



# IMPACT EVALUATION OF THE PROJECT STRENGTHENING YOUNG ROMA FAMILIES IN SERBIA

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# List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

ADRA Serbia	Foundation Adventist Development and Relief Agency – ADRA Serbia
CEE	Central and Eastern Europe
FAS	Failed Asylum Seekers
MEAL	Monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning
NGO	Nongovernmental organization
OECD	The organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
WAS	Weak Asylum Seekers
WB	World Bank

# Introduction

***“Integration is when I feel equal to everyone.  
That I belong somewhere no matter what.”***

***Milan, 34***

**A**DRA has implemented programs dedicated to the social inclusion of Roma into Serbian society since 2016. During these years, they have mainly been focused on education and employment as the two core aspects of integration or preconditions, which are in alignment with the *Strategy of Social Inclusion of Roma for the period from 2016 to 2025*. On the other hand, it is important to know that the mainstream political discourse is primarily focused on the institutional integration of Roma identity according to mainstream political processes which are based on a market economy. (Kovats, 2013, p.127) This creates inadequate conditions for their integration which do not analyze in a comprehensive manner all needs and how has switch to the neoliberal system influenced their economic independence. Following industrialization and urbanization, Roma had a specific number of occupations (such as training animals, collecting scrap metal, handicrafts, street entertainment, seasonal agricultural work, itinerant trade, etc.) which enabled them to fulfill a particular social function and earn a living, whether they had an itinerant lifestyle or not. (Council of Europe, 1999, p.4) However, nowadays labor market became increasingly competitive, and persons who lack skills compatible to the urban industrial societies are excluded from many types of employment.

This evaluation paper is mainly focused on economic empowerment and education, the two significant aspects of social inclusion, and on the risk of labor migration which may potentially lead to trafficking in persons and labor exploitation. The idea is to show how has the project supported social inclusion and to find new ways of support which will be based on the needs of the beneficiaries.

# About the Project

**A**DRA Serbia in cooperation with ADRA Germany and with the support of the German Federal Foreign Office has been implementing the project *Strengthening Young Roma Families in Serbia* (Project) since 2016. The main partners in the Project are: “Branko Pesic” Primary School for Adult Education, Foundation SOS Children’s Villages Serbia, and NGO Know How Center. The period of the Project implementation is 2016-2020. Throughout this overall period, specific objectives have changed and adapted based on the needs of the direct beneficiaries of the project, the Roma community in Belgrade and Novi Sad.

Brief overview of the project goals and results



The overall goal of the project is to contribute to social inclusion and poverty reduction of Roma in Serbia. There are various versions and definitions of social inclusion developed by international organizations, scholars in academia, and nongovernmental organizations. Mostly used by international organizations (UN, WB, and others) is the following: *Social inclusion is the process of improving the terms on which individuals and groups take part in society – improving the ability, opportunity, and dignity of those disadvantaged on the basis of their identity.* It is a multidimensional process that encompasses social, political, cultural, and economic dimensions, and operates at various social levels. ADRA Serbia has identified 3 key dimensions in which Roma citizens in Serbia struggle the most – social, educational, and economic where they have unequal access to resources, denial of opportunities, and unequal participation.

To assure adequate opportunities, resources, and participation throughout the project implementation, the team has implemented each of the Common Basic Principles of the European Platform for Roma Inclusion which are:

1. Constructive, pragmatic, and non-discriminatory policies
2. Explicit but not exclusive targeting
3. Inter-cultural approach
4. Aiming for the mainstream
5. Awareness of the gender dimension
6. Transfer of evidence-based policies
7. Use of European Union instruments
8. Involvement of regional and local authorities
9. Involvement of civil society
10. Active participation of the Roma

At the very beginning of the project, the focus was on building the skills and finding the opportunities for inclusion of Roma inside of the community. ADRA Serbia through their MEAL mechanisms and participatory approach has realized that the employment opportunities in Serbia are not sufficient for creating sustainable solutions and their program beneficiaries need support in establishing enterprises. So, they have created in the last phase of the project (2018-2020) programs for supporting entrepreneurship among Roma through grants and education.

	2015/2016	2016/2017	2017/2018	2019/2020
Overall goal	Contribution to a poverty reduction of returnees (failed asylum seekers) and would-be asylum seekers in Germany – of Roma nationality living in Belgrade, and reduction of unfounded asylum seeking.	Contribute to social inclusion and poverty reduction of Roma in Serbia.	Contribute to social inclusion and poverty reduction of Roma in Serbia.	Contribute to social inclusion and poverty reduction of Roma in Serbia.
Sub-goals	Increased educational preparedness for employment, and creation of conditions for sustainable self-employment, and reducing number of Roma asylum seekers in Germany.	The number of Roma families from Zemun and Novi Beograd with an increased primary and professional training and social skills as much as the chance to improve their income opportunities, is raised.	There is an effective enabling environment that increases and promotes income opportunities of Roma in Belgrade city area, focused on an inclusive labor market and decent job creation.	There is an effective enabling environment that increases and promotes income opportunities of Roma in Belgrade and Novi Sad city areas, focused on an inclusive labor market, decent job creation and empowering existing Roma led business initiatives.
Results				
R1	Roma families, FAS and WAS, informed about negative aspects of asylum seeking and income generation opportunities in Belgrade	Roma started their enrollment into primary education	Roma people in Belgrade have better access to education and started their enrolment into primary education.	Roma people in Belgrade and Novi Sad have better access to education and started their enrolment into the education support program and/or primary education.

R2	Poverty rate of Roma families significantly reduced through individual capacity development for income generation opportunities.	Roma completed vocational/ professional training and are able to work independently.	Roma people in Belgrade have better access to employment – and started their own entrepreneurial activities and/or organized within cooperatives.	40 Roma have better access to employment through completion of vocational and/or on the job trainings, support in new employment or self-employment.
R3		Roma families are strengthened by the family programs and by the local leader promotion.	40 Roma families improved their social skills and coverage of social benefits by the family programs.	40 Roma families improved their social skills and coverage of social benefits by the Community centre program or/and family programs.

Table 1 – Presentation of the overall goals, subgoals, and results for the period 2015 – 2020.



# RESULTS

## SOCIAL DIMENSION OF SOCIAL INCLUSION

The social dimension represents inclusion in social services and relations. Services represent public transportation, youth clubs and play facilities, center for social welfare, health care, and services inside the home. Social relations cover five dimensions - non-participation in common activities (defined as being regarded as essential by a majority of the population); — the extent and quality of social networks; — support available in normal times and in times of crisis; — disengagement from political and civic activity; and — confinement, resulting from fear of crime, disability or other factors. (Hayes, Gray and Edwards, 2008, p.10)

- Coordinating Body is formed and consists of 4 stakeholders who support the project implementation since 2015.
- 2000 FAS and WAS, mostly Roma, living in 4 settlements, are informed about negative aspects of seeking asylum in Germany through brochures, and bi-monthly outreach meetings in Roma settlements (conducted by public and Roma NGO representatives) since 2015.
- 5033 humanitarian packages and material support were delivered since 2015.
- From 2015 until 2017 Adra has conducted 162 outreach workshops to inform and motivate Roma in 4 communities to actively get involved in the programs.
- Social skills and competences of 600 beneficiaries are improved through different workshops since 2016.
- 222 families and 516 youth members participated in Community Center activities through individual and group counselling since 2016.
- 504 children participated in Super Bus Workshops were conducted since 2015.
- 5 local leaders have participated in workshops and their leaderships skills are improved during 2016 and 2017.
- 5033 humanitarian packages and material support were delivered since 2015.
- Advocacy actions – 1 media campaign, 2 videos and 1 national conference were conducted since 2016.

Most of the activities reached 100% of their set target. Improvement of social skills and competencies was planned for 150 beneficiaries, but by the end of the project, 600 beneficiaries participated in this activity. Also, initially, it was planned to have 8 local leaders who will improve their leadership skills, but by the end of the project, 5 local leaders participated in this activity.

## EDUCATIONAL DIMENSION OF SOCIAL INCLUSION

**Inclusion in education involves, but it is not limited to it** - Supporting everyone to feel that they belong. - Increasing participation for children and adults in learning and teaching activities, relationships and communities of local schools. - Reducing exclusion, discrimination, barriers to learning and participation. - Restructuring cultures, policies and practices to respond to diversity in ways that value everyone equally. - Linking education to local and global realities. - Learning from the reduction of barriers for some children to benefit children more widely. - Viewing differences between children and between adults as resources for learning. - Acknowledging the right of children to an education of high quality in their locality. - Improving schools for staff and parents/carers as well as children. - Emphasizing the development of school communities and values, as well as achievements. - Fostering mutually sustaining relationships between schools and surrounding communities. - Recognizing that inclusion in education is one aspect of inclusion in society. - Putting inclusive values into action. - Viewing every life and every death as of equal worth. (Robo, 2014, p. 196)

- 222 beneficiaries graduated from vocational/professional training since 2015.
- 40 beneficiaries received passports competences during 2019 and 2020.
- 37 beneficiaries finished primary education since 2015.
- 40 beneficiaries attended and received certificates for IT/ business literacy workshops, conducted in Primary School for Adult Education “Branko Pesic” in 2015 and 2016.
- 64 children attended concurrent auxiliary recreational-educational courses in “Branko Pesic” during 2019 and 2020.

All objectives achieved their planned target (100%) except two:

- 30 beneficiaries more than planned graduated from vocational/professional training,
- and 3 more beneficiaries than planned were enrolled and completed primary education.

## ECONOMIC DIMENSION OF SOCIAL INCLUSION

The economic dimension is related to labor market inclusion which should allow and encourage all people of working age to participate in paid work and provide a framework for their development without any discrimination. (OECD, 2013)

- 30 beneficiaries have been supported with subgrants or support for establishing entrepreneurship since 2015.
- 179 beneficiaries visited business related workshops and strengthened their entrepreneurial skills since 2016.
- 177 beneficiaries have been supported in their search for employment through job searching mentorship since 2016.
- 49 beneficiaries completed "On the Job" training / internship since 2016.
- 126 beneficiaries have received a toolbox since 2016.
- 49 beneficiaries were employed or self-employed by the end of the project.
- 10 Roma led entrepreneurships were supported for better positioning in the market, enhancement of business capacities and promotion during 2019 and 2020.

All objectives were achieved at least 100%, except for the following that exceeded the target:

- 9 beneficiaries visited business-related workshops and completed "On the job" training/mentorship more than planned,
- 17 beneficiaries were supported in their search for employment more than planned,
- 11 beneficiaries received toolbox more than planned.

Based on the project reports, expected results of social, economic and education dimension of social inclusion were reached to its 100%.

# The Aim of Pilot Survey

This descriptive cross-sectional study aimed to show how the Project has enhanced the accomplishment of economic and educational rights of Roma in Belgrade and Novi Sad, Serbia. The main objective of this study is to acquire a fuller insight into the main obstacles Roma face regarding education and economic empowerment in Serbia, as well as to create recommendations for improvements of the existing system of direct support.

# Limitations of Pilot Survey

**D**ue to the COVID19 pandemic, methods of collecting data were limited. In order to protect beneficiaries and collect significant data, ADRA's team has decided to conduct telephone interviews. Telephone interview was used as a method of collecting data from Roma beneficiaries and professionals, which carries certain limitations as behavior and body language of the interviewees could not be observed and this would be a significant input related to the quality of gathered information. Considering that the pilot survey was conducted on a sample of 80 Roma project beneficiaries, which is not representative, the main findings are indicative and as such cannot be generalized and applied to the entire Roma population in Serbia. However, it is applicable for the project beneficiaries.

Research questions about the impact of the project were limited to education, economic empowerment, migration and the risk behaviors related to the migration. Given that this is a pilot survey conducted in a short period (from September 2, to September 15, 2020) due to the COVID19 pandemic, the survey primarily represents a starting point for further in-depth qualitative and quantitative research that include indirect aspects of the project which influence the quality of life of Roma people.

# Methodology of Pilot Survey

The pilot survey used an omnibus field questionnaire specially designed for the beneficiaries of the project (Roma in Belgrade and Novi Sad) and qualitative questionnaires for professionals and a guidebook, which were previously prepared within the project. The questionnaire for the beneficiaries of the project consisted of 30 questions: 11 open-ended and 19 closed-ended. The qualitative questionnaire for the professionals consisted of 12 open-ended questions. Responses were obtained through short telephone interviews (lasting 10 to 15 minutes) carried out by researchers who are not engaged in the project. During the interviews, the following principles were respected: voluntariness, informed consent, and full participation of the participants. The participants were previously informed about the purpose of the interview, that it was anonymous, about the way in which collected data will be used, but also that they are not obliged to participate in the interview if they do not want to, nor to respond to all the asked questions. Each participant was informed that he or she can ask all the questions of interest to them, related to the research and that all the necessary information can be obtained before, during, or after the interview. All data were collected impartially and in agreement with the participants. The research was conducted during September 2020, in the following cities: Belgrade and Novi Sad in Serbia. Descriptive statistics and T test were used in the analysis of the collected data. The entire analysis was conducted using SPSS, version 20.0.0 (IBM). Excerpts from four life stories collected from the project team and beneficiaries of the project, which reflect the direct experience of education and economic empowerment opportunities in Serbia, are also an integral part of this report. Reflection from professionals represent a significant part of the impact evaluation that is presented in each part of the results section and is crucial for further development of the project.

# Characteristic of the Sample

A pilot survey was conducted at 2 cities, Belgrade and Novi Sad in Serbia. The research included 80 beneficiaries of the projects, 44 male (55%) and 36 female (45%) respondents above 18 years old. From 2016 until 2020 ADRA has supported 225 Roma from Belgrade and Novi Sad. In conducting impact evaluation, more than 1/3 of project beneficiaries were interviewed to assess the project's influence on their lives. The participants who were not reached have changed their phone numbers and for that reason did not participate in the research.

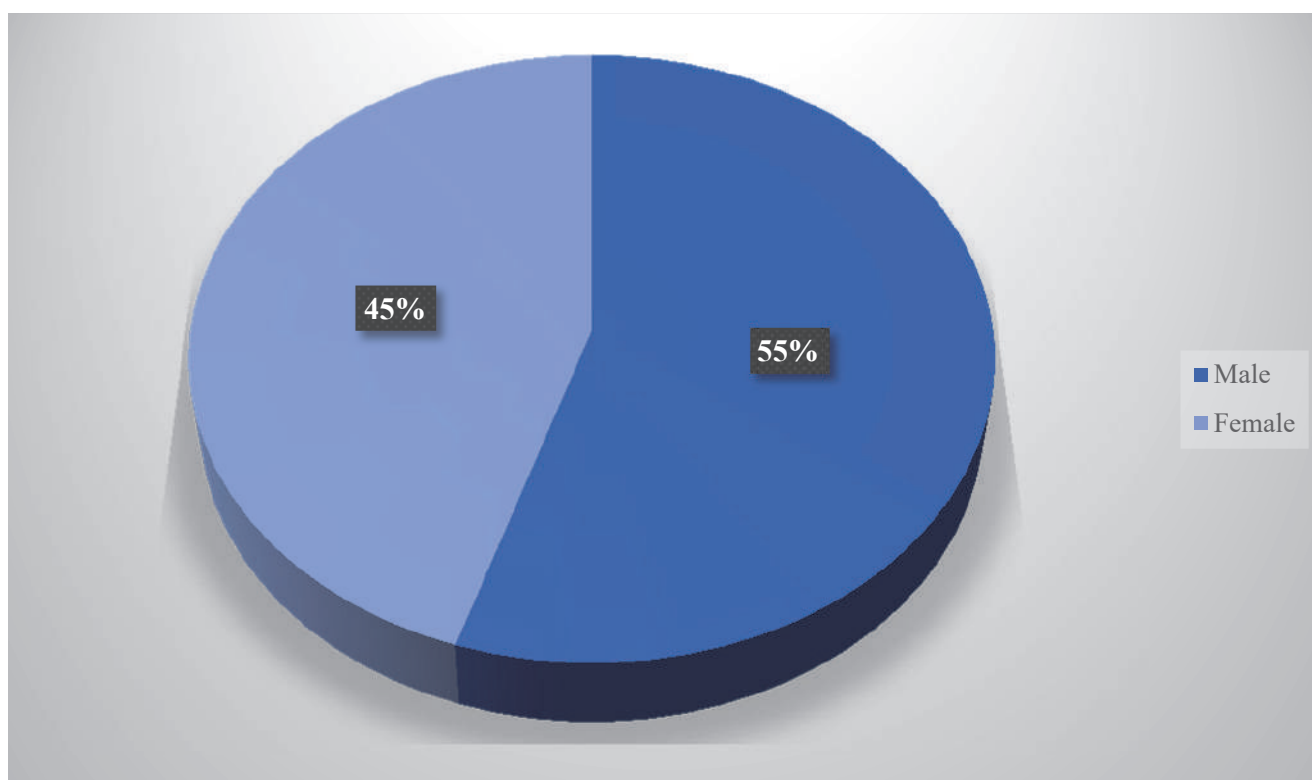


Figure 1 – Display of the distribution of respondents by gender

The average age of the participants was 34.4 – the youngest participant was 18 years old, and the oldest 53 years old. Most of the participants were in partner relation (married, extramarital union, relationship) – 54 (68%). 42 participants (68%) had a household with more than 5 members. The largest household has 15 members and the smallest has 1 member. Even though 68% of participants have households bigger than a typical household in Serbia<sup>1</sup>, the maximum number of em-

<sup>1</sup> According to Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia, the typical household in Serbia has three members.

ployed household members is 5. Only 1 respondent (1%) had 5 employed members, and 13 (16%) respondents did not have employed members. Out of 80 respondents, 36 (45%) had 1 employed member, 20 respondents had 2 employed members (25%), 9 participants had 3 employed members (11%), and only 1 respondent had 4 employed family members (1%).

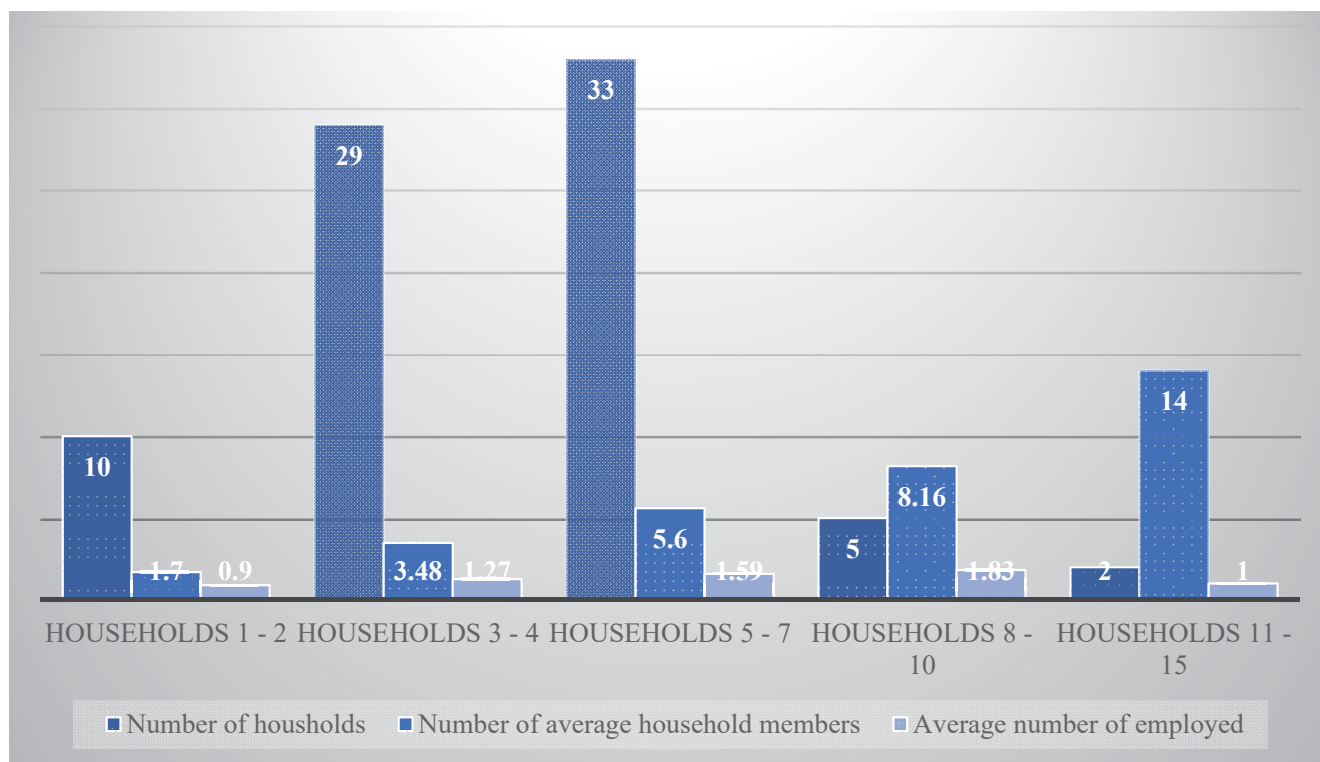


Figure 2 – Display of the number of household members and employed

Figure 2 shows the display of the number of employed in various households. Based on showed data, households with an average of 14 members have on average 1 employed member, and that households with 1.7 average members have 0.9 employed. This data shows poverty is still present among beneficiaries.

When it comes to the type of employment respondents had, 34 respondents are unemployed, 17 are full time employed with a contract (17%), 12 respondents have their own business (15%), 10 simply stated they are employed (12%), 5 are part-time employed (6%), 2 are working without a contract.

Regarding educational background, only 2 respondents had high education – university (2%), 29 of them had high school (36%), 46 respondents (58%) completed elementary school, and 3 are in the process of completing elementary school (4%).

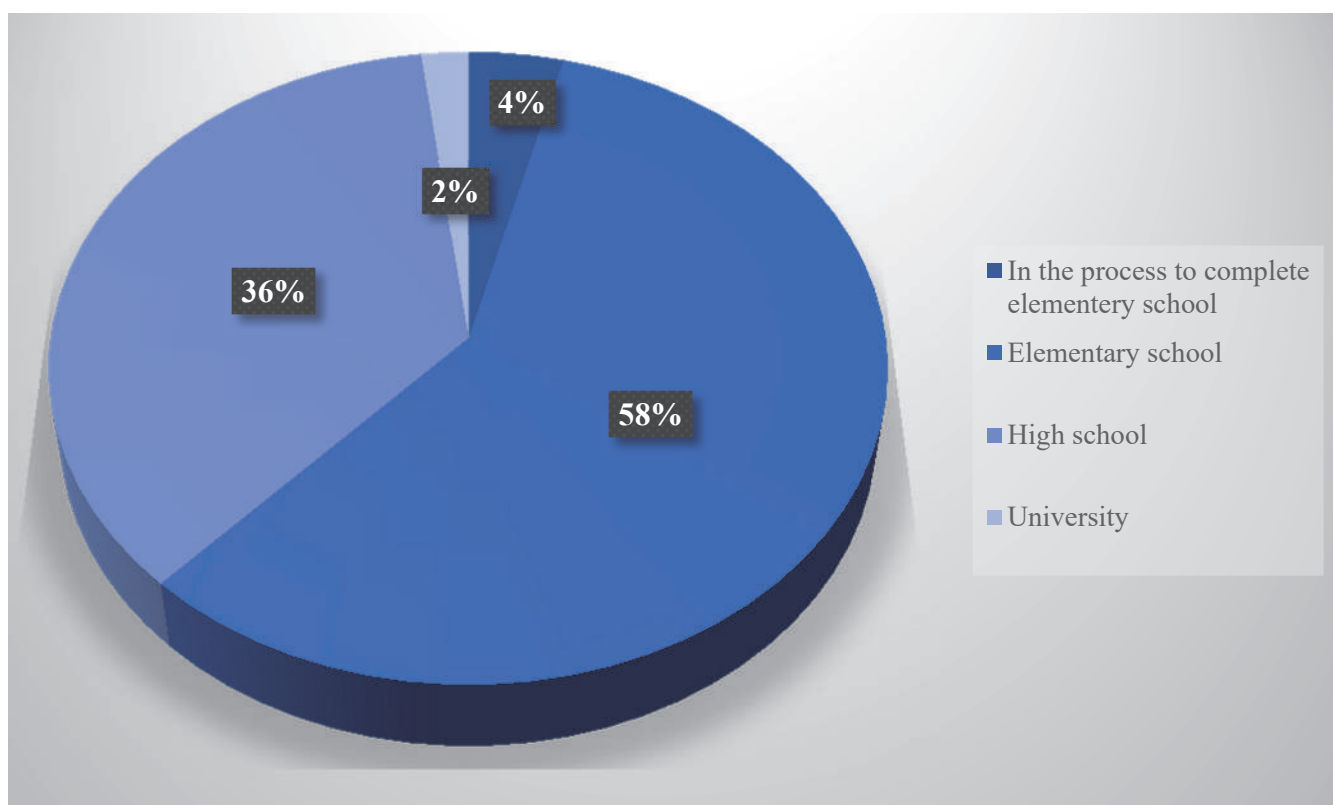


Figure 3 – Display of distribution of the respondents  
by the level of formal education

According to the data respondents themselves gave, most of the participants in the research (67% of them) did not travel to Western European countries to seek asylum or find job. This data should be taken with caution, due to the fact it does not show the real desire or need for migration among respondents.

Based on characteristics of the sample, it can be concluded that Project included economically unstable households with migration experience, or in risk of migrating to Western European countries, and included principle of gender equality.



# Results

The previous chapter gave general information about the participants, collected during this pilot survey. This section will serve to present the results of the research relating directly to education, economic empowerment, and migration. Education and economic empowerment present the main areas of social integration that ADRA Serbia has worked on and the aim is to establish the level of success of the project intervention. On the other hand, the main beneficiaries of the project are Roma citizens who have been returned to Serbia under a readmission agreement and who are at high risk of exploitation. For that very reason, the focus of the research is migration, as well.

## Education

During the five years of project implementation, ADRA has developed a comprehensive approach to improve access to formal and informal education, and entrepreneurial skills of Roma in Serbia. Interviewed professionals consider ADRA's work to be in alignment with the *Strategy of social inclusion of Roma for the period from 2016 to 2025*. Professionals have identified three key aspects of the project related to education:

- Support in completing formal education.
- Enhancing the parental skills of adults.
- And fight against antigypsyism.

*"These aspects represent the core. We need to work with adults to create the conditions for their children to be included in society. Also, we need to work with society and stop antigypsyism. This is where ADRA has a key role."*

*A representative of the school Branko Pesic*

For that very reason, we have evaluated perceptions of education among project beneficiaries. According to the collected and processed data, out of the total number of participants, 93%, consider education important to have a decent life.

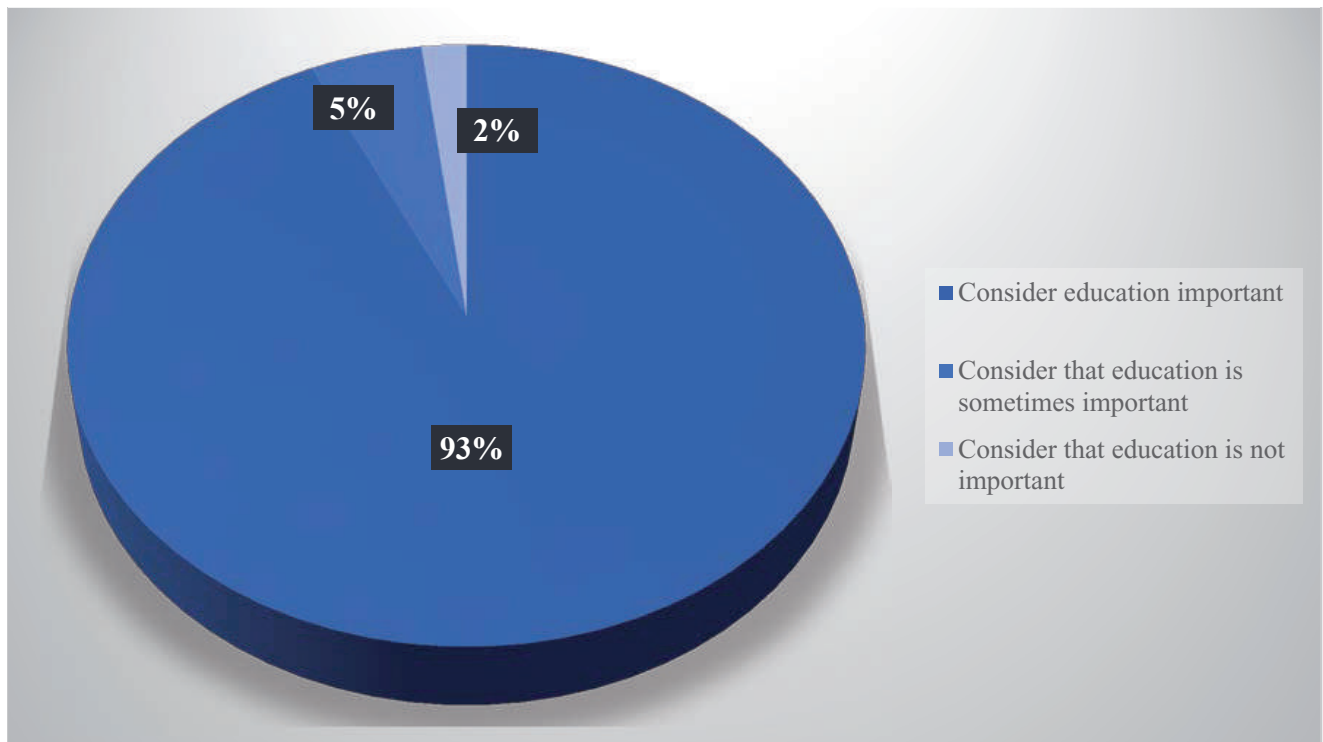


Figure 4 – Percentage of respondents who consider education important for having a good life.

Based on this finding, we can conclude that awareness of the importance of education is high, which is the result of strong joint vision and actions of various stakeholders, NGOs and relevant governmental bodies. On the other hand, partners and project staff have shared that beneficiaries of the project are ambassadors of the project and refer new beneficiaries on a regular basis. This fact shows the project has not only increased skills and knowledge for finding jobs but as well as awareness that education is a precondition for a quality life.

Also, the majority of the participants (90%) consider having better quality access to education with the support of ADRA. An interesting fact is 82% of survey participants were included in educational activities and 18% were included only in grants support for their businesses. Still, 8% of beneficiaries, who were included only in the entrepreneurial grant program, consider having a better quality of education. This fact shows that education is mainstreamed in every part of the program activity. One of the beneficiaries of the project and recipient of the grant has stated during the interview

*"I learn on a daily level how to create a job for myself. Sometimes I get tips from ADRA, sometimes from my neighbor, and sometimes from customers. It is all about communication and every time I communicate with someone from ADRA, I learn new things."*

*Sanja, 27*

Also, 75% of participants consider they gained significant skills and knowledge to find employment through ADRA programs. The fact shows educational programs are providing a necessary set of skills and knowledge which in the long-term, should bring economic empowerment and opportunity for participant's development. After ADRA's educational programs, 56% of survey respondents have found some form of employment. Economic empowerment will be further elaborated in the following section.

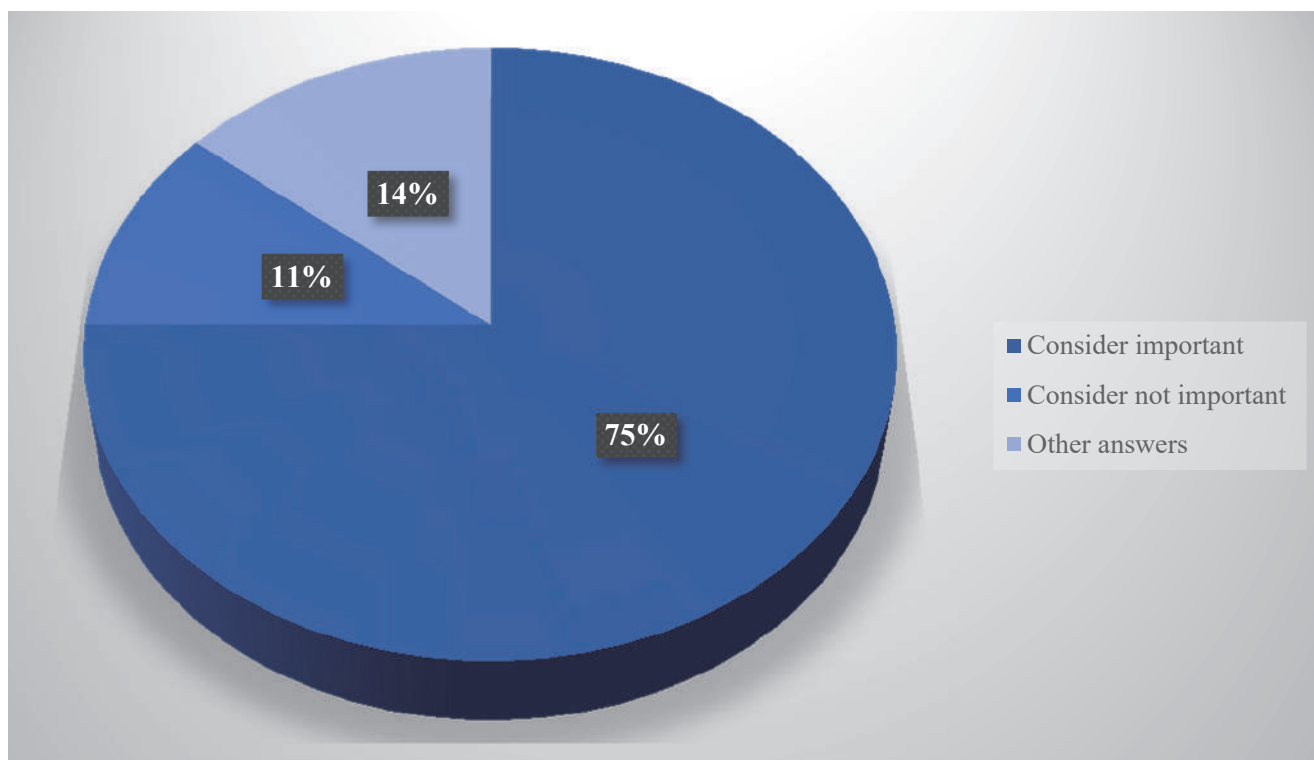


Figure 5 – Percentage of respondents who consider gained skills and knowledge through ADRA's program important for finding a job

Even though education is highly important among project beneficiaries, professionals have identified three major challenges in the field of education and inclusion of Roma:

- Gender-related challenges: Professionals consider that women and girls do not have equal access to education in their communities. Their access is usually denied or limited by male members of their household units. Representatives of the governmental institution consider ADRA's work very important to stop this form of gender-based violence. Direct work with men and boys through very practical workshops which should break prejudices is needed if we want to stop this from happening.

*“Unfortunately, we make a leaflet and we don’t even know if it reached our Roma beneficiaries, but people who work in ADRA, who are there directly in the field can make a difference and work directly on prevention of gender-based violence.”*

*Representative of Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction Unit of the Government of the Republic of Serbia*

- Motivation related challenges: Most of the direct workers see the lack of motivation as the main gap in completing education. Reasons for the lack of motivation are: insufficient financial support to complete the education, prejudices against oneself, and not seeing any future even after finishing school. Professionals have stated there are ways how to approach, support, and build trust with beneficiaries which can create the ground for motivation, but that it is individualized. Most of them consider there should be a guidebook on how to do build trust with beneficiaries and motivate them.

*“For some, it is the course you offer to them, for some, it is the fact that they can hang out with other people somewhere, and for some, it is the internship, but to reach that point they need to trust you. That’s the hardest thing. I think we have enough experience to share and explain how we build trust. Other professionals could learn more from our mistakes and build from our experience.”*

*A representative of the Academia Educativa*

- Inclusion of preschool children: *The Strategy of Social Inclusion of Roma for the period from 2016 to 2025* is especially focused on the education of preschool children because the preschool period is crucial for developing working and learning habits and the fastest way to include anyone in the system. On the other hand, professionals consider work with parents to enhance their parental skills is crucial to have children included in preschool. ADRA’s direct work is considered important to create these preconditions.

Also, some form of human rights defenders’ education is essential. So, each parent can advocate that their child receives equal treatment in preschool and school. According to most of the interviewed professionals (social workers, teachers, policy experts, activists) their capacities should be built to overcome self-stigmatization, understand their human rights and how to fight for them, and whom to ask for help if they cannot get equal treatment. They should become monitoring and advocacy factors that should lead to their political participation.

*"Roma should politically participate in society. There should be quotas for Roma political parties in the Parliament. We need our voice to be heard, our problems. We need to find solutions and the only way to do it is through equal political participation."*

*A representative of the Roma civil society*

## ***Stories of the beneficiaries who were engaged in formal courses and project staff***

As much as the figures, percentages, and statistical research may, to a certain extent, portray the impact project had, it is necessary to also gain insight into how these programs affect people's lives. This will be illustrated by two life stories recorded by our researchers: a story of an interviewed woman beneficiary, and a member of the project staff. Stories have been selected based on the desire of the beneficiaries to make their voices heard and have their life stories told which could motivate other people to engage in education.

### **A good mother or a good worker**

When I was a little girl, everyone used to say that every woman should be a good mother. Nothing else was important. In the community where I grew up women clean, cook, do everything. It is their only job. The reason for existing. I wanted more. I needed more. I would often feel bad because of that. Who am I to need more when so many women are satisfied with what they have? So, I got married and got 4 children thinking that this should be my life. One day I heard about ADRA's program for education and started to think I should give it a try. I was lucky because my husband supported me. In most cases, women are not allowed to study or work, and you can only accept this. There are no alternatives. With ADRA's support, I went back to get a formal education, and now I am attending the sixth grade of elementary school. Also, I finished the course on hairdressing, and I am going to a hairdressing salon every day to improve my skills. I want to learn and one day maybe to open a salon. I think it is very important to have more programs like this, because they may change lives.

Such programs do not just bring the skills, but friends, the opportunity to leave the house and speak with someone who is independent and can tell you that you can achieve everything you want. You get a different perspective, but as well you start to feel like a part of the community. You feel like a human being and that you belong to the world.

## **Against all odds**

A couple of years ago a boy who just graduated from elementary school came to ADRA's program. Our job was to help him choose a course that will bring him a job afterward. On a regular basis, we do market research and have a pool of companies that ask for a referral of employees. So, based on the needs and the interest, talent of our beneficiaries we help them find the right course. He asked to be enrolled in a course to become a barman. We were hesitant because this is not an occupation where you can find a job so easy and on the other hand, it demands some knowledge of the English language to learn how to make cocktails. So, we were advising him not to take this course, but he was very determined that he just wants to be a barman and nothing else. During his course, we found a hotel where he could do his internship, and guess what? He got a job there! That is one of the most prestigious hotels in Serbia. As I know he is building his career as a barman and we did not believe he could do it. The odds were against him, but his hard work and desire were on his side. It was a big lesson for us to always put in the first-place beneficiaries' motivation and then market needs because if they want something, they will get it.

# Economic Empowerment

**A** DRA has supported through the project 228 Roma men and women, and out of this number, 88 beneficiaries were included in some type of the employment program – 59 employed with a contract or self-employed, and 26 are part-time employed. More than one-third of the beneficiaries of the program were interviewed regarding current employment status, perception working rights, and success of business participants are running.

According to the data participants gave, 56% of them have some form of employment – the answer was from full time, part-time jobs, running their own business to working without any form of contract. Most of the types of jobs are related to physical work in construction and commerce. Professionals stated the paid internships after are crucial for beneficiaries' development of working habits, motivation, and finding a job. On the other hand, it is desirable to have some form of working experience to find a job. In order to have more beneficiaries employed, it is important to have programs for their employment. According to the Report on Implementation of Operational Conclusions from the Social Inclusion of Roma in the Republic of Serbia developed by the League of Roma all economic empowerment programs are mainly implemented by the nongovernmental sector and there are major problems in current governmental employment politics. Some of them are that there is no working group within the Working Group for the Drafting of the National Employment Action Plan, and no revision of existing rights regarding the abolition of social rights during public works. Also, nothing has been done following the conclusion on the establishment of a special Roma Employment Fund or mediators for Roma employment. The data show that the work of the nongovernmental sector is crucial as a monitoring factor, but as well as direct service providers who can create solutions for the economic empowerment of Roma in Serbia.

The majority of participants (88%) consider it is important to have a signed contract for the work they do.

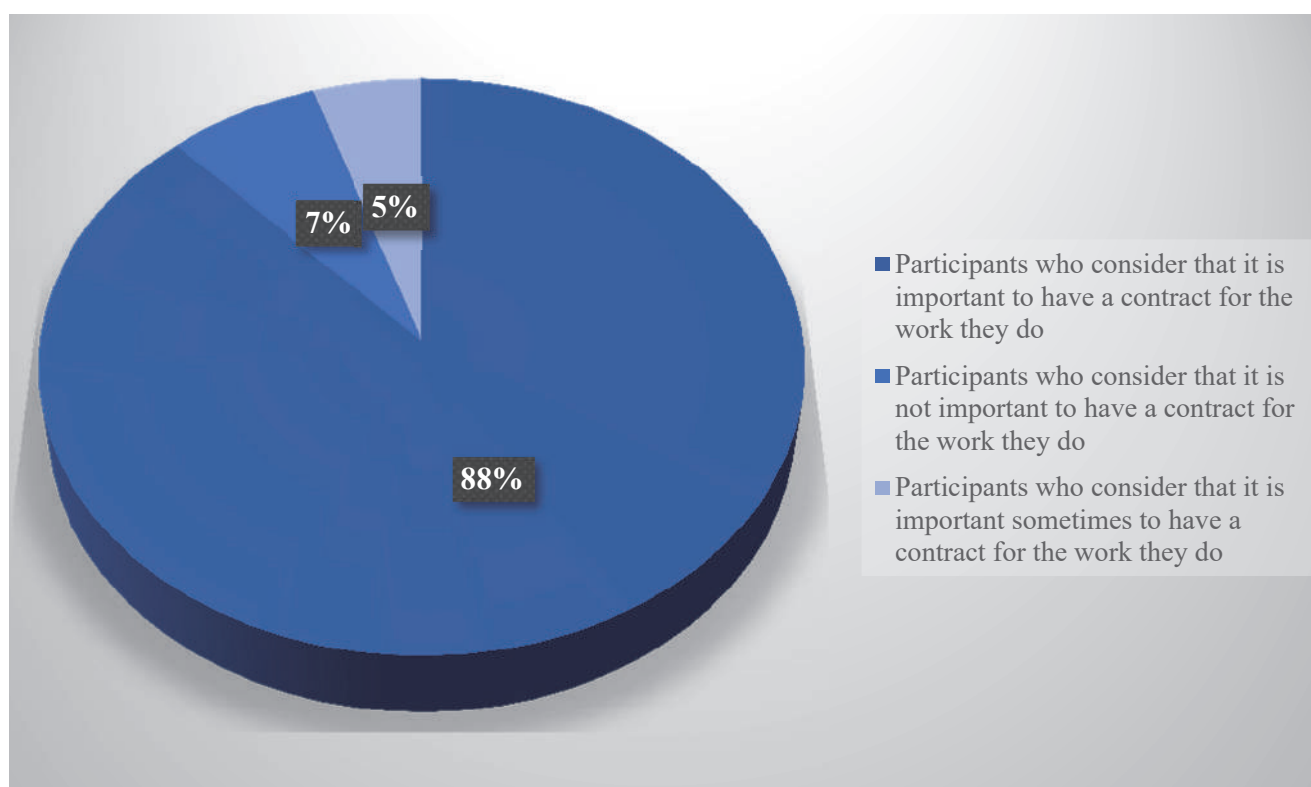


Figure 6 – Percentage of respondents who consider important or not important to have a contract for their job

This fact shows that Roma want to be a part of the legalized work even though very often it is perceived they want to avoid the system. According to the most interviewed professionals (teachers, social workers and activists) most of the Roma in Serbia avoid working in legal terms with a contract, because they will lose their social benefits. Still, a majority of them stated that a contract for the work they do is important, because they sometimes are not getting paid for their work. In case they did not receive payment for the job they did, 51% of participants would wait for their payment without any further legal actions, 19% would just find a new job and forget about the payment, 14% of participants would ask help from someone, and only 2 participants or 3% of participants would take legal actions and suing or reporting the employer to the relevant institutions for non-payment.



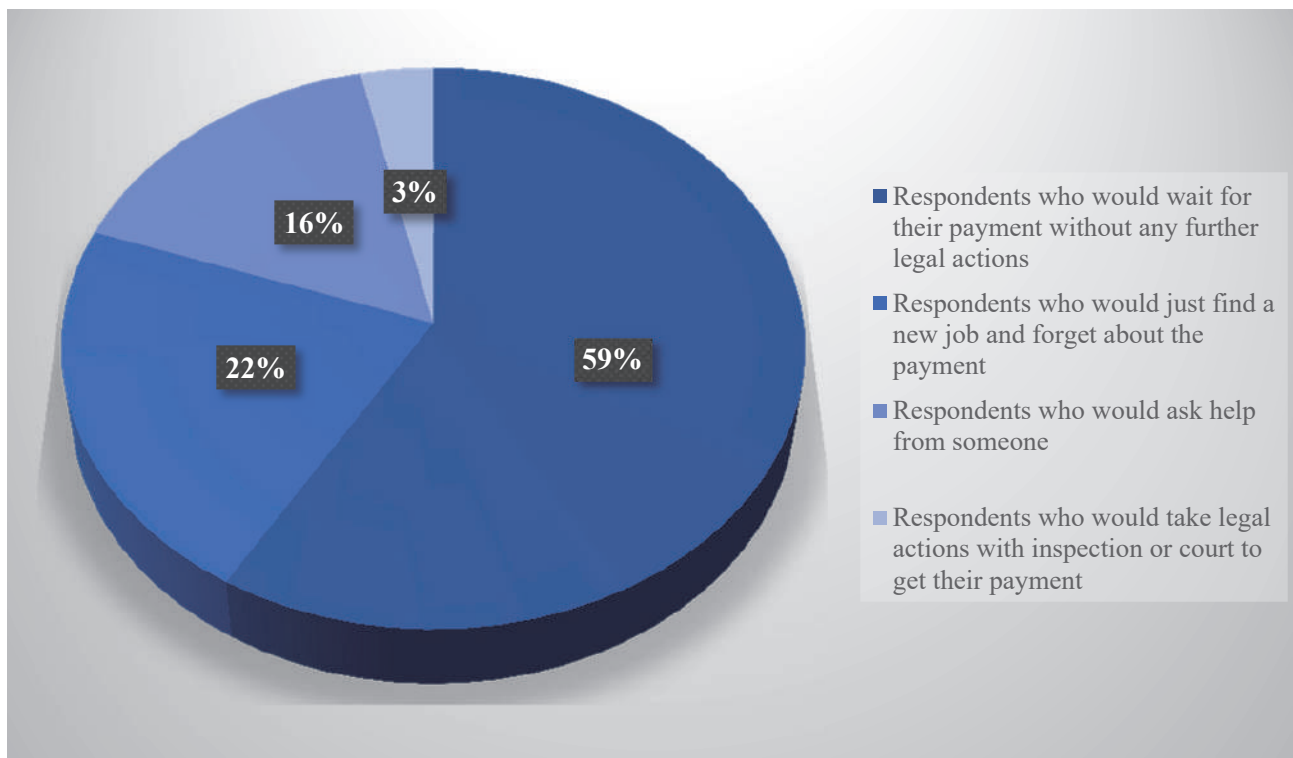


Figure 7 – Percentage of respondents who would take or not take legal actions for the unpaid job

These facts show a high risk of labor exploitation and fraud since most of them would not take any action to protect themselves, and 14% of the participants who stated they would ask help from someone, but did not know whom to ask for help. The figures show that beneficiaries need some form of basic education on labor rights in order to protect them from exploitation or fraud.

When it comes to discrimination in finding a job, 61% of participants consider that women have equal opportunities to find a job in Serbia, 20% consider that women don't have equal opportunities to find a job, and 15% of participants believe that women sometimes have an even higher chance of getting a job.



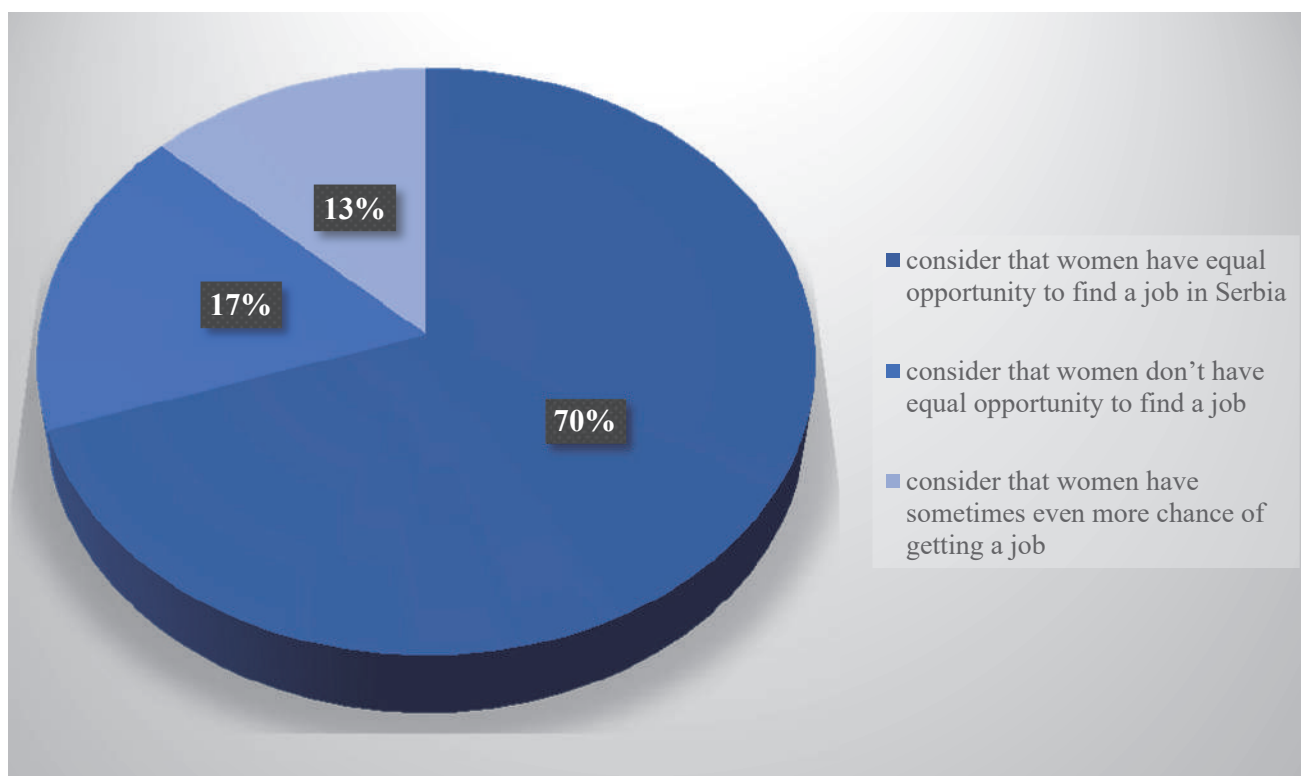


Figure 8 – Percentage of respondents' answers related to women opportunity to find a job

Most of the participants stated women can always find a job in cleaning services if they want to work. According to field researchers who conducted the interviews, most of the participants did not even think about any other job than cleaning for a woman. This fact shows a high need for developing a new image of women that would not be based on stereotypical household jobs but on skills and knowledge. Also, professionals from Academia Edukativa (partner organizations that provides accredited courses) have shared several cases about female participants in the educational program who were offered a job, but their partners or other male members of the family did not allow them to work. Work on the prevention of denial of economic resources as one of the forms of gender-based violence is needed in order to provide gender equality in employment for Roma.

On the other hand, 55% of participants consider Roma do not have equal opportunities to find a job in Serbia, 25% consider to have an equal opportunity to find a job in Serbia, and 20% of participants consider the equal opportunity to find a job depends on the type of the job.

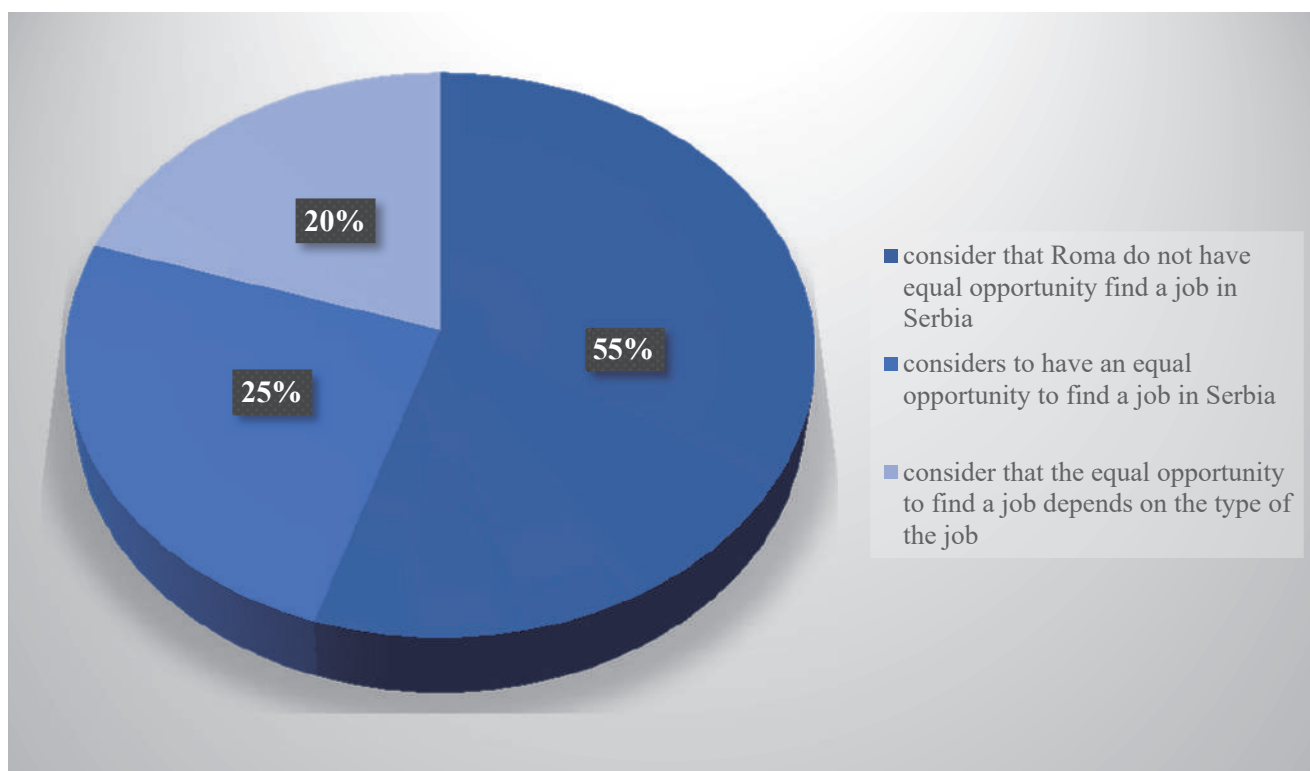


Figure 9 – Percentage of respondents' answers related to equality to find a job

Again, participants were mainly focused on the physically demanding jobs (work on construction sites, cleaning, or similar to those). Their terms of equality are related to survival only, whether they can find a job to survive or not.

*"Of course, I can find a job in Serbia. Not just here, but anywhere. I am Roma and predestine to clean and carry the baggage. I cannot dream big about nice work with an office, a clean T-shirt. That would be a lie. Maybe one day the children of the children of my children can dream about equality in finding a normal job, but not me, and not today."*

*Muhamed, 32*

In order to fight poverty among Roma and create conditions for their economic empowerment, it is needed to create the perception that equality is not a dream, but the condition which should exist now, today. Most of the interviewed professionals (policy workers, teachers, social workers, activists) consider this essential. Further work on understanding what equality means and that it is not only related to survival, but the quality of life is crucial, as well. Elaborated more, Muhamed's

statement reveals the presence of self-stigmatization, a social phenomenon and component of stigmatization which results with individual, and even a group self-devaluation. In order to break stigmatization and stereotyping of Roma as people who can only work low paid jobs that demand strength, there is a need for an interdisciplinary and intersectional approach on a grass root and governmental level. Professionals see ADRA's role as crucial in the fight against antigypsyism which will be one of the main aspects of the EU post-2020 Roma Framework.

When it comes to entrepreneurship, 16 grants recipients on the project were interviewed. ADRA has supported 26 entrepreneurs during the project implementation. Until September 2020, 24 entrepreneurs are still active and working according to the official data of the Business Registry Agency. The research included more than half of the grant recipients. Based on collected data the longest period of running the business is 13 years, and the shortest less is than a year. Most of the respondents stated the first 3 years are crucial for sustaining a business because they still struggle to find clients and create jobs for themselves. The number of employees from starting the business and today, after 13 years or less than a year has not changed. This fact shows financial support is needed to expand the businesses which create conditions for new employments and to become more competitive in the market and consequently increase the profit.

Even though most of the businesses could not expand on a long-term level, 13 out of 16 of the respondents are proud of their business and the success they have.

*"I am proud because of the quality of service I provide. I have regular customers who want my services and knowing that someone wants your car body services instead of others in the city makes you feel good about yourself."*

*Marko, 27*

## ***Stories of the recipient of the grant***

Below is one life story recorded by the researchers, which represent the testimony of an interviewed man. The story has been selected based on the desire of the project beneficiaries to make their voices heard and have their life stories told which could motivate other people to take a risk and start their own business journey.



## Changing my life

I grew up in a poor family and from early childhood, I had to work on a construction sites. My dreams were never big. Just to have a roof over my head, what to eat and someone to love, and to love me. It may sound like a small thing, but it is a big thing. At least for me.

I knew I needed to have a craft in my hands if I wanted to have all of that. That did not happen for years. Of course, my education was interrupted because my parents did not have the means to support me. So, I worked hard jobs in construction for many years. Still, my dreams did not fade. Often, I would dream how my life would look if I had my own business, if I was my boss or the master of my destiny. I would pass by car mechanic workshops thinking how happy they are and fantasizing how I would make things in my workshop. For 23 years I just had a dream and hard-working days, backpain, worries whether I will have bread for tomorrow or money to buy books for my children's school. Then I heard about ADRA's program and started to think about how to make my business. I did not want to get support from them and then close my workshop. I wanted to make something that will last. This would mean to go entirely into a legal system of working, paying taxes without knowing will you earn something, and changing my entire lifestyle. It was not an easy decision. I was scared at first how things would work out, after ADRA's support, how will I become visible in the market. But then somehow things started to figure out. I got a bank account, I could apply for tenders, jobs. I became visible and today I can ask for support from the state, my rights and I can feel dignified and above everything proud that I achieved something in my life.



# Migration

UNDP research on the push and pull factors for migration of Roma from CEE countries shows that three main reasons are: better chances of finding employment; better pay/better working conditions, and better living conditions/social and health care system/political situation. Similar reasoning for migration was established in the research, as well: 82% of participants stated that the main reason is finding social security<sup>2</sup>, 24% of participants stated finding a job, and 5% of participants stated education and better living conditions.<sup>3</sup>

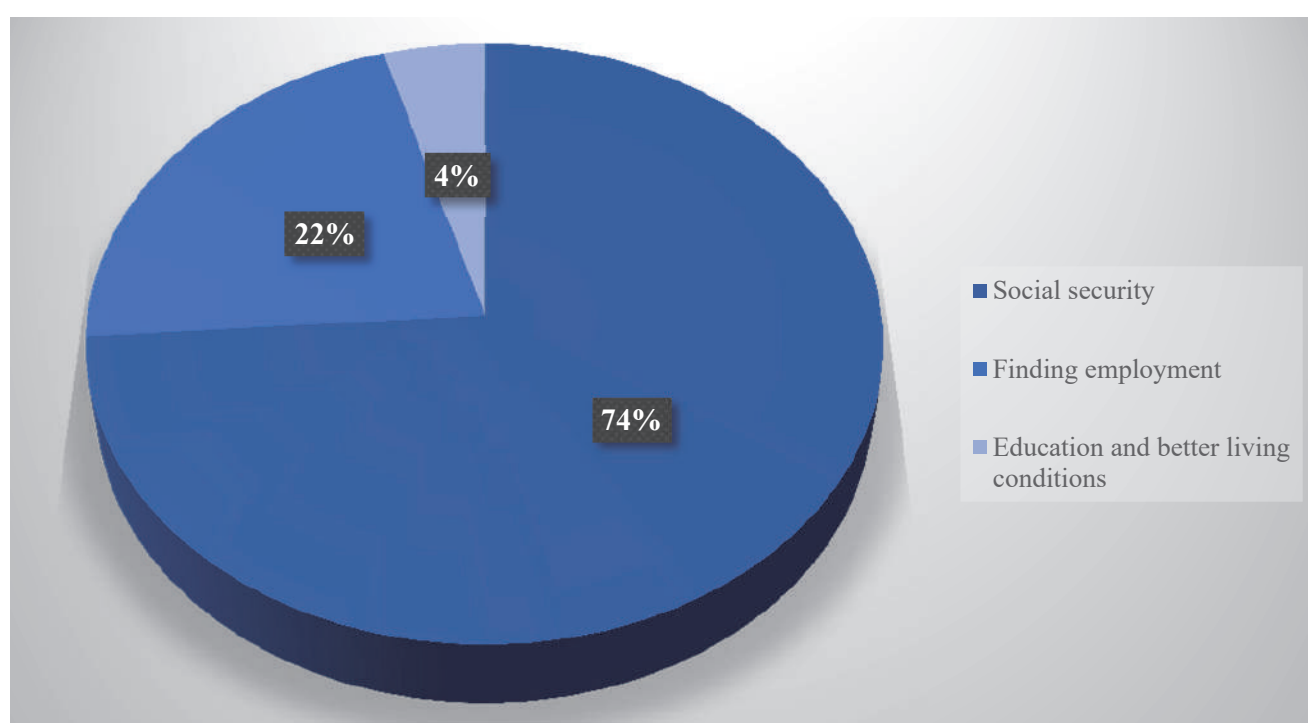


Figure 9 – Percentage of respondents' answers related to the reason for migration

This fact shows most Roma comprehensively seek safety: material income if they lose their job, opportunity for their children to learn, quality healthcare, and good working conditions, etc. Reasons for migration are complex and layered on several levels, still, 88% of respondents stated they would not migrate anywhere if they would have social security, a job, education, and better living conditions in Serbia.

<sup>2</sup> Social security implies stability of social position, material and cultural living conditions, possibilities of production and reproduction of life, creation of conditions for performing work, and social roles.

<sup>3</sup> Participants had the option to give multiple answers.

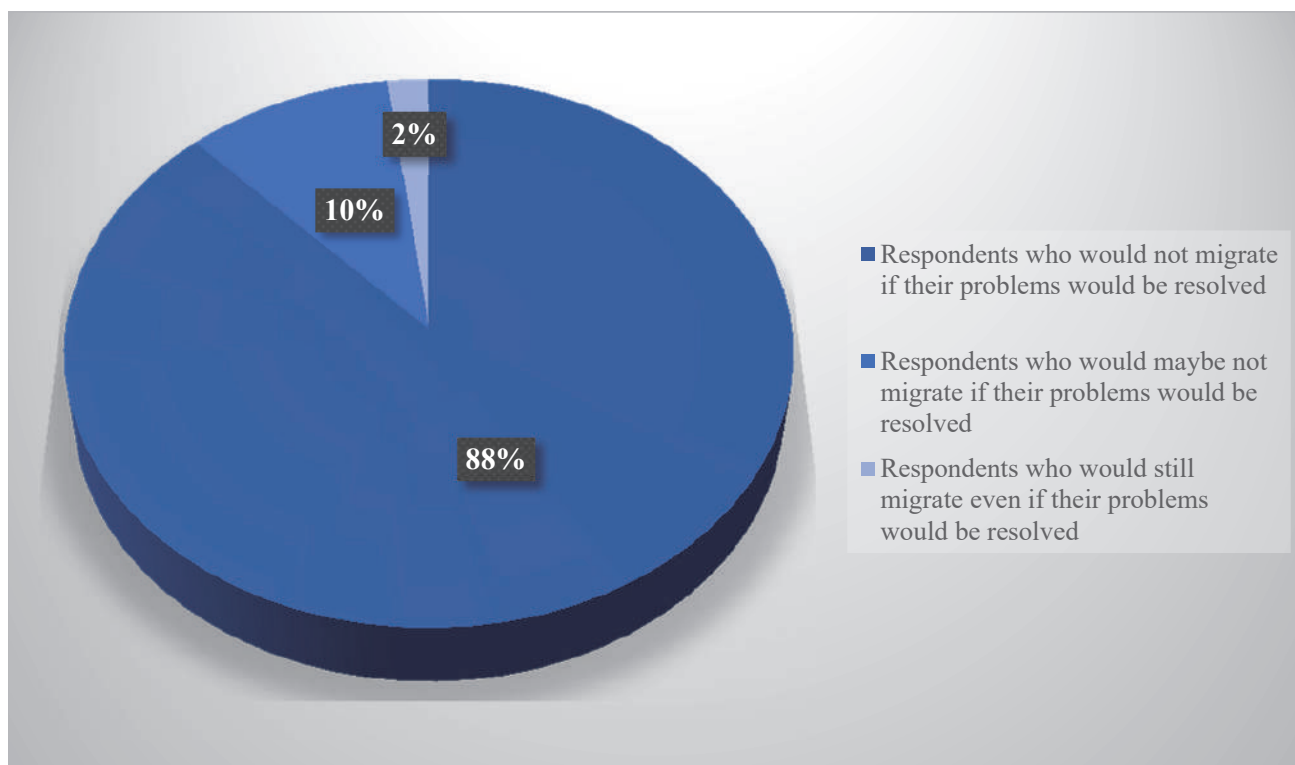


Figure 10 – Percentage of respondents' answers related to migration

This fact shows Roma migrate to find safety and that migration is not connected to the country itself, but the living condition it offers. Most of the participants have stated that through ADRA's programs they have found safety at some level, a place where they can learn, develop business, find a job, and communicate about issues they face.

*"I am afraid since the day I was born. You think whether you will have what to eat, to whom will you marry, will your children have a roof over their head, and you live in constant fear and you don't even know that. Sometimes when I go to courses, I feel like my life is changing, like things are moving and that I could maybe build a different life here in Serbia. I feel different. I forget about my fear and I feel like a member of the community. I feel safe just for a few seconds..."*

*Marija, 33 years old*

Safety has a different meaning for each person. For Marija safety is related to belonging to the community, and for others, safety is related to having a job and income which brings financial

sustainability. When it comes to safety in working conditions, 28% of respondents stated they would go to a Western European country to work even if they did not have a working permit, and 23% of respondents stated they maybe would. Most of them stated they would migrate for work without papers if they trust the person who is going to find them a job.

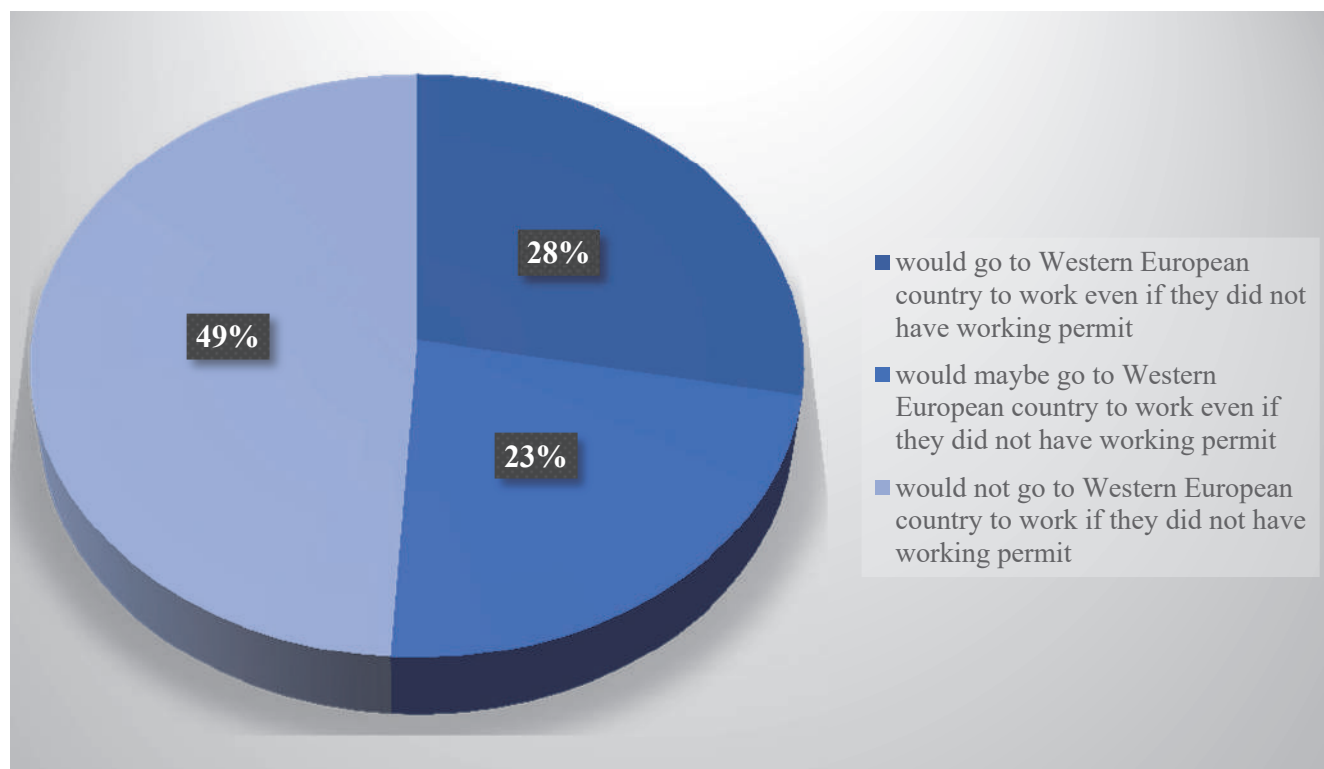


Figure 11 – Percentage of respondents' answers related to migration without working permit

This data shows 51% of respondents are at risk of labor exploitation or fraud because they would travel to Western European countries to work without a legal permit. One of the most important aspects to prevent labor exploitation and fraud according to professionals (social workers and policy experts) is to educate Roma who to call, how to recognize if they are at risk to become victims, what are their legal rights and how they can protect themselves. On the other hand, this education needs to be practical, peer to peer, where they could understand, identify, and recognize potential risks.

Still, 72% of respondents would not give their personal documents, passports to anyone<sup>4</sup> to regulate their working permit in Western European countries, 10% would give and 18% would maybe give their documents.

<sup>4</sup> Anyone who is not an official authority, governmental representative.



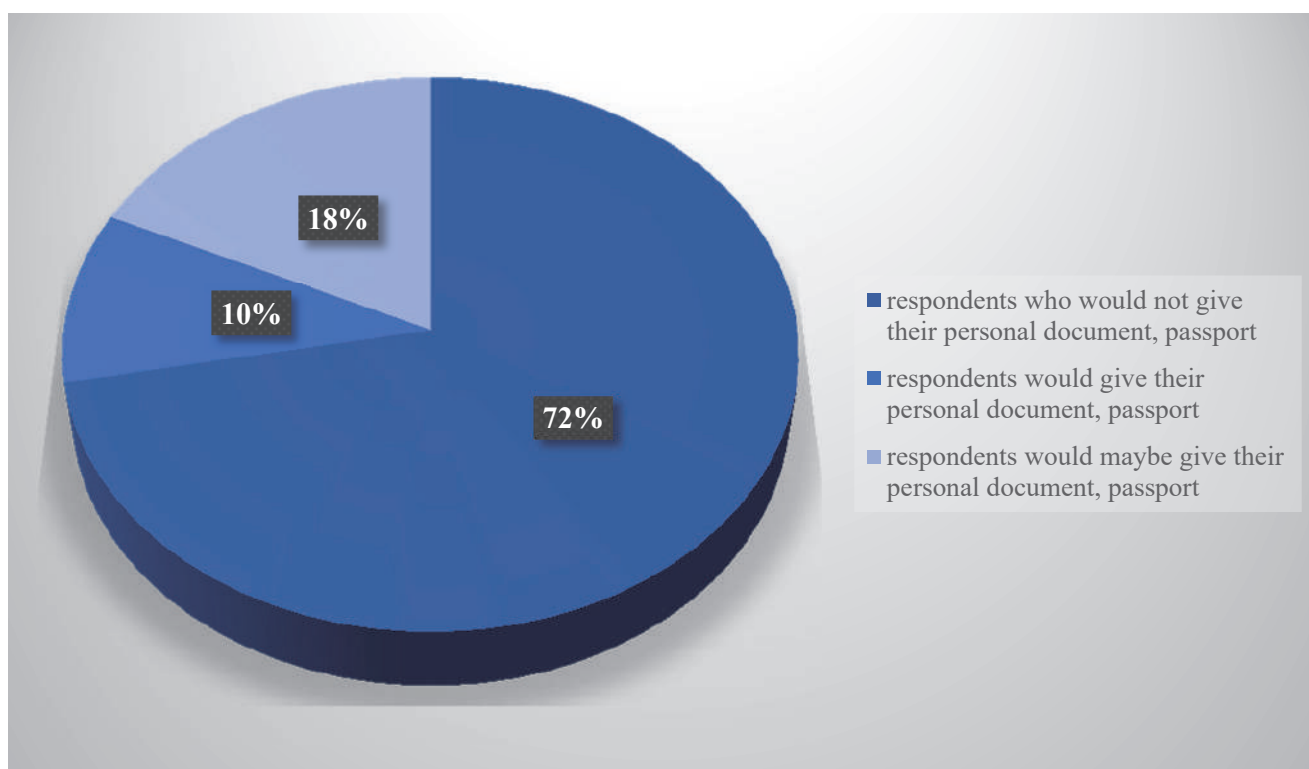


Figure 12 – Percentage of respondents' answers related to giving their personal documents for migration

This fact shows most of the respondents are aware of the risks of giving their personal documents, but 28% of respondents are not aware and would put themselves at risk of labor exploitation. One of the main indicators, distinctive factors between labor exploitation and fraud is if the victims had their personal documents and could leave the job. For that very reason, it is important to provide education on their labor and human rights.

A significant number of respondents, 24% of them know someone who gave their documents to regulate their working papers. All of them stated that people they know had a bad experience with giving their personal documents. One of the respondents answered:

*"My partner gave his personal documentation and loans were taken on his name. We never managed to pay the loans, or to prove that he was victim of a fraud. Now he is in prison and I am taking care of our children alone. We tend to trust people and get the worst from them. I cannot forgive myself that we gave our documents and trusted them. We were not aware of the risk"*

*Marija, 32*

One of the main reasons why people decide to migrate to work without a working permit is the lack of knowledge of risks. Still, the research show that 75% of respondents think migration to Western European country brings risks, 20% thinks it can bring risks, and 5% thinks there are no risks. The identified risks are: fraud (23), labor exploitation (26), trafficking in human persons (10), discrimination (11), and deportation (14). Additional research is needed in order to establish if beneficiaries just recognize the terminology and risk of people trafficking, labor exploitation, and if they really know what that implies and what kind of consequences can happen.

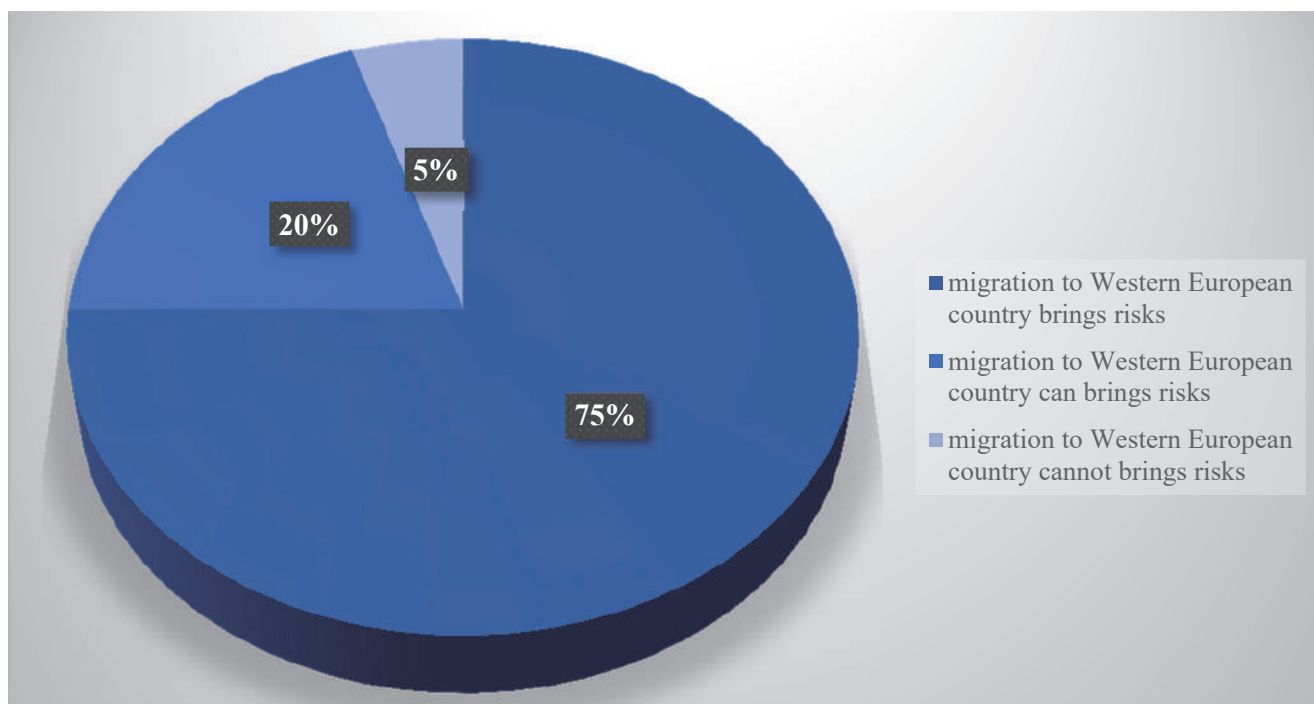


Figure 13 – Percentage of respondents' answers related to the risk of migration

The awareness of risks can be, to some extent, a protection factor that brings precaution in steps Roma would take in migrating. Still, if the living conditions are not improved, they will look for safety in other places and put themselves at risk. For that very reason, ADRA's and other stakeholders work is of high importance because they have relation of trust which can do prevention measures. One of the participants stated during the interview

*"If I decide to leave the country for work, I will definitely call ADRA or other NGO's like them to inform them. I know wherever I am that they would protect me and make sure that I am safe."*

Sana, 23

Direct work in informal settlements is essential to monitor, prevent, and recognize any form of abuse against Roma, from human rights denial to their exploitation. On the other hand, direct workers are needed in The Coordinating Body for Monitoring the Implementation of the Strategy for Social Inclusion of Roma 2016-2025 to create conditions for it. A representative of the Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction Unit of the government in Serbia considers the presence of ADRA essential for every working group because they know on a daily level what are the major problems and they have experience on how to address them.

# Main Findings

**A**DRA Serbia has, based on the pilot survey, which consists of an omnibus field questionnaire specially designed for the beneficiaries of the project (Roma in Belgrade and Novi Sad), qualitative questionnaires for professionals, and project reports, drew conclusions which cannot be generalized to the entire Roma population in Serbia, but represent significant findings necessary for further, future in-depth analysis that should be conducted on all dimensions of social inclusion and risks of migration and exploitation, not just those covered by this report.

- 💡 93% of project beneficiaries consider education important to have a decent life. Based on this finding, we can conclude that awareness of the importance of education is high which is the result of complementary actions of governmental and nongovernmental sector. Project partners and project staff have shared that beneficiaries are ambassadors of the project and refer new beneficiaries on a regular basis. This fact shows the project has not only increased the skills and knowledge for finding the job but as well as awareness that education is a pre-condition for a quality life.
- 💡 The majority of the participants (90%) consider having better quality access to education with the support of ADRA.
- 💡 75% of participants consider they gained significant skills and knowledge to find employment through ADRA programs. The fact shows educational programs are providing the necessary set of skills and knowledge which in a long-term run should bring economic empowerment and opportunity for participants' development.
- 💡 ADRA has supported through 228 Roma men and women, and out of this number, 88 beneficiaries were included in some type of the employment program – 59 employed with a contract or self-employed, and 26 are part-time employed.
- 💡 According to the data participants gave, 56% of them have some form of employment – the answer was from full time, part-time jobs, running their own business to working without

any form of contract. Most of the types of jobs are related to physical work in construction and commerce. Professionals stated paid internships after completed courses are crucial for beneficiaries' development of working habits, motivation, and finding a job.

- 💡 The majority of participants (88%) consider it is important to have a signed contract for the work they do.
- 💡 In case that project beneficiaries did not receive payment for the job they did, 51% of participants would wait for their payment without any further legal actions, 19% would just find a new job and forget about the payment, 14% of participants would ask for help from someone, and only 2 participants or 3% of participants would take legal actions with inspection or court to get their payment. This fact shows high risk of labor exploitation and fraud since most of them would not take any actions to protect themselves, and 14% of participants who stated they would ask help from someone, did not have an idea from whom would they ask help. This fact shows some form of capacity building on labor rights is needed for beneficiaries in order to protect them from labor exploitation or fraud.
- 💡 When it comes to discrimination in finding a job, 61% of participants consider women have equal opportunity to find a job in Serbia, 20% consider women don't have equal opportunity to find a job, and 15% of participants consider women have sometimes even more chance of getting a job.
- 💡 55% of participants consider Roma do not have an equal opportunity find a job in Serbia, 25% consider to have an equal opportunity to find a job in Serbia, and 20% of participants consider equal opportunity to find a job depends on the type of the job.
- 💡 ADRA has supported 26 entrepreneurs during the project implementation. Until September 2020, 24 entrepreneurs are still active and working according to the official data of the Business Registry Agency.
- 💡 13 out of 16 grant entrepreneurs are proud of their business and the success they have.

- 💡 82% of participants stated the main reason for migration is finding social security<sup>5</sup>, 24% of participants stated finding a job, and 5% of participants stated education and better living conditions.
- 💡 88% of respondents stated they would not migrate anywhere if they would have social security, a job, education, and better living conditions in Serbia.
- 💡 28% of respondents stated they would go to the Western European country to work even if they did not have a working permit, and 23% of respondents stated they would maybe go to work. Most of them stated they would migrate for work without papers if they trust the person who is going to find them a job.
- 💡 72% of respondents would not give their personal documents, passports to anyone<sup>6</sup> to regulate their working permit in Western European countries, and 10% would give and 18% would maybe give their documents.

The research shows 75% of respondents think migration to Western European countries brings risks, 20% think it can bring risks, and 5% think there are no risks. The identified risks are fraud (23), labor exploitation (26), trafficking in human persons (10), discrimination (11), and deportation (14).

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5 Social security implies stability of social position, material and cultural living conditions, possibilities of production and reproduction of life, creation of conditions for performing work, and social roles.

6 Anyone who is not an official authority, governmental representative.

# Conclusion with Recommendations

Serbia has adopted the *Strategy of Social Inclusion of Roma for the period from 2016 to 2025* and until today it has not adopted an action plan for the period from 2019 to 2020 which will support the implementation of the strategy. Except for the lack of an operational plan, monitoring reports of the League of Roma which is the member of the Coordinating Body of the Government of Serbia show most of the planned measures are not implemented in a comprehensive manner and much work is needed in every area, and especially related to education and employment. (Liga Roma Skrug, 2019) Based on these facts, research results, and current conditions regarding the social inclusion of Roma, the following steps are needed:

- Development of peer to peer groups which will work on prevention of gender discrimination and gender-based violence.
- Development of a guidebook on how to motivate and build trust with Roma who fear of the inclusion in the system. The guidebook will present ADRA and other stakeholders' experiences in direct work. Also, capacity building sessions for professionals and dissemination of guidebooks on a national level will provide further development of the social inclusion system.
- Program for the prevention of labor exploitation and fraud should be developed and implemented among informal Roma settlements. The core part of the program should be a referral mechanism, from whom they can ask support, how, and what are their rights.
- Paid internship programs after the completed course and/or formal education which should provide skills and knowledge for finding a job.
- Grant support for business in the first three years of the program which should be financial and nonfinancial – finding clients for the business, support in developing marketing strategies, or financial support.
- Creation of a comprehensive community-based approach in fighting against antigypsyism which will impact each member of the society.
- Inclusion of companies and businesses in the fight against antigypsyism in Serbia through various activities – the ambassadors of racism fight, supporters, and clients of Roma businesses.







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