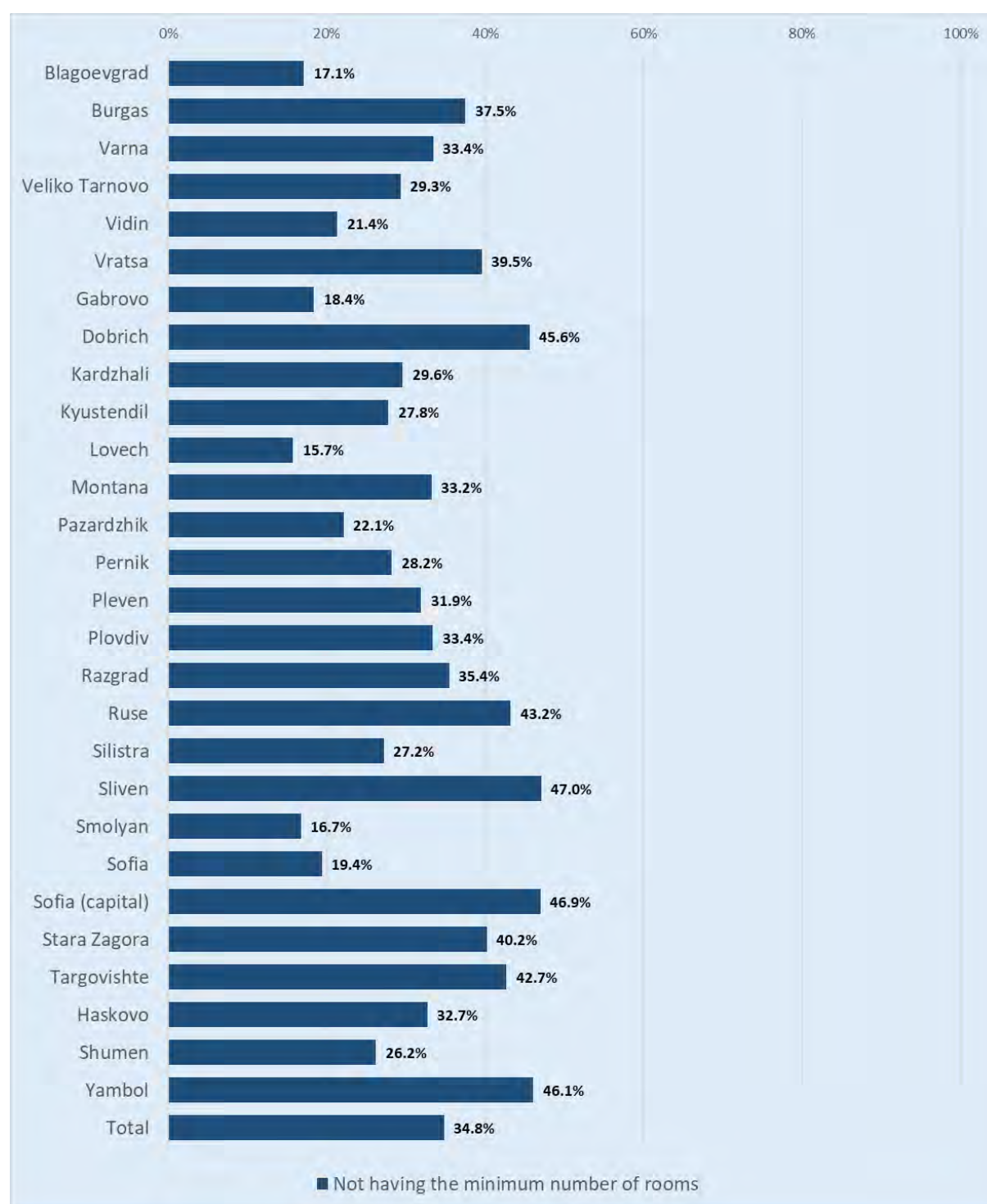
Source: National Statistical Institute, Household Survey on BGLD-3.001-0001 Project "Novel Approaches to Generating Data on hard-to-reach populations at risk of violation of their rights"

The ‘**minimum number of rooms**’ indicator captures overcrowding. It estimates the share of the population living in households that do not have a minimum number of rooms, which according to Eurostat should be per household: one common room; one room per couple; one room for each single person aged 18 or more; one room per two single people of the same sex between 12 and 17 years of age; one room for each single person between 12 and 17 years of age, not included in the previous category; one room per two children under 12 years of age.

The data show that more than one third (34,8%) of Bulgaria’s population lives in households that are overcrowded and does not have the defined minimum number of rooms (Figure 30). In Bulgaria, overcrowding has been a persisting problem that has not been successfully addressed despite policy and legislative measures. As Eurostat data show, overcrowding rates are considerably higher than the EU average and this has not changed substantially during the past decade.⁵⁸ This is due to a variety of factors, ranging from low income and unaffordability of housing, to country-specific demographic, historical and cultural factors, e.g., countries in Southeast Europe traditionally register higher overcrowding rates. Regardless of this, overcrowding may lead to a variety of vulnerability risks related to health (transmission of infections), education (lack of adequate space for studying), early child development, etc. At district level, the share of persons living in households that do not have the minimum number of rooms differs substantially across districts. Those with the highest shares are Sliven, the capital city Sofia, Yambol, Dobrich, Ruse, Targovishte and Stara Zagora, all registering shares of more than 40%. The districts of Lovech, Smolyan, Blagoevgrad, Gabrovo and Sofia, register shares below 20%.

⁵⁸ Eurostat (2020), [Overcrowding rate by age, sex and poverty status](#), 17 December 2020. According to the data for 2019, Bulgaria ranks third after Romania and Latvia in terms of overcrowding with an overcrowding rate almost three times higher than the EU-28 average. For the period between 2010 and 2019, the overcrowding rate in the country has dropped from 47.4% to 41.1%.

Figure 30: Share of people living in household that does not have the minimum number of rooms according to the Eurostat definition of overcrowding, by district ^{a,b} (%)



Notes: ^a Out of all household members in the surveyed households (n = 30,303); weighted results.

^b Questions: "Number of rooms in the dwelling (All rooms with an area of 4 and more square meters are included, without service rooms (bathrooms, closets, laundry rooms, etc.))"

^c Overcrowding rate: A person is considered as living in an overcrowded household if the household does not have at its disposal a minimum number of rooms equal to one room for the household; one room per couple in the household; one room for each single person aged 18 or more; one room per pair of single people of the same gender between 12 and 17 years of age; one room for each single person between 12 and 17 years of age and not included in the previous category; one room per pair of children under 12 years of age. Corresponding to Eurostat's indicator *ilc_lwho05a*.

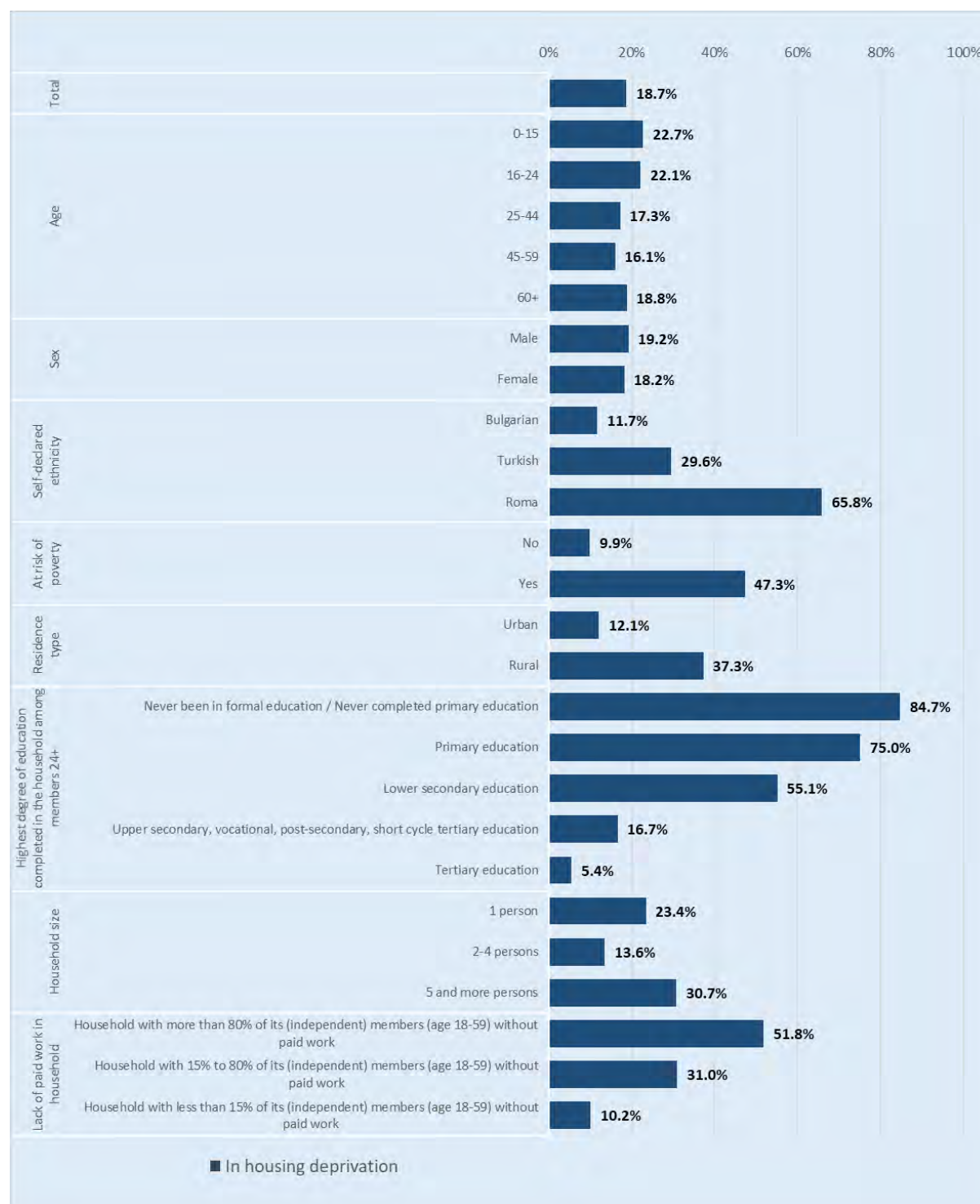
In addition to housing deprivation and overcrowding, some people (in particular specific population groups, as shown in 'Bi-variate analysis' section of this chapter) also experience discrimination. The indicator '**discrimination when looking for housing**' reflects the magnitude of this risk. It estimates the share of people who have experienced discrimination when looking for housing among those who have been looking for housing in the past five years. According to the survey results at national level of all persons who have been looking for housing in the past five years, 7.4% experienced discrimination on any ground. Those experiencing discrimination when looking for housing risk ending up living in poor housing conditions or become/remain homeless. This, in turn, could expose them to other risks related to health, employment, education, legal residence (for foreign nationals) and access to public services many of which require a current address. Breakdown by district for this indicator is not published due to low case numbers.

Bi-variate analysis

Several factors come up considering the share of people in housing deprivation, i.e., living in dwellings that are either too dark (insufficient daylight coming in through the windows), have leaking roof and/or damp walls or floors, have no shower or bathroom indoors, or have no toilet indoors. According to the survey, Roma, people living at risk of poverty, people with lower than secondary education as well as those in a rural area are at higher (above the average) risk of housing deprivation. Age and sex, on the other hand, do not seem to be among the factors determining people's living conditions.

In rural areas, people are usually living in family houses, which are more difficult to maintain and/or renovate given the run-down water and sewage systems, and road infrastructure. In urban areas, on the other hand, apartment buildings with centralised utilities are the prevailing type of dwellings. This explains the higher share of persons in housing deprivation living in rural areas (37.3%) compared to those living in urban areas (12.1%). In terms of ethnicity, the Roma population is the particularly vulnerable to housing deprivation (65.8%), which can be explained by many factors, including the fact that even in urban areas Roma are often living in segregated neighbourhoods (ghettos) where the infrastructure and living conditions are worse than in the other neighbourhoods in of the same area (Figure 31).

Figure 31: Share of people living in housing deprivation (in an apartment too dark or leaking roof/damp walls, floors or no bath/shower or no indoor toilet), by age, sex, self-declared ethnicity, at risk of poverty rate, residence type, highest degree of education completed in the household among members 24+, household size, and jobless intensity in categories ^{a,b} (%)



Notes: ^a Out of all household members in the surveyed households (n = 30,303); weighted results.

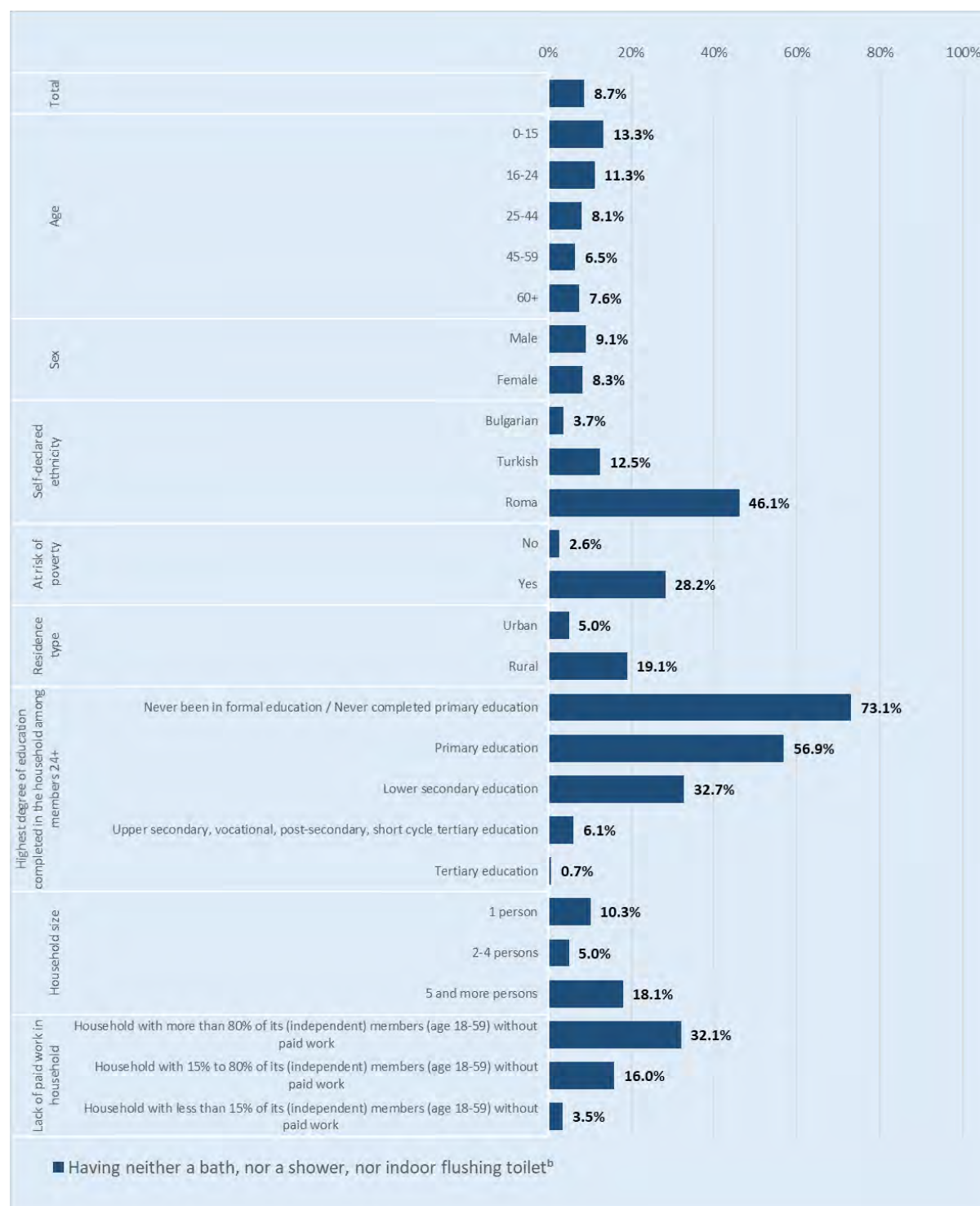
^b Remainder to 100% includes non-responses in the underlying question(s).

Source: National Statistical Institute, Household Survey on BGLD-3.001-0001 Project "Novel Approaches to Generating Data on hard-to-reach populations at risk of violation of their rights"

When it comes to people living in households not having bath, shower and a flushing toilet indoors, Roma stand out as the most vulnerable among all ethnic groups analysed: 46.1% of them live in such

conditions compared to 12.5% of the Turkish ethnic group and 3.7% of the Bulgarian ethnic group. These figures correspond to the data on housing deprivation and reconfirm the particular difficulties that Roma face in the area of housing compared to the rest of the population. Poverty and lower education, which are both linked to financial difficulties, seem to be factors increasing the risk of living in a place with no bath or a toilet inside. The high share of children (13.3%) and young people up to 24 years (11.3%) living in such conditions can be explained by the fact that multidimensional poverty (of which housing deprivation is an important dimension) is more prevalent among large households with children and young adults sharing a common home (Figure 32).

Figure 32: Share of people living in households having neither flushing toilet, nor shower, nor bathroom inside the dwelling, by age, sex, self-declared ethnicity, at risk of poverty rate, residence type, highest degree of education completed in the household among members 24+, household size, and jobless intensity in categories ^{a,b} (%)



Notes: ^a Out of all household members in the surveyed households (n = 30,303); weighted results.

^b Remainder to 100% includes non-responses in the underlying question(s).

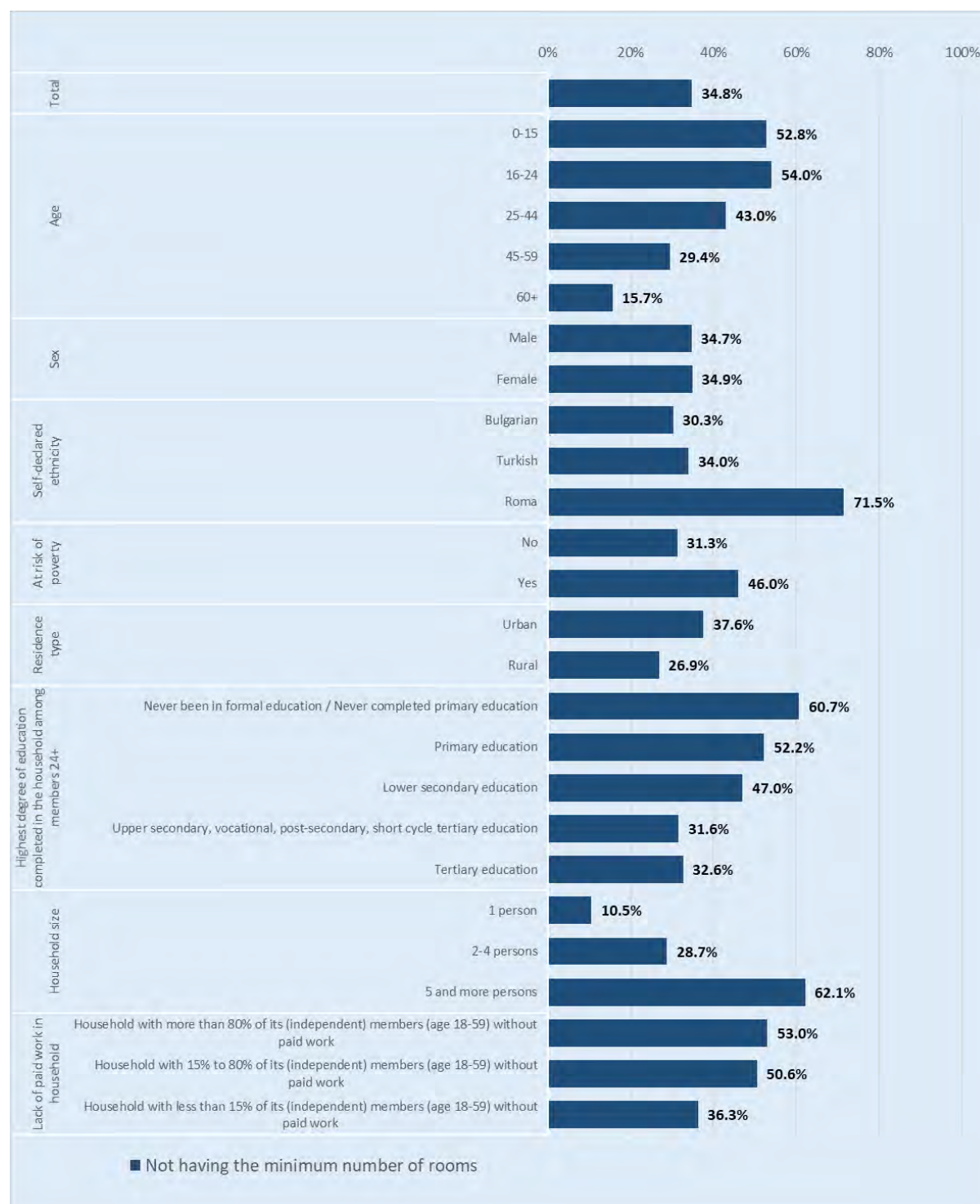
Source: National Statistical Institute, Household Survey on BGLD-3.001-0001 Project "Novel Approaches to Generating Data on hard-to-reach populations at risk of violation of their rights"

Overcrowding is quite a common problem affecting a significant part (almost 35%) of the Bulgarian population. However, a disaggregation by different characteristics show that some groups are more

affected than others. In terms of age, the highest share of people living in households not having the minimum number of rooms is registered among younger people (54.0% among those aged 16-24 and 43.0% among those aged 25-44) as opposed to older people aged 60 years or more where this share is the lowest (15.7%).

In terms of ethnicity, the share of Roma living in overcrowded dwellings (71.5%) exceeds more than twice the share of ethnic Turks (34%) and ethnic Bulgarians (30.3%), which reflects the widespread practice of large Roma families sharing one common home. Big households (of five or more members) are much more exposed to the risk of overcrowding than smaller households, as are persons living at risk of poverty compared to those not at poverty risk. Joblessness in the household does not seem have a large bivariate effect on the availability of sufficient living space. Type of residence however does have strong impact on overcrowding – 26.9% of people living in rural areas live in household that does not have the minimum number of rooms compared to 37.6% in urban areas. (Figure 33).

Figure 33: Share of people living in household that does not have the minimum number of rooms according to the Eurostat definition of overcrowding, by age, sex, self-declared ethnicity, at risk of poverty rate, residence type, highest degree of education completed in the household among members 24+, household size, and jobless intensity in categories ^a (%)



Notes: ^a Out of all household members in the surveyed households (n = 30,303); weighted results.

Source: National Statistical Institute, Household Survey on BGLD-3.001-0001 Project "Novel Approaches to Generating Data on hard-to-reach populations at risk of violation of their rights"

In terms of discrimination when looking for housing the past 5 years, the data cannot be meaningfully be analysed due to low case numbers.

6 Discrimination

Background

Article 21 of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights explicitly prohibits any discrimination based on any ground such as sex, race, colour, ethnic or social origin, genetic features, language, religion or belief, political or any other opinion, membership of a national minority, property, birth, disability, age or sexual orientation. In Bulgaria, the principle of equality is proclaimed in Article 6 of the Constitution and safeguarded by the national anti-discrimination legislation.

A recent Eurobarometer report shows that although Bulgaria ranks among the EU Member States with the highest share of people who think that discrimination is not widespread in their country, it is also among the countries with the highest share of people who would not feel comfortable having a person from a minority group at a high elected political position, as a colleague at work, or in love relationship with their child. According to the same report, Bulgarians are least tolerant toward Roma and LGBTI persons and most tolerant toward young people, old people and people with disabilities.⁵⁹

According to the annual activity reports of the national equality body, the Commission for Protection against Discrimination, the number of complaints for unequal treatment has been increasing through the years consistently reaching 921 in 2019. Most complaints are about discrimination on grounds of disability.⁶⁰

The current survey asked respondents if they felt discriminated against on different grounds (skin colour, ethnic or immigrant background or ethnic origin, religion or religious beliefs, sex, age, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, other reason) in the past 5 years and in the past 12 months and in different areas of life. These are: when looking for work, at work, when in contact with anyone from the school(s) as a parent or a student, when using healthcare services, when trying to rent or buy an apartment or a house, when in contact with administrative offices or public services and when trying to enter a night club, a bar, a restaurant or hotel, using public transport, being in a shop or trying to enter a shop.

Results at national and district level

The widespread nature of discrimination is an important indicator of the overall respect for the principle of equal treatment and non-discrimination. The indicator **‘discrimination on any ground in any area of life’** shows the extent of the risk to experience discrimination. It identifies the share of respondents who felt discriminated because of any ground in any of the areas covered in the survey during the year preceding the survey. According to the survey data, of all persons who have been at risk of unequal treatment in the past 12 months, 5% felt discriminated (on any ground and in any of the areas covered by the survey). This share raises concerns in view of the fact that it reflects the situation in the society as a whole (i.e., it covers both the majority and the minority group of the population on any ground). Thus, it can be expected that for some groups of the population, that are particularly vulnerable to discrimination, this share will be much higher. For some minority groups, like Roma⁶¹ and LGBTI people,⁶² this is evident from other studies addressing the issues of equal treatment and discrimination specifically for these groups. There are important differences among districts in the share of persons

⁵⁹ European Commission (2019), [Special Eurobarometer 493: Discrimination in the European Union](#).

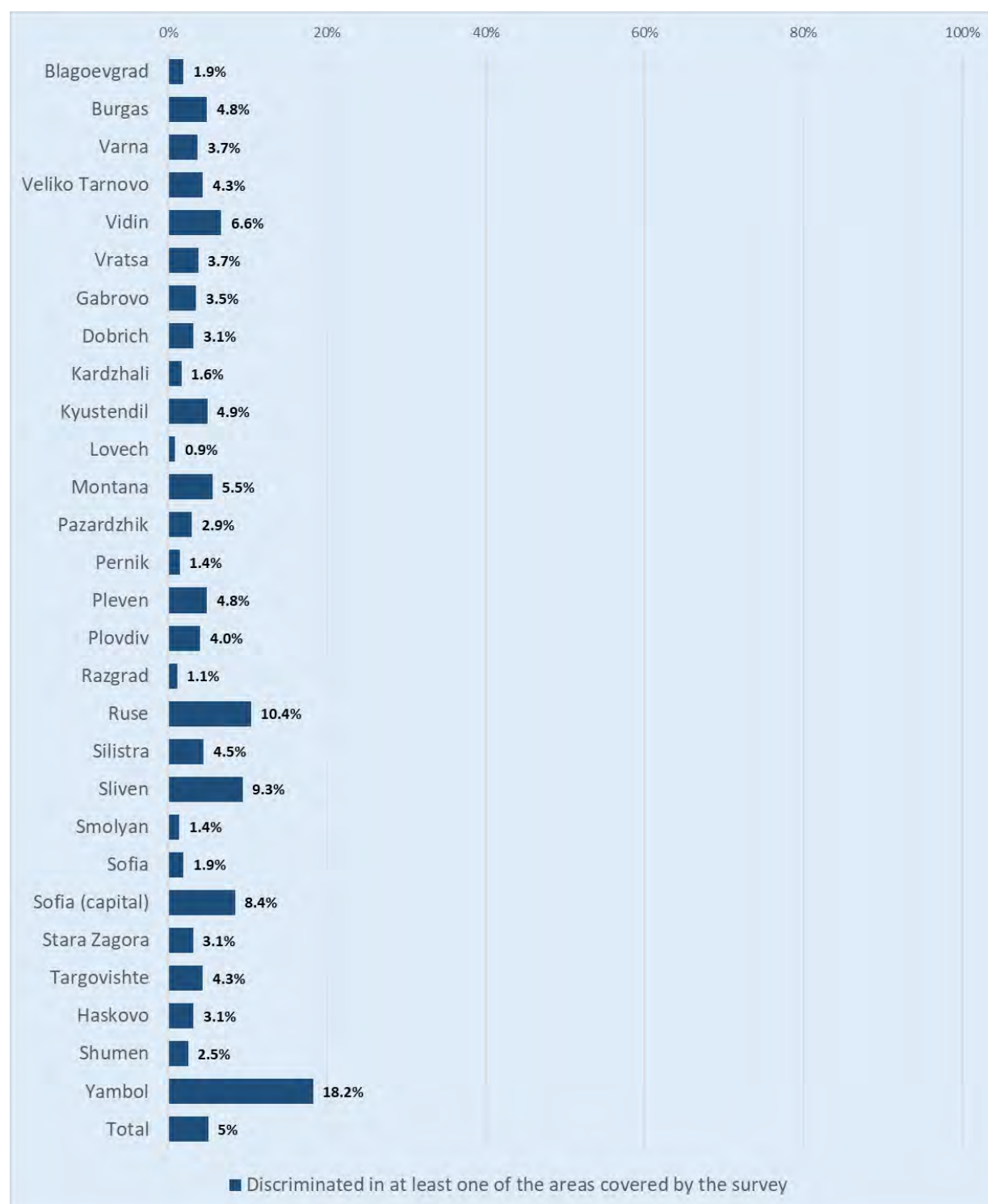
⁶⁰ Commission for Protection against Discrimination (2020), Annual activity report of the Commission for Protection against Discrimination for 2019 (*Годишен отчет за дейността на Комисията за защита от дискриминация през 2019 г.*), Sofia, Commission for Protection against Discrimination.

⁶¹ For example, according to [FRA EU MIDIS II Survey \(2016\)](#), 14% of Roma in Bulgaria have felt discriminated in the past 12 months in any of the ten areas of life covered by the survey because of their skin colour, ethnic origin or religion.

⁶² For example, according to [FRA LGBTI Survey \(2019\)](#), Bulgaria ranks second by share of LGBTI people (52%) who have personally felt discriminated against due to being LGBTI in the past 12 months in any of the eight areas of life covered by the survey.

who felt discriminated which is much higher than the national average in Yambol, Ruse, Sliven and the capital city Sofia. (Figure 34).

Figure 34: Share of people who have felt discriminated against because of any ground in any of the areas covered in the survey in the past 12 months, by district ^{a,b,c} (%)



Notes: ^a Out of respondents older than 16 years who have been in at least one of the areas of daily life asked about in the survey in the 12 months before the survey ($n = 25,646$); weighted results.

^b Areas of daily life asked about in the survey: looking for work, at work, education (self or as parent), health, housing and other public or private services (public administration, restaurant or bar, public transport, shop).

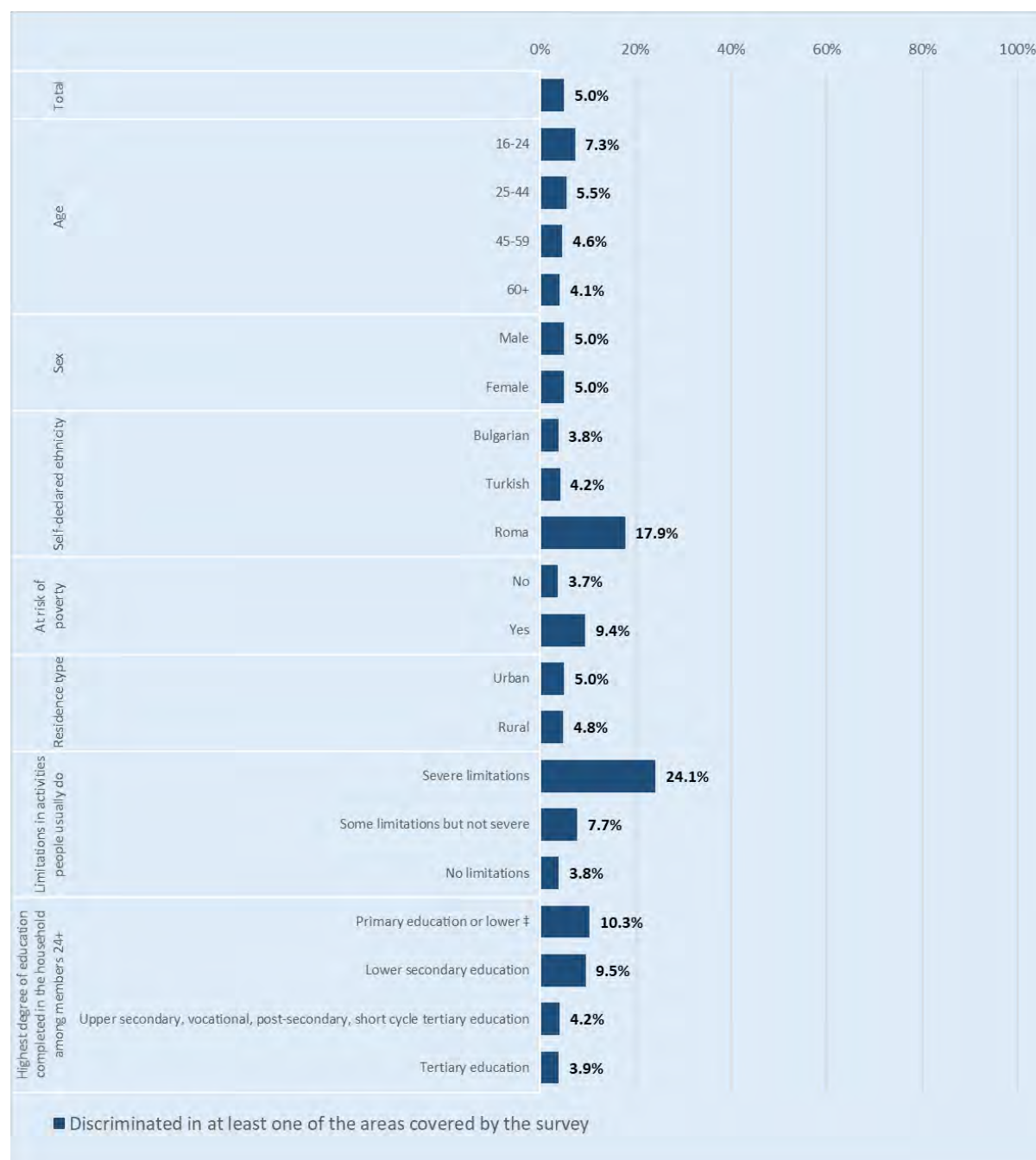
^c Remainder to 100% includes non-responses in the underlying question(s).

Source: National Statistical Institute, Household Survey on BGLD-3.001-0001 Project "Novel Approaches to Generating Data on hard-to-reach populations at risk of violation of their rights"

Bi-variate analysis

The bivariate analysis of the data on discrimination (people who felt discriminated against on any ground during the past year) shows that the groups most vulnerable to unequal treatment analysed in this report are Roma, people living in poverty, young people, people with severe limitations in activities people usually do and people living in households with highest completed education not exceeding primary education. Within some of the analysed groups, the share of persons, who have felt discriminated against, exceeds 10% reaching 24.1% among people with severe limitations in usual activities (Figure 35).

Figure 35: Share of people who have felt discriminated against because of any ground in any of the areas covered in the survey in the past 12 months, by age, sex, self-declared ethnicity, at risk of poverty rate, residence type, limitations, and highest degree of education completed in the household among members 24+, 16+ ^{a,b,c} (%)



Notes: ^a Out of respondents older than 16 years who have been in at least one of the areas of daily life asked about in the survey in the 12 months before the survey ($n = 25,646$); weighted results.

^b Remainder to 100% includes non-responses in the underlying question(s).

^c ‡ Results based on a small number of responses are statistically less reliable. Thus, results based on 20 to 49 unweighted observations in a group total are flagged. Results based on fewer than 20 unweighted observations in a group total are not published.

Source: National Statistical Institute, Household Survey on BGLD-3.001-0001 Project "Novel Approaches to Generating Data on hard-to-reach populations at risk of violation of their rights"

7 Harassment and violence

Background

Hate crimes motivated by racism, xenophobia, religious intolerance or by a person's disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression and sex characteristics are extreme and severe manifestations of discrimination and intolerance.⁶³ They do not occur in isolation and are indicative of persisting discriminatory perceptions and structural discrimination in society. Hate crimes constitute a grave abuse of a person's dignity, inherent to all human beings, and violate the founding values of the EU expressed in its Treaties and the EU Fundamental Rights Charter.⁶⁴

The EU has adopted legislation to combat hate crime and ensure that the victims of such crime access justice and seek redress. Key pieces of legislation are the Framework Decision on combating certain forms and expressions of racism and xenophobia by means of criminal law⁶⁵ and the Victims' Rights Directive.⁶⁶ Implementing these legal provisions in practice requires systematic training of law enforcement and criminal justice authorities to recognise hate crime and deal with it effectively.

In Bulgaria, there are no official statistics on hate crime. The current system does not accommodate proper and reliable recording of hate crime disaggregated by bias and as a consequence statistics can't be generated. The law enforcement agencies register hate crime as any other criminal offence. Moreover, the Bulgarian authorities are often criticised for investigating and prosecuting hate crimes as conventional crimes and as such motivated by hooliganism not accounting for the bias-motivation of the offender.⁶⁷ This can lead to failure to investigate and prosecute cases of hate crimes as such contributing to a sense of impunity among potential perpetrators. Ultimately, this reinforces social exclusion and weakens social cohesion.⁶⁸ Silent tolerance or indifference to incidents of harassment and hate crime can discourage reporting. Victims that do not report such crimes to the police or other competent public bodies have no access to protection, support and justice.⁶⁹

In the absence of a proper hate crime recording mechanism and data collection, survey data are the only available source of information for estimating the actual prevalence of bias-motivated incidents.

⁶³ FRA (2012), [Making hate crime visible in the European Union: acknowledging victims' rights](#), Luxembourg, Publications Office of the European Union.

⁶⁴ Articles 2 and 3, [Treaty on European Union](#). The EU Charter of Fundamental Rights includes a number of Articles relevant to combating hate crime, for example, right to human dignity (Article 1), right to life (Article 2), right to physical and mental integrity (Article 3), right to seek redress through an effective remedy (Article 47), it prohibits inhuman or degrading treatment (Article 4) and discrimination on numerous grounds from race, colour, ethnic origin, or religion to sex, disability, age or sexual orientation (Article 21).

⁶⁵ [Council Framework Decision 2008/913/JHA of 28 November 2008 on combating certain forms and expressions of racism and xenophobia by means of criminal law](#).

⁶⁶ Directive 2012/29/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 25 October 2012 establishing minimum standards on the rights, support and protection of victims of crime, and replacing Council Framework Decision 2001/220/JHA.

⁶⁷ One such example is the decision by Varna District Court (*Окръжен съд – Варна*) on appellate criminal case of general nature No 1135/2019 ([Решение № 5 по въззивно наказателно дело от общ характер № 1135/2019 г.](#)) from 13 January 2020. The case concerns a violent crime allegedly motivated by hatred on the grounds of ethnicity. The incident happened in the city of Varna during the night of 22 May 2016 when two Roma boys and their friends encountered a group of 15 boys, who started to insult and threaten them, calling them *мангали* (an offensive name for Roma, literally meaning brazier). Two persons from the group attacked the victims and started hitting and kicking them, causing them light bodily injuries. The two offenders were prosecuted and found guilty of causing light bodily injuries motivated by hooliganism.

⁶⁸ FRA (2012), [Making hate crime visible in the European Union: acknowledging victims' rights](#), Luxembourg, Publications Office of the European Union (Publications Office), pp. 15-24.

⁶⁹ On the hidden extent of victimisation captured through crime surveys, see: FRA (2021), [Crime, safety and victims' rights – Fundamental Rights Survey](#), Luxembourg, Publications Office, pp. 9-12.

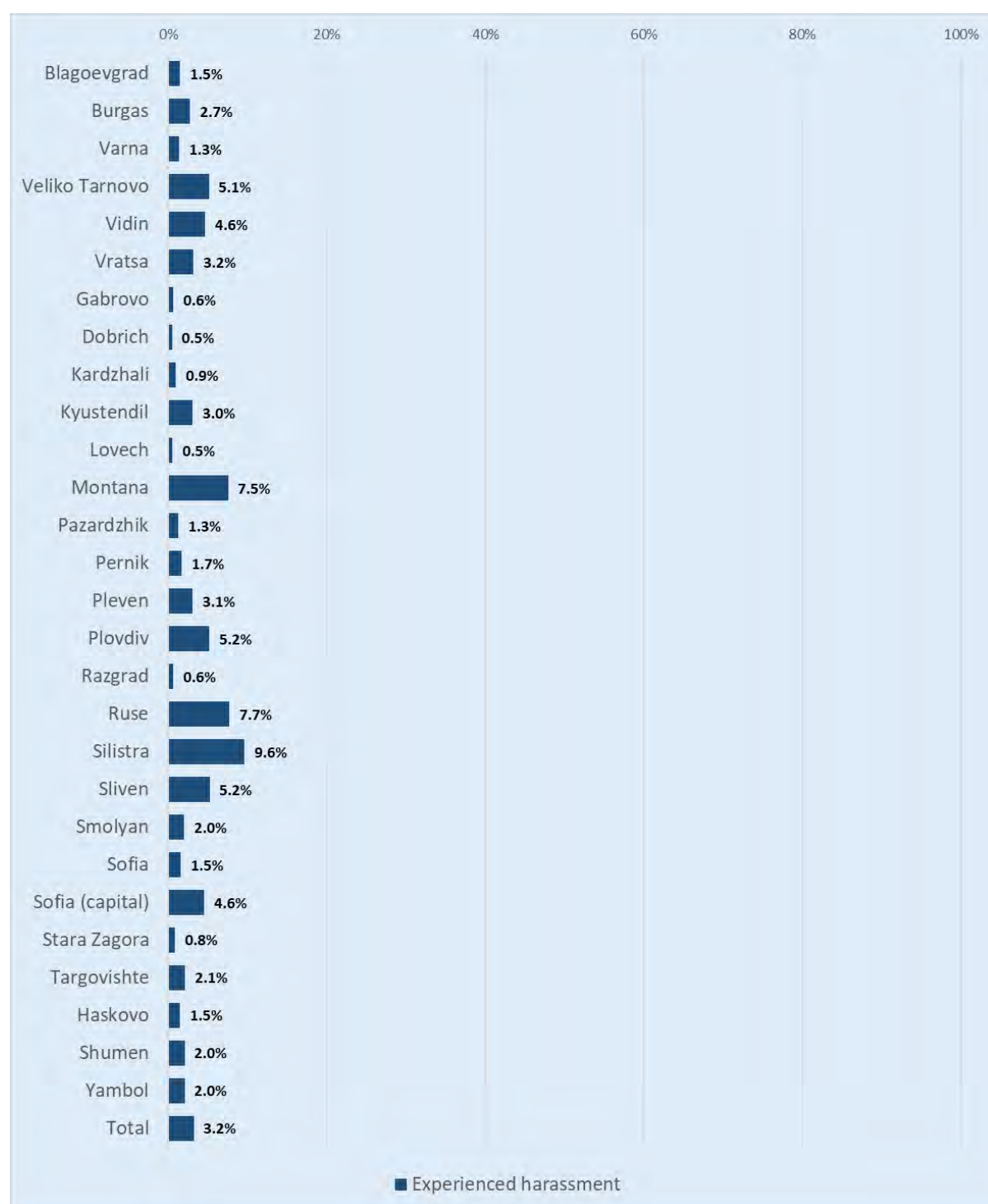
Results at national and district level

The indicator ‘**harassment on any ground**’ estimates the share of people who have been experiencing harassment (overall five acts) because of any ground in the 12 months before the survey. According to the survey results, 3.2% of the population experienced harassment (on any of the nine grounds). Similar to the data on discrimination on any ground, this share also raises concerns because of the assumption that for certain groups of the population, which are particularly vulnerable to unequal treatment, intolerance and bias-motivated violence (such as Roma⁷⁰ and LGBTI people⁷¹), this share may be substantially higher. The data at district level show substantially disproportionate distribution of harassment at local level. The share of people experiencing harassment in the 12 months before the survey was 7.5% or higher in three districts (Silistra, Ruse and Montana). At the opposite end of the spectrum are the districts of Dobrich, Lovech, Kardzhali, Gabrovo, Razgrad and Stara Zagora with share of less than 1% (Figure 36).

⁷⁰ For example, according to [FRA EU MIDIS II Survey \(2016\)](#), 12% of Roma in Bulgaria have had experiences of harassment (five acts) due to their ethnic background in the past 12 months.

⁷¹ For example, according to [FRA LGBTI Survey \(2019\)](#), Bulgaria ranks sixth by share of LGBTI people (51%) who have had experiences of harassment for **any reason** in the past 12 months.

Figure 36: Share of people experiencing harassment (overall – 5 acts) because of any ground in the 12 months before the survey by district ^{a, b, c} (%)



Notes: ^a Out of all respondents 16 years old and older (n = 26,380); weighted results.

^b Questions: “And in the past 12 months, has somebody...: 1. made offensive or threatening comments to you in person such as insulting you or calling you names?; 2. threatened you with violence in person?; 3. made offensive gestures to you or stared at you inappropriately?; 4. sent you emails or text messages (SMS, IMs) that were offensive or threatening?; 5. posted offensive comments about you on the internet, for example on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, etc.?”; if Yes: “Would you say that this happened to you for any of the following reasons? List all that apply to you: Skin colour; Ethnic or immigrant background / ethnic origin; Religion or religious beliefs; Age; Gender; Disability; Sexual orientation; Gender identity; Other reason”

^c Remainder to 100% includes non-responses in the underlying question(s).

Source: National Statistical Institute, Household Survey on BGLD-3.001-0001 Project “Novel Approaches to Generating Data on hard-to-reach populations at risk of violation of their rights”

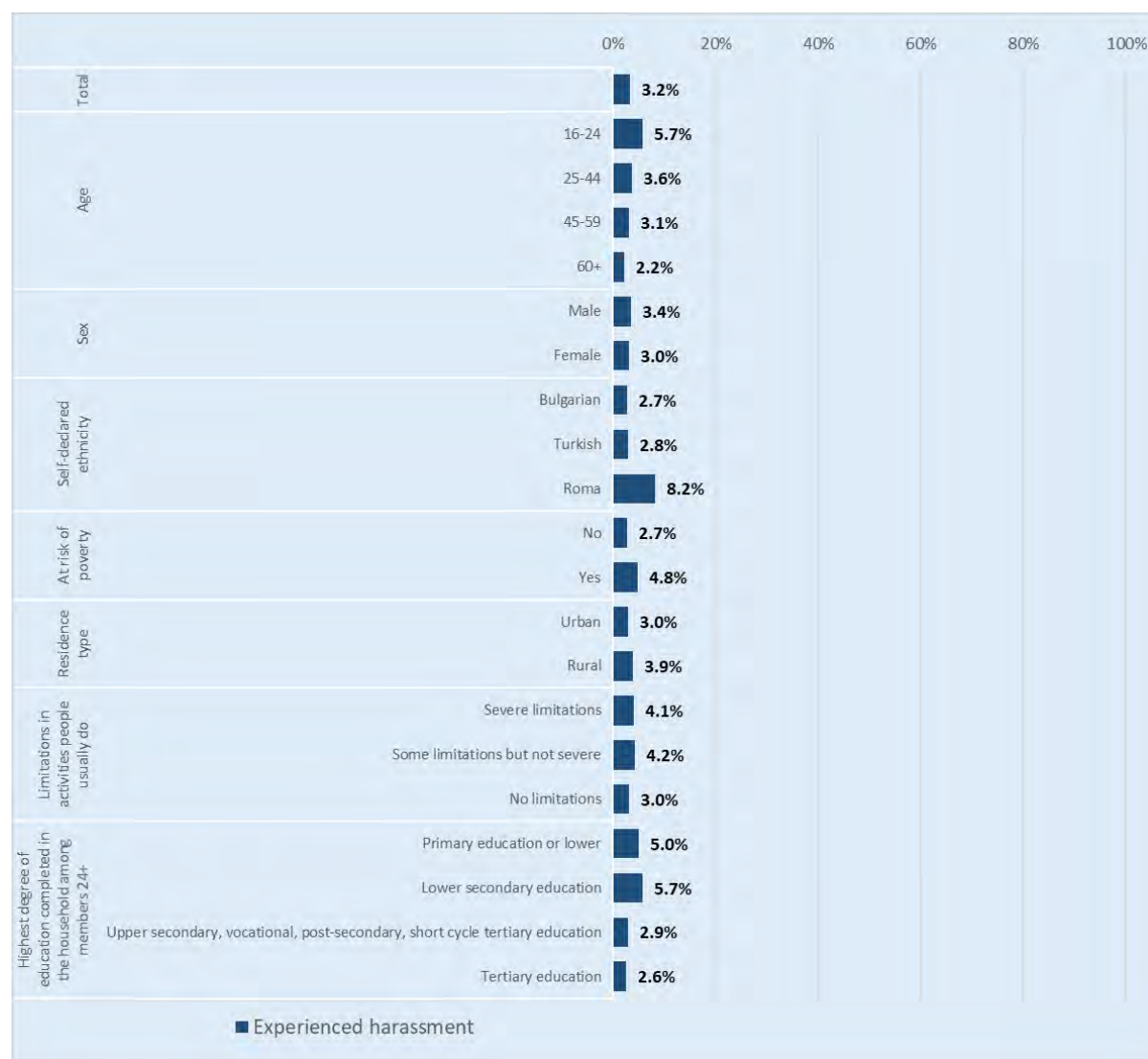
The survey reveals also prevalence of violence – the share of people who have been physically attacked (e.g., hit, pushed or kicked) because of any ground in the past 12 months. According to the data, 0.4% of the population were victims of a violent incident motivated by bias. In terms of the share of people who have been physically attacked (e.g., hit, pushed or kicked), the data cannot be meaningfully analysed at district level due to low case numbers.

Bi-variate analysis

In terms of age, the share of young people aged between 16 and 24 who have experienced harassment in the past year (5.7%) is more than twice higher than the share among older people of 60 years or more (2.2%). Broken down by ethnicity, the data show that harassment is most often targeted against the Roma (8.2%).

The share of persons who have experienced harassment is twice as high among the people living in households with highest completed education ‘lower secondary or lower’ than among those living in households with highest completed education ‘upper secondary or higher’. People living at risk of poverty also show higher risks of falling victims of harassment. Sex, place of residence (urban or rural area) and limitations in activities people usually do does not seem to affect rates of experiences of harassment (Figure 37).

Figure 37: Share of people experiencing harassment (overall – 5 acts) because of any ground in the 12 months before the survey, by age, sex, self-declared ethnicity, at risk of poverty rate, residence type, limitations, and highest degree of education completed in the household among members 24+, 16+ ^{a,b,c} (%)



Notes: ^a Out of all respondents 16 years old and older (n = 26,380); weighted results.

^b Remainder to 100% includes non-responses in the underlying question(s).

^c ± Results based on a small number of responses are statistically less reliable. Thus, results based on 20 to 49 unweighted observations in a group total are flagged. Results based on fewer than 20 unweighted observations in a group total are not published.

Source: National Statistical Institute, Household Survey on BGLD-3.001-0001 Project “Novel Approaches to Generating Data on hard-to-reach populations at risk of violation of their rights”

The low numbers of violence reported in the survey does not allow for analysis by age, sex, self-declared ethnicity, at risk of poverty rate, residence type, and highest degree of education completed in the household among members.

8 Participation, building cooperation and trust

Background

People at risk of poverty, social exclusion and violation of fundamental rights often experience social isolation and marginalisation, which affects their participation in public life as well as their interaction with public authorities and civil society organisations. Trust in the existing institutional infrastructure is among the key factors for societal participation – and people vulnerable to various risks are no exception. In their case, however, the low levels of trust and the related lack of interaction and cooperation may increase the probability of the vulnerability risks they face to materialise boosting their social isolation and marginalisation even further.

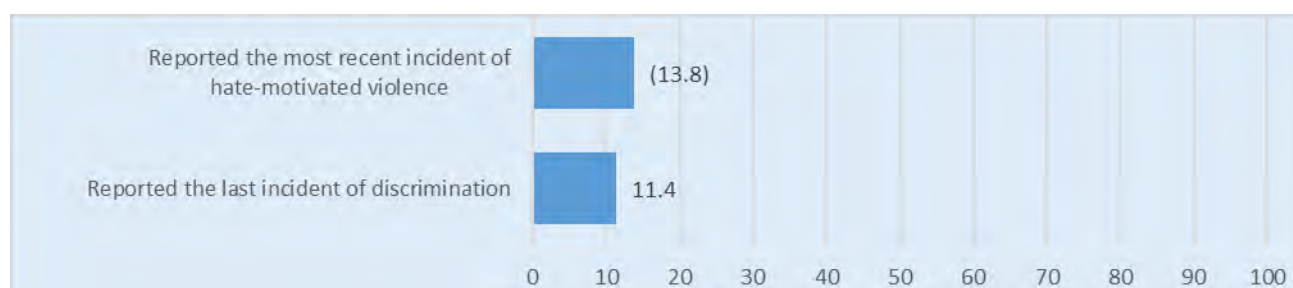
According to Eurostat, Bulgaria is among the EU Member States registering the lowest levels of trust in public institutions. According to the data, Bulgaria is the EU Member State with the lowest level of trust in the police with a rating of 3.6 out of 10. The country's average rating of trust in the political system (2.6) and the legal system (3.0) is also considerably lower than the EU-28 average.⁷²

Results at national level⁷³

Those vulnerable to poverty, social exclusion and violation of fundamental rights need the protection of law enforcement and the justice system to report a violation of their rights or to seek assistance and support, but lack of trust means that they are discouraged from doing so. The **'reporting of the last incident of discrimination'** indicator shows the share of those have reported the last incident of discrimination experienced in the past 12 months. Respectively, the indicator **'non-reporting of the most recent incident of hate-motivated violence'** estimates the share of victims who experienced a hate crime in the past five years and reported the most recent incident to anyone.

According to the survey data, only 11.4% of people who have felt discriminated did report the last incident they experienced. The share of those who were experienced violence and did report the last incident was 13.8%. This indicates that discrimination incidents remain unreported and are therefore not investigated or brought to justice (Figure 38). This can be due to a range of factors ranging from low level of awareness about the existing possibilities for reporting or fear of retaliation to mistrust in law enforcement and judicial institutions. The survey results point to a need for measures to increase the rate of reporting and thus improve both the prevention of and the subsequent intervention in cases of discrimination.

Figure 38: Share of people who felt discriminated against (in any area) in the past 12 months and reported the last incident of discrimination respondents 16+^{a, b, c} and share of persons who reported the most recent incident of hate-motivated violence (of those experiencing violence), respondents 16+^{c, d, e, f} (%)



Notes: ^a Out of all respondents 16 years old and older who felt discriminated against (in any area) in the past 12 months before the survey (n = 1,246); weighted results.

^b Questions: "You mentioned that in the past 12 months you felt discriminated against. Did you report or make a complaint about any of these incidents?"

⁷² For example, see Eurostat (2013), [Average rating of trust by domain, sex, age and educational attainment level](#).

⁷³ Both indicators in this section cannot be disaggregated by districts due to low case numbers.

^c Remainder to 100% includes non-responses in the underlying question(s).

^d Out of all respondents 16 years old and older who experienced that somebody has physically attacked them because of their skin colour or ethnic or immigrant background / ethnic origin in the past 12 months before the survey (n = 97); weighted results.

^e Questions: "Did you report or make a complaint about the incident?"

^f The share of persons who reported the most recent incident of hate-motivated is based on small number of observations

Source: National Statistical Institute, Household Survey on BGLD-3.001-0001 Project "Novel Approaches to Generating Data on hard-to-reach populations at risk of violation of their rights"

The high non-reporting rates can be seen as indicative of the low level of public trust not only in the law enforcement institutions, but also in the other available support mechanisms, including the healthcare system, the social services, the human rights institutions and the non-governmental organisations. At the same time, such high levels of non-reporting, combined with the lack of regular hate crime surveys, leaves policy makers with no reliable data on the actual spread of hate-motivated violence in the country and thus prevents the development and implementation of better targeted prevention and countering policies and measures.

Similar to the other indicators estimating discrimination, it is important to note that both the indicator on reporting of discrimination and the one on non-reporting of physical attacks include cases on any ground, which means that within certain groups of the population, which are more vulnerable to discrimination and hate crime (such as Roma⁷⁴ and LGBTI people⁷⁵), these shares may be different.

District-level distribution of both indicators – 'share of people who felt discriminated against (in any area) in the past 12 months and reported the last incident of discrimination' and 'share of persons who did NOT report the most recent incident of violence because of any ground (of those experiencing violence), 16+ ' – is not possible due to the small case numbers.

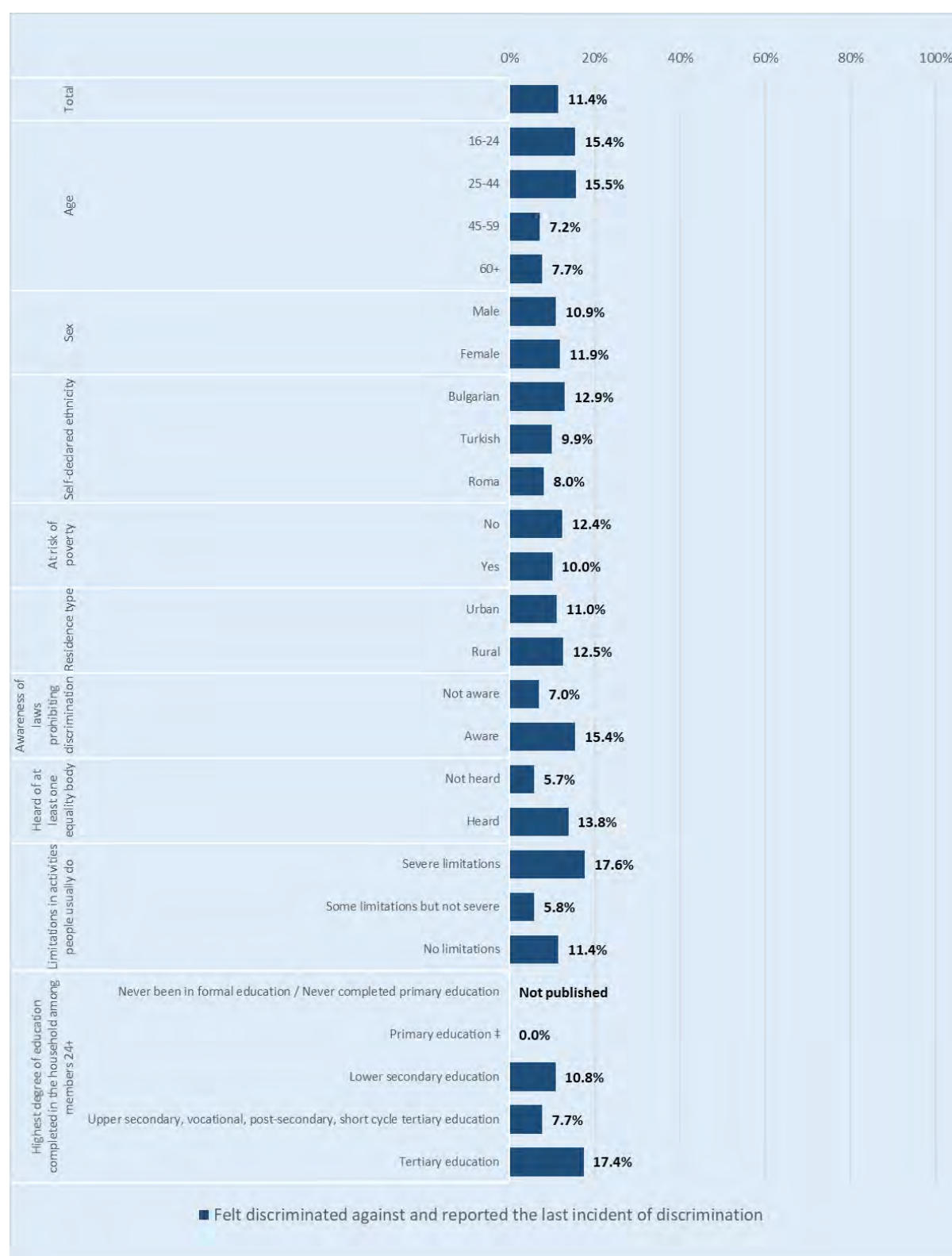
Bi-variate analysis

The data on reporting discrimination disaggregated by different demographic and socio-economic characteristics show that some groups of the population are more active to report the discrimination acts against them than other. These differences suggest that a considerable share of the people, including those who are most vulnerable to discrimination, might be mistrustful towards the available institutional infrastructure and not willing to look for a remedy. The share of persons who reported the last incident of discrimination is lower among those who are not aware of the existing anti-discrimination legislation and equality bodies than among those who are aware – although in both cases these shares are low (less than 10 and 20% respectively). The willingness to report is higher among young people and persons with tertiary education (17.4%) (Figure 39).

⁷⁴ For example, according to [FRA EU MIDIS II Survey \(2016\)](#), 86% of Roma in Bulgaria have not reported or made a complaint about the most recent time they have felt discriminated against because of their ethnic background in any area (data on non-reporting of physical attacks are not available due to the small sample size).

⁷⁵ For example, according to [FRA LGBTI Survey \(2019\)](#), 85% of LGBTI people in Bulgaria have neither reported the last discrimination incident nor have had someone else reporting it for them, and 82% have not reported the last incident of hate-motivated physical or sexual attack.

Figure 39: Share of people who felt discriminated against (in any area) in the past 12 months and reported the last incident of discrimination, by age, sex, self-declared ethnicity, at risk of poverty rate, residence type, awareness of laws prohibiting discrimination, heard of at least one equality body, limitations, and highest degree of education completed in the household among members 24+, 16+ ^{a,b,c} (%)



Notes: ^a Out of all respondents 16 years old and older who felt discriminated against (in any area) in the past 12 months before the survey (n = 1,246); weighted results.

^b Remainder to 100% includes non-responses in the underlying question(s)

^c ± Results based on a small number of responses are statistically less reliable. Thus, results based on 20 to 49 unweighted observations in a group total are flagged. Results based on fewer than 20 unweighted observations in a group total are not published.

Source: National Statistical Institute, Household Survey on BGLD-3.001-0001 Project “Novel Approaches to Generating Data on hard-to-reach populations at risk of violation of their rights”

Bi-variate analysis of non-reporting of the most recent incident of hate-motivated violence is not possible due to low case numbers.

Conclusions

Evidence-based social policies require multivariate analyses of reliable data. This report contributes to the national efforts to make use of data in order to develop a holistic approach to policy making by delivering an analysis of the situation in eight distinct, but interrelated thematic areas: (1) education, (2) employment, (3) poverty and social exclusion, (4) health, (5) housing, (6) discrimination, (7) harassment and hate crime and (8) participation, building cooperation and trust. It provides a multi-level analysis, which sets a baseline for possible assessment of progress in decreasing the risks of poverty, social exclusion and violation of rights in Bulgaria. The results disaggregated by key characteristics allow for the identification of vulnerable groups of the population particularly exposed to such risks. The availability of such data allows for the development of effective and informed targeted responses at national and regional level.

The survey results show that despite the efforts of the national authorities, further action is needed in several key areas to break the cycle of poverty addressing the lack of education, which is linked to unemployment and poverty, which, in turn, leads to marginalisation and social exclusion. This is particularly relevant for those facing multiple deprivations and thus are at higher risk poverty, social exclusion and violation of rights, such as Roma, people with disabilities and older people, as well as children, living in socially disadvantaged families. The specific challenges people from these group face will be subject of in-depth thematic reports.

Access to **education** emerges as a key challenge for significant shares of the Bulgarian population. The survey results confirm that the share of children not attending early childhood education and care remains high. This is worrying in view of the importance of early-age education as a precondition for reducing the risk of leaving school early and, at a later stage, decreasing the risk of young people living neither in employment nor education or training.⁷⁶ Bulgarian authorities have recognised the link between early age education and prevention of early school leaving and have taken measures including the reduction of mandatory pre-school age from five to four years, and the introduction of financial compensation scheme for parents, whose children remain outside kindergartens due to lack of places.⁷⁷ Furthermore, a number of projects have been implemented locally to improve the inclusion of children with a mother tongue other than Bulgarian.⁷⁸ However, the survey data show that these measures have as yet not produced tangible results. National and local authorities should monitor and assess progress by collecting data similar to those collected through this survey.

Decreasing early school leaving has been another priority of the educational authorities at both national and local level. The government implemented a special strategy for reducing the share of early leavers from the educational system⁷⁹ and in October 2019, reported a decline of the share of early school leavers from 13.8% in 2016 to 12.7% in 2018.⁸⁰ This is encouraging, although data produced by the present survey puts the share of early school-leavers actually higher at 15.5%.

⁷⁶ European Commission (2014), [Study on the effective use of early childhood education and care \(ECEC\) in preventing early school leaving \(ESL\)](#), Luxembourg, Publications Office of the European Union.

⁷⁷ Bulgaria, Pre-school and School Education Act ([Закон за предучилищното и училищното образование](#)), 13 October 2015 (last amended 18 September 2020). In September 2020, the law was amended and the age of compulsory pre-school education was decreased from five to four years. The enrolment of children at the age of four will start from the school year 2021/2022 in municipalities that have the necessary facilities and should be completed at the start of the school year 2023/2024 until when all municipalities are obliged to develop the necessary infrastructure.

⁷⁸ For example, see Operational Programme Human Resources Development, Grant Scheme BG051PO001-4.1.03 Integration of children and students from ethnic minorities into the educational system ([BG051PO001-4.1.03 Интеграция на децата и учениците от етническите малцинства в образователната система](#)).

⁷⁹ Bulgaria, Council of Ministers (*Министерски съвет*) (2013), Strategy for Reducing the Share of School Drop-outs 2013-2020 ([Стратегия за намаляване дела на преждевременно напусналите образователната система \(2013-2020\)](#)), 30 October 2013.

⁸⁰ Bulgaria, Ministry of Education and Science (*Министерството на образованието и науката*) (2019), Interim report on the implementation of the Strategy for Reducing the Share of School Drop-outs 2013-2020 for the year 2019 ([Междинен доклад за изпълнението през 2019 г. на Стратегията за намаляване дела на преждевременно напусналите образователната система \(2013 – 2020\)](#)), October 2019, p. 6.

Facilitating equal access to quality education can be a critical factor for retaining children in education. Discrimination experiences when in contact with school authorities appear more widespread in districts with larger shares of Roma populations. Educational and local authorities in these districts should monitor the situation systematically and consider further efforts to identify and address the reasons for such experiences of discrimination.

Employment appears as another area of concern. The share of people between 20 and 64 years, whose main activity is paid work, accounts to 75% of the population in active work age leaving the remaining 25% vulnerable to poverty. The risk of unemployment is high among young people – almost one in every five young persons aged 15 to 29 reported their main activity ‘neither in employment, education or training’. The district level data and the bivariate analysis show lower employment rates in some regions with large proportions of populations from the Roma and Turkish ethnic groups. At national level, the system of measures to reduce unemployment needs to be evaluated in terms of the effectiveness of the job opportunities and training programmes it offers – particularly the ones targeting the groups at highest risk of unemployment. An assessment of the impact of subsidised employment is also needed, particularly in relation to certain vulnerable groups such people with disabilities and young people.⁸¹ Moreover, further measures to prevent and monitor discrimination in employment are necessary, particularly in larger urban areas.

Long-term unemployment increases the risk of **poverty and social exclusion**. A considerable share of people (23.6%) live on equivalised current monthly disposable household income below the 60% of the national median and about 4.2% experience extreme conditions, such as the situation of at least one member of the household going to bed hungry due to lack of money to buy food. Moreover, risk of poverty affects disproportionately those belonging to groups exposed to higher risks in other areas, such as members of large households, people with disabilities who need extensive support, people with low educational qualifications. Groups experiencing overlapping deprivations, such as Roma, are particularly vulnerable to poverty and social exclusion. At district level, regions facing higher risk of poverty are largely the same as the ones in which the problems in the area of education and employment are most pronounced.

Poverty leads to social exclusion. The share of people who feel socially excluded (14.1%) suggests the need for targeted social inclusion measures. This analysis could usefully supplement evidence accompanying the new draft national strategy against poverty,⁸² which clearly identify the challenges facing the social support system and the need for additional efforts to improve the social cohesion of regions. In particular, the ongoing reform in the system of institutional care for people with disabilities would benefit from an evaluation of its impact on social inclusion.

Accessibility and availability of **healthcare** services is essential to sustaining good quality of life. The survey results show that overall health services remain inaccessible and/or unaffordable for a small share of the population (3.1%). At the same time, 3.6% of Bulgarians have severe limitations in their usual activities due to health problems and another 10.9% are limited but not severely. In this context, some groups of the population (old persons, unemployed persons and poor persons) face bigger challenges and difficulties in accessing health services, which future measures should address.

Housing is another area, in which the present survey has identified key vulnerability factors. Housing deprivation is a problem for some 18.7% of the population, while 8.7% live in places with no indoor bath or toilet. A total of 34.8% of Bulgarian citizens live in overcrowded dwellings. Combined with the other problems in the area of housing, this can lead to increased health risks and negative impact on children’s development – particularly in a complicated epidemiological situation as the one caused by

⁸¹ Subsidised employment is constantly increasing. In 2021 alone, the government plans to increase the number of subsidised job positions by 12.2% compared to 2020. For more information, see Bulgaria, Employment Agency (*Агенция по заетостта*) (2021), ‘Nearly 15,000 unemployed will start work under the National Action Plan on Employment in 2021’ (*‘Близо 15 000 безработни ще започнат работа по Националния план за действие по заетостта през 2021 г.’*), press release, 28 January 2021.

⁸² Bulgaria, Council of Ministers (2020), Draft National Strategy for Poverty Reduction and Promotion of Social Inclusion 2030 (*Проект на Национална стратегия за намаляване на бедността и насърчаване на социалното включване 2030 г.*), 9 November 2020.

COVID-19 pandemic. Rising house prices and high levels of youth unemployment indicate a need for measures targeting young families at both national and district level. The analysis also shows that large households in urban areas are particularly vulnerable to poor housing or living conditions. Efforts to provide social housing to vulnerable groups need to continue making use of the support of the European Structural and Investment Funds. In this regard, national and local authorities could consider including young people, large families, and people with disabilities, to the priority groups for social housing (such as families in risk, Roma and homeless people).

The survey registered very low prevalence of **discrimination and hate-motivated harassment and violence**. The reasons may include perception of discrimination as part of ‘normal daily life’, fear to report, unawareness or mistrust of victim support structures.

Overall, the survey results reveal some key vulnerability risks pointing to specific districts and groups of the population that are more exposed to some or all of these risks. They provide evidence for the development of government policy, but also valuable information about the impact of past or ongoing measures and initiatives.

9 Annexes

Annex 1: Indicators and variables of disaggregation

1. Education	
Indicators	Variables of disaggregation (individual and household level)
1.1. Share of children aged from 3 up to the age of starting compulsory primary education (6) who attend early childhood education and care	Sex (I), Ethnicity (I), Poverty (H), Rural/urban (H), Household size (H), "Joblessness intensity" at household level (H)
1.2. Share of people aged 18-24 years that have completed at most lower secondary education and are not involved in further education or training	Sex (I), Ethnicity (I), Poverty (H), Rural/urban (H), Discrimination (I), Limitations in activities people usually do (I) , Highest degree of education completed in the household among HH members 24+ (H)
1.3. Share of persons who felt discriminated against because of any ground in the past 12 months, when in contact with school authorities (as a parent/guardian or a student)	Sex (I), Ethnicity (I), Poverty (H), Rural/urban (H), Limitations in activities people usually do (I)

2. Employment	
Indicators	Variables of disaggregation (individual and household level)
2.1. Share of people who self-declared their main activity status as 'paid work' (including full-time, part-time, ad hoc jobs, self-employment and occasional work or work in the past four weeks), 20-64 years	Age (I), Sex (I), Ethnicity (I), Poverty (H), Rural/urban (H), Completed education (I), Limitations in activities people usually do (I) , Presence of children in the household (H)
2.2. Share of young persons, 15-29 years old with current main activity 'neither in employment, education or training' (NEET)	Age (I), Sex (I), Ethnicity (I), Poverty (H), Rural/urban (H), Discrimination (I), Limitations in activities people usually do (I) , Highest degree of education completed in the household among HH members 24+ (H)
2.3. Share of the population who felt discriminated against because of any ground in the past 12 months, when looking for a job, 16+	Age (I), Sex (I), Ethnicity (I), Poverty (H), Rural/urban (H), Limitations in activities people usually do (I)

3. Poverty and social exclusion	
Indicators	Variables of disaggregation (individual and household level)
3.1. At-risk-of-poverty rate (below 60% of median equivalised income after social transfers)	Age (I), Sex (I), Ethnicity (I), Rural/urban (H), "Joblessness intensity" at household level (H), Highest degree of education completed in the household among HH members 24+ (H), Presence of children in the household (H)
3.2. Share of persons living in household where one person in the household gone to bed hungry in the past month because there was not enough money for food	Age (I), Sex (I), Ethnicity (I), Poverty (H), Rural/urban (H), "Joblessness intensity" at household level (H), Highest degree of education completed in the household among HH members

	24+ (H), Presence of children in the household (H)
3.3. Share of people aged 16 years and more satisfied with their financial situation	Age (I), Sex (I), Ethnicity (I), Poverty (H), Rural/urban (H), Highest degree of education completed in the household among HH members 24+ (H), Presence of children in the household (H), "Joblessness intensity" at household level (H)
3.4. Share of people feeling of being excluded from society	Age (I), Sex (I), Ethnicity (I), Poverty (H), Rural/urban (H), Completed education (I), Household size (H), Limitations in activities people usually do (I) , Feeling safe (P6.3), Feeling happy (6.2-1), Feeling discouraged and depressed (6.2-3)

4. Health	
Indicators	Variables of disaggregation (individual and household level)
4.1. Share of persons with self-reported long-standing limitations in usual activities due to health problems, respondents	Age (I), Sex (I), Ethnicity (I), Poverty (H), Rural/urban (H), "Joblessness intensity" at household level (H)
4.2. Share of the population aged 16 and over reporting unmet needs for medical care due to one of the following reasons: 'Financial reasons', 'Waiting list' and 'Too far to travel' (all three categories are cumulated)	
4.3. Share of people who felt discriminated against because of any ground in the past 12 months, when accessing health services, 16+	Age (I), Sex (I), Ethnicity (I), Poverty (H), Rural/urban (H), Limitations in activities people usually do (I) , Highest degree of education completed in the household among HH members 24+ (H)

5. Housing	
Indicators	Variables of disaggregation (individual and household level)
5.1. Share of people living in housing deprivation (in an apartment too dark or leaking roof/damp walls, floors or no bath/shower or no indoor toilet)	Age (I), Sex (I), Ethnicity (I), Poverty (H), Rural/urban (H), Highest degree of education completed in the household among HH members 24+ (H), Household size (H), "Joblessness intensity" at household level (H)
5.2. Share of people living in households having neither flushing toilet, nor shower, nor bathroom inside the dwelling	
5.3. Share of people living in household that does not have the minimum number of rooms according to the Eurostat definition of overcrowding	

6. Discrimination	
Indicators	Variables of disaggregation (individual and household level)
6.1. Share of people who have felt discriminated against because of any ground in any of the	Age (I), Sex (I), Ethnicity (I), Poverty (H), Rural/urban (H), Highest degree of education

areas covered in the survey in the past 12 months	completed in the household among HH members 24+ (H)
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7. Harassment and violence	
Indicators	Variables of disaggregation (individual and household level)
7.1. Share of people experiencing harassment (overall – 5 acts) because of any ground in the 12 months before the survey	Age (I), Sex (I), Ethnicity (I), Poverty (H), Rural/urban (H), Limitations in activities people usually do (I), Highest degree of education completed in the household among HH members 24+ (H)
7.2. Share of people aged 16 years and more who were physically attacked (e.g., hit, pushed or kicked) because of any ground in the past 12 months	

8. Participation , building cooperation and trust	
Indicators	Variables of disaggregation (individual and household level)
8.1. Share of people who felt discriminated against (in any area) in the past 12 months and reported the last incident of discrimination	Age (I), Sex (I), Ethnicity (I), Poverty (H), Rural/urban (H), Awareness of the anti-discrimination legislation (I), Awareness of the equality body (I), Limitations in activities people usually do (I), Highest degree of education completed in the household among HH members 24+ (H)

Annex 2: Survey questions used for disaggregation variables

Disaggregation variable	Survey questions
Age (I)	D4: Date of birth
Sex (I)	D3: Sex
Ethnicity (I)	D10: Ethnic affiliation
Completed education (I)	D12: Highest degree of education completed
Discrimination (I)	DX2_A: When you were looking for a job in the past 5 years in Bulgaria, have you ever felt discriminated against for any of the following reasons? List all that apply to you. DX3_A: In the past 12 months for which of these reasons you felt discriminated against in Bulgaria when looking for a job? List all that apply to you. DX2_B: When being in work in the past 5 years in Bulgaria, have you ever felt discriminated against for any of the following reasons? List all that apply to you. DX3_B: In the past 12 months for which of the following reasons you felt discriminated against in Bulgaria when being in work? List all that apply to you. DX2_C: When using any healthcare services in the past 5 years in Bulgaria, have you ever felt discriminated against for any of the following reasons? List all that apply to you.

	<p>DX3_C: In the past 12 months for which of the following reasons you felt discriminated against in Bulgaria when using any healthcare services? List all that apply to you.</p> <p>DX2_D: When trying to rent or buy an apartment or a house in the past 5 years in Bulgaria, have you ever felt discriminated against for any of the following reasons? List all that apply to you.</p> <p>DX3_D: In the past 12 months for which of the following reasons you felt discriminated against in Bulgaria when trying to rent or buy an apartment or a house? List all that apply to you.</p> <p>DX2_E: When being in contact with anyone from the school(s) as a parent or a student in the past 5 years in Bulgaria, have you ever felt discriminated against for any of the following reasons? List all that apply to you.</p> <p>DX3_E: In the past 12 months for which of the following reasons you felt discriminated against in Bulgaria when being in contact with anyone from the school(s) as a parent or a student? List all that apply to you.</p> <p>DX2_F: When being in contact with administrative offices or public services in the past 5 years in Bulgaria, have you ever felt discriminated against for any of the following reasons? List all that apply to you.</p> <p>DX3_F: In the past 12 months for which of the following reasons you felt discriminated against in Bulgaria when being in contact with administrative offices or public services? List all that apply to you.</p> <p>DX2_G: When trying to enter a night club, a bar, a restaurant or hotel, using public transport, being in a shop or trying to enter a shop in the past 5 years in Bulgaria, have you ever felt discriminated against for any of the following reasons? List all that apply to you.</p> <p>DX3_G: In the past 12 months for which of the following reasons you felt discriminated against in Bulgaria when trying to enter a night club, a bar, a restaurant or hotel, using public transport, being in a shop or trying to enter a shop? List all that apply to you.</p> <p>For all above questions the following grounds: skin colour, ethnic or immigrant background / ethnic origin, religion or religious beliefs, sex, age, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, other reason</p>
Limitations in activities people usually do (I)	P4.3: In the past 6 or more months, have you been limited in performing normal activities due to a health problem?
Residence type - Rural/Urban (H)	Defined based on the Unified Classification of Administrative-Territorial and Territorial Units (UCATTU)
Household size (H)	D1: How many persons live in the household?
At-risk-of-poverty status (H)	<p>B20: What is the net monthly income of your household?</p> <p>B21: Maybe you could give approximate limits. Could you indicate which group shows the net monthly income of your household? (after deductions for taxes, insurances, etc.)</p>

"Joblessness intensity" at household level (H)	P1.1: How would you describe your current employment status? P1.5: During the past 4 weeks, have you done any work for a fee in cash or other income?
Presence of children in the household (H)	D4: Date of birth (if age smaller than 18 years a person is considered a child)
Highest degree of education completed in the household among HH members 24+ (H)	D12: Highest degree of education completed
Feeling safe (P6.3)	P6.3: Do you feel safe when you walk alone in the neighbourhood (settlement) where you live?
Feeling happy (6.2-1)	P6.2: How often in the last four weeks have you felt this way? - 1. You were happy
Feeling discouraged and depressed (6.2-3)	P6.2: How often in the last four weeks have you felt this way? - 3. You felt discouraged and depressed
Awareness of the anti-discrimination legislation (I)	RA05: As far as you are aware, is there a law in Bulgaria that forbids discrimination based on skin colour, ethnic origin or religion?
Awareness of the equality body (I)	RA06: Have you ever heard of the following organizations? - 1. The Commission for Protection against Discrimination; 2. The Ombudsman of Bulgaria

Annex 3: Descriptive statistics

1. Education	Share	Standard error	95% Confidence Interval		Design Effect	Unweighted Count
			Lower	Upper		
1.1. Share of children aged from 3 up to the age of starting compulsory primary education (6) who attend early childhood education and care	77.0%	1.5%	74.1%	79.8%	1.058	880
1.2. Share of people aged 18-24 years that have completed at most lower secondary education and are not involved in further education or training	15.5%	0.8%	13.9%	17.1%	.926	1845
1.3. Share of persons who felt discriminated against because of any ground in the past 12 months, when in contact with school authorities (as a parent/guardian or a student)	1.4%	0.2%	1.1%	1.7%	.929	4852

2. Employment	Share	Standard error	95% Confidence Interval		Design Effect	Unweighted Count
			Lower	Upper		
2.1. Share of people who self-declared their main activity status as 'paid work' (including full-time, part-time, ad hoc jobs, self-employment and occasional work or work in the past four weeks), 20-64 years	75.0%	0.3%	74.4%	75.7%	1.008	17308
2.2. Share of young persons, 15-29 years old with current main activity 'neither in employment, education or training' (NEET)	19.3%	0.6%	18.1%	20.5%	.989	4030
2.3. Share of the population who felt discriminated against because of any ground in the past 12 months, when looking for a job, 16+	17.2%	0.7%	15.8%	18.5%	0.92	2745

3. Poverty and social exclusion	Share	Standard error	95% Confidence Interval		Design Effect	Unweighted Count
			Lower	Upper		
3.1. At-risk-of-poverty rate (below 60% of median equivalised income after social transfers)	23.6%	0.2%	23.2%	24.1%	.932	30303
3.2. Share of persons living in household where one person in the household gone to bed hungry in the past month because there was not enough money for food	4.2%	.1%	3.9%	4.4%	1.052	1228
3.3. Share of people aged 16 years and more satisfied with their financial situation	39.4%	.3%	38.8%	40.0%	1.005	10769
3.4. Share of people feeling of being excluded from society	14.1%	.2%	13.7%	14.5%	1.006	3815

4. Health	Share	Standard error	95% Confidence Interval		Design Effect	Unweighted Count
			Lower	Upper		
4.1. Share of persons with self-reported long-standing limitations in usual activities due to health problems, respondents severely limited	3,6%	,1%	3,4%	3,8%	,980	,1007
limited but not severely	10,9%	,2%	10,6%	11,3%	,920	3243
not limited at all	85,5%	,2%	85,1%	85,9%	,937	21999
4.2. Share of the population aged 16 and over reporting unmet needs for medical care due to one of the following reasons: 'Financial reasons', 'Waiting list' and 'Too far to travel' (all three categories are cumulated)	3.1%	0.1%	2.9%	3.3%	1.016	26380
4.3. Share of people who felt discriminated against because of any ground in the past 12 months, when accessing health services, 16+	2.4%	0.1%	2.1%	2.6%	1.045	17988

5. Housing	Share	Standard error	95% Confidence Interval		Design Effect	Unweighted Count
			Lower	Upper		
5.1. Share of people living in housing deprivation (in an apartment too dark or leaking roof/damp walls, floors or no bath/shower or no indoor toilet)	18.7%	0.2%	18.3%	19.1%	.906	30303
5.2. Share of people living in households having neither flushing toilet, nor shower, nor bathroom inside the dwelling	8.7%	0.2%	8.4%	9.0%	.964	30303
5.3. Share of people living in household that does not have the minimum number of rooms according to the Eurostat definition of overcrowding	34.8%	0.3%	34.2%	35.3%	1.043	30303
5.4. Share of people who felt discriminated against because of any ground in the past 5 years, when looking for housing, 16	7.4%	0.8%	5.8%	9.1%	1.000	970

6. Discrimination, harassment and hate crime	Share	Standard error	95% Confidence Interval		Design Effect	Unweighted Count
			Lower	Upper		
6.1. Share of people who have felt discriminated against because of any ground in any of the areas covered in the survey in the past 12 months	5.0%	0.1%	4.7%	5.3%	1.070	25646

6.2. Share of people experiencing harassment (overall – 5 acts) because of any ground in the 12 months before the survey	3.2%	0.1%	3.0%	3.4%	1.063	26380
6.3. Share of people aged 16 years and more who were physically attacked (e.g., hit, pushed or kicked) because of any ground in the past 12 months	0.4%	0.0%	0.3%	0.5%	1.160	26380

7. Participation , building cooperation and trust	Share	Standard error	95% Confidence Interval		Design Effect	Unweighted Count
			Lower	Upper		
7.1. Share of people who felt discriminated against (in any area) in the past 12 months and reported the last incident of discrimination	11.4%	0.9%	9.6%	13.1%	0.995	1246
7.2. Share of persons who did not report the most recent incident of hate-motivated violence (of those experiencing hate-motivated violence)	86.2%	3.2%	79.8%	92.6%	0.834	97

Annex 4: Survey sampling frame

District	Population			Estimated number of households		
	Urban	Rural	Total	Urban	Rural	Total
Blagoevgrad	183,269	121,718	304,987	71,279	41,347	112,626
Burgas	314,330	96,673	411,003	132,605	37,666	170,271
Varna	396,717	75,812	472,529	155,597	25,973	181,570
Veliko Tarnovo	165,381	68,522	233,903	63,200	31,241	94,441
Vidin	54,361	29,458	83,819	23,230	15,637	38,867
Vratsa	94,753	66,417	161,170	38,706	27,904	66,610
Gabrovo	88,014	19,467	107,481	40,093	8,409	48,502
Dobrich	119,329	53,735	173,064	48,696	20,797	69,493
Kardzhali	63,918	94,247	158,165	22,154	33,131	55,285
Kyustendil	82,732	35,451	118,183	37,483	17,508	54,991
Lovech	77,761	45,790	123,551	34,303	20,707	55,010
Montana	82,344	45,860	128,204	31,692	22,036	53,728
Pazardzhik	159,901	94,780	254,681	64,840	35,252	100,092
Pernik	95,285	24,758	120,043	38,478	12,826	51,304
Pleven	159,189	78,919	238,108	62,116	34,457	96,573
Plovdiv	506,194	162,355	668,549	198,924	61,140	260,064
Razgrad	52,755	59,212	111,967	22,747	22,856	45,603
Ruse	169,580	47,360	216,940	76,845	20,683	97,528
Silistra	48,103	60,717	108,820	20,258	20,693	40,951
Sliven	121,958	63,566	185,524	52,461	24,660	77,121
Smolyan	58,820	45,558	104,378	24,250	20,965	45,215
Sofia	140,325	87,825	228,150	55,233	41,241	96,474
Sofia(capital)	1,273,202	58,860	1,332,062	574,679	21,173	595,852
Stara Zagora	228,538	87,405	315,943	96,895	37,362	134,257
Targovishte	60,390	51,303	111,693	23,109	18,994	42,103
Haskovo	164,002	63,278	227,280	71,089	29,243	100,332
Shumen	105,920	67,126	173,046	46,706	26,602	73,308

Yambol	83,649	34,558	118,207	36,226	14,551	50,777
Grand total	5,150,720	1,840,730	6,991,450	2,163,894	745,054	2,908,948

Annex 5: Survey sample

District	Clusters			Households		
	Urban	Rural	Total	Urban	Rural	Total
Blagoevgrad	63	37	100	378	222	600
Burgas	116	33	149	696	198	894
Varna	125	23	148	750	138	888
Veliko Tarnovo	56	28	84	336	168	504
Vidin	21	14	35	126	84	210
Vratsa	34	24	58	204	144	348
Gabrovo	35	8	43	210	48	258
Dobrich	43	19	62	258	114	372
Kardzhali	20	30	50	120	180	300
Kyustendil	33	15	48	198	90	288
Lovech	31	19	50	186	114	300
Montana	28	20	48	168	120	288
Pazardzhik	57	31	88	342	186	528
Pernik	34	11	45	204	66	270
Pleven	55	31	86	330	186	516
Plovdiv	160	54	214	960	324	1284
Razgrad	21	21	42	126	126	252
Ruse	68	18	86	408	108	516
Silistra	17	18	35	102	108	210
Sliven	46	22	68	276	132	408
Smolyan	22	19	41	132	114	246
Sofia	48	36	84	288	216	504
Sofia(capital)	461	19	480	2766	114	2880
Stara Zagora	86	33	119	516	198	714
Targovishte	21	17	38	126	102	228
Haskovo	62	26	88	372	156	528
Shumen	42	24	66	252	144	396
Yambol	32	13	45	192	78	270
Grand total	1837	663	2500	11022	3978	15000

Annex 6: Interviewed persons by self-declared ethnicity

District	Bulgarian	Turkish	Roma	Did not declare or did not wish to answer	Other	Total
Blagoevgrad	1237	11	59	6	54	1367
Burgas	1133	217	210	12	4	1576
Varna	1358	70	171	7	3	1609
Veliko Tarnovo	883	23	77	31	6	1020
Vidin	273	-	77	-	-	350
Vratsa	678	4	85	3	1	771
Gabrovo	415	4	-	1	3	423
Dobrich	640	71	86	-	2	799
Kardzhali	169	431	26	10	-	636
Kyustendil	530	1	83	3	-	617
Lovech	556	21	34	1	-	612
Montana	406	2	139	9	-	556
Pazardzhik	1185	30	45	11	2	1273
Pernik	517	-	33	16	-	566
Pleven	788	28	102	1	2	921
Plovdiv	2425	157	275	28	21	2906
Razgrad	188	305	76	13	2	584
Ruse	872	141	116	2	4	1135
Silistra	253	174	15	1	11	454
Sliven	589	35	148	1	2	775
Smolyan	413	45	-	5	39	502
Sofia	1099	-	63	2	2	1166
Sofia (capital)	5024	44	271	29	8	5376
Stara Zagora	1257	14	213	96	1	1581
Targovishte	168	219	22	3	3	415
Haskovo	892	83	132	5	3	1115
Shumen	370	237	79	1	1	688
Yambol	333	14	155	4	4	510
Grand Total	24651	2381	2792	301	178	30303

Annex 7: Interviewed persons by age

District	0-15		16-24		25-44		45-59		60+		Total count
	Count	Share	Count	Share	Count	Share	Count	Share	Count	Share	
Blagoevgrad	201	14.7%	91	6.7%	317	23.2%	319	23.3%	439	32.1%	1367
Burgas	217	13.8%	108	6.9%	359	22.8%	340	21.6%	552	35.0%	1576
Varna	208	12.9%	134	8.3%	376	23.4%	342	21.3%	549	34.1%	1609
Veliko Tarnovo	129	12.6%	78	7.6%	209	20.5%	191	18.7%	413	40.5%	1020
Vidin	43	12.3%	27	7.7%	62	17.7%	75	21.4%	143	40.9%	350
Vratsa	103	13.4%	69	8.9%	175	22.7%	186	24.1%	238	30.9%	771
Gabrovo	30	7.1%	26	6.1%	57	13.5%	101	23.9%	209	49.4%	423
Dobrich	104	13.0%	57	7.1%	164	20.5%	198	24.8%	276	34.5%	799
Kardzhali	65	10.2%	56	8.8%	141	22.2%	164	25.8%	210	33.0%	636
Kyustendil	69	11.2%	42	6.8%	133	21.6%	141	22.9%	232	37.6%	617
Lovech	63	10.3%	40	6.5%	121	19.8%	153	25.0%	235	38.4%	612
Montana	82	14.7%	46	8.3%	115	20.7%	115	20.7%	198	35.6%	556
Pazardzhik	147	11.5%	100	7.9%	296	23.3%	294	23.1%	436	34.2%	1273
Pernik	46	8.1%	35	6.2%	129	22.8%	134	23.7%	222	39.2%	566
Pleven	101	11.0%	58	6.3%	167	18.1%	208	22.6%	387	42.0%	921
Plovdiv	386	13.3%	234	8.1%	667	23.0%	663	22.8%	956	32.9%	2906
Razgrad	78	13.4%	56	9.6%	112	19.2%	133	22.8%	205	35.1%	584
Ruse	155	13.7%	72	6.3%	264	23.3%	274	24.1%	370	32.6%	1135
Silistra	48	10.6%	35	7.7%	96	21.1%	105	23.1%	170	37.4%	454
Sliven	121	15.6%	64	8.3%	157	20.3%	151	19.5%	282	36.4%	775
Smolyan	54	10.8%	33	6.6%	103	20.5%	122	24.3%	190	37.8%	502
Sofia	126	10.8%	87	7.5%	271	23.2%	267	22.9%	415	35.6%	1166
Sofia (capital)	769	14.3%	505	9.4%	1444	26.9%	1166	21.7%	1492	27.8%	5376
Stara Zagora	245	15.5%	140	8.9%	370	23.4%	311	19.7%	515	32.6%	1581
Targovishte	45	10.8%	29	7.0%	85	20.5%	119	28.7%	137	33.0%	415
Haskovo	118	10.6%	89	8.0%	264	23.7%	241	21.6%	403	36.1%	1115
Shumen	87	12.6%	54	7.8%	144	20.9%	169	24.6%	234	34.0%	688
Yambol	83	16.3%	48	9.4%	113	22.2%	85	16.7%	181	35.5%	510
Grand Total	3923	12.9%	2413	8.0%	6911	22.8%	6767	22.3%	10289	34.0%	30303

Annex 8: Interviewed persons by sex

District	Women		Men		Total
	Count	Share	Count	Share	
Blagoevgrad	710	52%	657	48%	1367
Burgas	827	52%	749	48%	1576
Varna	843	52%	766	48%	1609
Veliko Tarnovo	530	52%	490	48%	1020
Vidin	183	52%	167	48%	350
Vratsa	388	50%	383	50%	771
Gabrovo	236	56%	187	44%	423
Dobrich	413	52%	386	48%	799
Kardzhali	322	51%	314	49%	636
Kyustendil	319	52%	298	48%	617
Lovech	314	51%	298	49%	612
Montana	294	53%	262	47%	556
Pazardzhik	657	52%	616	48%	1273
Pernik	297	52%	269	48%	566
Pleven	489	53%	432	47%	921
Plovdiv	1539	53%	1367	47%	2906
Razgrad	299	51%	285	49%	584
Ruse	575	51%	560	49%	1135
Silistra	233	51%	221	49%	454
Sliven	413	53%	362	47%	775
Smolyan	260	52%	242	48%	502
Sofia	613	53%	553	47%	1166
Sofia (capital)	2815	52%	2561	48%	5376
Stara Zagora	803	51%	778	49%	1581
Targovishte	211	51%	204	49%	415
Haskovo	564	51%	551	49%	1115
Shumen	345	50%	343	50%	688
Yambol	280	55%	230	45%	510
Grand Total	15772	52%	14531	48%	30303