Key social inclusion and fundamental rights indicators in Bulgaria

Overview of SDG indicators for Bulgaria

Authors: Dimitar Markov, Catherine Riachi, Anne Leach

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Introduction

This report follows the series of five thematic reports,[1] developed as part of 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 is funded by the European Economic Area Financial Mechanism 2014–2021 under the programme 'Local development, poverty reduction and enhanced inclusion of vulnerable groups', and is implemented in partnership between the National Statistical Institute of Bulgaria (BNSI) (*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.

These data are intended to be used to inform the planning of appropriate social policy measures and the development of target indicators for the operational programmes of the European Structural and Investment Funds. Moreover, the indicators populated with data from a survey conducted by the BNSI can serve as a baseline for assessment of progress in important policy areas, such as the UN Sustainable Development Goals, the European Pillar of Social Rights and the new EU Roma strategic framework for equality, inclusion and participation. Other Member States facing similar social and economic challenges may also benefit from the outputs of the project and the experience gained during it.[2]

The BNSI conducted a nationally representative survey of households between 19 May 2020 and 17 September 2020. During the previous stage of the project, the analysis of the survey results specifically focused on the four groups identified as being at high risk of poverty, social exclusion and violation of fundamental rights: the Roma community (people who self-identify as Roma), children (people below the age of 18 years), older people (people aged 65 years and over), and people with disabilities (people who answered that they had been limited or severely limited in the activities they usually do in the past 6 months owing to health problems).

The purpose of this thematic report is to present, based on the data from the survey, the situation in the thematic areas of SDGs that are relevant for household-level analysis, using the SDG indicators that can be populated with data from the survey.

Each chapter analyses the situation of the particular vulnerable group, reflected in the respective SDG indicator, with reference to the corresponding policy framework. The analysis also offers, to the extent possible, an estimate of the gap between the respective group and the national average – as well as an estimate of the rate of improvement necessary for closing the gap by 2030.

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[1] The five thematic reports are on the situation of Roma, children, older people and people with disabilities, and a general report on the key social inclusion and fundamental rights indicators in Bulgaria.
[2] For more information, see the project's [website](#).

1. Good health and well-being

1.1. Goal

The third Sustainable Development Goal is to **ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages**. This goal is directed towards ensuring general well-being, with a focus on achieving universal access to healthcare in order to protect the well-being of all populations.

The goal has 13 targets and 28 indicators to measure progress. The nine outcome targets are reduction of the global maternal mortality ratio to less than 70 per 100,000 live births; ending preventable deaths of newborns and children under 5 years of age; ending the epidemics of AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria and other communicable diseases; reducing by one-third of premature mortality from non-communicable diseases through prevention and treatment and promote mental health and well-being; strengthened prevention and treatment of substance abuse; reduction by half of the number of global deaths and injuries from road traffic accidents; ensuring universal access to sexual and reproductive health-care services; achievement of universal health coverage and substantial reduction of the number of deaths and illnesses from hazardous chemicals and air, water and soil pollution and contamination. The four targets related to means of achieving the goal are strengthening the implementation of the World Health Organisation Framework Convention on Tobacco Control in all countries; supporting the research and development of vaccines and medicines for the communicable and non-communicable diseases that primarily affect developing countries and providing access to affordable essential medicines and vaccines; substantially increasing health financing and the recruitment, development, training and retention of the health workforce in developing countries and strengthening the capacity of all countries for early warning, risk reduction and management of national and global health risks.[1]

1.2. National policy framework

Bulgaria's main strategies regarding the improvement of health services and overall community wellbeing are outlined in the National Health Strategy 2021-2030 (*Национална здравна стратегия 2021-2030*), which has been developed by the Ministry of Health (MH) (*Министерство на здравеопазването*, МЗ) but is still pending adoption by the government.[2] The priorities set out in this strategy are formulated in accordance with several regional and international policy frameworks, such as the UN Sustainable Development targets for health and wellbeing, the WHO's global framework for the prevention and control of chronic non-communicable diseases, the WHO's Framework Convention on Tobacco Control and other national strategies for the improvement of access to healthcare for vulnerable populations and risk groups. The national health strategy focuses on ameliorating the demographic crisis, by ensuring equal access to public healthcare and welfare services to all people, regardless of age, gender, sexual orientation, race, disability and territorial distribution. The document targets several policies, such as the development of human resources through improving education and labour standards, ensuring the financial capacity of the public health system and highlighting the development of prophylactic and rehabilitation services through an emphasis on chronic non-communicable diseases. The framework also focuses on the disparities of health services amongst socio-economic groups and regions in Bulgaria, with the aim to improve access to healthcare and professional services.

Policies for the improvement of the wellbeing and overall mental health of the population are set out in the National Strategy for the Mental Health of the Citizens of the Republic of Bulgaria 2021-2030 (*Национална стратегия за психичното здраве на гражданите на Република България 2021-*

2030).[3] The document contains information about the identification of common mental health disabilities and issues, as well as an assessment of the current state of the psychiatric health system and information available to patients and financing of the strategy through the national and EU budgets. The framework also lists some of the key challenges for the implementation of efficient mental health and wellbeing services, such as the lack of proper funding for public services, inefficient mental diagnosis of children and highly-bureaucratic procedures, which impede the functioning of urgent care for patients with mental health issues and disabilities.

Although the aforementioned national strategies for physical and mental health provide an inclusive assessment of the healthcare commitments of Bulgaria until 2030, there are other policy documents which outline more specific strategies for targeted diseases and the prevention of life-threatening practices. Some instances of such documents are the National Programme for the Prevention of Chronic Non-Communicable Diseases 2021-2025 (*Национална програма за превенция на хроничните незаразни болести 2021-2025*),[4] the National Programme for the Prevention and Control of Tuberculosis in the Republic of Bulgaria 2021-2025 (*Национална програма за превенция и контрол на туберкулозата в Република България за периода 2021-2025 година*)[5] and others.

1.3.   Commitments

With regards to the Draft National Health Strategy 2021-2030, the Ministry of Health (MH) (*Министерство на здравеопазването*, МЗ) has committed to the implementation of several policies within each of the six main priorities. For instance, within the first priority listed as "Sustainable development and strengthening of the public health protection system", some commitments include the improvement of the availability of information regarding health risk factors, ensuring access to public services for marginalised social groups and multi-sector cooperation with companies and organisations involved with food production and advertisement to ensure healthier options available to children and young adults. Regarding the second priority called "Improving the quality, efficiency and control of medical services", the Ministry of Health (MH) (*Министерство на здравеопазването*, МЗ) has committed to the improvement of regional imbalances in health services, the restructuring of hospitals through substitution with newer equipment and the optimisation of monitoring and control with regards to the implementation of the public budget. Regarding Bulgaria's commitments under the National Strategy for the Mental Health of the Citizens of the Republic of Bulgaria, by 2030 the country aims to increase the number of stationary psychiatric beds in every region to between 50 and 75, as well as to introduce effective rehabilitation services and educate medical professionals and first-line practitioners for the prevention and treatment of depression, anxiety, and alcohol and drug addiction.

1.4.   Progress towards the targets

The BNSI/FRA survey provides data for assessing Bulgaria's progress towards achieving one of the targets under SDG3, namely to support the research and development of vaccines and medicines for the communicable and non‑communicable diseases that primarily affect developing countries, provide access to affordable essential medicines and vaccines, in accordance with the Doha Declaration on the TRIPS Agreement and Public Health, which affirms the right of developing countries to use to the full the provisions in the Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights regarding flexibilities to protect public health, and, in particular, provide access to medicines for all (Target 3.b).

In relation to this target, the survey provides data on the proportion of children aged 0-2 years covered by all vaccines included in their national programme (Figure 1).

According to the UN, this indicator aims to measure access to vaccines, including the newly available or underutilised vaccines, at the national level. In the past decades, all countries added numerous new and underutilised vaccines to their national immunisation schedule and there are several vaccines under the final stage of development to be introduced by 2030. For monitoring diseases, control and impact of vaccines, it is important to measure coverage from each vaccine in the national immunisation schedule.[6]

According to the survey results, immunisation coverage of children aged 0-2 years is relatively high (97.5 %). It is slightly lower among boys (96.3 %) than girls (98.8 %) and is almost the same among children living in urban and rural areas. The lowest share of children not covered by all vaccines is among those self-identifying as Roma (90.7 %).

Figure 1: Proportion of the target population (children aged 0-2 years) covered by all vaccines included in their national programme, by sex, self-declared ethnicity and type of residence (%)
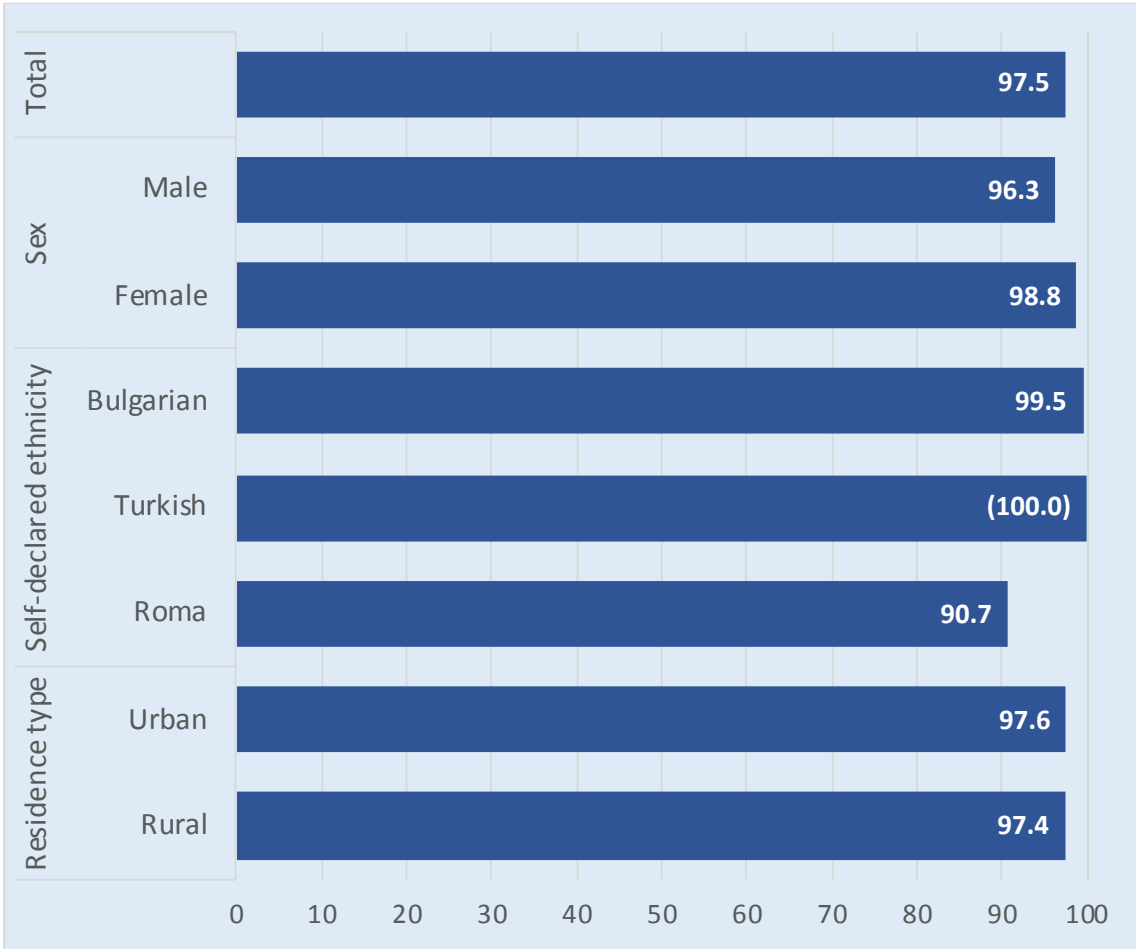
Notes: [a] *Out of all children aged 0-2 years (n = 533); weighted results.*

[b] *Corresponds to SDG indicator 3.b.1.*

[c] *Based on the question "Does (child's name) get all required immunisations for his/her age?" filled in by the respondent for all children in the household aged 0-2 years.*

[d] *The remainder of the 100 % excludes non-responses to the underlying questions.*

[e] *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 – or based on less than 20 individual cell count – are flagged (the value is published in brackets). Results based on fewer than 20 unweighted observations in a group total are not published.*

Source: *BNSI/FRA survey 2020*

There is no available data on the proportion of children aged 0-2 years covered by all vaccines included in their national programme for other years, which prevents the assessment of the progress made by Bulgaria since 2016. The available data in other sources such as Monitorstat and the SDG Indicators Database shows the proportion of the target population with access to specific vaccines such as measles-containing-vaccine second-dose (MCV2), pneumococcal conjugate 3rd dose (PCV3), and three doses of diphtheria-tetanus-pertussis (DTP3).

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[1] United Nations (UN), Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on Work of the Statistical Commission pertaining to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/71/313), 6 July 2017.

[2] Bulgaria, Ministry of Health (*Министерство на здравеопазването*) (2020), Draft National Health Strategy 2021-2030 (*Проект за национална здравна стратегия 2021-2030*), 30 December 2020.

[3] Bulgaria, Council of Ministers (*Министерски съвет*) (2021), National Strategy for the Mental Health of the Citizens of the Republic of Bulgaria 2021-2030 (*Национална стратегия за психичното здраве на гражданите на Република България 2021-2030*), 23 April 2021.

[4] Bulgaria, Ministry of Health (*Министерство на здравеопазването*) (2021), National Programme for the Prevention of Chronic Non-Communicable Diseases 2021-2025 (*Национална програма за превенция на хроничните незаразни болести 2021-2025*), 9 August 2021.

[5] Bulgaria, Ministry of Health (*Министерство на здравеопазването*) (2021), National Programme for the Prevention and Control of Tuberculosis in the Republic of Bulgaria 2021-2025 (*Национална програма за превенция и контрол на туберкулозата в Република България за периода 2021-2025 година*), 9 August 2021.

[6] United Nations (UN), SDG Indicators Metadata, 31 July 2022.

2. Quality education

2.1. Goal

The fourth Sustainable Development Goal is to **ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all**. The focus of this goal centres around access to quality education, with an acknowledgement of the role of education in employment outcomes as well as in the promotion of sustainable development and lifestyle. Further, the goal aims to ensure developing states and countries, as well as vulnerable populations everywhere, receive access to quality education.

The goal has ten targets and 12 indicators to measure progress. The seven outcome targets are ensuring that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes; ensuring that all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education so that they are ready for primary education; ensuring equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education; a substantial increase of the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship; elimination of gender disparities in education and ensuring equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable; ensuring that all youth and a substantial proportion of adults, both men and women, achieve literacy and numeracy and ensuring that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development. The three targets related to means of achieving the goal are building and upgrading education facilities that are child, disability and gender sensitive and provide safe, non-violent, inclusive and effective learning environments for all; substantially expanding globally the number of scholarships available to developing countries for enrolment in higher education and substantially increasing the supply of qualified teachers.[1]

2.2. National policy framework

Some of the national policy frameworks pertaining to the SDG of quality education in Bulgaria are drafted in the Strategy for the Development of Higher Education in the Republic of Bulgaria 2021-2030 (*Стратегия за развитие на висшето образование в Република България за периода 2021-2030*).[2] The document contains an analysis of the current system of higher education, along with a reflection on the 2014-2020 strategy, its outcomes and drawbacks. The strategy outlines some of the external and internal factors that challenge the development of education, such as the accelerating labour market dynamics, the digitalisation of education and the ageing demographics of the country. The framework sets ten priorities for higher education, some of which are: the development of a sustainable mechanism for the modernisation of existing and new curricula; the implementation of modern, flexible and effective methods of education; the development of the organisation and effectiveness of higher education; the internationalisation of higher education; and stimulating the participation of young teachers.

Bulgaria has also adopted a Strategic Framework for the Development of Education, Teaching and Learning in the Republic of Bulgaria 2021-2030 (*Стратегическа рамка за развитие на образованието, обучението и ученето в Република България 2021-2030*),[3] which covers all aspects of education – from early childhood development to employment. This framework focuses on nine priorities, some of which are the development of competencies and talents, focus on creativity within teaching and training, the collaboration between education institutions and parents, as well as innovation, digital transformation and sustainable development of education.

2.3.   Commitments

Some of the commitments outlined in the above strategies include the introduction of artificial intelligence (AI) and virtual reality (VR) methods of learning and training, in order to enhance the digitalisation and development of education, supporting the extra-professional guidance of students through the creation of a national network of career centres, the organisation of inter-university national and international conferences and seminars, as well as the preparation of open-access MOOCs. Other commitments regarding the quality of education include the stimulation of research activity in higher education institutions through the gradual increase in subsidy for research practices to reach 40 % of the total funding of the research fields. Regarding early childhood and primary education, by 2030, Bulgaria has committed to ensure that all girls and boys should complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes. Some other instances of commitments by 2030 include a target of 80 % of graduates in employment between one and three years after graduation, as well as a target of 32 % of the total education staff under the age of 35.

2.4.   Progress towards the targets

The BNSI/FRA survey provides data for assessing Bulgaria's progress towards achieving one of the targets under SDG4, namely to ensure that all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care and pre‑ primary education so that they are ready for primary education (Target 4.2).

In relation to this target, the survey provides data for the proportion of children aged 24–59 months who are developmentally on track in health, learning and psychosocial well-being (Figure 2 and Figure 3).

According to the UN, early childhood development (ECD) sets the stage for life-long thriving. Investing in ECD is one of the most critical and cost-effective investments a country can make to improve adult health, education and productivity in order to build human capital and promote sustainable development. ECD is equity from the start and provides a good indication of national development. Efforts to improve ECD can bring about human, social and economic improvements for both individuals and societies.[4]

The survey results show that in Bulgaria the majority of children aged 3 and 4 years (98.6 %) are on track in their early childhood development with no notable differences based on age and sex. However, broken down by domains, the survey results show considerable differences. While the proportion of children who are developmentally on track is close to 100 % in the approaches to learning domain (99,3 %), the social-emotional domain (99,5 %) and the physical domain (98,5 %), it is considerably lower in the literacy/numeracy domain (56 %).

Figure 2: Proportion of children aged 24–59 months who are developmentally on track in health, learning and psychosocial well-being, by age and sex (%)

Notes: [a] Out of all children aged 3-4 years (n = 419); weighted results.

[b] Corresponds to SDG indicator 4.2.1.

[c] The Early Childhood Development Indicator (ECDI) is used to determine whether children are developmentally on track in four domains. (1) Literacy/numeracy: developmentally on track if at least two of the following are true: can identify/name at least 10 letters of the alphabet/can read at least four simple, popular words/knows the name and recognises the symbol of all numbers from 1 to 10. (2) Physical: developmentally on track if one or both of the following are true: can pick up a small object, such as a stick or a rock, with two fingers from the ground/is not sometimes too sick to play. (3) Social/emotional: developmentally on track if one or both of the following are true: gets along well with other children/does not kick, bite or hit other children. (4) Approaches to learning: developmentally on track if one or both of the following are true: follows simple directions on how to do something correctly/when given something to do, is able to do it independently. This is different to the UNICEF Early Childhood Development Index, as the question about distraction is not included in the survey.

Source: BNSI/FRA survey 2020

The survey results show no notable differences in the early childhood development of children from different ethnic groups as well as of children living in urban and rural areas.

Figure 3: Proportion of children aged 24–59 months who are developmentally on track in health, learning and psychosocial well-being, by self-declared ethnicity and type of residence (%)

Notes: ^a *Out of all children aged 3-4 years (n = 419); weighted results.*

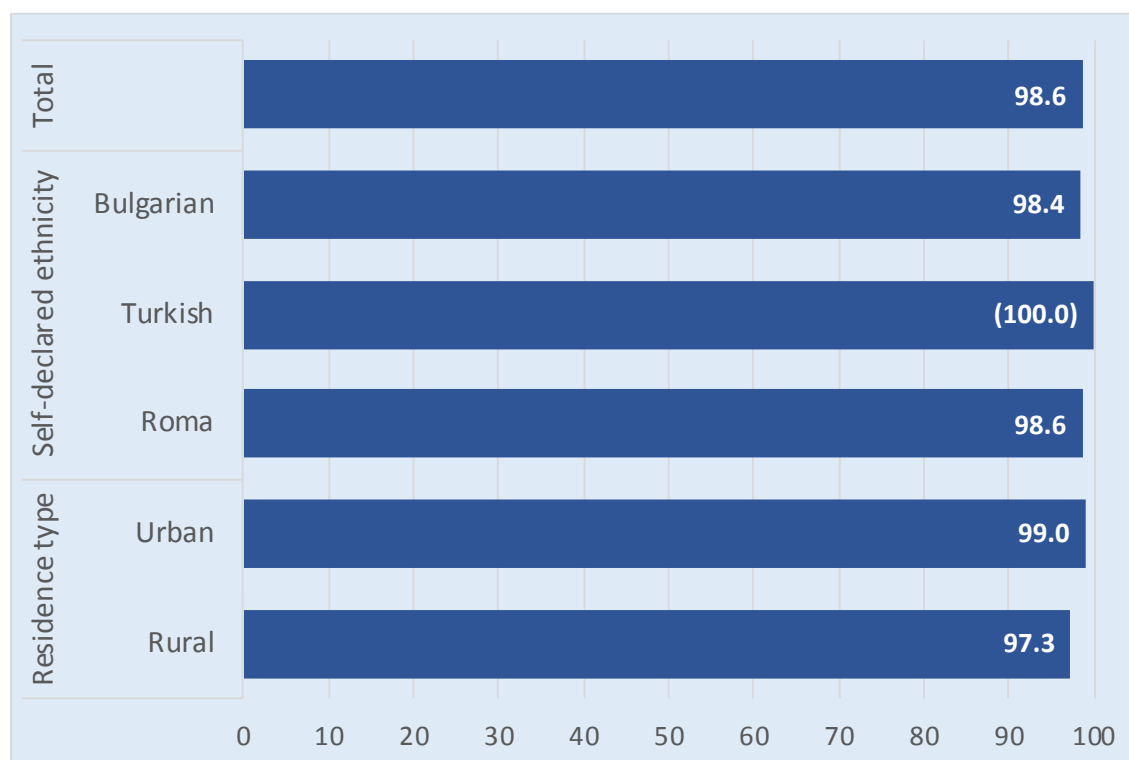^b *Corresponds to SDG indicator 4.2.1.*

^c *The Early Childhood Development Indicator (ECDI) is used to determine whether children are developmentally on track in four domains. (1) Literacy/numeracy: developmentally on track if at least two of the following are true: can identify/name at least 10 letters of the alphabet/can read at least four simple, popular words/knows the name and recognises the symbol of all numbers from 1 to 10. (2) Physical: developmentally on track if one or both of the following are true: can pick up a small object, such as a stick or a rock, with two fingers from the ground/is not sometimes too sick to play. (3) Social/emotional: developmentally on track if one or both of the following are true: gets along well with other children/does not kick, bite or hit other children. (4) Approaches to learning: developmentally on track if one or both of the following are true: follows simple directions on how to do something correctly/when given something to do, is able to do it independently. This is different to the UNICEF Early Childhood Development Index, as the question about distraction is not included in the survey.*

^d *The remainder of the 100 % includes non-responses to the underlying questions.*

^e *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 – or based on less than 20 individual cell count – are flagged (the value is published in brackets). Results based on fewer than 20 unweighted observations in a group total are not published.*

Source: BNSI/FRA survey 2020

The lack of data on early childhood development for 2016 prevents the assessment of the actual progress toward the target. Considering that the target is defined as ensuring that "all girls and boys" have access to quality early childhood development, it is expected that the proportion of children who are developmentally on track, including in each of the four domains, should be close to 100 % by 2030.

[1] United Nations (UN), Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on Work of the Statistical Commission pertaining to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/71/313), 6 July 2017.

[2] Bulgaria, National Assembly (*Народно събрание*), Strategy for the Development of Higher Education in the Republic of Bulgaria 2021-2030 (*Стратегия за развитие на висшето образование в Република България за периода 2021-2030*), 8 January 2021.

[3] Bulgaria, Council of Ministers (*Министерски съвет*), Strategic Framework for the Development of Education, Teaching and Learning in the Republic of Bulgaria 2021-2030 (*Стратегическа рамка за развитие на образованието, обучението и ученето в Република България 2021-2030*), 24 February 2021.

[4] United Nations (UN), SDG Indicators Metadata, 31 July 2022.

3.   Gender equality

3.1.   Goal

The fifth Sustainable Development Goal is to **achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls**. The objective of this goal is to eliminate discrimination on the basis of gender while taking action against practices that harm women and children and dismantling the systemic devaluation of women's labour. In addition, the goal aims to empower women by ensuring access to sexual and reproductive healthcare and providing equal leadership opportunities.

The goal has nine targets and 14 indicators to measure progress. The six outcome targets are ending all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere; elimination of all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres; elimination of all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation; recognition of and valuation of unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies and the promotion of shared responsibility within the household and the family; ensuring women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life and ensuring universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights as agreed in accordance with the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and Beijing Platform for Action. The three targets related to means of achieving the goal are undertaking reforms to give women equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to ownership and control over land and other forms of property, financial services, inheritance and natural resources; enhancing the use of enabling technology to promote the empowerment of women and adopting and strengthening sound policies and enforceable legislation for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls at all levels.[1]

3.2.   National policy framework

The National Strategy for the Promotion of the Equality of Women and Men 2021-2030 (*Национална стратегия за насърчаването на равнопоставеността на жените и мъжете 2021-2030*)[2] is an "expression of the political engagement of the Bulgarian government for ensuring conditions of equal opportunity and promoting the equality between men and women in different aspects of life". The policy framework considers five key priorities: equality between women and men in the labour market and equal degree of economic independence; reducing the gender pay gap; promotion of gender equality in decision-making processes; combatting gender-based violence and protection of victims; and overcoming gender stereotypes and sexism in different areas of public life. This framework assesses the current conditions for gender equality in Bulgaria and offers guidance for the implementation of the strategy, whilst also outlining the key challenges in the implementation of gender equality policies. Some of the main policies include the introduction of more flexible forms of employment, overcoming the vertical and horizontal gender segregation in the labour market, achieving equality in domestic labour and caring responsibilities, and increasing the capacity of women to engage in independent economic activities, such as start-up businesses and entrepreneurship. The national policy framework also focuses on the combatting of gender-based violence through increasing the access of victims to support services, strengthening the capacity, qualification and competencies of institutions, responsible for prevention and combating violence and victim support.

3.3.   Commitments

The key commitments specified within the aforementioned policy framework are divided under each priority area. Some commitments for the first priority include promoting gender equality among economic sectors, and a focus on balancing production and social reproduction, with the latter including caring for children, the elderly and vulnerable people. Some of the commitments within the second priority include increasing gender equality for education and qualification opportunities, as well as minimising gender disparities with regard to wages and pensions. Regarding decision-making, the strategy commits to implementing systemic measures for improving the balance between genders in the decision and policy-making processes in both the public and private sectors. Within the gender-based violence priority, a commitment is made to ensure the accessibility and quality of support services for victims of domestic and gender-based violence, including human trafficking and exploitation. Other key commitments include combatting discriminatory practices, through an analysis of cases of discrimination in collaboration with the Commission for Protection against Discrimination (CPD) (*Комисия за защита от дискриминация*, КЗД).

3.4.   Progress towards the targets

The BNSI/FRA survey provides data for assessing Bulgaria's progress towards achieving one of the targets under SDG5, namely to eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation (Target 5.3).

In relation to this target, the survey provides reliable data only for the proportion of women aged 20-24 who were married or in a union before the age of 18 years (Figure 4). The small number of observations does not allow for a reliable estimation of the proportion of women who got married before the age of 15 years.

According to the UN, the rationale behind this indicator is that marriage before the age of 18 is a fundamental violation of human rights. Child marriage often compromises a girl's development by resulting in early pregnancy and social isolation, interrupting her schooling, limiting her opportunities for career and vocational advancement and placing her at increased risk of intimate partner violence. In many cultures, girls reaching puberty are expected to assume gender roles associated with womanhood. These include entering a union and becoming a mother. The practice of early/child marriage is a direct manifestation of gender inequality.[3]

As evident from the results, in Bulgaria, the practice of women getting married before turning 18 years is relatively widespread. More than 15 % of all women aged 20-24 years were married or in a union as children (under 18 years of age). In almost all of these cases, the women got married after they have turned 15 years. The risk of getting married before 18 is much higher for women who self-identify as Roma (40.3 %) and women living in rural areas (28.5 %).

Figure 4: Proportion of women aged 20–24 years who were married or in a union before age 18, by self-declared ethnicity, type of residence and limitations (%)
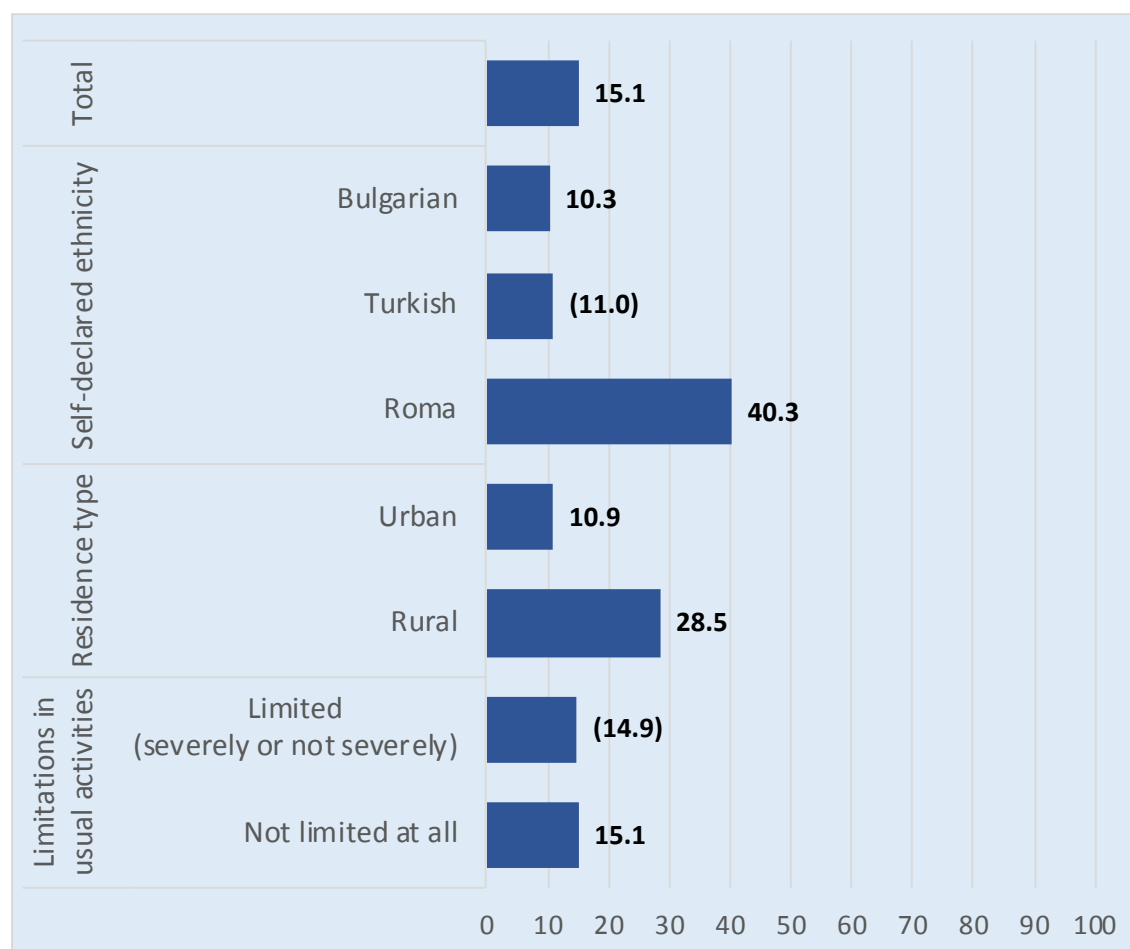
Notes: ª *Out of all women in the surveyed household aged 20–24 years (n = 629); weighted results.*
   ᵇ *Corresponds to SDG indicator 5.3.1.*
   ᶜ *Results based on a small number of responses are statistically less reliable. Thus, results based on 20 to 49 unweighted observations in a group total – or based on less than 20 individual cell count – are flagged (the value is published in brackets). Results based on fewer than 20 unweighted observations in a group total are not published.*
Source: *BNSI/FRA survey 2020*

The lack of data on early marriages for 2016 prevents the assessment of the actual progress toward the target. However, considering that the target is defined as the "elimination" of child and early marriages, it is expected that the proportion of women getting married before the age of 18 years, which is currently estimated at about 15 %, should go down to zero by 2030.

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[1] United Nations (UN), Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on Work of the Statistical Commission pertaining to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/71/313), 6 July 2017.

[2] Bulgaria, Council of Ministers (*Министерски съвет*), National Strategy for the Promotion of the Equality of Women and Men 2021-2030 (*Национална стратегия за насърчаването на равнопоставеността на жените и мъжете 2021-2030*), 30 December 2020.

[3] United Nations (UN), SDG Indicators Metadata, 31 July 2022.

4. Affordable and clean energy

4.1. Goal

The seventh Sustainable Development Goal is to **ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all**. This goal targets inequalities of access to clean energy, striving to ensure not only the further innovation of renewable energy sources but also that these modern energy services are accessible to all.

The goal has five targets and six indicators to measure progress. The three outcome targets are ensuring universal access to affordable, reliable and modern energy services; a substantial increase in the share of renewable energy in the global energy mix; and doubled global rate of improvement in energy efficiency. The two targets related to means of achieving the goal are enhancing international cooperation to facilitate access to clean energy research and technology and promoting investment in energy infrastructure and clean energy technology and expanding infrastructure and upgrading technology to supply modern and sustainable energy services for all in developing countries.[1]

4.2. National policy framework

The national policy framework which encompasses the seventh UN Sustainable Development Goal is the Draft Strategy for the Sustainable Energy Development of the Republic of Bulgaria 2030 with a Horizon Until 2050 (*Проект за Стратегия за устойчиво енергийно развитие на Република България до 2030 година с хоризонт до 2050 година*) developed and submitted to the parliament by the Ministry of Energy (ME) (*Министерство на енергетиката* ME) but not adopted yet.[2] The framework is designed around the implementation of five key priorities by 2030: ensuring energy security and sustainable energy development; the development of an integrated and competitive energy market and the protection of consumers through ensuring transparent, competitive and non-discriminatory conditions for accessing energy services; increasing energy efficiency in the initial processes of production to final energy consumption; sustainable energy development for clean energy and the decarbonisation of the economy; implementation of innovative technologies for sustainable energy development. The document contains an assessment of the energy market security, as well as the consumerism trends and energy forecasts for 2030. The national strategy emphasises the need for regional and international cooperation to ensure energy security, sustainability and affordability.

4.3. Commitments

Some of the commitments that Bulgaria has set out in its national strategy are the following: the reduction of its primary energy consumption compared to the primary baseline forecast PRIMES 2007 (27.89 %); the reduction of its final energy consumption compared to the primary baseline forecast PRIMES 2007 (31.67 %); 27.09 % share of renewable energy from the gross final energy consumption, etc. There are several key commitments listed for the heat supply sector, some of which are: stimulating the construction of local district heating and cooling systems in populated areas, as well as the use of microaggregates for combined energy production installed in residential buildings; continuing the process of reducing transmission losses and the distribution of thermal energy among other commitments. The main outcome of the commitments in the national policy framework are centred around two key long-term goals: the liberalisation of the electric energy and natural gas markets and its integration to the European Energy Market, as well as strengthening the protection of consumers in the development of the competitive market and the effective functioning of the energy systems.

4.4. Progress towards the targets

The BNSI/FRA survey provides data for assessing Bulgaria's progress towards achieving one of the targets under SDG7, namely to ensure universal access to affordable, reliable and modern energy services (Target 7.1).

In relation to the target of ensuring universal access to affordable, reliable and modern energy services, the survey provides reliable data for the proportion of the population with access to electricity (Figure 5).

According to the UN, access to electricity addresses major critical issues in all dimensions of sustainable development. The target has a wide range of social and economic impacts, including facilitating the development of income-generating activities and lightening the burden of household tasks. Under the global target of equal access to energy, this indicator focuses specifically on electricity access available to the global population. In order to gain a clear picture, access rates are only considered if the primary source of lighting is the local electricity provider, solar systems, mini-grids and stand-alone systems. Sources such as generators, candles, batteries, etc., are not considered due to their limited working capacities and since they are usually kept as backup sources for lighting.[3]

In Bulgaria, already in 2016, the proportion of the population with access to electricity was 100 %.[4] According to the survey results, however, in 2020 this proportion went down to 99.5 %. This trend puts Bulgaria away from achieving the target, which, considering the wording "universal access", means that the proportion of the population with access to electricity should get back to 100 % by 2030. According to the survey results, the proportion of the population with access to electricity is less than 100 % in half of the districts in the country, including the capital city Sofia.

In terms of socio-demographic characteristics, the Roma population stands out as the group with the lowest share of people with access to electricity (98.3 %). Other characteristics such as sex, age, type of residence and limitations in usual activities do not seem to be important factors leading to a higher risk of no access to electricity.

Figure 5: Proportion of population with access to electricity, by sex, self-declared ethnicity, type of residence, age and limitations (%)
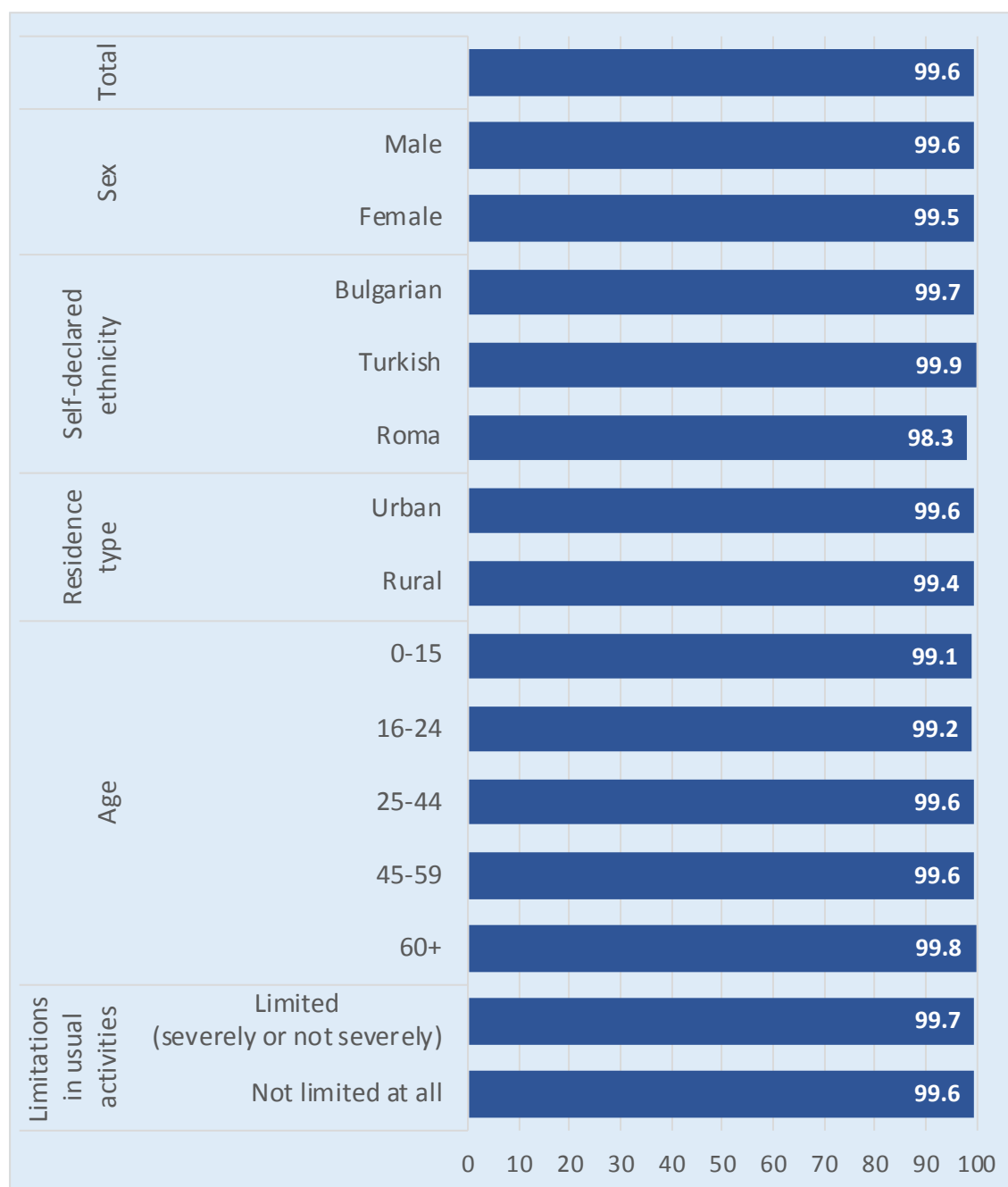
Category	Group	Value
Total		99.6
Sex	Male	99.6
	Female	99.5
Self-declared ethnicity	Bulgarian	99.7
	Turkish	99.9
	Roma	98.3
Residence type	Urban	99.6
	Rural	99.4
Age	0-15	99.1
	16-24	99.2
	25-44	99.6
	45-59	99.6
	60+	99.8
Limitations in usual activities	Limited (severely or not severely)	99.7
	Not limited at all	99.6

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

b Corresponds to SDG indicator 7.1.1.

c Based on the question "Is there electricity in the dwelling?".

d The remainder of the 100 % includes non-responses to the underlying questions.

Source: *BNSI/FRA survey 2020*

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[1] United Nations (UN), Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on Work of the Statistical Commission pertaining to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/71/313), 6 July 2017.

[2] Bulgaria, Ministry of Energy (*Министерство на енергетиката*) (2021), Strategy for the Sustainable Energy Development of the Republic of Bulgaria 2030 with a Horizon Until 2050 (*Стратегия за устойчиво енергийно развитие на Република България до 2030 година с хоризонт до 2050 година*), 10 February 2021.

[3] United Nations (UN), SDG Indicators Metadata, 31 July 2022.

[4] Bulgaria, National Statistical Institute (*Национален статистически институт*), Sustainable development goals 2030 (Global Indicator Framework), Monitorstat: Information system for monitoring European and national strategies and regional policy, 31 July 2022.

5. Decent work and economic growth

5.1. Goal

The eighth Sustainable Development Goal is to **promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all.** This goal strives toward the improvement of economic situations both at a national and individual level, by ensuring productive and equitable employment for all adults while ending harmful and unproductive economic practices. Additionally, the intention of this goal includes support for those in precarious employment, as well as those with limited access to financial services.

The goal has 12 targets and 16 indicators to measure progress. The ten outcome targets are sustainment of per capita economic growth in accordance with national circumstances; achievement of higher levels of economic productivity through diversification, technological upgrading and innovation; promotion of development-oriented policies that support productive activities, decent job creation, entrepreneurship, creativity and innovation, and encouragement of the formalisation and growth of micro-, small- and medium-sized enterprises; progressive improvement of global resource efficiency in consumption and production and endeavoured decoupling of economic growth from environmental degradation; achievement of full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men and equal pay for work of equal value; substantial reduction of the proportion of youth not in employment, education or training; immediate and effective measures taken to eradicate forced labour, end modern slavery and human trafficking and secure the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labour; protection of labour rights and promotion of safe and secure working environments for all workers; devising and implementation of policies that promote sustainable tourism that creates jobs and promotes local culture and products and strengthened capacity of domestic financial institutions to encourage and expand access to banking, insurance and financial services for all. The two targets related to means of achieving the goal are increasing Aid for Trade support for developing countries and developing and operationalising a global strategy for youth employment and implementing the Global Jobs Pact of the International Labour Organization.[1]

5.2. National policy framework

One of the national policy frameworks that ensure commitment to the eighth Sustainable Development Goal is the Employment Strategy for the Republic of Bulgaria 2021-2030 (*Стратегия по заетостта на Република България 2021-2030 година*).[2] This framework introduces the goals and priorities for the country in a medium-term plan, as well as analyses the economic conditions in Bulgaria and its impacts on employment, small and medium-sized businesses and labour standards. The policy framework envisions that by 2030, employment in Bulgaria will provide decent pay, healthy and safe labour conditions and opportunities for career development. Some of the main priorities for economic growth and decent employment this framework outlines are to be achieved through the integration of potential labour power (people with disabilities, seasonal workers, etc.), flexible employment, information campaigns about career opportunities, structural reforms in education and effective distribution of human resources. One of the central priorities of the policy document highlights the role of youth in employment and economic growth, with a great focus on reducing the number of young people "not in education, employment, or training" (NEETs). The strategic framework also emphasises the need for the digitalisation of employment through the development of electronic services, remote learning and employment, and online registration for employment and education to increase the flexibility of both employers and employees.

Another policy framework, concerned specifically with the development of small and medium-sized enterprises, is the National Strategy for Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises 2021-2027 (*Национална стратегия за малките и средните предприятия 2021-2027 г.*).[3] This strategy includes six priority areas: entrepreneurship, access to markets, access to funding, digitalisation and competencies, better regulation and business standards, and sustainability. The framework identifies three main strategic objectives: increasing competitiveness, regional equality and the specialisation of businesses in high-tech production and knowledge-intensive services.

5.3.   Commitments

The key commitments set out in the employment strategy for 2030 are listed in eight measurable outcomes, some of which are: economic activity rate (ages 15-64) to be 77.7 %; employment rate (ages 15-64) to reach 74.6 %; employment rate (ages 20-64) to reach 79 %; unemployment rate (ages 15-74) to be reduced to 4 % by 2030 from 5.1 % in 2020. Some general outcomes Bulgaria has committed to ensuring by 2030 include the development of social services, particularly for parents, people with disabilities and elderly people ensuring these groups' social inclusion and employment opportunities. Bulgaria has also committed to ensuring that by 2030, incomes will reach average EU standards, as the country currently has the lowest wages among other EU member states. Regarding the development of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), several commitments and goals are listed, such as: ensuring SMEs' access to internal, cross-border and transnational markets (particularly the EU Single Market); promoting collaboration between Bulgarian and foreign SMEs to ensure access to sources of funding through business partnerships and developing specialised internal training in order to actively increase employee qualification.

5.4.   Progress towards the targets

The BNSI/FRA survey provides data for assessing Bulgaria's progress towards achieving two of the targets under SDG8, namely to substantially reduce the proportion of youth not in employment, education or training (Target 8.6), and to strengthen the capacity of domestic financial institutions to encourage and expand access to banking, insurance and financial services for all (Target 8.10).

In relation to the target of substantially reducing the proportion of youth not in employment, education or training, the survey provides reliable data for the proportion of youth (aged 15-24 years) not in education, employment or training (Figure 6).

According to the UN, the share of youth not in employment, education or training (youth NEET rate) provides a measure of youth who are outside the educational system, not in training and not in employment, and thus serves as a broader measure of potential youth labour market entrants than youth unemployment. It includes discouraged worker youth as well as those who are outside the labour force due to disability or engagement in household chores, among other reasons. Youth NEET is also a better measure of the current universe of potential youth labour market entrants as compared with the youth inactivity rate, as the latter includes those youth who are outside the labour force and are in education, and thus are furthering their skills and qualifications.[4]

In Bulgaria, in the period 2016-2020, the proportion of young people aged 15-24 years neither in employment nor in education and training decreased from 18.2 % to 14.4 % (from 17.1 % to 13.7 % for men and from 19.4 % to 15.2 % for women).[5] This trend puts Bulgaria on track to achieving the target, which, considering the wording "substantially reducing the proportion" has no specific measurable value to be reached by 2030.

According to the survey, the proportion of young people not in education, employment or training is 17.4 %. This share is notably higher among women (20.8 %) compared to men (14.4 %) and among

persons living in rural areas (26.3 %) compared to those living in urban areas (14.4 %). The most notable difference, however, is related to ethnicity. The share of young people not in education, employment or training is more than 50 % among the people self-identifying as ethnic Roma, about 20 % among those self-identifying as Turkish (20.4 %) and less than 10 % among ethnic Bulgarians.

Figure 6: Proportion of youth (aged 15–24 years) not in education, employment or training, by sex, self-declared ethnicity, type of residence and limitations (%)
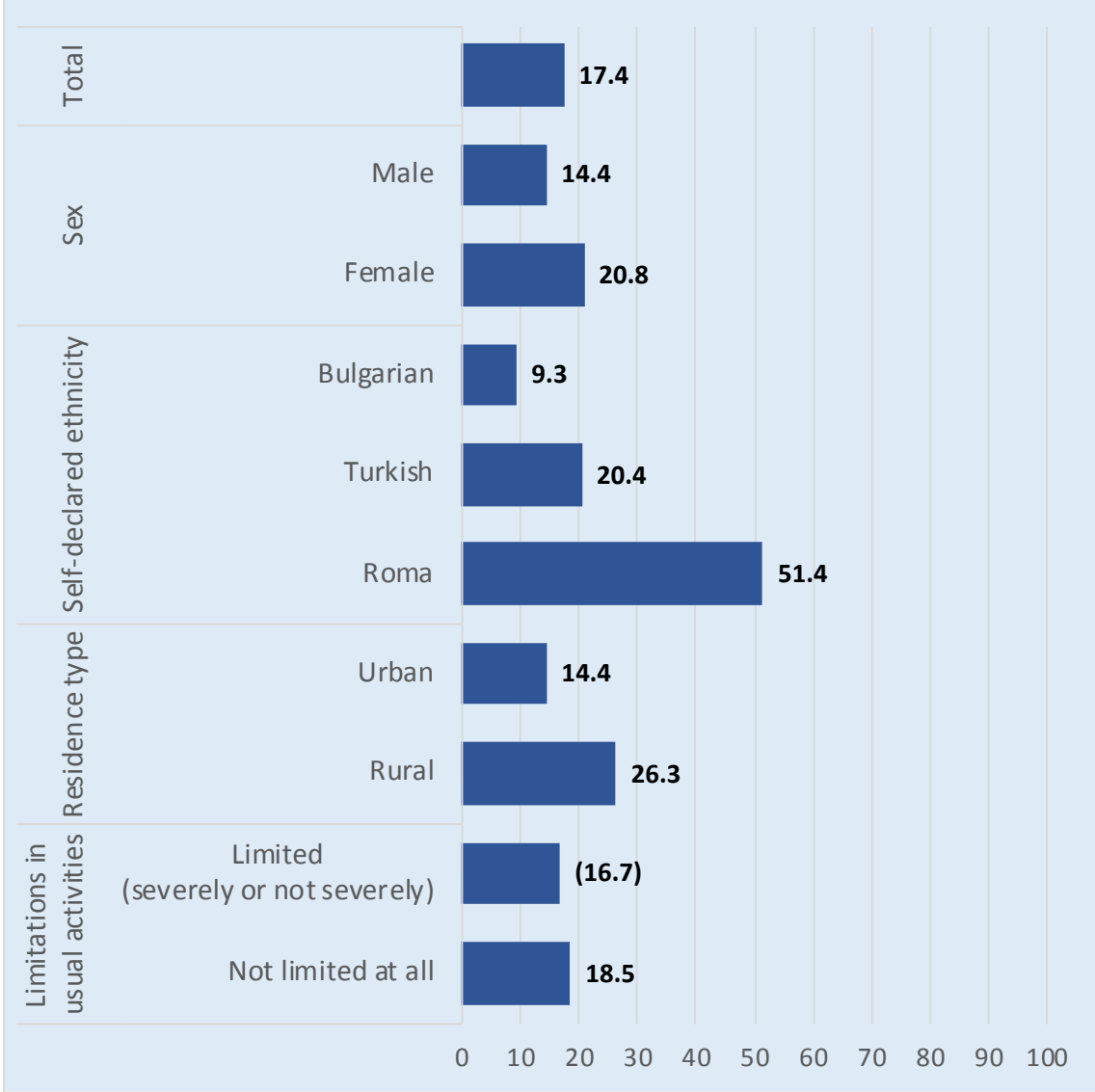
Notes: [a] *Out of all household members in the surveyed household (n = 30,303); weighted results.*
[b] *Corresponds to SDG indicator 8.6.1.*
[c] *The remainder of the 100 % includes non-responses to the underlying questions.*
Source: *BNSI/FRA survey 2020*

In relation to the target of strengthening the capacity of domestic financial institutions to encourage and expand access to banking, insurance and financial services for all, the survey provides reliable data on the proportion of adults (15 years and older) with an account at a bank or other financial institution or with a mobile-money-service provider (Figure 7).

According to the UN, access to formal financial services such as savings, insurance, payments, credit and remittances is essential to the ability of people – regardless of income level, gender, age, education

or where they live – to manage their lives, build their futures, and grow their businesses. Having access to an account is an important starting point for people to access a range of financial services.[6]

According to the survey results, in 2020, more than 75 % of the Bulgarian population had an account at a bank or other financial institution. The proportion of the population with a bank account is higher among men (77 %) than women (73.7 %), among persons self-identifying as ethnic Bulgarians (79.0 %) than persons self-identifying as ethnic Turks (64.8 %) and Roma (48.2 %), and among persons living in urban areas (80.0 %) than those living in rural areas (61.8 %). In terms of age, the proportion is higher among persons aged 25-44 years (88.2 %) and 45-59 years (87.7 %) and lower among younger persons aged 16-24 (51.0 %) and older persons aged 65 years and over (63.7 %). There is also a notable difference between the share of people with a bank account among the persons with (57.4 %) and without (79.3 %) limitations in usual activities.

Figure 7: Proportion of adults (15 years and older) with an account at a bank or other financial institution or with a mobile-money-service provider, by sex, self-declared ethnicity, type of residence, age and limitations (%)
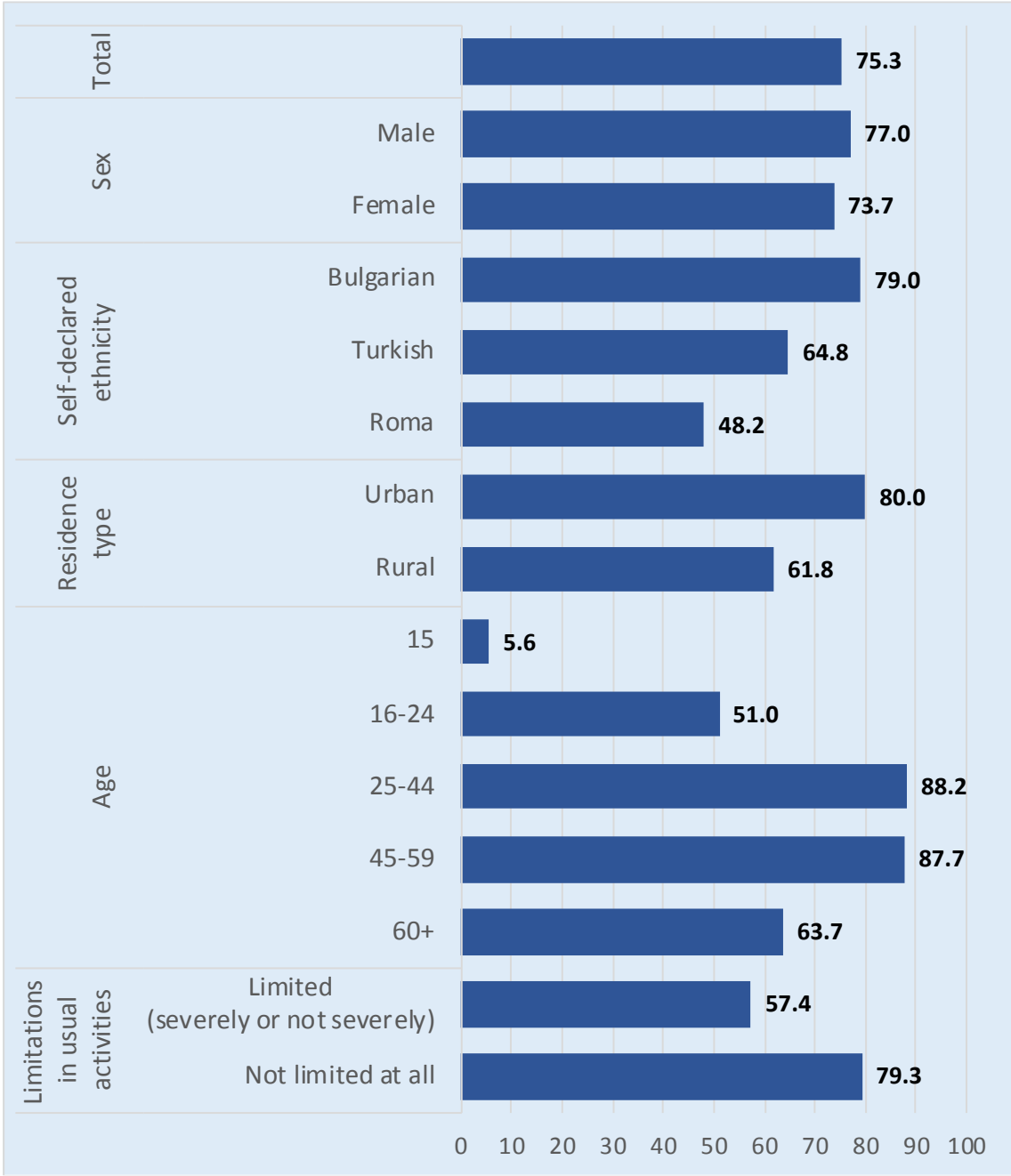
Notes: [a] *Out of all household members in the surveyed household aged 15 years and over (n = 26,667); weighted results.*
  [b] *Corresponds to SDG indicator 8.10.2.*
  [c] *Based on the question "Do you have a bank card (debit, credit) and/or bank account?".*
Source: *BNSI/FRA survey 2020*

According to data from other sources, in Bulgaria, in 2017, the proportion of adults (15 years and older) with an account at a bank or other financial institution or with a mobile-money-service provider was 72.2 % (70.6 among men and 73.6 % among women).[7]

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[1] United Nations (UN), Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on Work of the Statistical Commission pertaining to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/71/313), 6 July 2017.

[2] Bulgaria, Council of Ministers (*Министерски съвет*) (2021), Employment Strategy for the Republic of Bulgaria 2021-2030 (*Стратегия по заетостта на Република България 2021-2030 година*), 15 July 2021.

[3] Bulgaria, Council of Ministers (*Министерски съвет*) (2021), National Strategy for Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises 2021-2027 (*Национална стратегия за малките и средните предприятия 2021-2027 г.*), 1 April 2021.

[4] United Nations (UN), SDG Indicators Metadata, 31 July 2022.

[5] Bulgaria, National Statistical Institute (*Национален статистически институт*), Sustainable development goals 2030 (Global Indicator Framework), Monitorstat: Information system for monitoring European and national strategies and regional policy, 31 July 2022.

[6] United Nations (UN), SDG Indicators Metadata, 31 July 2022.

[7] Bulgaria, National Statistical Institute (*Национален статистически институт*), Sustainable development goals 2030 (Global Indicator Framework), Monitorstat: Information system for monitoring European and national strategies and regional policy, 31 July 2022.

6. Reduced inequalities

6.1. Goal

The tenth Sustainable Development Goal is to **reduce inequality within and among countries**. This goal contains the two objectives of promoting equality domestically within each country as well as on a global scale. This aspiration will be accomplished through a focus on non-discrimination of policies and institutions, as well as through the protection and empowerment of vulnerable and socially-excluded populations and developing countries.

The goal has ten targets and 14 indicators to measure progress. The seven outcome targets are progressive achievement and sustainment of income growth of the bottom 40 per cent of the population; empowerment and promotion of the social, economic and political inclusion of all; ensuring equal opportunity and reduction of inequalities of outcome; adoption of policies, especially fiscal, wage and social protection policies, and progressive achievement of greater equality; improvement of the regulation and monitoring of global financial markets and institutions and strengthened implementation of such regulations; ensuring enhanced representation and voice for developing countries in decision-making in global international economic and financial institutions in order to deliver more effective, credible, accountable and legitimate institutions and facilitation of orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people. The three targets related to means of achieving the goal are implementing the principle of special and differential treatment for developing countries; encouraging official development assistance and financial flows to states where the need is greatest and reducing to less than 3 per cent the transaction cost of migrant remittances and eliminating remittance corridors with costs higher than 5 per cent.[1]

6.2. National policy framework

One of the key national policy frameworks that addresses the reduction of inequalities in Bulgaria is the National Strategy on Poverty Reduction and Encouragement of Social Inclusion 2030 (*Национална стратегия за намаляване на бедността и насърчаване на социалното включване 2030*).[2] Some of the main priorities of this strategic framework include the equal access of all social groups to socioeconomic benefits and social services, such as education, healthcare, housing, public transport, employment, fair pay, etc. The document outlines the fiscal policies needed to reduce inequalities between vulnerable people and social groups by 2030, with particular attention paid to children, elderly people, households/parents with children, unemployed people, people from vulnerable ethnic backgrounds, people with disabilities, homeless people and low-paid employees. The framework also highlights the development and accessibility of social services as a key factor for reducing poverty and inequality, including setting new standards for the funding and quality of social services, strengthening the capacity of municipalities, providing financial and material support for people in disadvantaged positions. The strategy also focuses on increasing the capacity and expertise of institutions, responsible for the implementation of policies in the field of social inclusion, as well as the improvement of coordination of inter-sector policies on district, national and regional levels.

6.3. Commitments

Some quantifiable measurements of the commitments of the National Strategy on Poverty Reduction and Encouragement of Social Inclusion 2030 indicate that by 2030, Bulgaria aims to: reduce its GINI coefficient to 33 %; reduce the population at risk of poverty and social exclusion to 25 %; and reduce the ratio between the incomes of the poorest and wealthiest from 20 % of households to 5.5 %. Other more general commitments that would ensure the reduction of inequalities by 2030 are the

prevention of the risks of poverty and social exclusion, adopting solution-oriented approaches and adopting a territorial approach, which aims to reduce regional inequalities in the country. Key elements of the strategy's vision are limiting social inequalities by fostering inclusion in education, employment and opportunities for qualification, housing, social services and benefits and an accessible environment to all, regardless of background and social standing.

## 6.4. Progress towards the targets

The BNSI/FRA survey provides data for assessing Bulgaria's progress towards achieving one of the targets under SDG10, namely to ensure equal opportunity and reduce inequalities of outcome, including by eliminating discriminatory laws, policies and practices and promoting appropriate legislation, policies and action in this regard (Target 10.3).

In relation to this target, the survey provides reliable data for the proportion of the population reporting having personally felt discriminated against or harassed in the previous 12 months on the basis of a ground of discrimination prohibited under international human rights law (Figure 8).

According to the UN, the pledge to leave no one behind and eliminate discrimination is at the centre of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The elimination of discrimination is also enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the core international human rights treaties. The purpose of this indicator is to measure the prevalence of discrimination based on the personal experience reported by individuals. It is considered an outcome indicator helping to measure the effectiveness of non-discriminatory laws, policies and practices for the concerned population groups.[3]

According to the survey results, in 2020, about 7.3 % of the population felt discriminated against or harassed during the past 12 months. The disaggregated data show that, unlike sex and place of residence, which do not appear to lead to a higher risk of discrimination, ethnicity and disability stand out as factors leading more often to unequal treatment. The share of people who felt discriminated against or harassed is much higher among the population that self-identify as Roma (21.8 %) than among the people who self-identify as ethnic Bulgarians (6.0 %) and ethnic Turks (6.4 %). Persons with self-reported limitations in usual activities are the other group that stands out as particularly vulnerable to discrimination and harassment. According to the survey, the share of those who felt discriminated against or harassed in this group (14.5 %) is notably higher than the corresponding share among people with no limitations (6.2 %). In terms of age, the survey results show that young people (aged 16-24 years) felt discriminated against or harassed most often while older people (aged 65 years and over) were least likely to feel this way.

Figure 8: Proportion of population reporting having personally felt discriminated against or harassed in the previous 12 months on the basis of a ground of discrimination prohibited under international human rights law, by sex, self-declared ethnicity, type of residence, age and limitations (%)
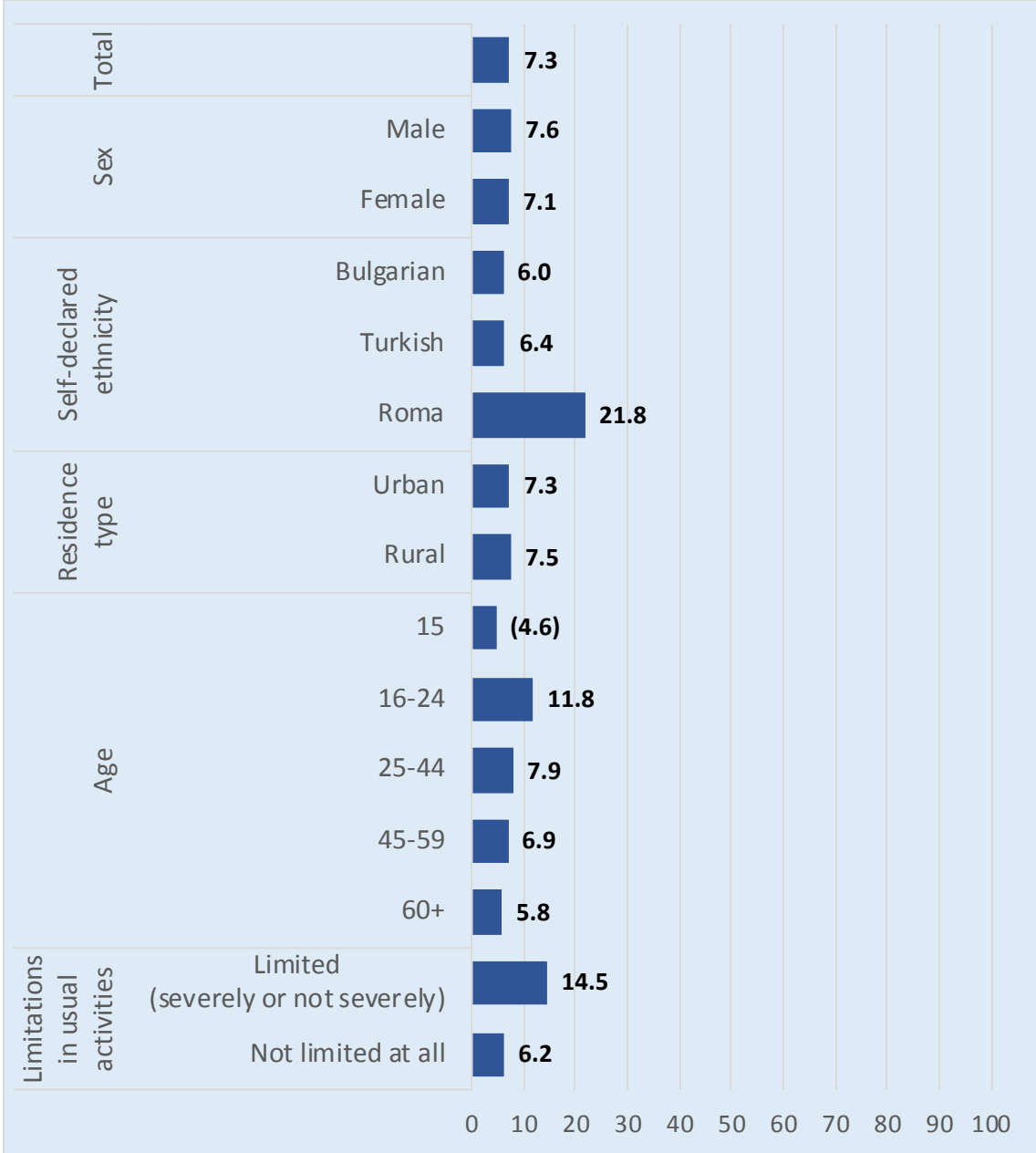
Notes: [a] *Out of all household members in the surveyed household aged 15 years and over who responded to the underlying questions (n = 25,947); weighted results.*
[b] Corresponds to SDG indicator 10.3.1.
[c] Based on the questions "Is there at least one case of discrimination in the past 12 months?" and "Are there any incidents of harassment in the past 12 months?".
[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 – or based on less than 20 individual cell count – are flagged (the value is published in brackets). Results based on fewer than 20 unweighted observations in a group total are not published.
Source: *BNSI/FRA survey 2020*

Discrimination and harassment indicators are included in several surveys conducted by FRA in the past decade. Although the different methodologies used in these studies do not allow a direct comparison

of these indicators with the ones produced by the BNSI/FRA survey, it is worth noting that they largely show a similar picture. Thus, for example, according to FRA's Fundamental Rights Survey, about 7 % of people in Bulgaria felt discriminated against in the past 12 months at work or when looking for work, in a shop, café, restaurant or when using leisure or sports facilities, or in other similar situations, and 14 % experienced harassment (offensive or threatening comments, threatening with violence, offensive or threatening gestures or inappropriate staring, offensive or threatening emails or text messages (SMS), or offensive or threatening comments on the internet).[4] According to FRA's EU-MIDIS II in 2016, 14 % of Roma in Bulgaria felt discriminated against in the 12 months before the survey in any of the 10 areas of life covered by the survey because of their skin colour, ethnic origin or religion, and 30 % experienced harassment in the past 12 months due to their ethnic or background.[5] Furthermore, according to FRA's LGBTI Survey in 2019, Bulgaria ranked second by share of LGBTI people (52 %) who personally felt discriminated against in the 12 months before the survey, in any of the eight areas of life covered by the survey, because they were part of the LGBTI community, and seventh by share of LGBTI people (51 %) who experienced harassment for any reason in the past 12 months before the survey.[6]

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[1] United Nations (UN), Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on Work of the Statistical Commission pertaining to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/71/313), 6 July 2017.
[2] Bulgaria, Council of Ministers (*Министерски съвет*) (2020), National Strategy on Poverty Reduction and Encouragement of Social Inclusion 2030 (*Национална стратегия за намаляване на бедността и насърчаване на социалното включване 2030*), 31 December 2020.
[3] United Nations (UN), SDG Indicators Metadata, 31 July 2022.
[4] European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) (2019), Fundamental rights survey.
[5] European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) (2016), Survey on Minorities and Discrimination in EU.
[6] European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) (2019), LGBTI survey.

7. Peace, justice and strong institutions

7.1. Goal

The sixteenth Sustainable Development Goal is to **promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels**. This goal addresses both issues of violence as well as corruption and crime, with the aim of reforming systems of justice as well as ensuring peace for all individuals and institutions.

The goal has 12 targets and 24 indicators to measure progress. The ten outcome targets are significant reduction of all forms of violence and related death rates everywhere; elimination of abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against and torture of children; promotion of the rule of law at the national and international levels and ensuring equal access to justice for all; significant reduction of illicit financial and arms flows, strengthened recovery and return of stolen assets and combat against all forms of organised crime; substantial reduction of corruption and bribery in all their forms; development of effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels; ensuring responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels; broadened and strengthened participation of developing countries in the institutions of global governance; provision of legal identity for all and ensuring public access to information and protection of fundamental freedoms. The two targets related to means of achieving the goal are strengthening relevant national institutions for building capacity at all levels to prevent violence and combat terrorism and crime and promoting and enforcing non-discriminatory laws and policies for sustainable development.[1]

7.2. National policy framework

One of the national policy frameworks that aim to protect practices of good governance, institutional transparency and efficiency in Bulgaria is the National Strategy for Preventing and Countering Corruption in the Republic of Bulgaria 2021-2027 (*Национална стратегия за превенция и противодействие на корупцията в България 2021-2027 г.*).[2] The aforementioned strategic framework sets out seven priority areas, each containing several measures for countering corruption practices and strengthening the transparency and accessibility of the justice system. The main priorities identified in the policy document are: strengthening the capacity and increasing transparency of the operation of anti-corruption bodies and units; countering corruption crimes; strengthening the capacity and improving the work of administration bodies charged with supervising and penalising powers; increasing the transparency and accountability of local government; freeing citizens from "petty" corruption; creating an environment for public intolerance to corruption; and timely response to the necessity of updating the anti-corruption measures included in the national strategy, including in response to recommendations made by international institutions. This framework builds upon the proposals and assessments from the same policy document from the period 2015-2020, with its priorities and measures particularly targeting the rule of law, social justice and the systematic implementation of state policy.

7.3. Commitments

Some of the commitments outlined in the national anti-corruption strategy include the digitalisation of the justice system and the establishment of an electronic platform and tools for the exchange information, developing a code of ethics for senior officials, increasing the transparency and accountability of executive bodies and strengthening the interaction and cooperation of judicial institutions and anti-corruption organisations. Regarding the legislation on corruption crimes, Bulgaria

aims to limit the formalism and bureaucracy of criminal procedures, in order to allow effective investigation and prosecution of crimes. This will also be enhanced through the training and qualification of administrative bodies and investigative police officers. Other important measures Bulgaria has committed to implement are the improvement of the regulation for signalling corruption practices, the involvement of the public and private sectors, along with civil society organisations, to promote integrity and good governance. This is also to be done through educational anti-corruption campaigns in order to instil civic awareness and enhance the legal culture of citizens, with a particular focus on civic education classes for students as they progress into higher education.

7.4. Progress towards the targets

The BNSI/FRA survey provides data for assessing Bulgaria's progress towards achieving two of the targets under SDG16, namely to significantly reduce all forms of violence and related death rates everywhere (Target 16.1) and to promote and enforce non-discriminatory laws and policies for sustainable development (Target 16.b).

In relation to the target of significantly reducing all forms of violence and related death rates everywhere, the survey provides reliable data for the proportion of the population that feel safe walking alone around the area they live in (Figure 9).

According to the UN, perception of safety is considered a subjective well-being indicator. It affects the way in which human beings interact with their surroundings, their health, and consequently, their quality of life. The indicator taps into the concept of "fear of crime", which has been elicited in dozens of crime victimisation surveys, and the standard formulation used has been shown to be applicable in different cultural contexts. It is important to note that fear of crime is a phenomenon that is separate from the prevalence of crime and that fear of crime may be even largely independent from actual experience. The perception of crime and the resulting fear of it is influenced by several factors, such as the awareness of crime, the public discussion, the media discourse, and personal circumstances. Nevertheless, fear of crime is an important indicator in itself as high levels of fear can negatively influence well-being and lead to reduced contacts with the public, reduced trust and engagement in the community, and thus represent an obstacle to development. Fear of crime also differs across demographic groups and this indicator helps to identify vulnerable groups.[3]

The survey results show that, in 2020, 86.1 % of the population felt safe walking alone around the area they live. The feeling of safety is higher among men (91.2 %) than women (81.4 %), and slightly higher among persons living in rural areas (88.0 %) than persons living in urban areas (85.5 %). There are no major differences across the different ethnic groups as the proportion of persons feeling safe among those who self-identify as ethnic Bulgarians (86.1 %), ethnic Turks (88.7 %) and Roma (83.7 %) are very similar. In terms of age, the proportion of older persons aged 65 years and over, who feel safe walking alone around the area they live (80.6 %) is lower than persons aged 45-59 years (89.5 %), 25-44 years (90.8 %) and 16-24 years (90.5 %). At the same time, disability seems a relevant factor in relation to the feeling of safety as the share of people feeling safe walking alone around the area they live is much higher among persons with no limitations in usual activities (89.1 %) compared to those with some (severe or not severe) limitations (74.6 %).

Figure 9: Proportion of population that feel safe walking alone around the area they live, by sex, self-declared ethnicity, type of residence, age and limitations (%)
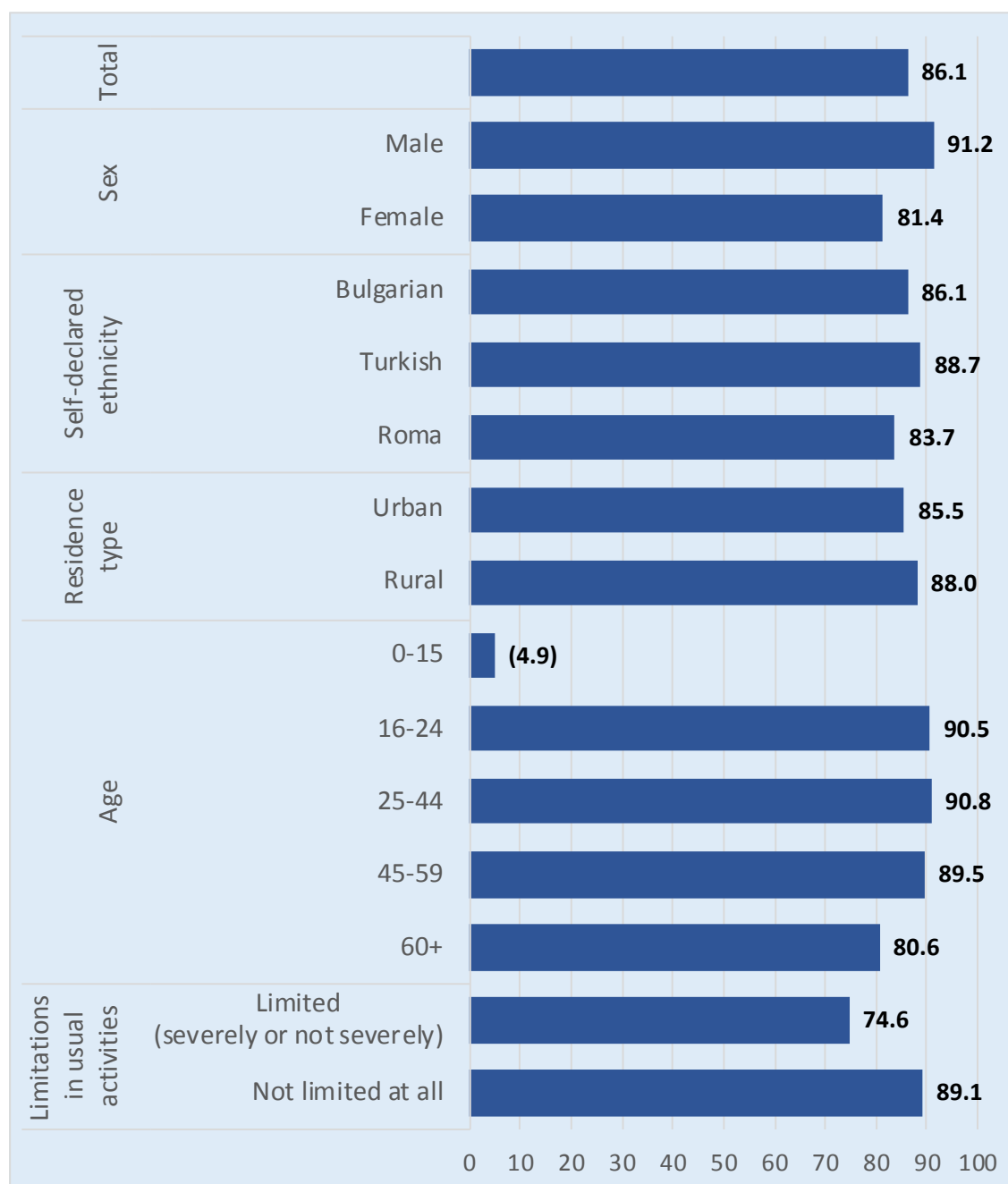
Notes: [a] *Out of all household members in the surveyed household (n = 30,303); weighted results.*

       [b] *Corresponds to SDG indicator 16.1.4.*

       [c] *Based on the question "Do you feel safe when you walk alone in the neighbourhood (settlement) where you live?".*

       [d] *The remainder of the 100 % includes non-responses to the underlying questions and responses "I never walk alone in the dark.".*

       [e] *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 – or based on less than 20 individual cell count – are flagged (the value is published in brackets). Results based on fewer than 20 unweighted observations in a group total are not published.*

Source: *BNSI/FRA survey 2020*

The lack of available data for 2016 makes it impossible to assess whether the situation has improved or deteriorated during the past five years. The wording used for formulating the target ("significantly reducing all forms of violence") does not allow for assessing the progress toward achieving it either.

In relation to the target of promoting and enforcing non-discriminatory laws and policies for sustainable development, the survey provides reliable data for the proportion of the population reporting having personally felt discriminated against or harassed in the previous 12 months on the basis of a ground of discrimination prohibited under international human rights law. The same indicator is used for monitoring the progress under target 10.3 (ensuring equal opportunity and reducing inequalities of outcome, including by eliminating discriminatory laws, policies and practices and promoting appropriate legislation, policies and action in this regard) and is analysed in Chapter 6 "Reduced inequalities" above (see Figure 8).

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[1] United Nations (UN), Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on Work of the Statistical Commission pertaining to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/71/313), 6 July 2017.

[2] Bulgaria, Council of Ministers (*Министерски съвет*) (2021), National Strategy for Preventing and Countering Corruption in the Republic of Bulgaria 2021-2027 (*Национална стратегия за превенция и противодействие на корупцията в България 2021-2027 г.*), 19 March 2021.

[3] United Nations (UN), SDG Indicators Metadata, 31 July 2022.

Conclusions and recommendations

As can be seen from the content of the report, the BNSI/FRA survey allows for the collection of data on some, albeit few, of the indicators for achieving the targets of the Sustainable Development Goals. However, the main advantage of this study is that, in addition to providing a snapshot of the situation in Bulgaria vis-à-vis these indicators, it also allows for assessing to what extent the country is progressing toward achieving these targets in relation to specific groups of the population, that have been identified as more vulnerable to the risk of poverty, social exclusion and violation of fundamental rights.

The use of the BNSI/FRA survey for generating data for the SDG indicators shows that in addition to monitoring the progress toward achieving the goals at the national level, it is equally important to use the indicators also in relation to specific groups of the population that are at higher risk of poverty, social exclusion and violation of fundamental rights. It is evident from the survey results that some population groups are in a particularly disadvantaged situation and, for them, achieving the targets, even when it seems close at the national level, remains a major challenge. This is illustrated, for example, by the proportion of youth (aged 15–24 years) who are not in education, employment or training (an indicator for achieving the target of substantially reducing the proportion of youth not in employment, education or training of SDG8: Decent work and economic growth). While at the national level the indicator registers a proportion of NEET of 17.4 %, the data disaggregated by self-declared ethnicity reveal significant discrepancies (more than 50 % among the people who self-identify as Roma, about 20 % among those who self-identify as Turkish and less than 10 % among ethnic Bulgarians). These results show that monitoring at the national level only is not enough to properly assess the progress toward achieving the goals and that the indicators should also be used to generate data on specific population groups at higher risk of poverty and social exclusion. Only in this way will it be possible to gather precise information on the situation of these groups, which is in line with the central promise of the SDGs to leave no one behind.