



# LEAVE NO ONE BEHIND!

## Progress in Achieving Sustainable Development Goals among Youth in Serbia



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### Translation (English):

Halifax Translation Services

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When using data from this publication, be sure to cite the source.

The production of this publication was supported by the Governments of Switzerland and Germany. The publication does not necessarily represent the official standpoints of the Swiss and German Governments.





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# LEAVE NO ONE BEHIND!

## Progress in Achieving Sustainable Development Goals among Youth in Serbia

Leave No One Behind is the main principle of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDG). This principle reflects the unequivocal commitment by all states to fully eradicate poverty, social exclusion and discrimination in all forms, and to reduce inequalities and various forms of vulnerability that exclude individuals and social groups from development processes and undermine their developmental potential and well-being, as well as the developmental potential of humanity as a whole<sup>1</sup>.

This principle is based on the knowledge that, due to the intersection of various exclusion factors, certain groups face multiple, mutually reinforcing factors of deprivation and inequality, leading to these groups being left behind in development processes. The five key factors of exclusion are: discrimination (based on an inherited or acquired characteristic); geographic distance or residence in an unfavourable geographic area (degraded environment, lack of transport or communication, underdeveloped economy, technology, services); governance (inadequate laws, policies, non-transparent and irresponsible institutions, lack of democratic participation); socio-economic status (unequal access to resources, employment opportunities, poverty and deprivation), and vulnerability to shock (conflicts, crises, climate change and natural disasters)<sup>2</sup>.

This short informative publication from the “Leave No One Behind” series is dedicated to providing an overview of the status of the achievement of SDGs in the Republic of Serbia regarding youth,<sup>3</sup>i.e. the population aged 15-30 years according to the Law on Youth.

The status overview provided in the publication is based on official SDG indicators monitored at the portal of the Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia<sup>3</sup>, with certain additional indicators providing a better insight into those aspects of the life and status of youth that may indicate they are excluded from certain aspects of development. Every time an official indicator is used, it is emphasised in brackets, while all the other indicators are additional. When possible, attention was given to intersecting inequalities, and/or differences among youth regarding gender, place of residence, material status or other characteristics.

According to the population estimates by the Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia (SORS), youth represented 17.6% of the total population of Serbia at the end of 2019<sup>4</sup>. There were slightly more men than women among them (51.3% compared to 48.7%). The share of youth in the female population was slightly lower (16.7%) than in the male (18.6%), since women, on the average, live longer. The decline in the share of the young population is clear; according to the 2011 population census the share of youth in the total population was 18.4%, while according to the 2002 census it was 20.3%<sup>5</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> <https://unsdg.un.org/2030-agenda/universal-values/leave-no-one-behind>

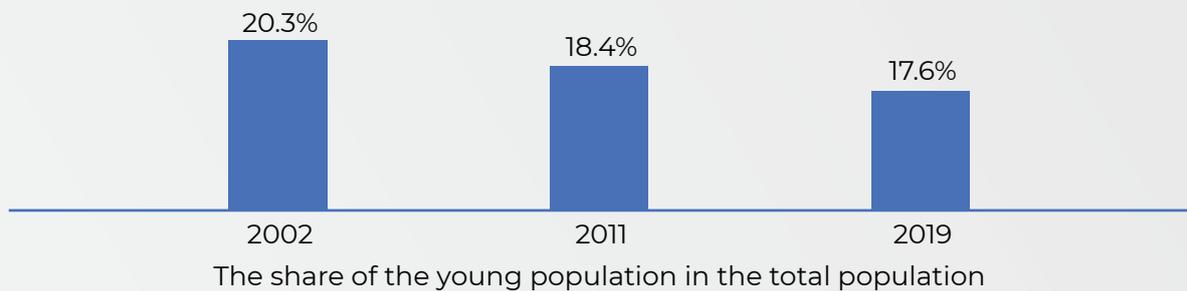
<sup>2</sup> UNSDG (2019) Leaving No One Behind. A UNSDG Operational Guide for UN Country Teams, <https://unsdg.un.org/sites/default/files/Interim-Draft-Operational-Guide-on-LNOB-for-UNCTs.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> <http://sdg.indikator.rs/sr-Cyrl/>

<sup>4</sup> Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia, population estimates, <https://data.stat.gov.rs/Home/Result/18010403?languageCode=sr-Cyrl>

<sup>5</sup> Бубало-Живковић, М., Лукић, Т. (2015) Млади у Србији почетком 21. века. Попис становништва, домаћинства и станова 2011. у Републици Србији, РЗС, Београд, стр. 17, <https://publikacije.stat.gov.rs/G2015/Pdf/G20154005.pdf>

# YOUNG POPULATION IN THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA



## 1 NO POVERTY

Youth in Serbia aged 16-24 are exposed to a higher risk of poverty and social exclusion than the population of other age groups

At-risk-of-poverty or social exclusion rate

**36.2**  
For youth

**31.7**  
Total

The lower inclusion of youth in the labour market and more unfavourable employment conditions are part of the reason for a higher risk of poverty or social exclusion

## 8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH

Employment rate 15-64 = **61.3%**  
Unemployment rate 15-64 = **9.5%**

Youth 15-24 = **20.8%**  
Youth 15-24 = **26.6%**

20.0% of youth aged 15-29 are not in education, employment or training

## 4 QUALITY EDUCATION

For certain groups of young people low labour market opportunities are the consequence of early school leaving which leave them without the skills required by the labour market

Rate of completion for secondary school

**97.7%**  
Total

**97.0%**  
Girls

**96.0%**



**93.0%**

Youth from outside of urban areas

Youth from the poorest households

Young people use information and communication technologies considerably more than older generations, while the gender gap present among the older generation is closing among youth

# 17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS



Use of the internet during the past three months



# 5

## GENDER EQUALITY



Gender inequalities are the reason for young women being exposed to a higher risk of exclusion from important aspects of development than young men

Young women **20-24** entering marriage **before the age of 15 1.2%**  
 Young women **20-24** entering marriage **before the age of 18 5.5%**

Making independent decisions about reproductive health 20-24 = **83.2%**  
 Making independent decisions about reproductive health 25-29 = **84.2%**



A significant number of young women are still not using contraceptives or rely on modern contraception methods in family planning, but there is a visible decrease in the number of early child bearing, and progress in the antenatal care and ensuring medically assisted births

# 3

## GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING



Insufficient use of contraceptives



Women aged 15-49 = 8.8%  
 Young women 20-24 = 21.0%  
 Young women 25-29 = 15.1%

# 16

## PEACE AND JUSTICE, STRONG INSTITUTIONS



Discrimination is an exclusion mechanism, and experiences of discrimination during the past year have been reported by a relatively low share of young women; although the share increases with age, potentially indicating the raising of awareness and recognition of discrimination

Percentage of women who felt discriminated against

Total  
15-49  
**6.9%**

15-19  
**4.4%**

20-24  
**4.4%**

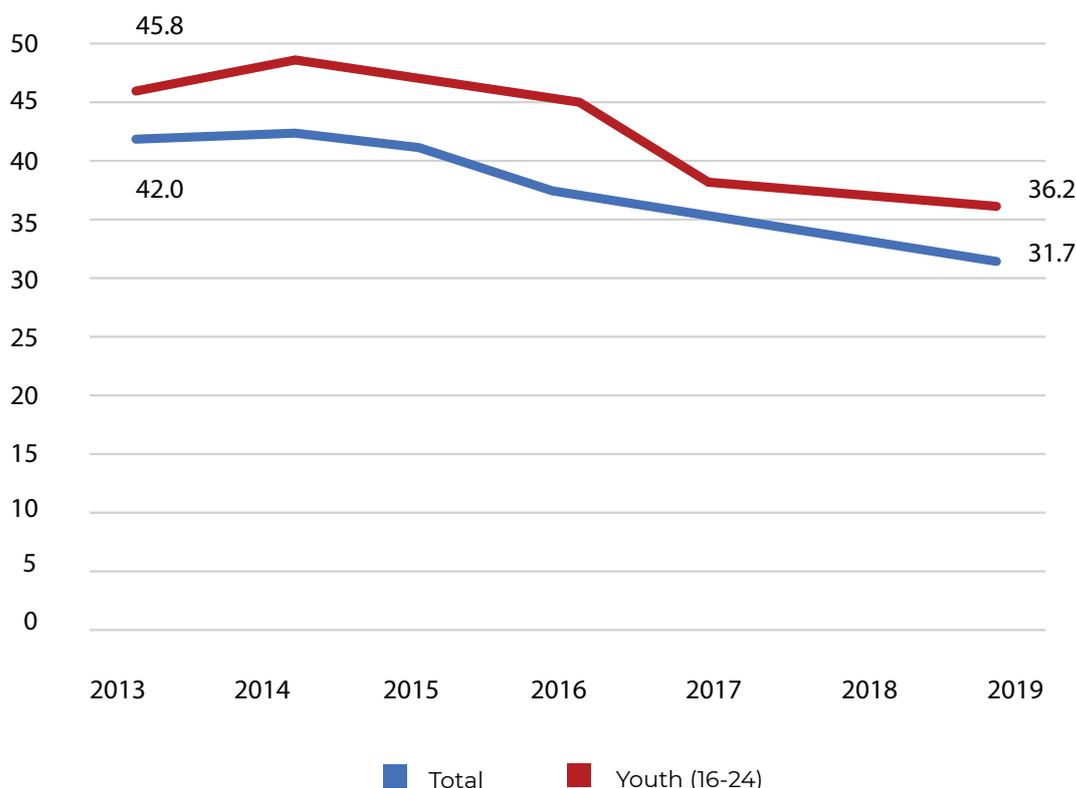
25-29  
**7.3%**

...YOUTH IN SERBIA ARE EXPOSED TO A HIGHER RISK OF POVERTY AND SOCIAL EXCLUSION THAN TOTAL POPULATION...



The at-risk-of-poverty or social exclusion rate, representing a composite measure of risk of financial poverty, material deprivation and low labour intensity in the household, is significantly higher for youth aged 16-24, than for the overall population (Graph 1). Although the at-risk-of-poverty or social exclusion rate has been continuously decreasing since 2014 both for youth and the overall population, the gap in 2019 is higher than for the initial year of 2013 (3.8 percentage points compared to 4.5 pp), indicating that youth are lagging behind in those aspects of development manifesting as security against poverty and exclusion.

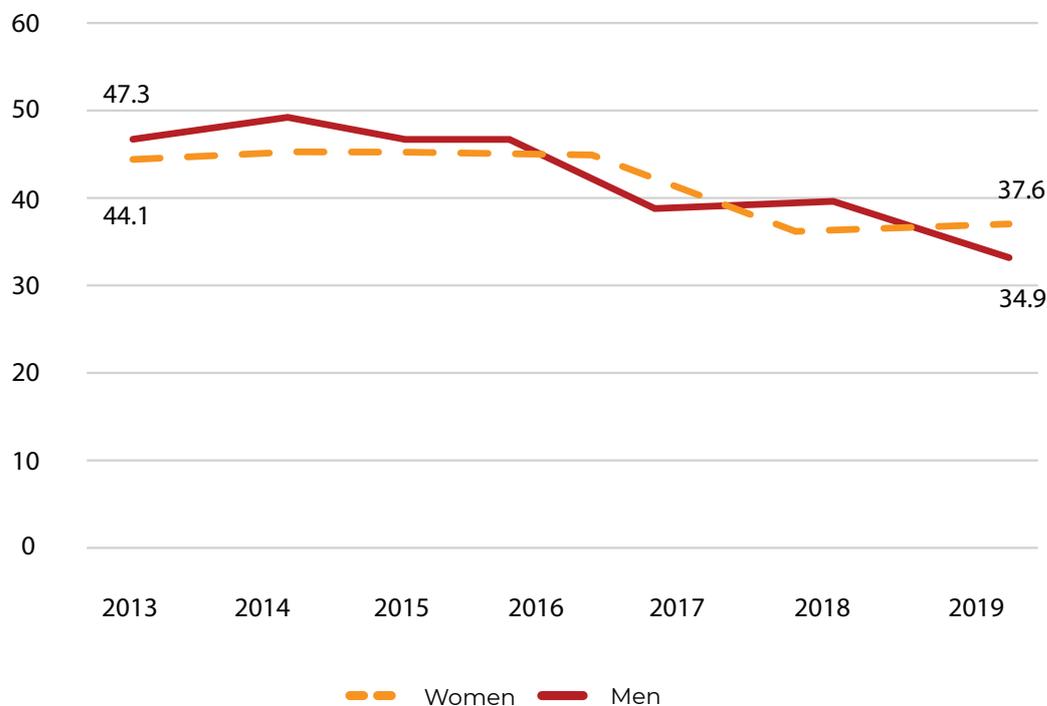
Graph 1: **At-risk-of-poverty or social exclusion rate, total population and youth (16-24), 2013-2019, in % (SDG indicator 1.2.2)**



Source: SORS, Survey on Income and Living Conditions (SILC)

Gender differences in the exposure to risk of poverty or social exclusion are not high, and trends are inconsistent, with women initially having a lower rate of poverty or social exclusion, only to reverse at the end of the observed period (Graph 2).

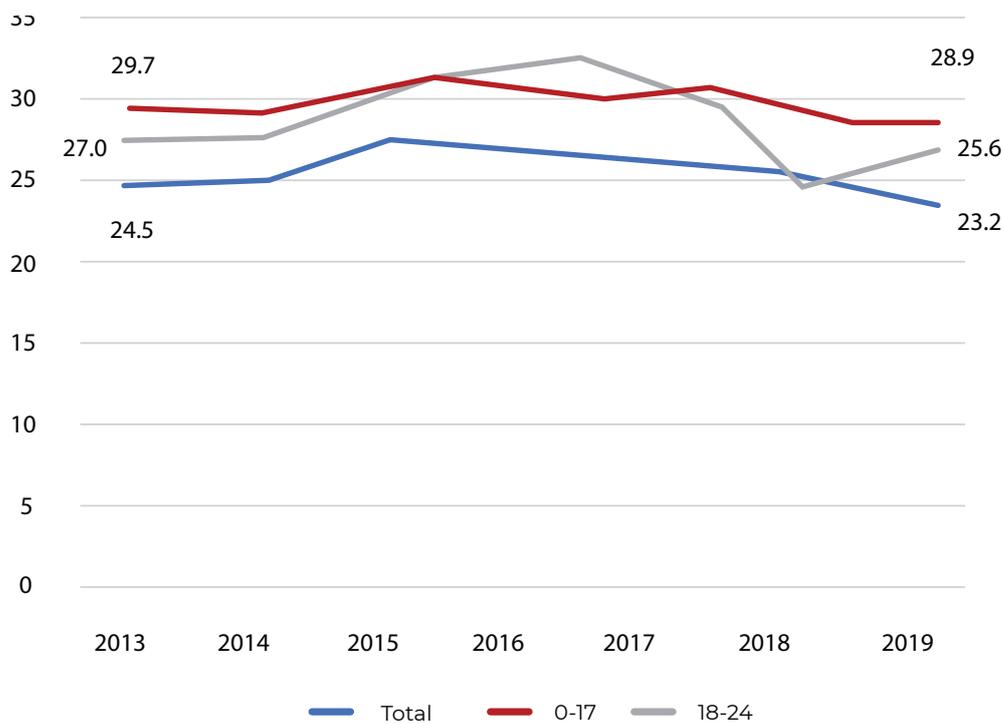
Graph 2: **At-risk-of-poverty or social exclusion rate, population aged 16-24, by gender, 2013-2019, in % (SDG indicator 1.2.2)**



Source: SORS, Survey on Income and Living Conditions (SILC)

The at-risk-of-poverty rates that measure financial poverty indicate that young people are somewhere between children and the population over the age of 24. Data for the period 2013-2019 also indicate the highest rate oscillation among youth, such that in 2016 they were exposed to even higher risks of poverty than children, in 2018 they were equal to older age groups, only to find themselves between children and the older group in 2019, with a slight 1.4 pp decrease in the rate compared to 2013.

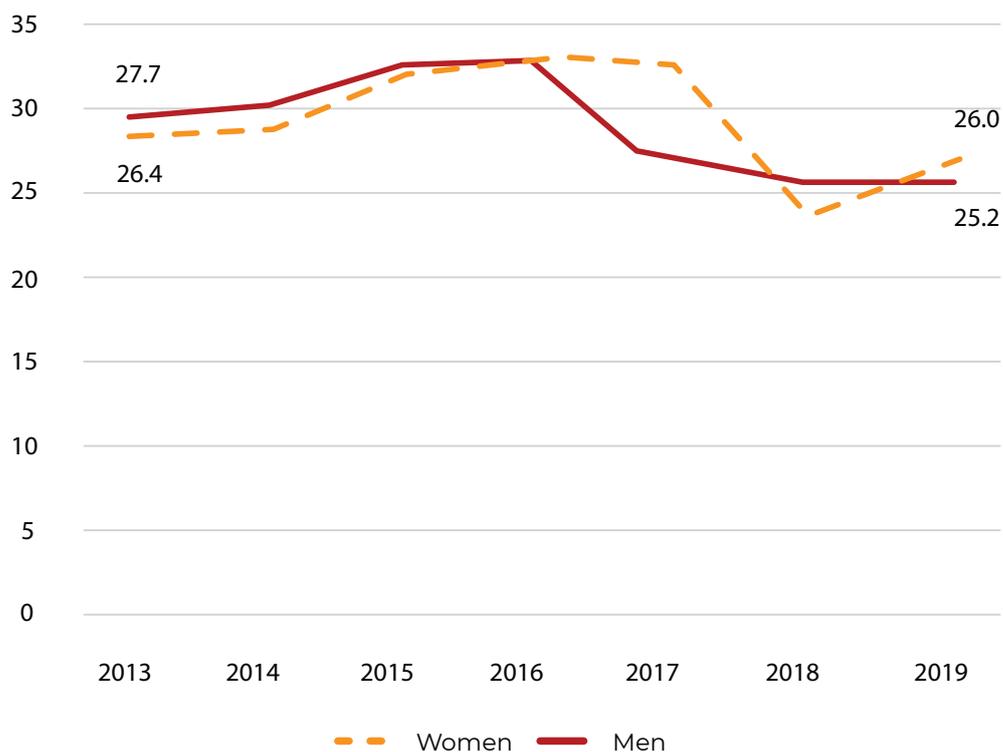
Graph 3: **At-risk-of-poverty rate, total population, children (0-17) and youth (18-24), 2013-2019, in % (SDG indicator 1.2.1)**



Source: SORS, Survey on Income and Living Conditions (SILC)

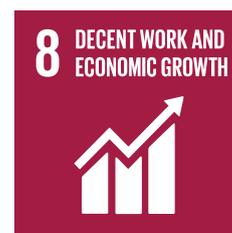
In this case the gender differences also indicate change, i.e. from a somewhat higher exposure of men to risk of poverty, to a somewhat higher exposure for women (Graph 4). However, the differences in 2019 were not as high as in 2017 (0.8 pp compared to 5.0 pp).

Graph 4: **At-risk-of-poverty rate, population aged 18-24, by gender, 2013-2019, in % (SDG indicator 1.2.1)**



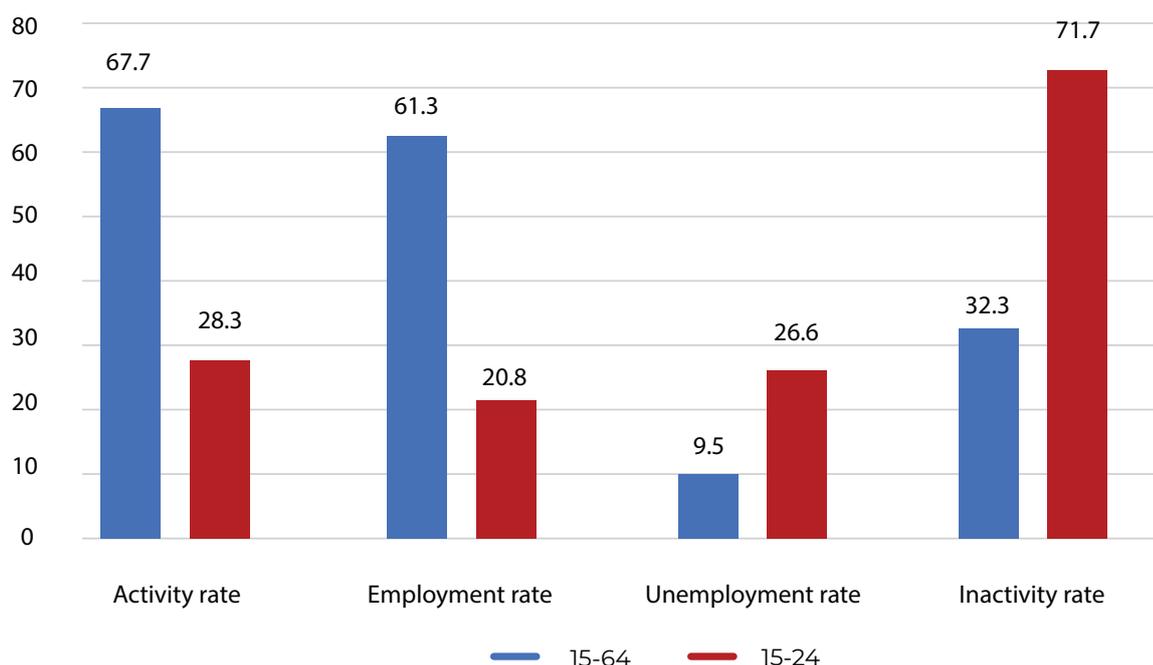
Source: SORS, Survey on Income and Living Conditions (SILC)

...THE LOWER INCLUSION OF YOUTH IN THE LABOUR MARKET AND MORE UNFAVOURABLE EMPLOYMENT CONDITIONS ARE PART OF THE REASON FOR A HIGHER RISK OF POVERTY OR SOCIAL EXCLUSION...



The activity and employment rates for youth aged 15-24 are considerably lower according to the Labour Force Survey (LFS), while the unemployment and inactivity rates are considerably higher than for the total working-age population (15-64 years) (Graph 5). This unfavourable status is particularly visible in the data showing that more than a quarter of youth (26.6%) that wish to work and are actively seeking jobs cannot find employment.

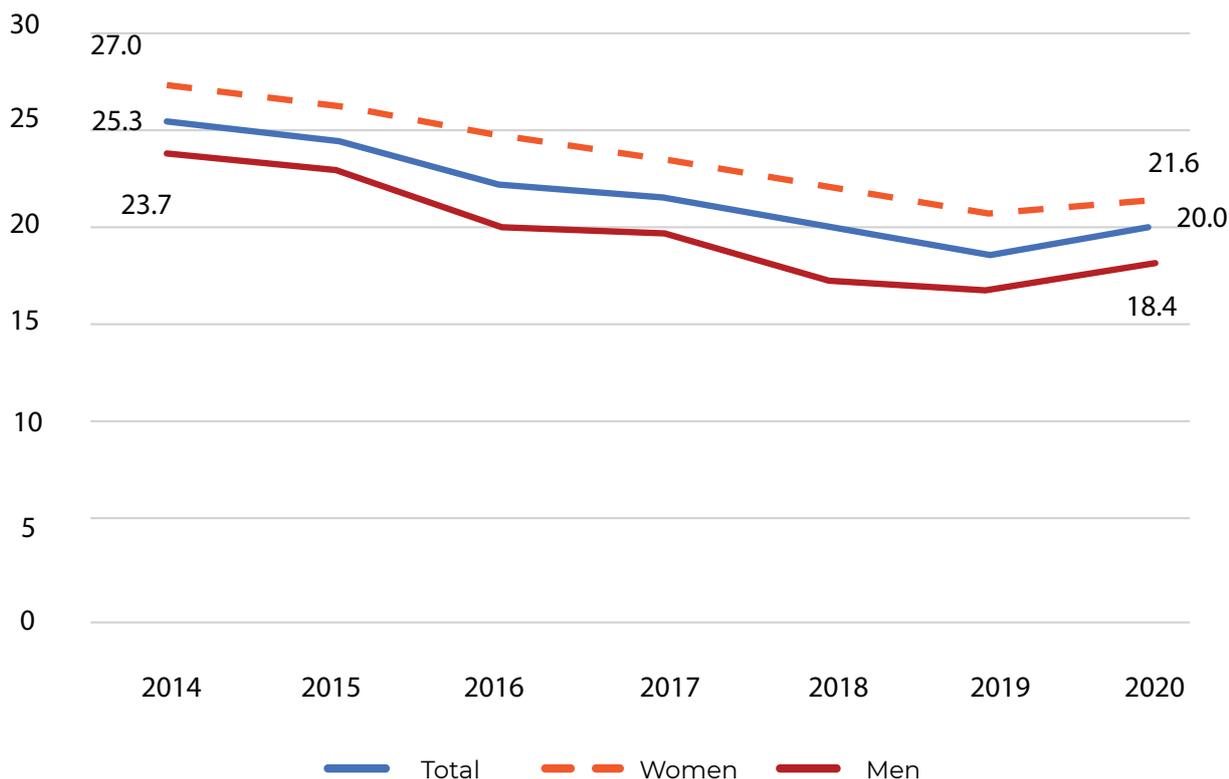
Graph 5: **Main labour market indicators by age, 2020, in %**



Source: SORS, LFS

For some groups of youth, the transition from education into the labour market is particularly difficult. The SDG indicator monitoring this transition for youth indicates that in 2020 one fifth were not included neither in the (formal or informal) education system nor on the labour market. Generally positive trends are visible compared to 2014, although there is a downturn between 2019 and 2020 (Graph 6).

Graph 6: **Proportion of youth aged 15-29 not in education, employment or training, by gender, 2014-2020 (SDG indicator 8.6.1)**



Source: SORS, LFS

Youth are not only less likely to be employed, but also less likely to be formally employed and thus acquire work-based rights, such as pension, disability and health insurance, unemployment insurance, and other rights. Namely, the proportion of informal employment (SDG indicator 8.3.1) is higher among youth than among older categories of the employed - in 2020, among employed persons aged 15-24 there were 21.4% of informally employed, among those aged 25-54 there were 11.6%, while among those aged 55-64 there were 19.8%<sup>7</sup>.

Employed youth earn less than employed persons in older categories of the population. The average hourly earnings (SDG indicator 8.5.1) are lower for youth (15-29) than for older categories of employed persons, amounting to RSD 343.08 in 2018, considerably lower than the average for the total workforce (15+) of RSD 406.04. Furthermore, the average salaries of young women are lower than the average salaries of young men (RSD 333.97 against RSD 350.18)<sup>8</sup>.

7 Source: SORS, LFS, p.35

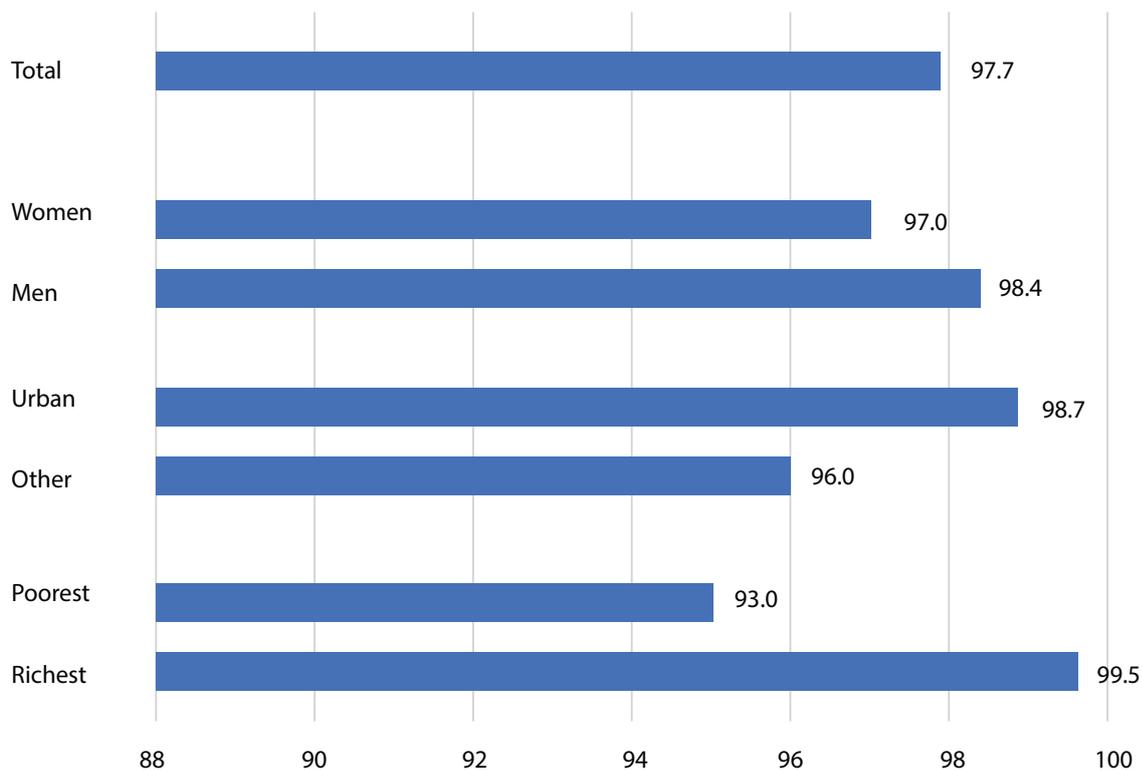
8 Source: SORS, Structure of Earnings Survey

...FOR CERTAIN GROUPS OF YOUNG PEOPLE LOW LABOUR MARKET OPPORTUNITIES ARE THE CONSEQUENCE OF EARLY SCHOOL LEAVING WHICH LEAVE THEM WITHOUT THE SKILLS REQUIRED BY THE LABOUR MARKET...



Unlike primary education, secondary education is not mandatory in Serbia, and certain groups of youth are being excluded from education before they acquire basic qualifications, those believed to be provided only by completing a three-year or four-year secondary school. Data from the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) shows that children from the poorest households have lower chances of completing secondary school compared to children from the wealthiest households, children from non-urban settlements have lower chances compared to children from cities, and girls have lower chances than boys (Graph 7).

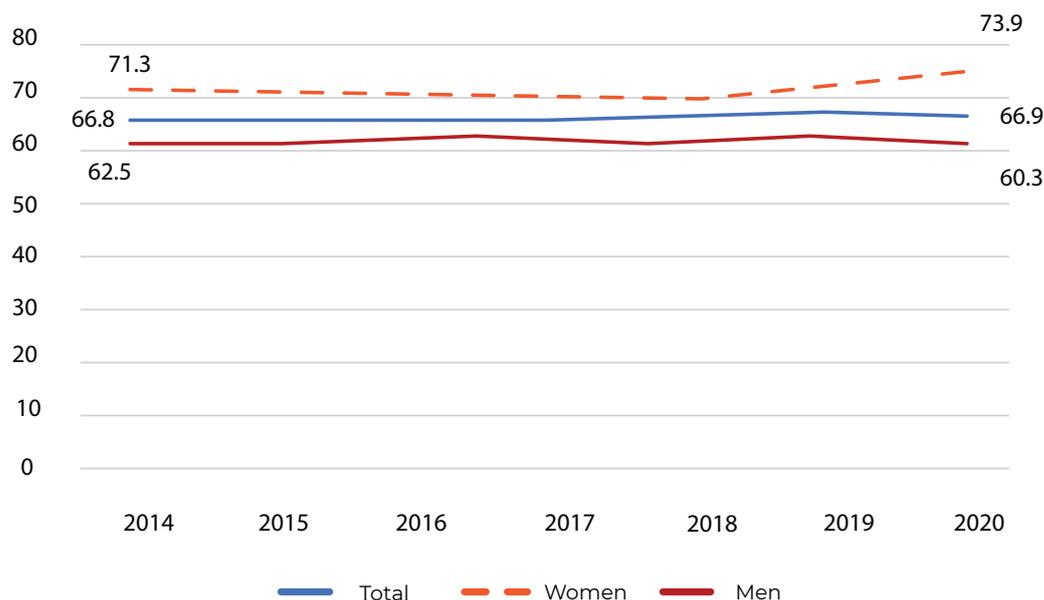
Graph 7: **Completion rate of secondary education by sex, place of residence, material welfare index, 2019 (SDG 4.1.2c)**



Source: SORS, UNICEF, MICS

The rate of youth participation in formal and informal education is showing a stable trend. However, between 2019 and 2020 the gender gap has increased due to a certain increase in the share of young women in education, with a decrease in the share of young men (Graph 8).

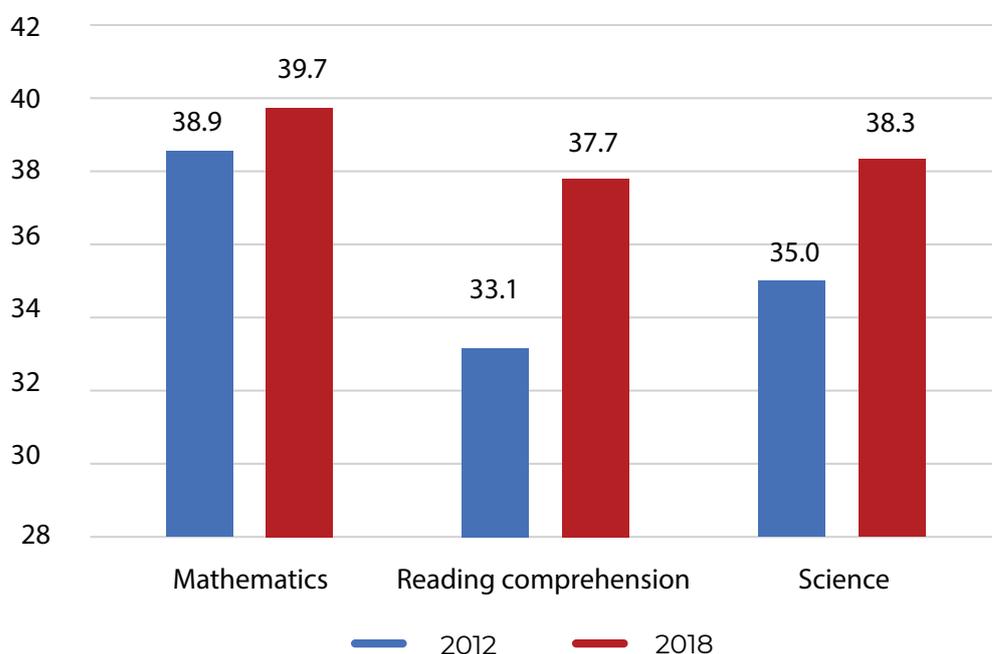
**Graph 8: Participation rate of youth (15-24) in formal and non-formal education and training in the previous 12 months, by sex, 2014-2020, in % (SDG indicator 4.3.1)**



Source: SORS, LFS

Quality education is an important factor for developing youth potential. However, data indicates that a large number of 15-year old youths have still not achieved the lowest level of achievement in mathematics, reading comprehension and science. As shown on the following chart from a study by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development - OECD, more than one third of youth of this age have not achieved the lowest level of literacy in the above three areas, while changes compared to 2012 indicate a downturn (Graph 9).

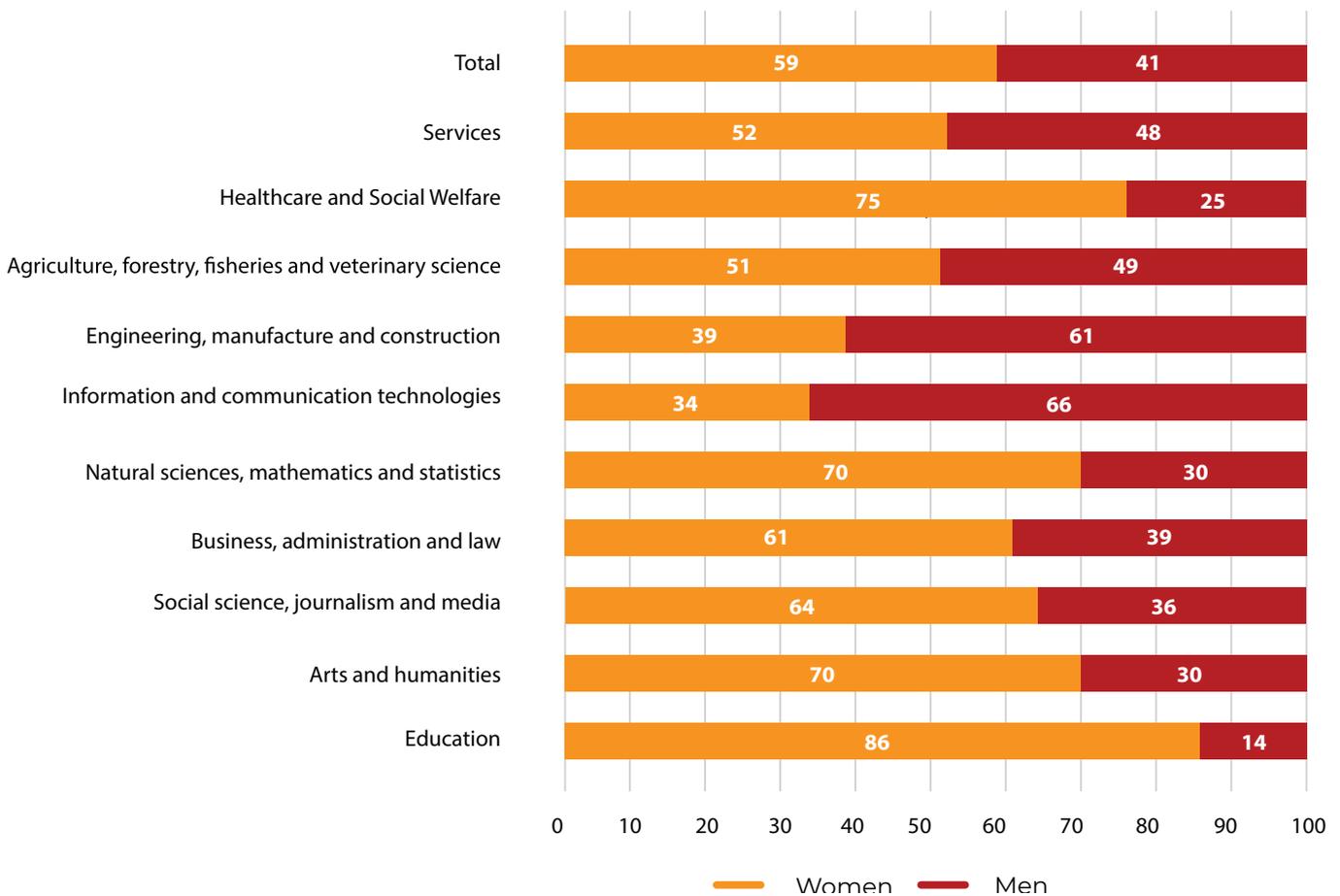
**Graph 9: Proportion of students aged 15 years not achieving the minimum fixed level on the PISA scale for three elementary school subjects (numeracy, literacy, science), 2012 and 2018, in % (SDG indicator 4.6.1)**



Source: OECD

There was a significant increase in the percentage of the population with higher education between 2010 and 2019: from 41.2% to 54.7%. Among youth in studies, the majority in 2019 were women (64.2%). Regarding fields of education, between 2010 and 2019 there was a noticeable increase of interest for studies in the field of information and communication technologies (ICT), engineering, manufacture and construction, healthcare and social welfare, and a decrease of interest in business, administration and law, education and social science, journalism and media.

Graph 10: **Students graduating in post-secondary higher education and faculties by field of education and gender, 2019, in %**



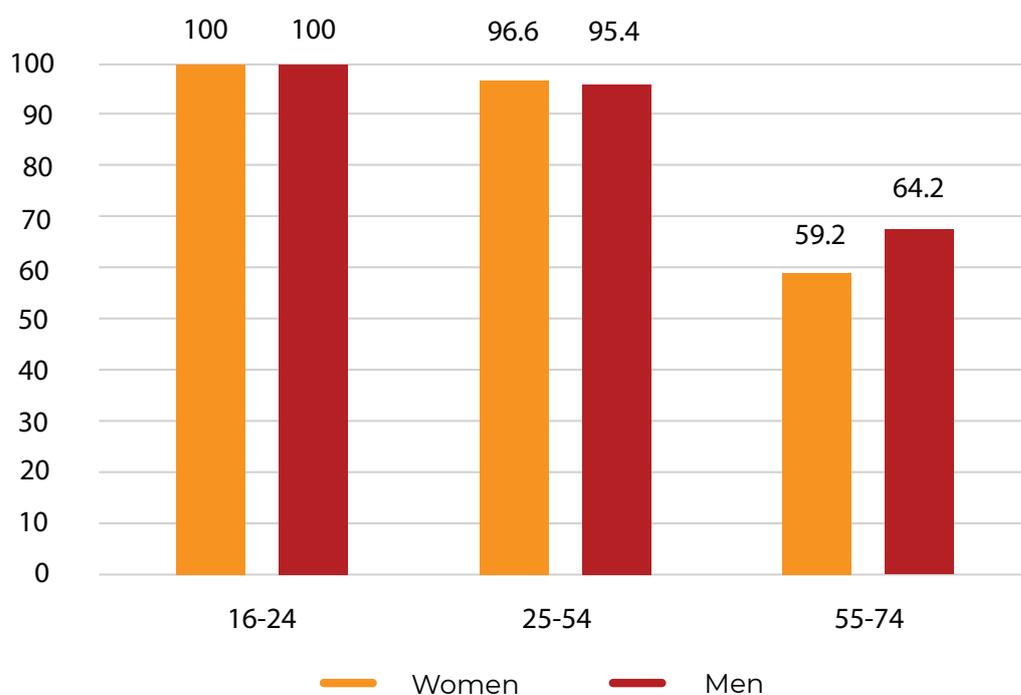
Source: SORS, Education Statistics

...YOUNG PEOPLE USE INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES CONSIDERABLY MORE THAN OLDER GENERATIONS, WHILE THE GENDER GAP PRESENT AMONG THE OLDER GENERATION IN THIS ASPECT IS CLOSING AMONG YOUTH...



Youth use the internet significantly more frequently than older generations, particularly the oldest ones. Young women use the internet as much as young men (Graph 11).

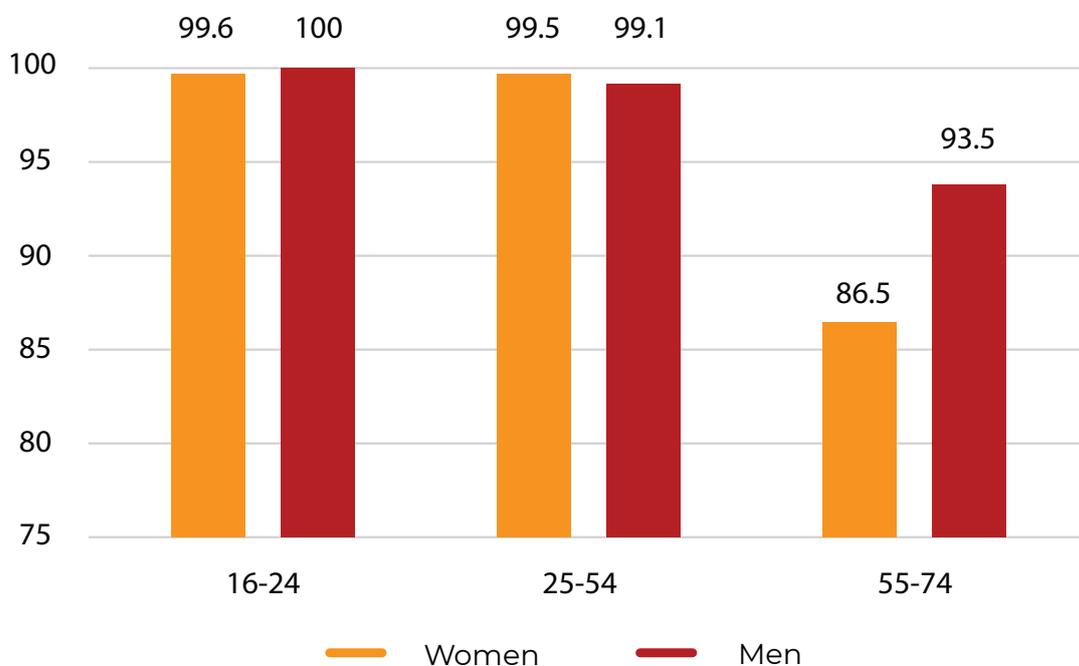
Graph 11: **Use of the internet during the past three months, by gender and age, 2020, in % (SDG indicator 17.8.1)**



Source: SORS, Use of information and communication technologies

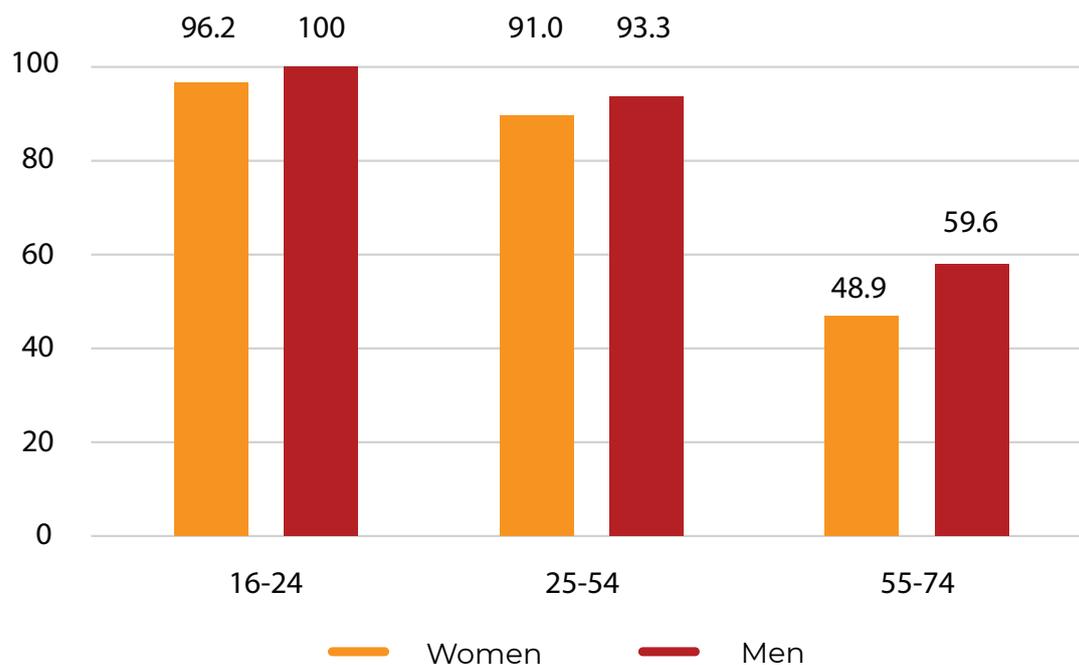
The use of computers and mobile telephones is also highly widespread among youth. While no significant differences are registered in the use of mobile telephones between young women and young men (Graph 12), there are slight differences in the use of computers, utilised by all young men during the past three months, but not by all young women (Graph 13).

Graph 12: **Use of mobile telephones during the past three months, by gender and age, 2020, in %**



Source: SORS, Use of information and communication technologies

Graph 13: **Use of computers during the past three months, by gender and age, 2020, in %**



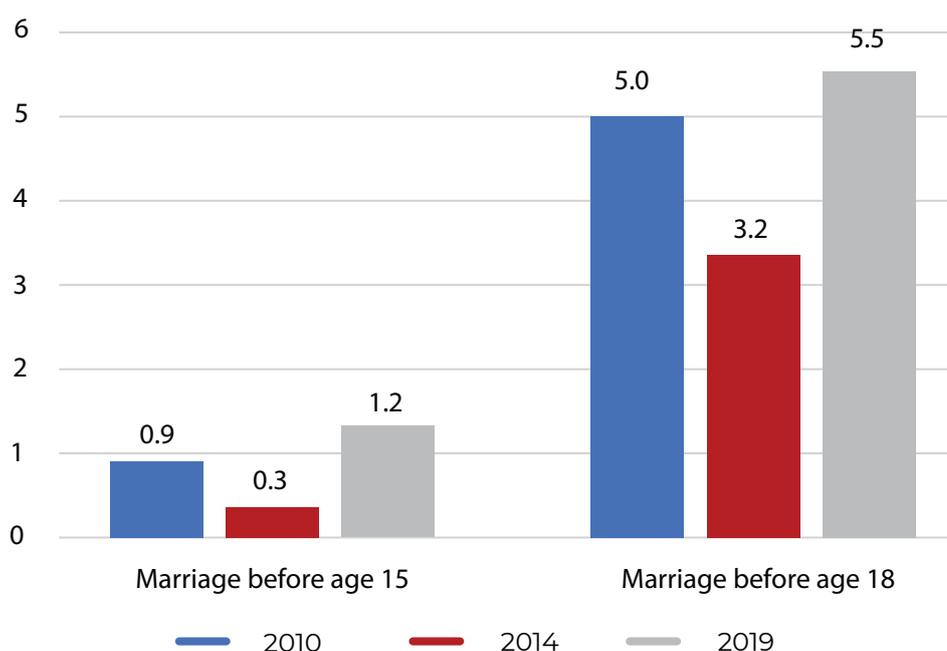
Source: SORS, Use of information and communication technologies

...GENDER INEQUALITIES ARE THE REASON FOR YOUNG WOMEN BEING EXPOSED TO A HIGHER RISK OF EXCLUSION FROM IMPORTANT ASPECTS OF DEVELOPMENT THAN YOUNG MEN...



Young women being married early are under a higher risk of being excluded from education before acquiring qualifications, and then they have lower chances of employment and avoiding the risk of poverty and social exclusion. According to MICS data, there was an increase in the share of women that entered their first marriage before the age of 15 and the age of 18 among young women aged 20-24 (Graph 14).

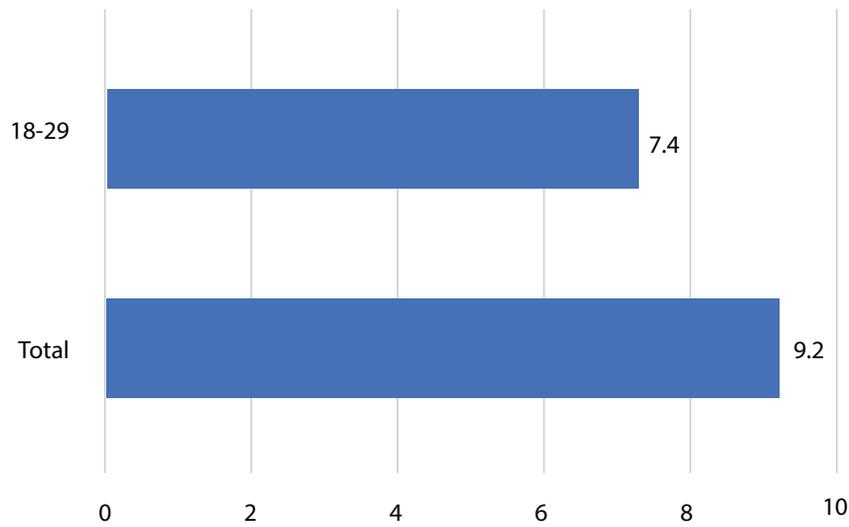
Graph 14: **Proportion of women aged 20-24 years who were married or in a union before age 15 and before age 18, 2010, 2014 and 2019, in % (SDG indicator 5.3.1)**



Source: SORS, UNICEF, MICS

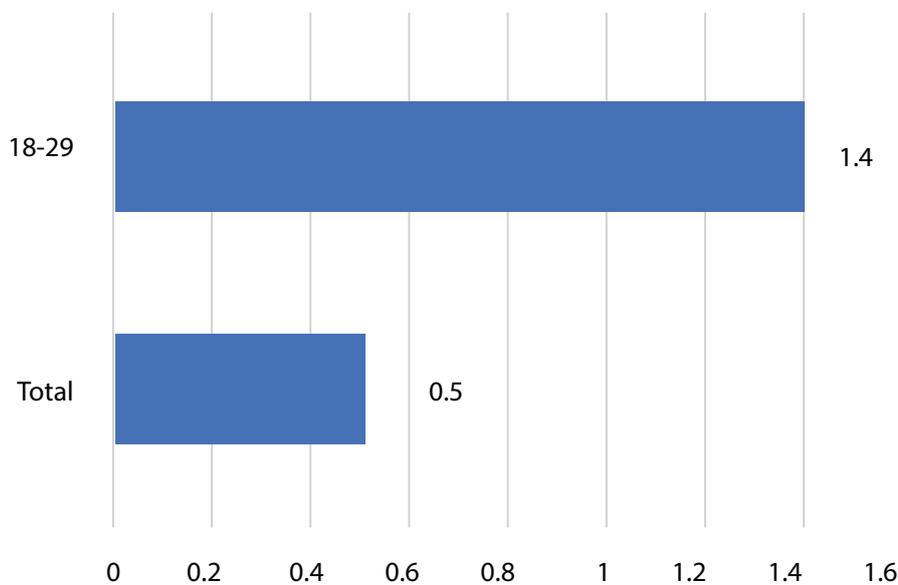
The most extreme form of gender inequality is gender-based violence against women, inhibiting their potential to become involved in various areas of relevance for their development and personal well-being. According to data from a study on the well-being and safety of women implemented by OSCE in 2018, among young women in an intimate partner relationship there is a slightly lower share of those that have experienced physical, sexual or psychological violence from their partner during the past 12 months than in the total sample of women aged 18-74 years, but the share of those who experienced sexual violence from persons who were not their intimate partner is also somewhat higher (Graphs 15 and 16).

Graph 15: **Proportion of women and girls aged 18 to 74 that are or were subjected to physical, sexual or psychological violence by a current or former intimate partner in the previous 12 months, by age, 2018, in % (SDG indicator 5.2.1)**



Source: OSCE, Study on the Well-being and Safety of Women

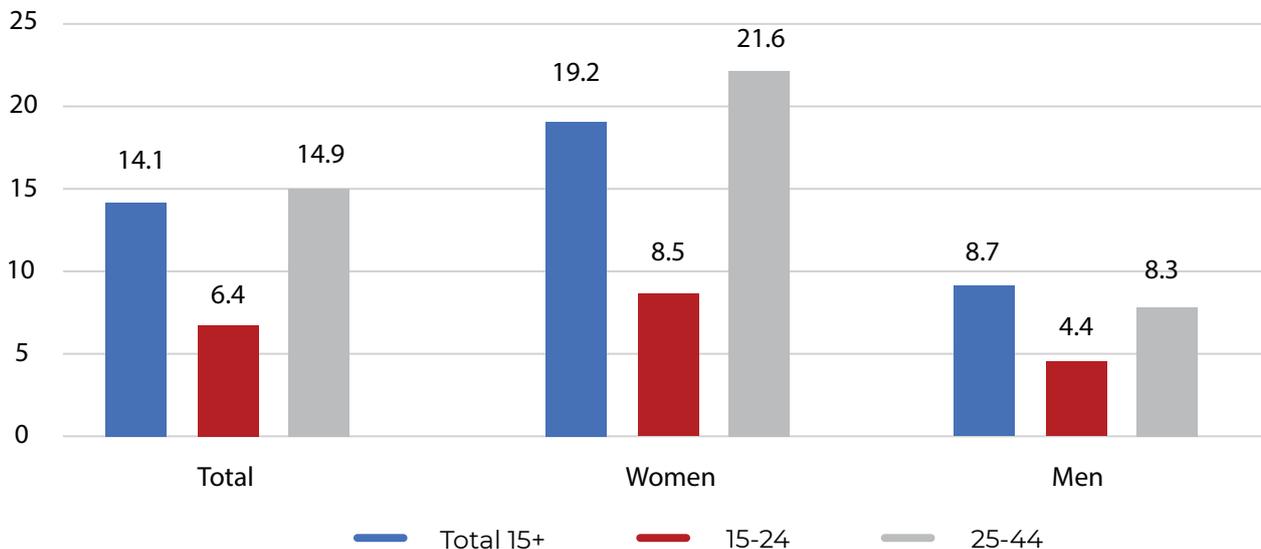
Graph 16: **Proportion of women and girls aged 18 to 74 subjected to sexual violence by persons other than an intimate partner in the previous 12 months, by age, 2018, in % (SDG indicator 5.2.2)**



Source: OSCE, Study on the Well-being and Safety of Women

Young women aged 15-24 spend somewhat less time on unpaid work maintaining the household and caring for the family, but in comparison to their male peers they spend nearly twice as much time performing this work (Graph 17).

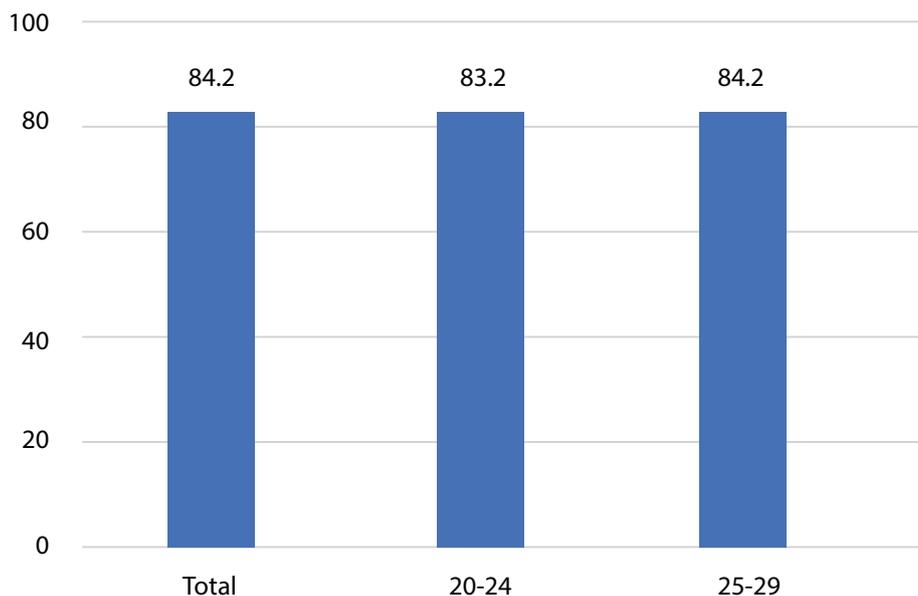
Graph 17: **Proportion of time spent on unpaid domestic and care work, by sex and age, 2015, in % (SDG indicator 5.4.1)**



SORS, Time Use Survey

An important aspect of human rights, related to opportunities for women to be included in development processes and achieving personal welfare, is the opportunity to make independent decisions regarding their sexual and reproductive health, and family planning. This would make the transition towards parenthood better harmonised with other important transitions faced by youth, such as the transition from education to the labour market, or the transition from the parental home to independent living. Data indicates that still not all young women make these decisions independently (Graph 18).

Graph 18: **Proportion of women aged 15-49 years who make their own informed decisions regarding sexual relations, contraceptive use and reproductive health care, 2019, in % (SDG indicator 5.6.1)**



Source: SORS, UNICEF, MICS

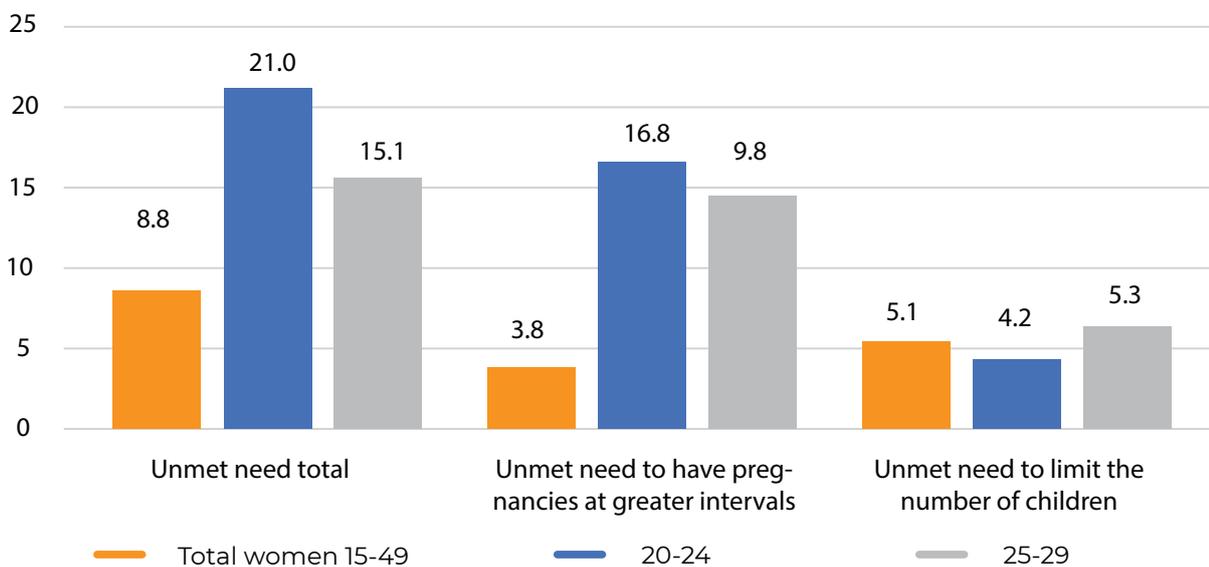
**SDG 3.7.1; 3.7.2; 3.8.1b;**

...A SIGNIFICANT NUMBER OF YOUNG WOMEN ARE STILL NOT USING CONTRACEPTIVES OR RELY ON MODERN CONTRACEPTION METHODS IN FAMILY PLANNING, BUT THERE IS A VISIBLE DECREASE IN THE NUMBER OF EARLY CHILD BEARING, AND PROGRESS IN THE ANTENATAL CARE AND ENSURING MEDICALLY ASSISTED BIRTHS...



More than one fifth of young women aged 20-24 do not meet their need for contraception, significantly more than among young women aged 25-29 and compared to the total population of reproductive-age women (15-49). Unmet needs for contraception are primarily related to having pregnancies at greater intervals, and in fewer cases to limiting the number of children (Graph 19).

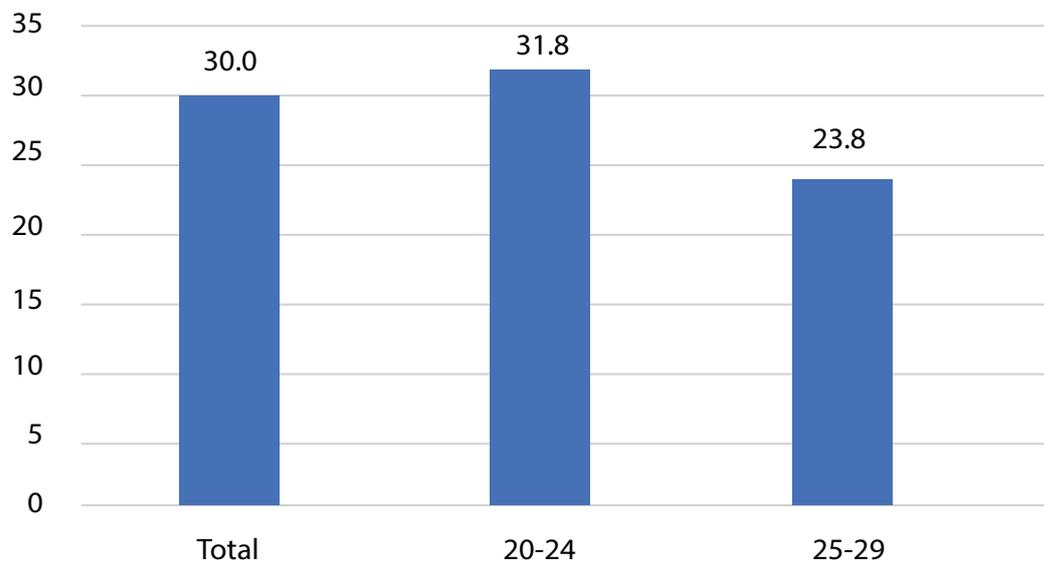
**Graph 19: Women aged 15-49 years, currently married or in a common-law marriage, and having unmet needs for family planning, by age, 2019, in %**



Source: SORS, UNICEF, MICS

Family planning for the majority of women still relies on traditional methods of contraception, while only a smaller share of young women (just under a third in the 20-24 group and even less than a fourth in the 25-30 group) rely on modern contraception methods that are more reliable and provide for more efficient family planning (Graph 20).

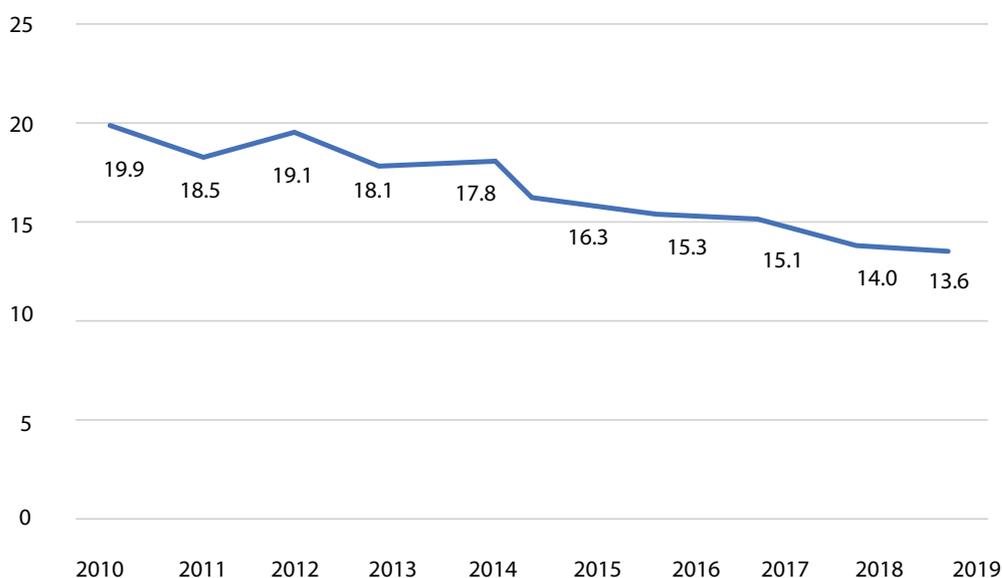
**Graph 20: Proportion of women of reproductive age (15-49) who have their need for family planning satisfied with modern methods, total and for young women (20-24, 25-29), 2019, in % (SDG indicator 3.7.1)**



Source: SORS, UNICEF, MICS

Positive development processes are visible in the continuous decrease of the birthing rate among adolescents aged 15-19, decreasing by 6.3 pp between 2010 and 2019 (Graph 21).

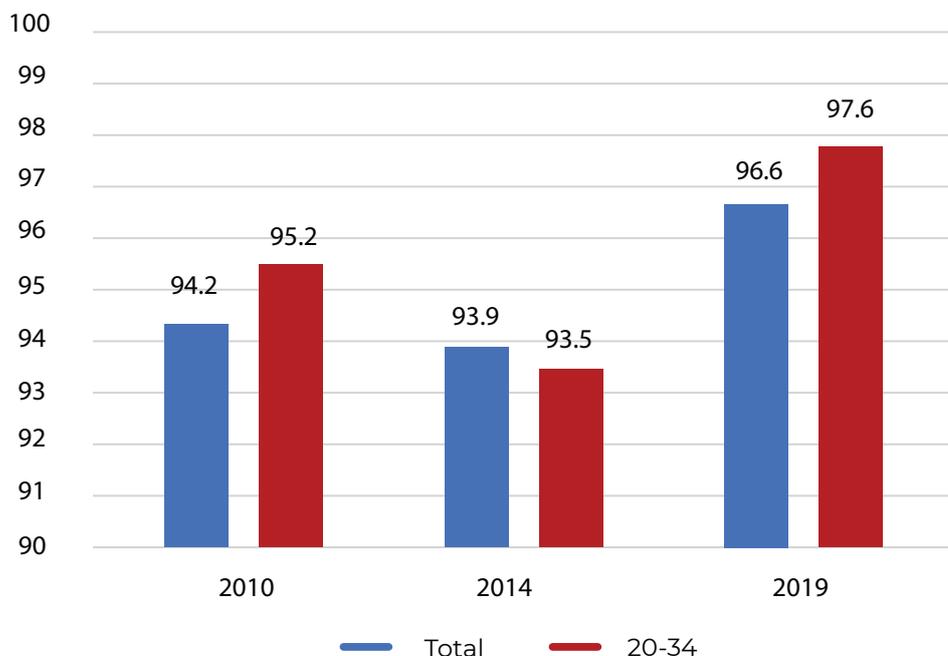
**Graph 21: Adolescent birth rate (aged 15-19 years) per 1000 women in that age group, 2010-2019 (SDG indicator 3.7.2)**



Source: SORS, UNICEF, MICS

Prenatal healthcare of women is showing progress between 2010 and 2019, with a high percentage of young women that had four or more visits to the doctor during pregnancy (Graph 22). Furthermore, in 2019, nearly all births (99.9%) for women aged 20-34 that gave live birth during the past two years were conducted with the supervision of skilled health personnel (SDG indicator 3.1.2).

Graph 22: **Percentage of coverage by essential health services: antenatal care (four or more visits), by age, 2010, 2014 and 2019 (SDG indicator 3.8.1b)**



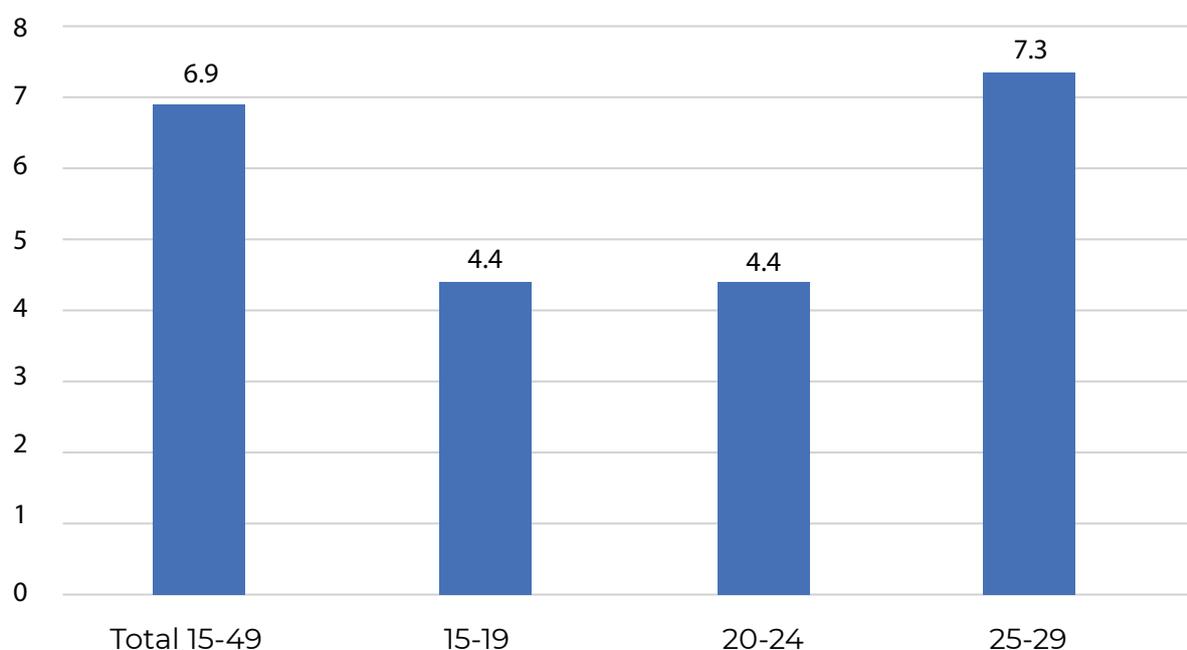
Source: SORS, UNICEF, MICS

...DISCRIMINATION IS AN EXCLUSION MECHANISM, AND EXPERIENCES OF DISCRIMINATION DURING THE PAST YEAR HAVE BEEN REPORTED BY A RELATIVELY LOW SHARE OF YOUNG WOMEN; THE SHARE INCREASES WITH THE AGE OF RESPONDENTS, POTENTIALLY INDICATING THE RAISING OF AWARENESS AND RECOGNITION OF DISCRIMINATION...



One key mechanism for the exclusion of certain groups of youth from development is discrimination. Data on such experiences are not available for the entire youth population, only for young women. According to the findings of the MICS survey from 2019, during the 12 months prior to the survey, a relatively small percentage of young women felt discriminated (SDG indicator 16.b.1 and 10.3.1, Graph 23). The percentage of women reporting discrimination is higher among “older young” women (25-29), potentially indicating not only higher exposure to discrimination, but also higher awareness of discrimination and its recognition (SDG indicator 16.3.1).

Graph 23: **Proportion of reproductive age women (15-49) 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, 2019, in % (SDG indicators 16.b.1 and 10.3.1)**



Source: SORS, UNICEF, MICS





Република Србија – Републички завод за статистику  
Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia

SEPTEMBER 2021