

PUBLIC ATTITUDES TOWARDS HATE SPEECH IN BULGARIA IN 2016

The present report summarizes the findings of a public opinion survey conducted by the Open Society Institute – Sofia in the period 22 April – 14 May 2016.

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The survey was conducted by a team comprising:

- **Georgi Stoytchev,**
editor
- **Ivanka Ivanova,**
author
- **Associate Prof. Dr. Alexey Pamporov,**
head of onsite survey team
- **Dr. Petia Braynova and Dr. Dragomira Belcheva,**
data processing

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Hate speech is a common and quite established phenomenon for the Bulgarian public environment. In 2016, the prevalence of this phenomenon has been expanding, while the willingness of society to resist it has been declining. The share of respondents who reported that over the past 12 months they had heard statements expressing disapproval, hatred or aggression towards members of minority groups, has increased, reaching 58%, which is the highest measured level of this indicator for the three surveys conducted so far (2013, 2014 and 2016).

The Roma are most frequently reported to be victims of hate speech: 92% of the respondents that have heard hate speech in the last 12 months report that the hate speech they have heard was addressed towards Roma. A significant share of respondents have also heard hate speech towards Muslims, Turks, gay people and foreigners. There has been a significant increase in the share of respondents who over the last year have heard statements expressing disapproval, hatred or aggression against Muslims – from 10.6% in 2014 to 38% in 2016.

The television remains the most influential media with which people associate the spread of hate speech – three quarters of the respondents who in the last year have heard hate speech, have heard it from television. Compared to the surveys from 2013 and 2014, in 2016 the role of internet as a media spreading hate speech is on the rise – internet is already the second most important medium for spread of hate speech. Important mediums for hate speech use are also the public places such as shops and restaurants, the public transport and the work place of the respondents.

Public approval of the use – in traditional media – of statements containing extreme nationalism and hate speech against Roma and migrants has also increased. At the same time there is a decline in the share of respondents who are aware that certain forms of hate speech are punishable by law as a crime, in the share of those who agree that the State should provide protection against hate speech, and in the share of those who agree that the prosecution service and the police should make sure that it is prosecuted.

Despite these negative tendencies the majority of Bulgarian citizens (73%) continue to disapprove of the public use of statements that express disapproval, hatred or aggression against minorities. The majority of respondents (49%) agree that the State should protect members of minority groups against hate speech; 59% agree the prosecution service should prosecute journalists and politicians who express disapproval, hatred or aggression against minorities, while 65% agree that aggressive nationalism should be prosecuted. At the same time, however, only 23% of the respondents would personally report to the police instances of hate speech they themselves have witnessed.

A considerable majority of the respondents (63%) believe that the State should limit public funding for political parties whose leaders make statements expressing disapproval, hatred or aggression towards members of minority groups, while 58% feel that media which disseminate hate speech should have no access to national or European public funding.

As in the 2014 survey, the focus groups with young people, teachers and Roma conducted in 2016, revealed that schools steadily emerge as places which far from promoting equality, actually disseminate hate speech. Teachers have little sensitivity to the problem, do not possess specific educational tools to intervene, and often express racist and xenophobic sentiments themselves. As stated in Recommendation No. 15 of the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance, adopted on December 8, 2015, misconceptions and misinformation form the basis of hate speech and therefore, it is necessary to implement specific measures in the education system to curb it. These measures should be directed in particular to the young and should include civic education and media literacy.

As noted in the previous two surveys, the need to develop and implement a national policy to limit and counteract hate speech is becoming increasingly pressing. Without such policy, there is a growing risk of escalating discrimination against the most affected social groups (Roma, Muslims, Turks, foreigners and homosexuals) and escalation of hate crimes.

ABOUT THE SURVEY

The present report* contains the findings of a nationally representative public opinion poll conducted in the period 22 April – 13 May 2016 as part of a regular omnibus survey of public attitudes, organized by the Open Society Institute – Sofia. The survey's cohort comprised the adult population of Bulgaria. The sample is probabilistic and multilevel – two-stage cluster, stratified by administrative regions (NUTS 3) and by type of settlement (urban/rural). The method of registration was a face-to-face interview based on a standardized questionnaire. Out of 1,200 interviews planned, 1,197 were conducted. The maximum permissible error (at 50% relative share and 95% probability guarantee) was $\pm 2,9\%$ (without taking into account intra-cluster correlation).

The Open Society Institute – Sofia has been conducting omnibus public opinion surveys since 2008. The re-

ports presenting the findings of the previous surveys and the survey data are available on the internet (www.opendata.bg). In 2013 and 2014, in the framework of the omnibus surveys, the team studied also public attitudes towards hate speech. The two previous surveys were conducted in the period July 5 – 16, 2013 and June 16 – July 6, 2014, respectively, following the same method as the present survey. The findings of both surveys were published in the reports "Public Attitudes Towards Hate Speech in Bulgaria in 2013" and "Public Attitudes Towards Hate Speech in Bulgaria in 2014", which are available in both Bulgarian and English on the OSI-Sofia website: www.osi.bg.

For the purposes of the present survey, three focus groups with young people, teachers and Roma were conducted. The focus group with young people was held on May 19, 2016 in a small town and involved 6 persons, the focus group with teachers was held on May 19, 2016 in a regional city and involved 6 persons, while the focus group with Roma was held on June 3, 2016 in Sofia and involved 7 persons.

Table 1. Respondents' Profile

By gender	Number	Share
Male	507	42,3%
Female	690	57,7%
Total	1197	100%
By age	Number	Share
18 – 29 yrs.	131	10,9%
30 – 44 yrs.	301	25,1%
45 – 59 yrs.	301	25,1%
Над 60 yrs.	453	37,8%
Undeclared	11	0,9%
Total	1197	100%
By ethnic group	Number	Share
Bulgarian	1021	85,2%
Turkish	102	8,5%
Roma	59	5%
Other	15	1,3%
Total	1197	100%

* We would like to sincerely thank Associate Prof. Dr. Boriana Dimitrova who made important comments and recommendations to an earlier version of this report.

CONTEXT OF THE SURVEY

Bulgaria remains the poorest country in the EU – in 2014, more than one third of the population (40.1%) lived at risk of poverty and social exclusion, compared to an average of 24.4% for the EU Member States.¹ In Bulgaria, more than 40% of the children and 47.8 % of the people above the age of 65 live in households at risk of poverty and social exclusion (the highest share among EU Member States). One third (33.1%) of the population of Bulgaria live in material deprivation – the highest share among EU Member States where material deprivation affects an average of only 9% of the population. For comparison, in Romania, the share of the population who live in material deprivation is 26.3%.

The real gross domestic product (GDP) of Bulgaria increased by 1.5% in 2014 and by 3% in 2015, which is slightly above the average real GDP growth for EU Member States (1.9%) for the same period. According to NSI

¹ Data on the share of population at risk of poverty and social exclusion, as well as data on GDP growth have been derived from the Eurostat website on June 1, 2016: http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/People_at_risk_of_poverty_or_social_exclusion

data, in the first quarter of 2016, Bulgaria's GDP grew by 2.9% compared to the last quarter of 2015. There has been also a slight increase in the employment rate of the population aged 15-64 years: in the first quarter of 2016, it stood at 66.5%, compared to 63.7% in the last quarter of 2015. In 2015, the total income of households averaged 12,349 BGN, while the expenses reached 11,911 BGN per household, the greatest share of which (9,313 BGN) was spent on food.

In the period 2013–2014, Bulgaria had four governments: the first government of the GERB party resigned in March 2013; the caretaker government of Marin Raykov run the country from March to May 2013; then the regularly elected government of Plamen Oresharski assumed power for a little more than a year (with the parliamentary support of the Bulgarian Socialist Party - BSP and the Movement for Rights and Freedoms - MRF), resigning in August 2014, and finally, the caretaker government of Georgi Bliznashki run the country from August to November 2014.

Early parliamentary elections were held on October 5, 2014 resulting in a parliament composed of eight parties and coalitions with GERB receiving greatest support (32.67% of the votes), followed by BSP (15.4%), MRF (14.84%), the Reformist Bloc (8.89%), the Patriotic Front (an alliance of NFSB and IMRO with a total of 7.28%), Bulgaria without Censorship (5.68%), Ataka (4.52%) and the Alliance for Bulgarian Revival (4.15%). Compared to previous parliamentary elections, the parliament composition was highly fragmented and for the first time in recent history included three parties with nationalist platforms (Ataka, NFSB and IMRO).

As of November 2014 the country has been run by a government of the GERB party, which was formed in coalition with the parties of the Reformist Bloc and the Alliance for Bulgarian Revival, with the parliamentary support of the Patriotic Front. On different legislative matters, however, the parties of the ruling coalition vote differently, and GERB relies on support from the MRF.

In December 2015, the National Assembly passed amendments to the Constitution, affecting the judiciary branch, with which the staffing body of the judiciary system (the Supreme Judicial Council) was divided into two separate chambers that would decide on staffing issues related to judges and prosecutors, respec-

tively.² The amendments were motivated by the need to strengthen the guarantees for independence of judges and were voted in response to recommendations by the European Commission under the Cooperation and Verification Mechanism.³ The Commission has been monitoring the state of the rule of law in Bulgaria and Romania since the date of their accession to the EU because of insufficient progress in reforming judicial systems, problems with judicial independence and lack of tangible results in fighting corruption and organized crime.

In December 2015, following the adoption of the amendments to the Constitution, the Minister of Justice Hristo Ivanov resigned, and the party "Democrats for Strong Bulgaria" (part of the Reformist Bloc and the ruling coalition) declared that it was going into opposition, but the Reformist Bloc itself did not leave the government. In May 2016, the Alliance for Bulgarian Revival left the ruling coalition, withdrawing all its representatives in the government.

On October 25, 2015 regular local elections were held, in which the representatives of GERB strengthened their positions in local government in most places of the country, while support for BSP and MRF declined.

Due to the ongoing military conflict in Syria and the instability in other Middle Eastern countries, since 2013, Europe, Bulgaria included, has seen an increased influx of refugees and migrants. In 2013, 2014 and 2015, the number of people who have sought refugee status or another form of international protection in Bulgaria increased significantly, reaching 20 391 persons in 2015, which is 15 times more than the number of people who have sought refugee status and international protection in 2012 (1,387 persons).⁴

Initially, the increased influx of refugees and migrants confronted the Bulgarian authorities with a serious humanitarian problem – the first measures the government took in the fall of 2013 were aimed at pro-

² Law amending and supplementing the Constitution of the Republic of Bulgaria, Prom. SG, No.100 of December 18, 2015.

³ The European Commission established the Cooperation and Verification Mechanism on December 13, 2006, with its Decision C (2006) 6570 final, in order to monitor Bulgaria's progress on specific indicators in the area of judicial reform and the fight against corruption and organized crime. Both the decision and the annual progress reports on Bulgaria are available on the Internet at: <http://ec.europa.eu/cvm/>

⁴ Information of the State Agency for Refugees at the Council of Ministers on asylum seekers and decisions on applications taken for the period January 1, 1993 – April 30, 2016 retrieved from the Agency's website on June 6, 2016: <http://www.aresf.government.bg/?cat=8>

viding accommodation, food and medicine for the migrants. In the next two years other problems related to migrant integration policies emerged, namely ensuring access to education, to the labor market, to citizenship and healthcare. Due to underdeveloped public policies in these areas, in 2015, Bulgaria was ranked 31st out of 38 participating countries in an international comparative study of integration policies (MIPEX). The fact that Bulgaria has provided legal guarantees for protection against discrimination and has created a special body (the Commission for Protection Against Discrimination) was highly appreciated in the study, but it was also noted that migrants who have fallen victims to discrimination, do not benefit from these guarantees due to limited support from the authorities and lack of funds.⁵

Over the last three years, migrants have been intensively persecuted by the criminal justice system of the country. In Bulgaria, illegal border crossing is a crime under Art. 280 of the Penal Code and in 2014, this was the third most penalized crime in the country after crimes against property (thefts) and criminal traffic violations (driving under the influence). In 2014, a total of 4 195 persons were convicted for illegal border crossing, which amounts to 13% of all convicted persons that same year.⁶

In 2015 and the beginning of 2016, politicians and the media presented the growing influx of refugees and migrants primarily as a national security problem, while public investment was mainly targeted at deploying more police force and building a fence along the border with Turkey.

From the early days of the second GERB government (November 2014) until the time of the survey (April-May 2016), scandals involving elements of racism, discrimination and hate speech directed against either Roma or migrants have focused public attention on several occasions.

On December 7, 2014, after an incident with an ER team in a neighborhood inhabited mainly by Roma, Health Minister Petar Moskov posted the following comment on his Facebook profile: “So much talk about the rights everyone has. If someone chooses to live as an animal, they get the right to be treated like an animal. As of

tomorrow, ER teams would be entering [these neighborhoods] only upon agreement with community opinion leaders providing for personalized responsibility for the behavior of this populace, and where and if possible, accompanied by the police. I shall issue an order removing all responsibility for these decisions from the regional ER centers and teams; responsibility will be borne entirely by me and by my deputy. Please, do not expect political correctness from me on this issue”. The next day, political party Drom issued a statement condemning these comments, while the Bulgarian Helsinki Committee qualified them as racist in a declaration. The parliamentary group of the MRF also issued a special statement, demanding the Minister’s resignation, while speaking in Parliament, MRF MPs described the Minister’s comments as “hate speech” and a violation of the Constitution. Later, MRF announced that they would be putting forward a motion of no confidence in the government but never acted on it.

On December 17, 2014, speaking in Parliament in defense of Minister Moskov’s position, MP and Chairman of the political party NFSB (“National Front for the Salvation of Bulgaria”), Valeri Simeonov called Roma: “... arrogant, insolent and brutal humanoids expecting to be entitled to remuneration without working, requiring sickness benefits without being sick, seeking child allowances for children who play with the pigs on the streets and maternity benefits for women with the instincts of stray bitches”. Some media described Valeri Simeonov’s statements as the first case of racist speech from the floor of the National Assembly.⁷ On this occasion, the Bulgarian Helsinki Committee (BHC) alerted the Prosecution Service, insisting that the leader of NFSB be investigated for a crime under Art. 162, section 1 of the Penal Code. In their letter, the BHC also condemned the actions of the Chairperson of the National Assembly, Tsetska Tsacheva, who condoned racist statements in Parliament without any intervention whatsoever, although the internal regulations allow her to intervene. In their letter, the BHC noted, among other things, that “so far we have not witnessed such poisonous, racist, inflammatory and vulgar remarks made from high rostrum of the National Assembly”. The recurring instances of hate speech provoked a reaction from the US Embassy as well, which in a statement dated December 18, 2014, expressed serious concern over the manifestations of “ethnic intolerance”,

⁵ All Integration Policies Index data for 2015 are available on the internet at: <http://www.mipex.eu/bulgaria>.

⁶ Data on convicted persons have been derived from the website of the National Statistical Institute: <http://www.nsi.bg> on June 1, 2016.

⁷ See for instance Tatiana Waxberg’s article “The Door Moskov Opened” published on December 18, 2014 on the Deutsche Welle website: <http://www.dw.com>

noting that: “It is sad to witness the public debate being poisoned by speech which should be unacceptable in a modern, democratic society...”

On February 18, 2016, bTV broadcast a report tagged “A man from Yambol catches immigrants with his bare hands. Dinko Vulev believes that there should be volunteer squads along the border”, which informed the public that over the past few months the said Dinko Vulev had „arrested” no less than 20 Syrian refugees near the village of Dolno Yabulkovo on the border with Turkey. On February 22, 2016, the Association of European Journalists sent an open letter to bTV, asking whether the report met the criteria for professional journalism, whether it reflected the official position of the TV channel and why the anchor and the reporter praised “the use of physical violence, death threats, accusations of terrorism, illegal imprisonment and hate speech, presenting Dinko Vulev as a superhero”. On March 7, 2016, the BHC alerted the Prosecution Service on this occasion too, emphasizing that the news story provided information for multiple crimes committed by Dinko Vulev against foreign nationals seeking asylum (physical assault, death threats) and instilled fear, contempt and hatred towards asylum seekers. There were some reports in the media that the Prosecution Service had launched an investigation on the case but so far no information on its progress has been made available.

On April 10, 2016, a video sharing website published a video clip showing a new case of illegal detention of migrants, this time in the area of the village of Zvezdets near Malko Tarnovo, by Peter Nizamov and his group. In his initial reaction to the news, the Prime Minister thanked the so-called “volunteers” saying that “the country belongs to all of us and everyone who helps [the Border Police] deserve to be thanked for it.” When a number of national and foreign media qualified the unauthorized handling of migrants as a crime rather than an expression of support for the police, the Prime Minister said he had been misquoted.⁸ A few days later, the District Prosecutor’s Office in Malko Tarnovo ordered the detention of Peter Nizamov and opened criminal proceedings for the illegal detention of three Afghanistan citizens – a crime under Art. 142a, section 1 of the Penal Code.

In its annual report on the state of fundamental human rights in Bulgaria in 2015, the BHC noted that in

2015 there had been a departure from policies aimed at improving the situation with regard to hate speech, prison conditions and discrimination. With regard to hate speech in particular, the BHC noted that: “Hate speech towards ethnic, religious and sexual minorities, as well as towards refugees and migrants, continued to persist in many media, while the attitude towards marginalized groups was generally stereotypical and negative. Many media continued to cover the positions of neo-Nazi organizations without any criticism. We have also witnessed reports inciting and calling for violence and mob law against people belonging (or “suspected” of belonging) to the LGBT community. The TV channel of the Ataka party – Alfa TV, continued to systematically incite hatred and intolerance on racist and Islamophobic grounds. Although this is punishable both under the media legislation and under the Penal Code, sanctions have never been imposed. Racist and xenophobic statements also persisted almost daily in the broadcasts of Skat TV run by the NFSB party, which is part of the ruling coalition.”⁹

DEFINITION OF “HATE SPEECH” USED FOR THE PURPOSES OF THE SURVEY

The phrase “реч на омразата” used in the Bulgarian version of this report is a literal translation of the English phrase “hate speech”. Other phrases used in Bulgarian to denote the same phenomenon include “език на омразата”, “слово на омразата”, “враждебна реч”.

Different documents of international organizations contain different definitions of hate speech, two of which in particular were taken into consideration in preparing the 2013 and 2016 surveys.

In 1997, the Committee of Ministers to the Council of Europe defined hate speech as “... covering all forms of expression which spread, incite, promote or justify racial hatred, xenophobia, anti-Semitism or other forms of hatred based on intolerance, including: intolerance expressed by aggressive nationalism and ethnocen-

⁸ See Biliiana Rilska’s article “Politicians on the Civil Arrests along the Border” published on April 4, 2016 in the Dnevnik Daily: <http://www.dnevnik.bg>

⁹ Bulgarian Helsinki Committee, Human Rights in Bulgaria in 2015, p. 69-70. The report has been retrieved on June 1, 2016 from the website: <http://www.bghelsinki.org/bg/publikacii/dokladi-na-bhk/godishni-dokladi-za-pravata-na-choveka/>

trism, discrimination and hostility against minorities, migrants and people of immigrant origin”.¹⁰

In March 2016, the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance of the Council of Europe (ECRI) released its own General Policy Recommendation No. 15 on combating hate speech, giving the following definition: “hate speech is to be understood for the purpose of the present General Policy Recommendation as the advocacy, promotion or incitement, in any form, of the denigration, hatred or vilification of a person or group of persons, as well as any harassment, insult, negative stereotyping, stigmatization or threat in respect of such a person or group of persons and the justification of all the preceding types of expression, on the ground of “race”, colour, descent, national or ethnic origin, age, disability, language, religion or belief, sex, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation and other personal characteristics or status”.¹¹

In the same recommendation ECRI also notes that “hate speech may take the form of the public denial, trivialisation, justification or condonation of crimes of genocide, crimes against humanity or war crimes which have been found by courts to have occurred and of the glorification of persons convicted for having committed such crimes”.

Both definitions cited above cover a broad range of phenomena and use highly specialized terms and are, therefore, not appropriate for nationally representative public opinion surveys. That is why, rather than using the term “hate speech”, all three surveys made use of a descriptive definition that covers most of the hypotheses, namely: “public statements, which express disapproval, hatred or aggression against members of different minorities”.

The concept of hate speech used here is narrower than the definitions of the Council of Europe and the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance, since it refers only to hate speech expressed in words, rather than to other forms of expression, and does not cover hypotheses involving public denial, trivialisation, justification or condonation of crimes of genocide, crimes against humanity or war crimes, as well as justification and glorification of perpetrators of such crimes.

¹⁰ Committee of Ministers to the Council of Europe, Recommendation No. R (97) 20 on “hate speech”, 1997.

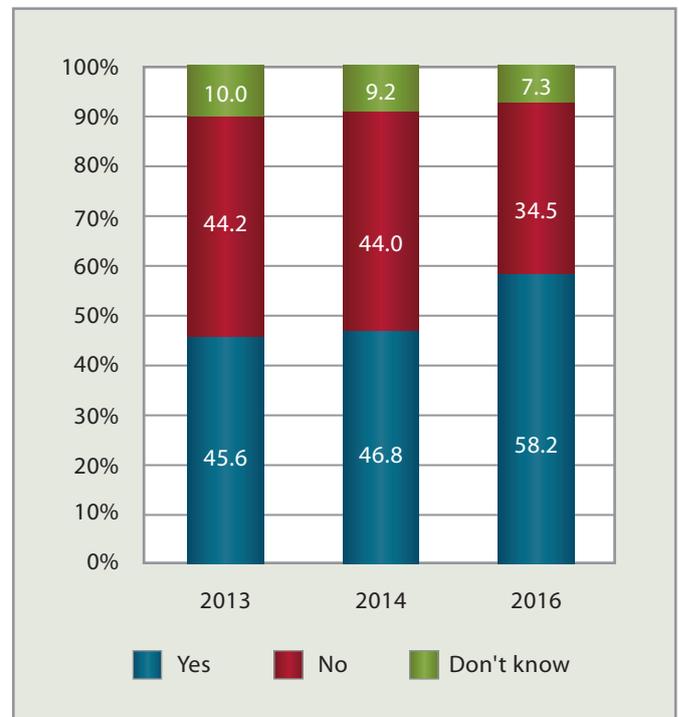
¹¹ ECRI, General Policy Recommendation No. 15 on combating hate speech, adopted on 8 December 2015, retrieved on June 1, 2016 from the website: https://www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/ecri/activities/GPR/EN/Recommendation_N15/REC-15-2016-015-ENG.pdf.

INCIDENCE OF HATE SPEECH

Hate speech is a widespread phenomenon in Bulgaria. It is firmly established as an element of public discourse, while in the last two years its usage has been growing. In the period 2013-2014, nearly half of the respondents (46%) reported that in the last 12 months, they had heard public statements expressing disapproval, hatred or aggression against members of ethnic, religious or sexual minorities. In 2016, the number of people who reported having encountered such statements has increased by nearly 11% compared to 2014, reaching 58%.

There is some correlation between hate speech reporting patterns and the respondents’ ethnic background, education level, region and place of residence. Respondents who identify themselves as Roma reported considerably more often than the national average that over the last 12 months they had heard statements constituting hate speech – 70% of respondents who identify themselves as Roma have heard such

Figure 1. Incidence of hate speech



Question: *In the last 12 months, have you heard public statements expressing disapproval, hatred or aggression against members of ethnic, religious or sexual minorities?*

Young male, small town:

„It’s normal [to have heard hate speech] because it is a frequent phenomenon... Nowadays this is sort of trendy.“

Teacher, regional center:

„The problem is that success nowadays is associated with aggression. You can’t be successful without being aggressive. This is where it all begins. And it is being tolerated.“

Roma, female, Sofia:

„I’d get into a cab and I’d say: ‘Fakulteta’ [one of the Roma neighborhoods in Sofia]. And I’d hear: ‘Aren’t you afraid to go to these gypsies?!‘“

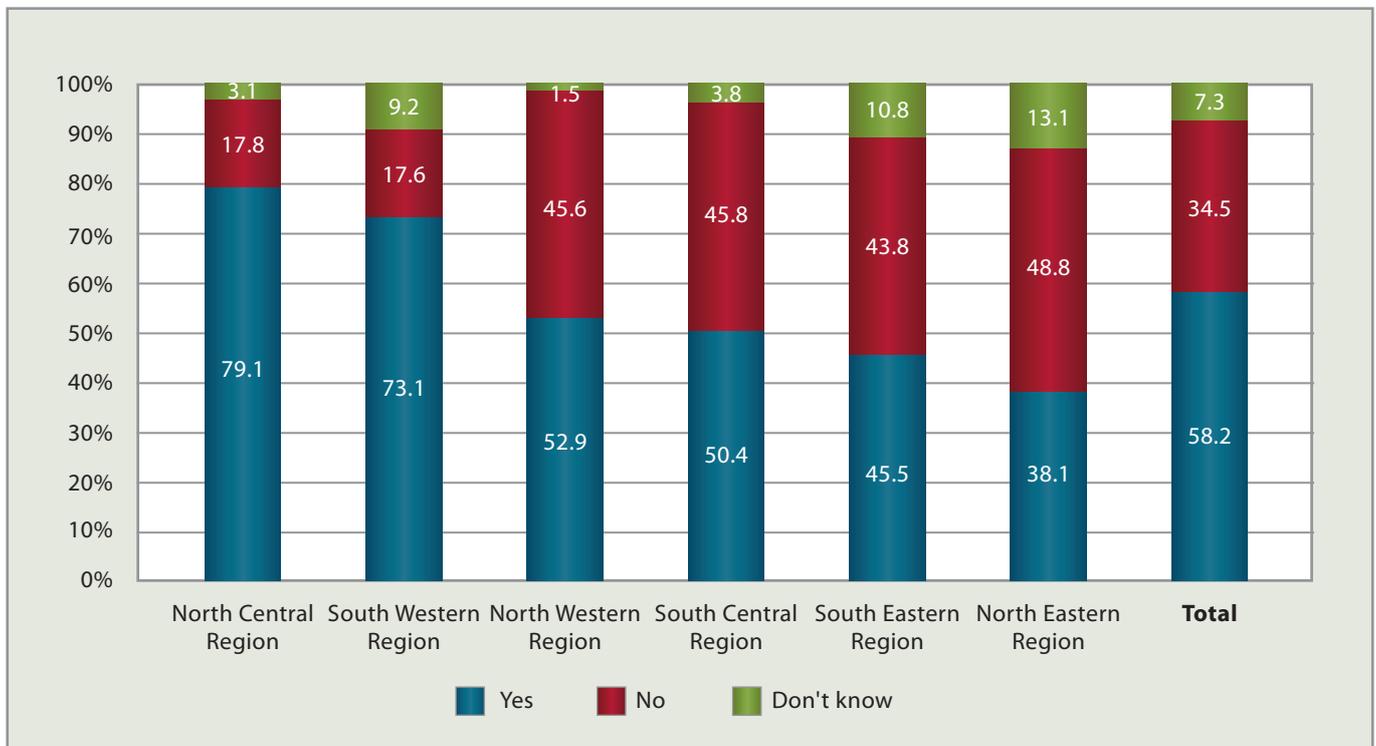
statements, against the countrywide average of 59%. Among respondents who identify themselves as Turks, this share is lower than the national average – 47% of them reported having heard statements constituting hate speech in the last 12 months. This was estab-

lished in the two previous surveys, as well, in 2013 and 2014, and is most likely due to the fact that Turks live in closed communities in specific regions of the country and because of the language barrier, one can assume that they tend to watch Bulgarian television less often than the rest of the population.

Respondents from the North Central Region and the Southwestern Region reported more often than the national average that over the last 12 months they had heard statements expressing disapproval, hatred or aggression against members of ethnic, religious and sexual minorities. Respondents from Sofia and those with university or college education reported having heard such statements much more frequently than respondents with lower education and people living in villages or district centers.

In 2013, 2014 and 2016, between 14% and 17% of respondents reported that they had heard statements by politicians and journalists that constitute extreme forms of hate speech and suggest that physical violence against and destruction of property owned by Roma, foreign nationals or gay people is acceptable or less reproachable than similar acts of aggression targeted against Bulgarians.

Figure 2. Incidence of hate speech: impact of regional differences



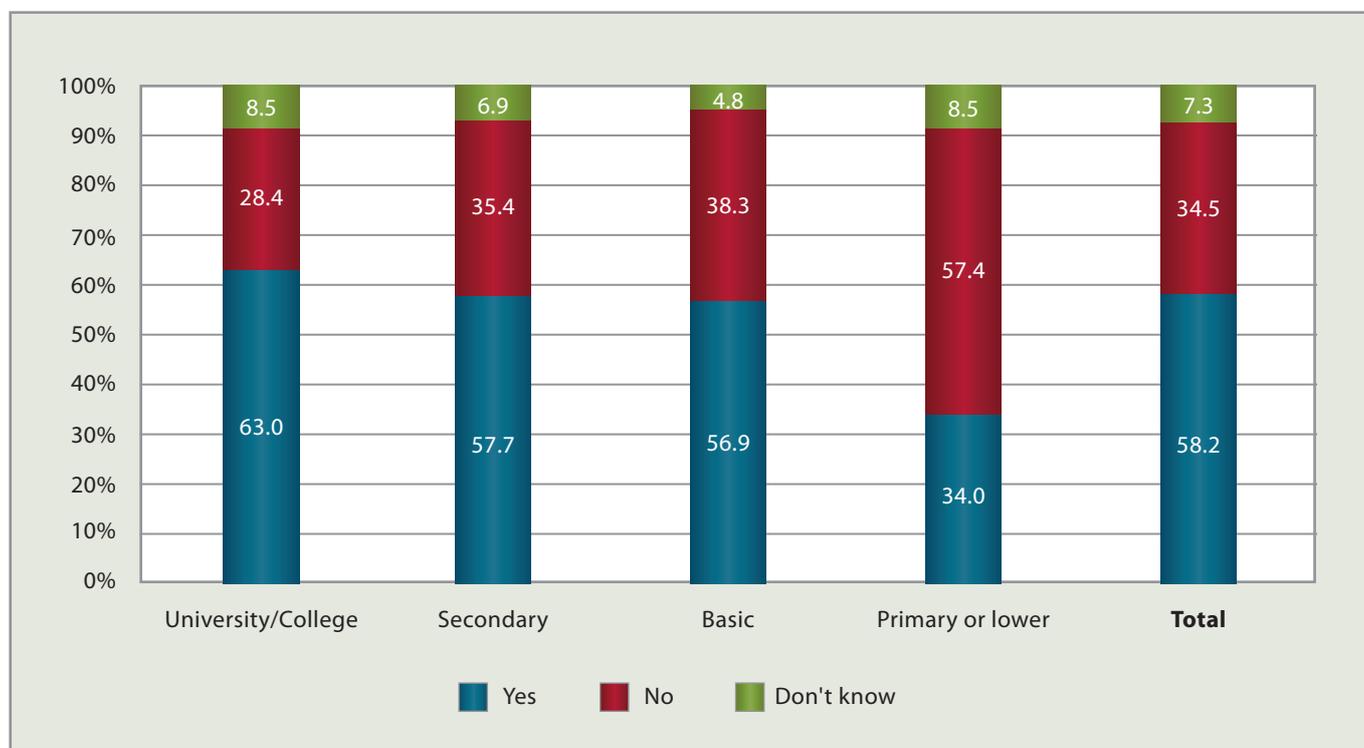
Question: *In the last 12 months, have you heard public statements expressing disapproval, hatred or aggression against members of ethnic, religious or sexual minorities?*

Figure 3. Incidence of hate speech: impact of the place of residence



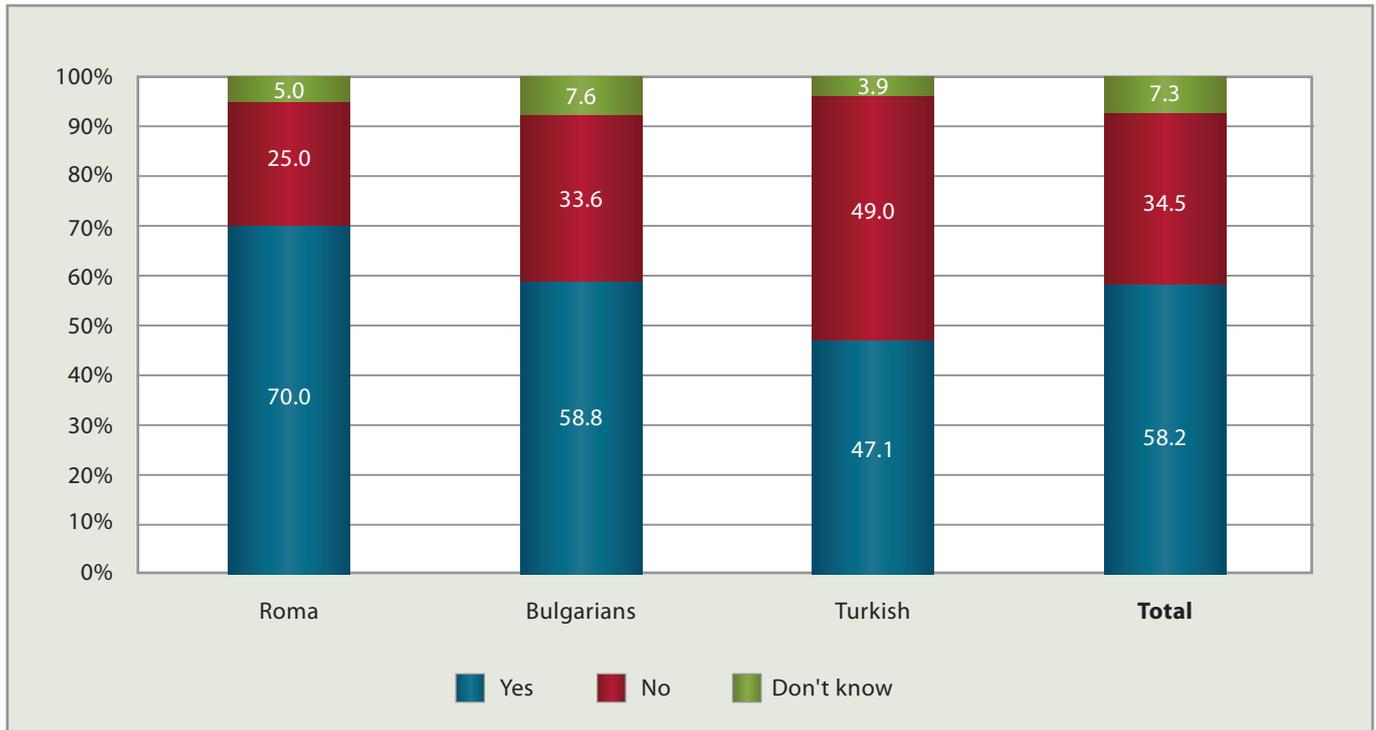
Question: *In the last 12 months, have you heard public statements expressing disapproval, hatred or aggression against members of ethnic, religious or sexual minorities?*

Figure 4. Incidence of hate speech: impact of education



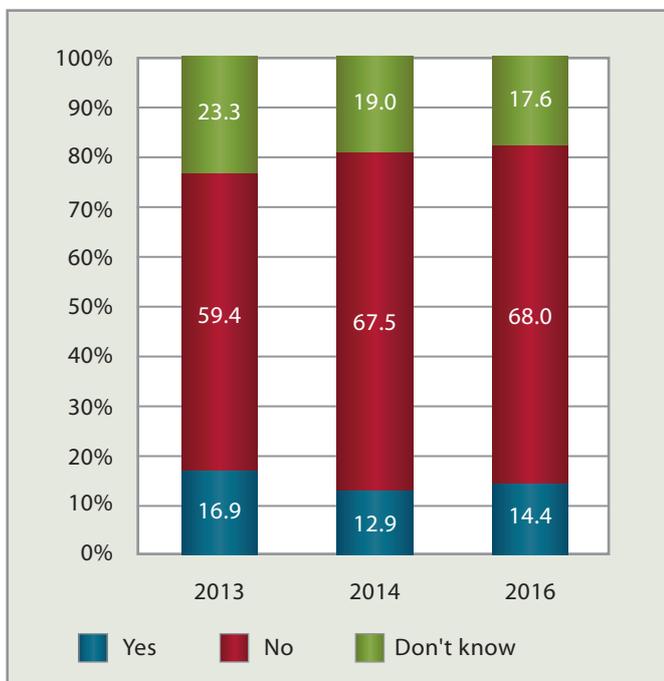
Question: *In the last 12 months, have you heard public statements expressing disapproval, hatred or aggression against members of ethnic, religious or sexual minorities?*

Figure 5. Incidence of hate speech: impact of ethnic background



Question: *In the last 12 months, have you heard public statements expressing disapproval, hatred or aggression against members of ethnic, religious or sexual minorities?*

Figure 6. Link between hate speech and hate crimes



Question: *Have you heard a specific statement by a politician or a journalist, which left you with impression that physical violence against or destruction of property owned by Roma, gay people or foreigners is normal, justifiable or less condemnable than if it was targeted to Bulgarians?*

AWARENESS OF THE CONCEPT “HATE SPEECH”

The 2016 survey included for the first time a question referring to the very concept of “hate speech” with the assumption that the findings would be indicative of the existence of public policies to combat this phenomenon, i.e. if respondents have heard and recognize the term “hate speech”, then they would be able to distinguish the phenomenon in the rest of the public discourse and would be aware of the social risks it poses. The results indicated that the respondents were equally divided among those who have heard the three phrases that translate in Bulgarian as “hate speech” (46%) and those who have never heard any of these phrases (46%); 8% refrained from responding.

The respondents who have heard different versions of the phrase “hate speech” in Bulgarian more often than the national average include people living in Sofia (58% compared to a national average of 46%), people living in the Southwestern Region (54% against an average of 46% for the country), people aged between 30 and 44 years (56% reported having heard the phrase

“hate speech” compared to a national average of 46%) and people with university or college education (56% against an average of 46% for the country).

The share of respondents who have heard the phrase “hate speech” is much lower among respondents who identify themselves as Turks or Roma – 30% and 32% of them reported having heard the phrase “hate speech” against a national average of 46%. Awareness of the term is lower among people with primary or lower education (only 19% of them have heard the phrase “hate speech”), among people with primary education (35%), among people living in the Northeastern Region (33%) and the South Central Region (38%), and among respondents aged over 60 years (41% against a national average of 46%).

The fact that two-thirds of the respondents who identify themselves as Roma or Turks have never heard any of the phrases used to denote “hate speech” in Bulgarian (“език на омразата”, “реч на омразата” or “враждебна реч”), suggests that a targeted public policy to combat hate speech is either non-existent or too limited in scope.

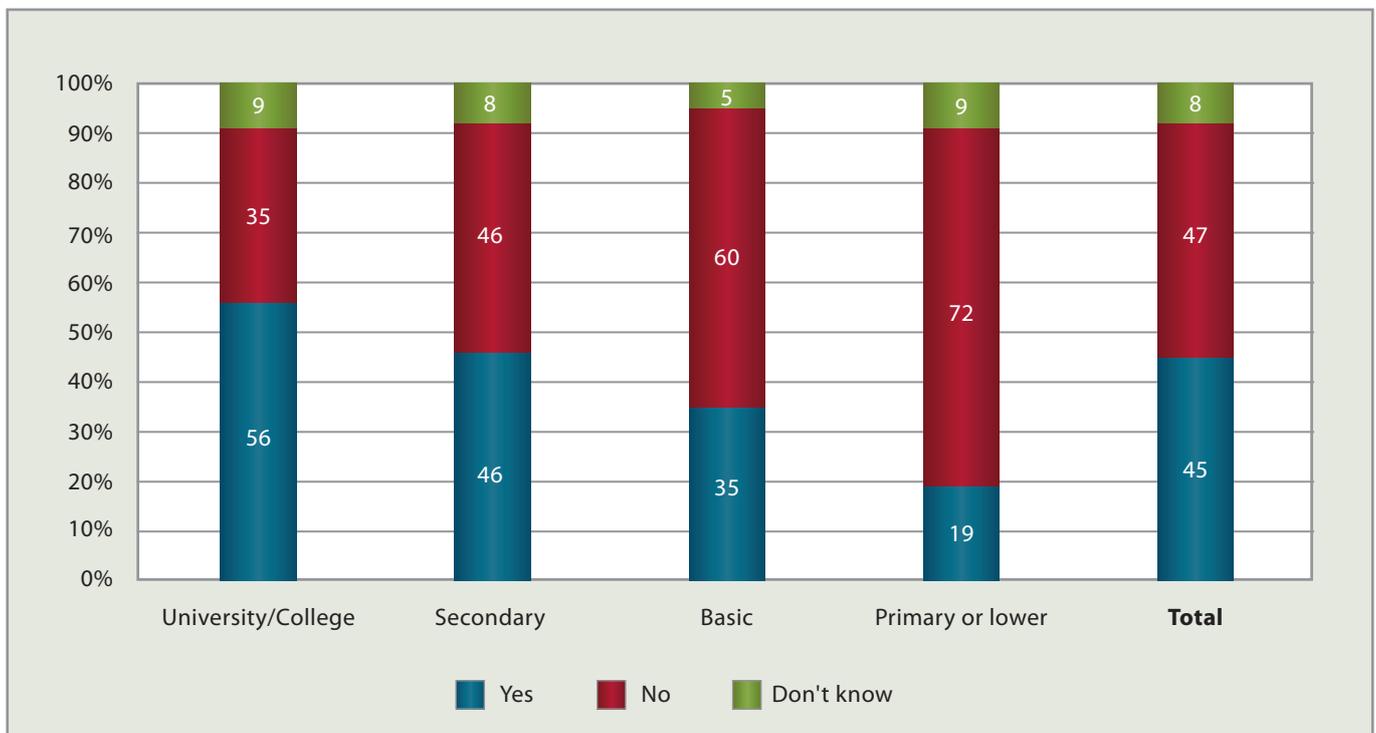
In the focus groups with young people, teachers and Roma conducted in the framework of the survey,

Roma, male, Sofia:
„I’m a taxi driver. And I’m somewhat darker skinned. People pass me by and you would hear sometimes: ‘We’re not riding with this gypsy.’“

none of the participants could name a single politician, magistrate or public official to have opposed the use of hate speech or explained that in its most extreme forms it constitutes a crime and has dangerous consequences for society. In the focus group with teachers, participants mentioned only the BHC and its Chairman Krassimir Kanev as advocates against the use of hate speech. At the same time, however, the focus group participants entered into a debate as to the benefits of BHC’s activity. This suggests the conclusion that the circle of actors who tend to counteract hate speech and related discrimination and hate crimes is highly limited, while those who attempt it in this environment, risks being faced with criticism and disapproval.

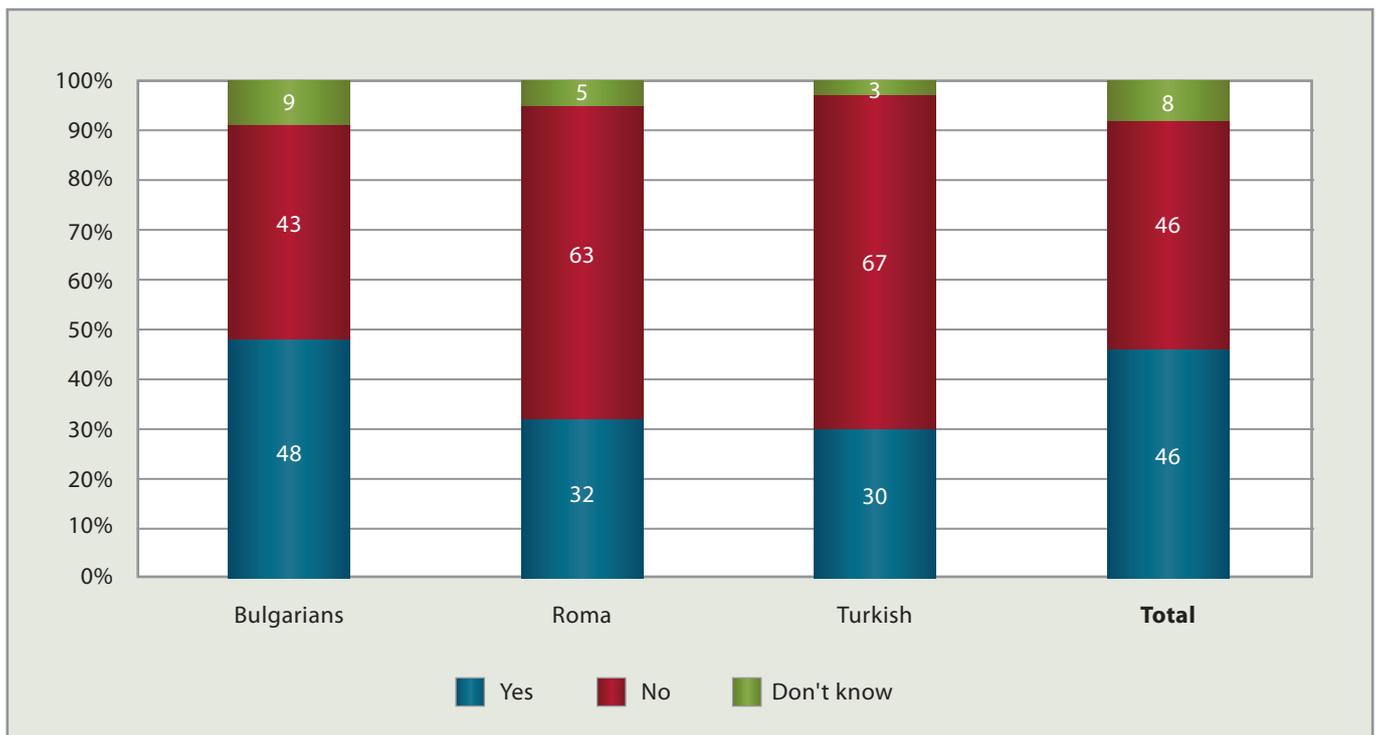
Respondents who have heard any of the phrases used to denote “hate speech” in Bulgarian (“език на омразата”, “реч на омразата” or “враждебна реч”),

Figure 7. Awareness of the concept “hate speech” – impact of education



Question: Have you heard any of the phrases “език на омразата”, “реч на омразата” or “враждебна реч”? (These are the three phrases that are used in Bulgarian and denote “hate speech”).

Figure 8. Awareness of the concept “hate speech” – impact of ethnic background



Question: *Have you heard any of the phrases “език на омразата”, “реч на омразата” or “враждебна реч”?*

tend to read them as insulting or seeking to introduce disagreement and division among people, rather than instigating unequal treatment. According to the vast majority of respondents (63%), the term “hate speech” means “aggressive statements aiming to offend or insult those against whom they are targeted”; significantly fewer (43%) are those who understand the phrase “hate speech” as “statements seeking to provoke different attitude towards people because of their different race, origin or beliefs.” None of the participants in the three focus groups conducted for the purposes of this survey (young people, teachers and Roma) makes a difference between insult in interpersonal relations and public use of hate speech.

In 2013, respondents most often reported having encountered hate speech against three social groups: Roma, Turks and gay people; in 2014, two new groups – Muslims and foreigners – emerged as frequent targets of hate speech, while the 2016 findings suggest that Muslims and foreigners are now firmly established as common victims of hate speech in the public perception. Actually, in 2016, the respondents who have come across hate speech targeted against Muslims are even more than those who have heard such statements against Turks.

The share of respondents who in the past year have encountered statements expressing disapproval, hatred or aggression against Muslims, has increased considerably – from 10.6% in 2014 to 38% in 2016.

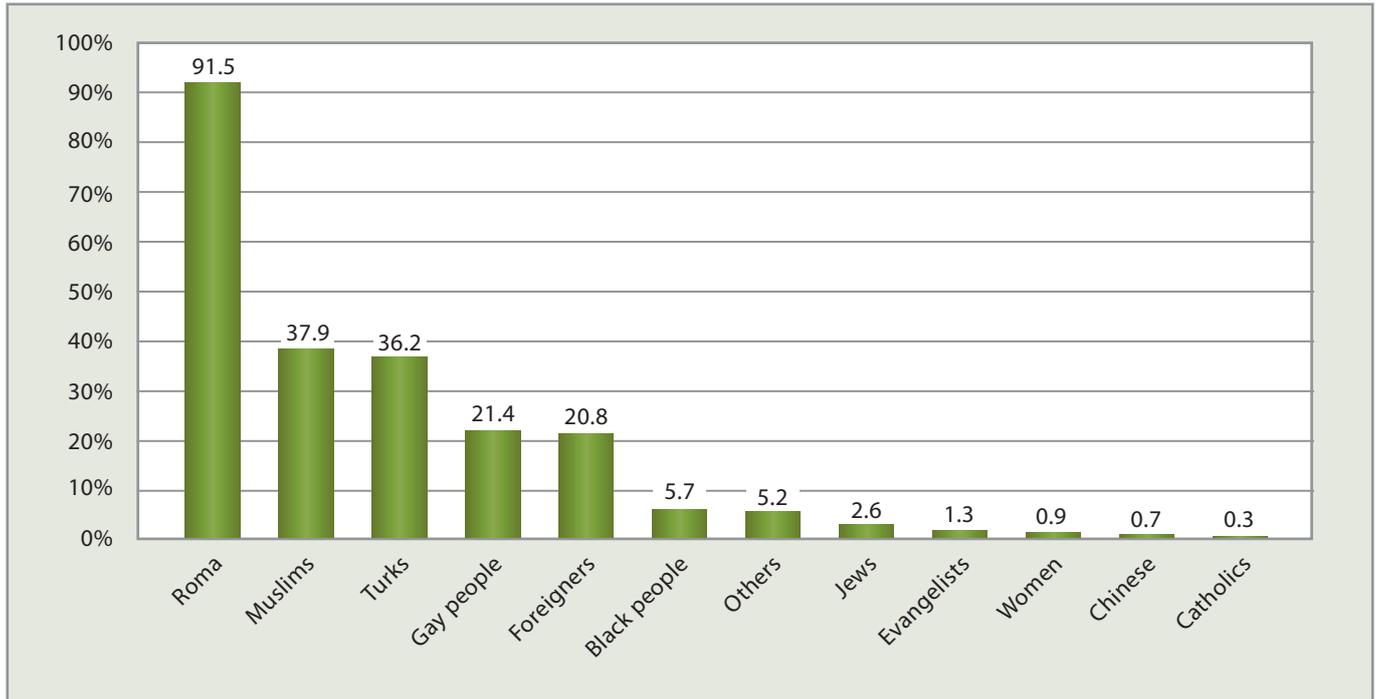
TARGETS OF HATE SPEECH

Roma are still perceived as the most frequent targets of hate speech. The overwhelming majority (91.5%) of those who have encountered hate speech in the last 12 months, report having heard statements directed against Roma. This has remained almost unchanged since 2013.

Teacher, female, regional center:

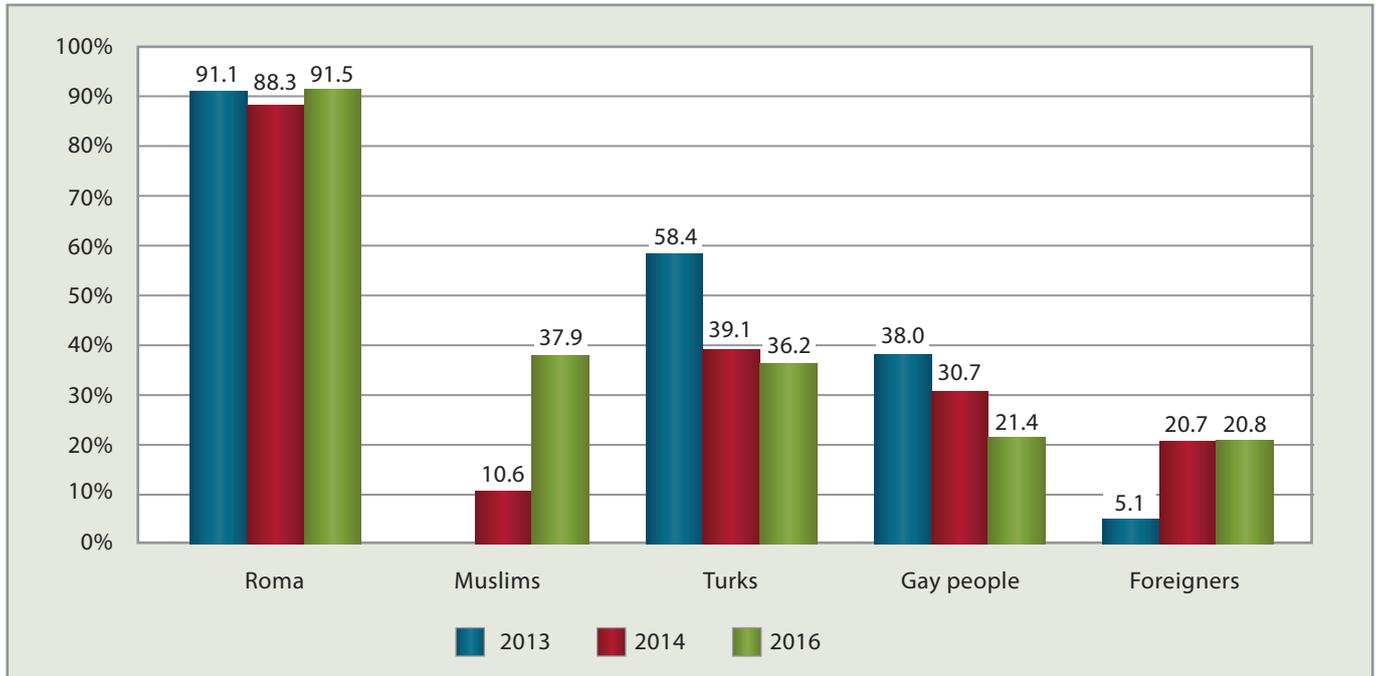
„In our school and in this neighborhood Bulgarians are a minority. And there is a lingering animosity towards Bulgarians. Usually it is the Bulgarians who are accused of racism but they [Roma] also have a negative attitude towards Bulgarians.“

Figure 9. Targets of hate speech



Question: *If you have answered “yes” to the first question, against whom you have most often heard public statements expressing disapproval, hatred or aggression?*

Figure 10. Dynamics in the main targets of hate speech



Question: *If you have answered “yes” to the first question, against whom you have most often heard public statements expressing disapproval, hatred or aggression?*

On the other hand, since 2013 there has been a significant decrease in the number of respondents who report having encountered hate speech against Turks

– from 58% in 2013 to 36% in 2016, as well as in the share of those who have heard hate speech against gay people – from 38% in 2013 to 21% in 2016.

POPULARITY OF SELECTED NEGATIVE PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS ABOUT MINORITIES

The negative perceptions about the different social groups covered in the survey are deepening. In 2013 and 2014, the largest share of respondents (38% and 42%, respectively) reported that they did not associate the word “criminal” with any of the social groups included in the survey, while in 2016, this share has decreased to 30%.

In 2016, Roma remained most persistently associated with negative perceptions: 33% of the respondents tend to associate Roma with “criminal”. Meanwhile, almost the same share of people tend to associate the word “criminal” with politicians. There has been a significant increase in the share of respondents who associate Roma with “criminal”: in 2013 and 2014, one-fifth of the respondents tended to make this association, while in 2016 this share has increased to one-third of the respondents. There has been also a significant increase in the number of respondents who tend to associate immigrants/refugees with “criminal”: the share of those

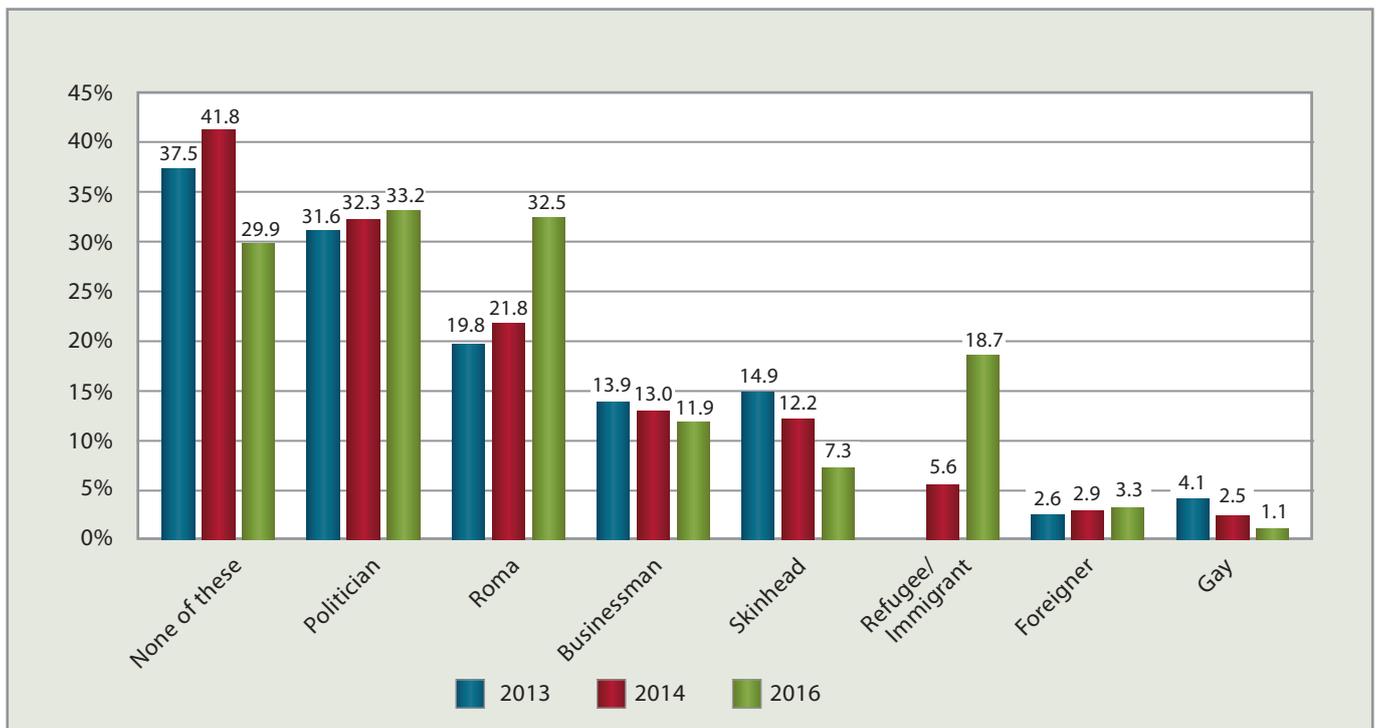
Young Roma, female, small town:
 „The teacher herded the gypsies to one side, the Bulgarians to the other and said: ‘They’re gypsies; they have lice’. But we didn’t have.“

Roma, female, Sofia:
 „At work [cleaning lady in the public sector]... civil servants talk a lot against gypsies. For example, they blame gypsies for VAT fraud but the accountants are Bulgarians.“

who have reported making this association has raised from 6% in 2014 to 19% in 2016.

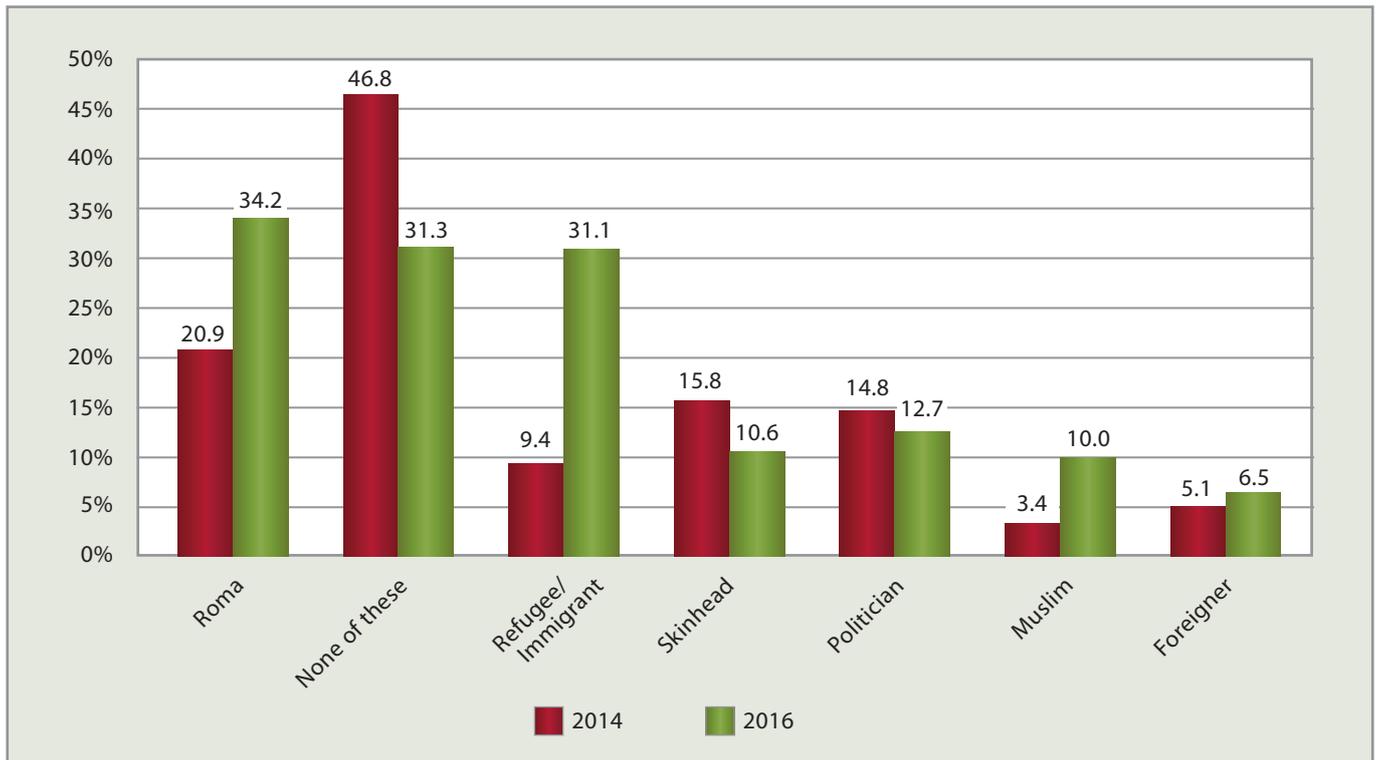
Negative perceptions about Roma and refugees/immigrants are further confirmed by the question testing the most common associations with the word “threat”. The share of respondents who perceived none of the social groups covered in the survey as a threat, has dropped significantly: from 47% in 2014 (or almost half of the respondents) to one third in 2016. The share of respondents who tend to associate Roma and refugees/immigrants with the word “threat” has increased considerably in 2016.

Figure 11. Most common associations with “criminal”



Question: Which of the mentioned groups you would associate with the word “criminal”?

Figure 12. Most common associations with “threat”



Question: Which of the mentioned groups you would associate with the word “threat”?

MEDIA OF HATE SPEECH

Television remains the most influential medium with which people associate the proliferation of hate speech: three-quarters of the respondents who have come across hate speech in the last year, have heard such statements on TV. The importance of the internet is growing steadily compared to the findings of the 2013 and 2014 surveys. In fact, the internet is emerging as the second most important medium for the proliferation of hate speech. However, the significance of other environments for the spread of hate speech should not be underestimated. Almost one third of the respondents who have encountered hate speech, have heard it in shops, cafeterias and restaurants, one fifth of the respondents who have come across statements constituting hate speech, have heard it in the means of public transportation, while nearly 15% have witnessed hate speech at their workplace.

These findings suggest that the regulation and self-regulation mechanisms of electronic media in Bulgaria, inasmuch as they exist, have not been used in the last

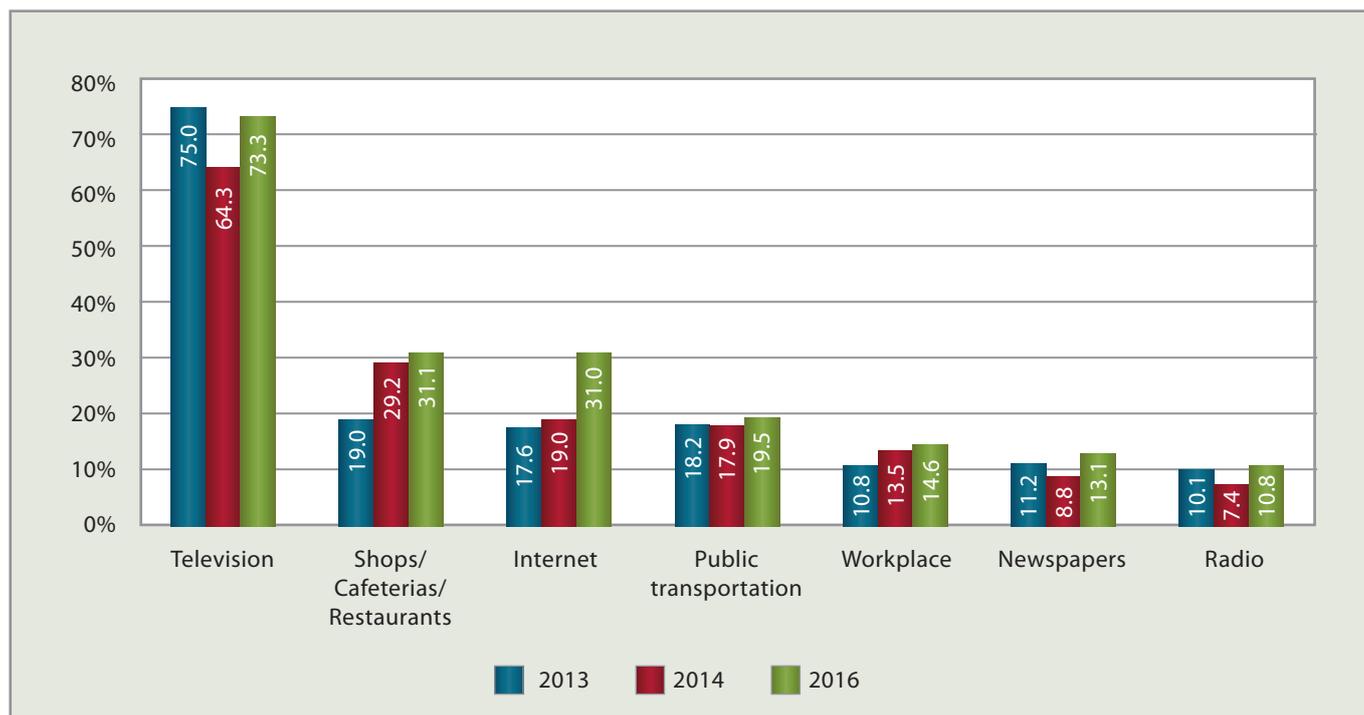
Roma, male, Sofia:

„The media are to blame. Because they shoot the most failed and the dirtiest gypsies. And show to the entire society that these are the gypsies. If only there were someone with a camera now [during the discussion]...“

Roma, male, Sofia:

„Things are not like they used to be. There is a lot of hatred in the younger nation [young people]. They want to isolate us from the country. They want to have it for themselves. No Turks. No gypsies. This hatred comes from the media. There are bad things about the gypsies every day. If a gypsy has done something wrong, they show his face. They say his full name. When a Bulgarian has done the same, it's only the initials. He covers his head and nobody sees him. A gypsy steals a hen and it's all over the news! But when millions get stolen, nobody says a thing. And nobody is convicted. This is where the hatred towards gypsies comes from. They keep showing them stealing, lying, cheating.“

Figure 13. Media of hate speech



Question: *If you have answered “yes” to the first question, where you would most often hear public statement expressing disapproval, hatred or aggression against minorities?*

Roma, male, Sofia:

„The journalists... when they want to show gypsies on camera, why don't they get more educated, more well-to-do people but keep showing the most fallen ones and every single mistake ...?“

three years to curb hate speech, despite the growing public importance of this phenomenon and its potentially harmful effects.

PROPAGATORS OF HATE SPEECH

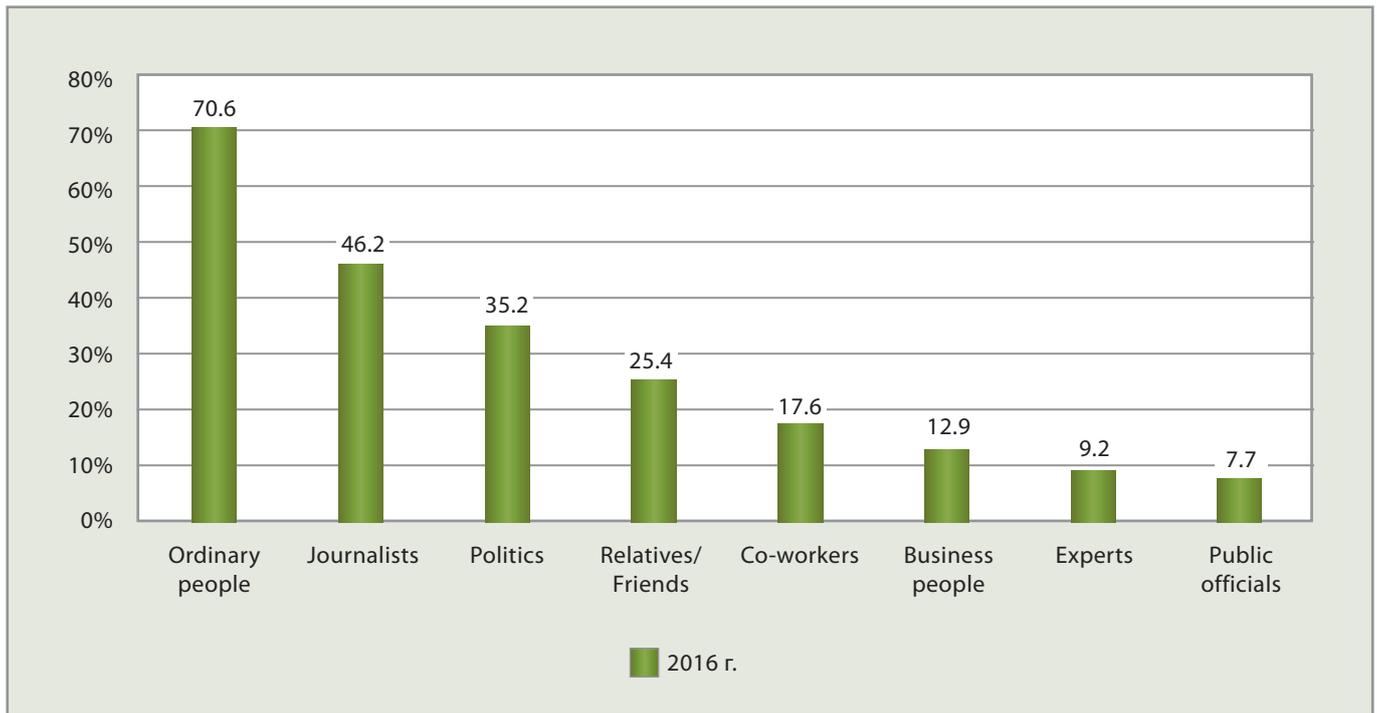
In 2016, the largest share of respondents who have encountered hate speech, report having heard it from ordinary people (71%), journalists (46%), and politicians (35%).

Journalists and politicians were cited as the most frequent users of hate speech in the previous two surveys as well (2013 and 2014) but in 2016, the questionnaire

for the first time included the possibility to choose the answer “ordinary people” because of the prevalence of hate speech in public places such as shops, cafeterias, restaurants and means of public transportation. As the media coverage of cases of illegal detention of immigrants in the spring of 2016 suggests, hate speech and the glorification of hate crimes permeates seamlessly from the conversations of “ordinary people” to the media and political discourse. Cases of hate crimes are presented in the media as praiseworthy acts of proper behavior in support of the institutions, and it seems that neither the media, nor political institutions are subject to the existing mechanisms to control and deter hate speech (editorial control, rules of ethical journalism, internal regulations of the various media and political institutions such as the National Assembly, for example).

Another fact that raises serious concern is that in the 2016 survey, hate speech was also associated in the public perception with statements of experts and public officials. In fact 9% of the respondents who have encountered hate speech in the last 12 months, reported having heard it from “experts”, while 8% claimed they had heard it from “public officials”.

Figure 14. Propagators of hate speech



Question: *From whom you have most often heard statements expressing disapproval, hatred or aggression against members of minorities? Respondents were asked to select all that apply.*

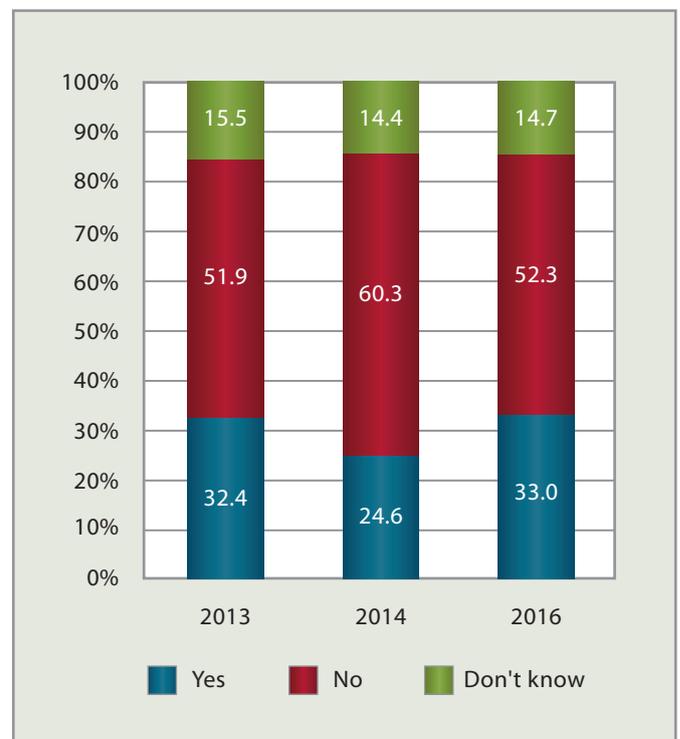
Roma, male, Sofia:
„Many people talk bad. Even members of parliament from the stand say that gypsies are good for nothing... or for our wives that they “breed like bitches.”

Roma, female, Sofia:
„I have worked for a long time in an ObG clinic and it is true that doctors there have been very openly offensive. I have even heard the director saying bad things. They just instill hatred.”

USE OF HATE SPEECH PROMOTING VIOLENCE

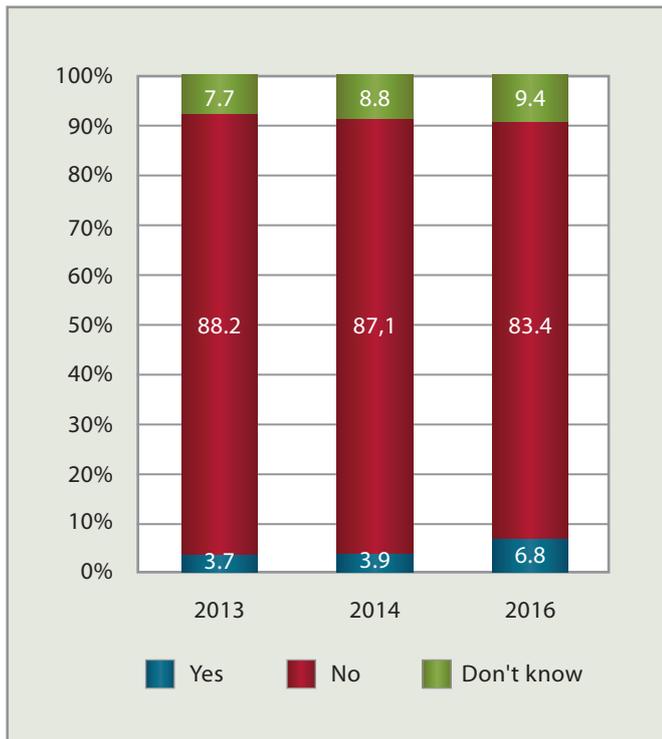
In 2016, there has been a slight increase in the share of respondents who have heard public statements, which in their opinion could encourage others to commit acts of violence against members of minorities. In 2013, every third respondent reported having encour-

Figure 15. Use of hate speech promoting violence



Question: *In the last 12 months have you heard public statements, which in your opinion could incite violence against members of minorities groups?*

Figure 16. Use of hate speech creating a sense of threat



Question: *In the last 12 months, have you happened to hear specific statements by politicians or journalists, which left you with the feeling that you may be physically threatened, that you may become the victim of aggression or violence?*

tered these most extreme forms of hate speech. In 2014, this share decreased to every fourth respondent, while in 2016, it grew again with every third respondent reporting having come across hate speech that encourages acts of violence against members of minority social groups. While the high reported incidence of the most extreme forms of hate speech, established in the 2013 survey, could be attributed to political instability and street protests against the government of Plamen Oresharski, the fallback to the 2013 levels, witnessed in 2016, should be seen as an alarming tendency towards increased incidence of the most serious forms of hate speech.

Roma, female, Sofia

„Many women who work in the street cleaning service have been beaten. They were afraid to go to work. But how could they report it? There would be lawyers coming. They would want money. They would want income. People wouldn't know what to do.“

In 2016, the reported occurrence of hate speech, which left respondents with the impression that they themselves could fall victim to violence, has increased from 4% in 2014 to 7% in the 2016 survey. The share of respondents who have felt personally threatened by specific statements is considerably higher than the average for the country among those who identify themselves as Roma: more than 23% of them reported that in the last year they had heard statements by politicians or journalists, which made them feel that they could be physically threatened or could fall victims to aggression or violence (compared to an average of 7% for the country).

PUBLIC USE OF SPEECH PERCEIVED AS INSULTING

Approximately 8% of the respondents reported that in the last year they had happened to feel personally and grossly insulted by specific statements of journalist or politicians. Public perceptions on this issue have remained unchanged in the three years in which surveys have been conducted (2013, 2014 and 2016). As in the previous two quantitative surveys, almost all specific examples of insulting statements cited by respondents, in fact constitute hate speech. Most often respondents have felt insulted by statements of politicians, which contained negative stereotypes against Roma: “filthy gypsies”, “Roma are scum”, “Roma steal and are stupid”, “Roma are bad”.

A review of the statements, which have made respondents feel personally insulted, however, shows that hate speech is also common against other social groups, which are not normally perceived as targets of discrimination but in fact fall victims to inequality and negative stereotypes: women, senior citizens, poor people, people with disabilities. Particularly disquieting is the proliferation of negative stereotypes against people who are expected to contribute to curbing hate speech; one of the respondents, for instance, has felt personally insulted by a statement heard on TV, which described teachers as “simpletons”. One can assume that such negative stereotyping of teachers (as well as the negative stereotyping of politicians) is a factor that prevents the adoption of targeted policies to curb discrimination and hate speech in schools.

Young male, small town:

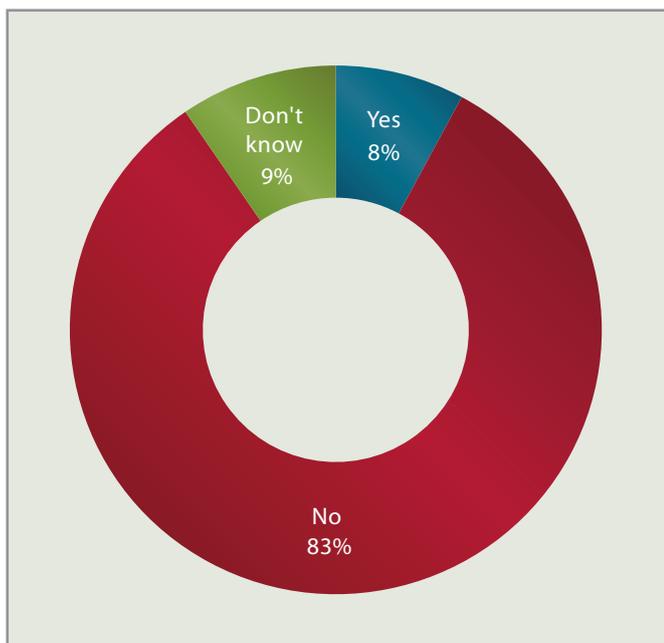
„We don't notify the police because it's like – sorry for the expression – *pissing against the wind.*“

Young Roma, female, small town:

„We don't report it because everything will be twisted and it will turn out to be our fault.“

Insult differs from hate speech, which seeks to instill a sense of inferiority of the entire social group to which the person concerned belongs. However, the focus groups conducted in the framework of the present survey, indicate that on the whole participants do not distinguish between the two and cannot make a difference between behavior that is personally insulting to the victim and behavior that involves hate speech. The focus group with teachers, in particular, revealed that teachers do not distinguish between the cynical comments and insults students exchange in their interpersonal communication in school and the racist and xenophobic statements they make.

Figure 17. Public use of speech perceived as insulting



Question: *In the last 12 months, have you happened to hear specific statements by politicians or journalists, which you found grossly insulting?*

PUBLIC ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE USE OF CRIMINAL SANCTIONS AGAINST HATE SPEECH

Under Bulgaria's Penal Code, propagation of fascist or other anti-democratic ideology, incitement to racial, national or ethnic hostility, hatred or racial discrimination, and commission of violence against another on the grounds of their nationality, race, religion or political convictions, constitute crimes. In all three surveys, however, between 23% and 33% of the respondents claim that they are not aware of this fact.

The 2014 survey registered an increase in the number of respondents who knew that these acts are prosecuted under criminal law, but apparently this was only a temporary phenomenon, rather than an indication of a positive trend towards strengthened public awareness of hate crimes.

There are considerable regional differences in the level of awareness regarding the acts that constitute a crime. In the Northwestern region, the share of respondents who do not know that incitement to racial, national or ethnic hostility or hatred is a crime, is higher than the percentage of those who are aware of the provisions of Art. 162, section 1 of the Penal Code – 54% against 46%, respectively. This is also the case among people with primary or lower than primary education, 57% of whom do not know that this is a crime, while 40% claim that they are aware of this fact. The share of those who are not aware that that incitement to racial, national or ethnic hostility or hatred is a crime, is higher than the average for the country among the respondents who identify themselves

Roma, female, Sofia:

„I was in the park with my children and there were other kids too. My kids were a little dirtier. This doesn't mean that they are... something. They're in the park. They get dirty. One of my sons went to a Bulgarian kid and asked him: "Do you want to play ball?" And the kid's mother jumped and said: "You're not playing with the Roma", then took him aside and told him: "What are you doing playing with the gypsies. Are you crazy?" To me, this is a very bad thing to hear.“

Roma, female, Sofia:

„The license plate of my husband’s car got stolen. We go to the police to report it. There were a lot of people who had come after us but the officer tells us: ‘I don’t have time for your bullshit. Wait at the back of the line and I’ll see you, when I can’. And we’re there for a serious matter. Imagine what would happen if we went for an insult [hate speech]. Would anyone bother?’“

as Roma or Turks (43% of both groups do not know that this is a crime, against a nationwide average of 33%).

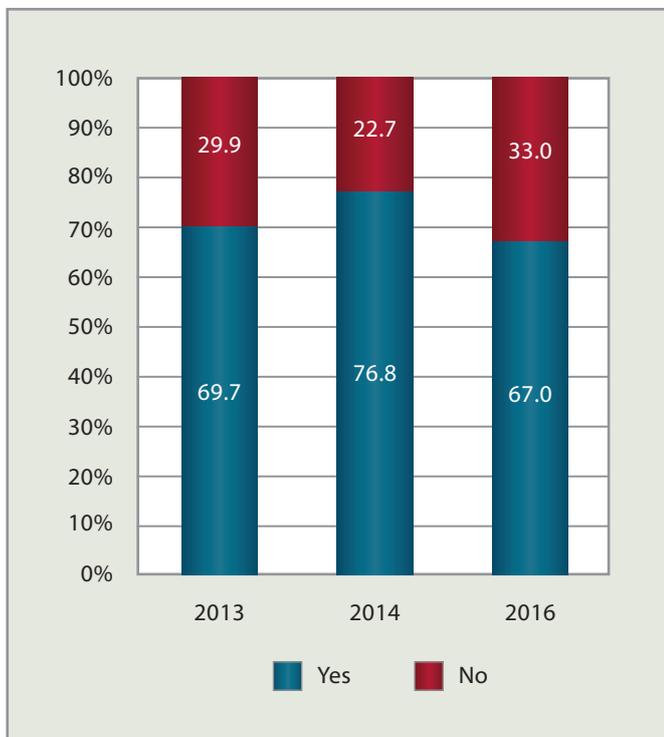
The share of respondents who are aware that the acts under Art. 162 of the Penal Code constitute a crime, is higher among university graduates (76% against a national average of 67%) and among those living in the North Central region and in the Southeastern region (88% and 79%, respectively, against an average of 67 % for the country).

In 2016, the share of respondents who are aware of the provisions of Art. 162, section 2 of the Penal Code,

related to the commission of violence against another or damage to their property on the grounds of their nationality, race, religion or political convictions, has also decreased compared to 2014. In 2014, 84% of the people knew that such acts constitute a crime, while in 2016, this percentage dropped to 72%.

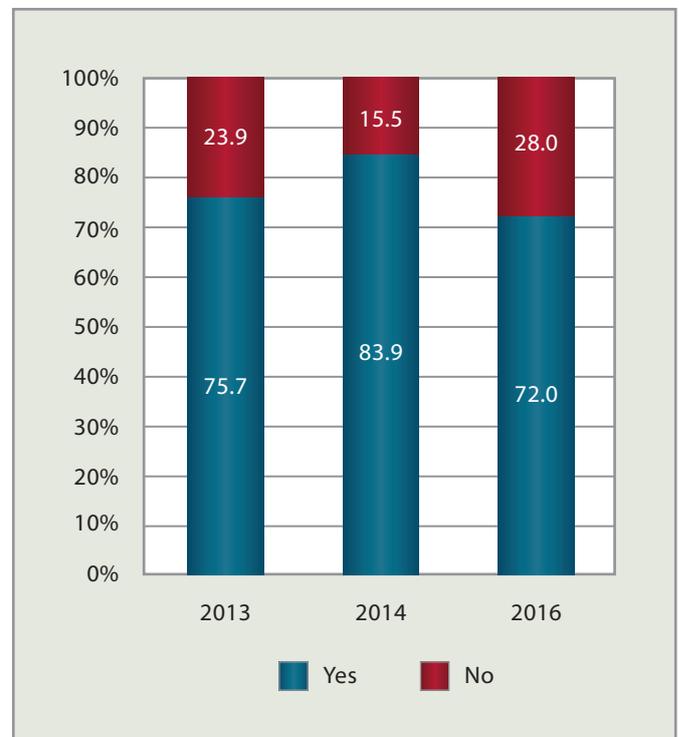
As above, there are considerable demographic differences in the level of awareness: better educated people tend to report more often that they are aware of the provisions of Art. 162, section 2 of the Penal Code than the respondents with primary or lower than primary education. The share of respondents who know that such acts constitute a crime is again lower than the national average among those who identify themselves as Roma or Turks (57% and 53% of them, respectively, are aware of this against a national average of 72%). Those who live in the South Central and the Southeastern regions tend to report more often than the average citizen that they are aware of the provisions of Art. 162, section 2 of the Penal Code, while those who live in the Northwestern region are less aware.

Figure 18. Awareness about the incitement to hatred is a crime



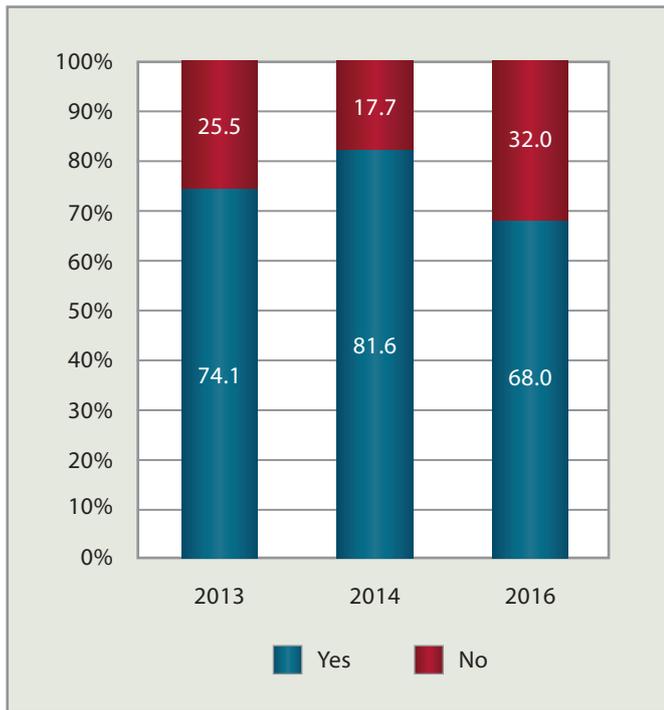
Question: Do you know that it is a crime in Bulgaria to propagate and incite hostility or hatred based on race and ethnicity, or to instigate racial discrimination (Art. 162 of the Penal Code)?

Figure 19 – Awareness about hate crimes (Art. 162, section 2 of the Penal Code)



Question: Do you know that it is a crime in Bulgaria to commit violence against someone or to destroy someone’s property on the grounds of their ethnicity, race, religion or political convictions (Art. 162, section 2 of the Penal Code)?

Figure 20. Awareness about hate crimes (Art. 162, section 3 of the Penal Code)

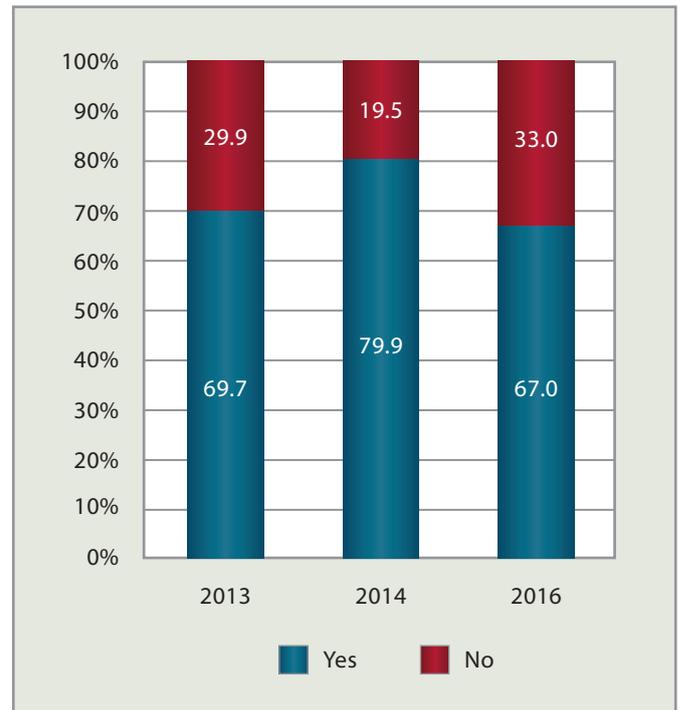


Question: Do you know that it is a crime in Bulgaria to form an organization or group with the purpose of committing violence against someone or destroying someone's property on the grounds of their ethnicity, race, religion or political convictions (Art. 162, section 3 of the Penal Code)?

Out of the three survey years (2013, 2014 and 2016), last year saw the lowest share of respondents who were aware that the establishment of organizations or groups with the purpose of committing violence against someone or destroying someone's property on the grounds of their ethnicity, race, religion or political convictions, was a crime under Art. 162, section 3 of the Penal Code. In 2014, almost 82% of the respondents knew that this was a crime, while in 2016 this share dropped to 68%. Although the majority are aware that it is illegal to form an organization or a group seeking to commit hate crimes, the fact that one third of the respondents do not know that this is a crime raises concerns.

Two thirds of the respondents surveyed in 2016 are aware that propagation of fascist or other anti-democratic ideology is a crime under Art. 108 of the Penal Code. However, in 2016, the share of respondents who do not know that this is a crime has increased from 20% in 2014 to 33%. In fact, every third citizen is not aware that it is a crime in Bulgaria to propagate fascist or other anti-democratic ideology.

Figure 21. Awareness about crimes against the Republic



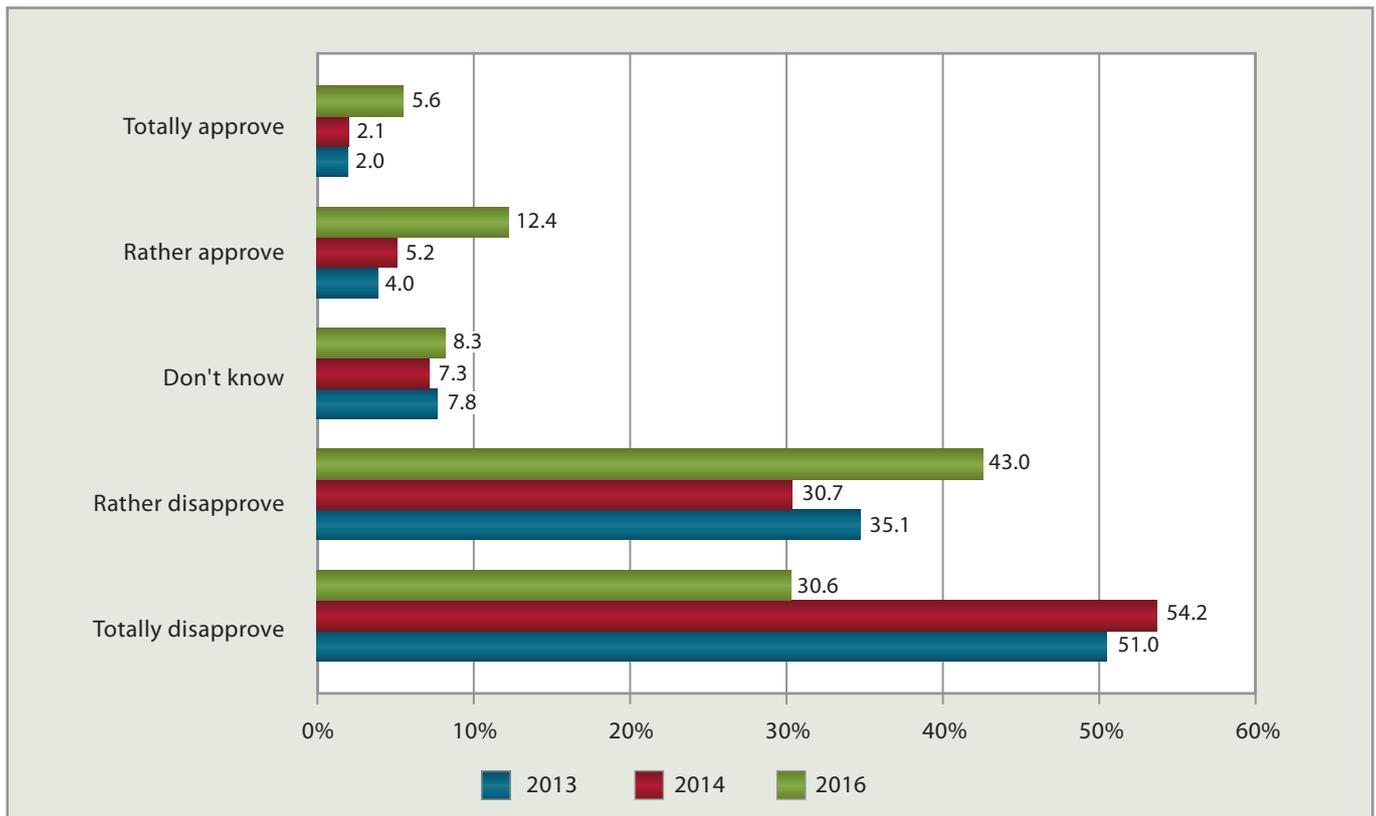
Question: Do you know that propagating fascist or other anti-democratic ideology is a crime in Bulgaria (Art. 108 of the Penal Code)?

PUBLIC ATTITUDES TOWARDS ANTI-HATE SPEECH POLICIES

The vast majority of respondents (73%) disapprove, more or less categorically, of the use of public statements expressing disapproval, hatred or aggression against members of minorities. Compared to previous surveys, however, the share of those who totally disapprove has dropped significantly (by more than 23%), while the percentage of those who are less convinced and would rather disapprove has increased. In 2014, 54% of the respondents claimed that they totally disapproved of the use of hate speech in the public environment, while in 2016, this percentage plummeted to 31%.

There is a noticeable increase in the number of respondents who would rather approve or would totally approve of the use of hate speech in the public domain:

Figure 22. (Dis)approval of hate speech (general)



Question: *To what extent you would approve of public statements expressing disapproval, hatred or aggression against minorities?*

in 2013 and 2014, those who have answered that they would “rather approve”, were 4% and 5%, respectively, while in 2016, this percentage has reached 12%. The respondents who totally approve of the use of hate speech in the public domain have increased from 2% in 2013 and 2014 to almost 6% in 2016.

There is quite a difference between the general and abstract disapproval of the public use of hate speech and the public attitude towards the public use of hate speech in specific cases against specific vulnerable minorities. Both in 2014 and in 2016, it is clear that extreme nationalism contained in the phrase “Bulgaria for Bulgarians” is not perceived as a statement constituting hate speech. In 2016, the majority of respondents (52%) approve of the use of this phrase in mainstream

media. In the qualitative survey, however, this phrase was cited by some interviewed persons as a statement that makes them feel threatened or insulted. In the focus group with Roma, the phrase “Bulgaria for Bulgarians” was also described as an example of hate speech.

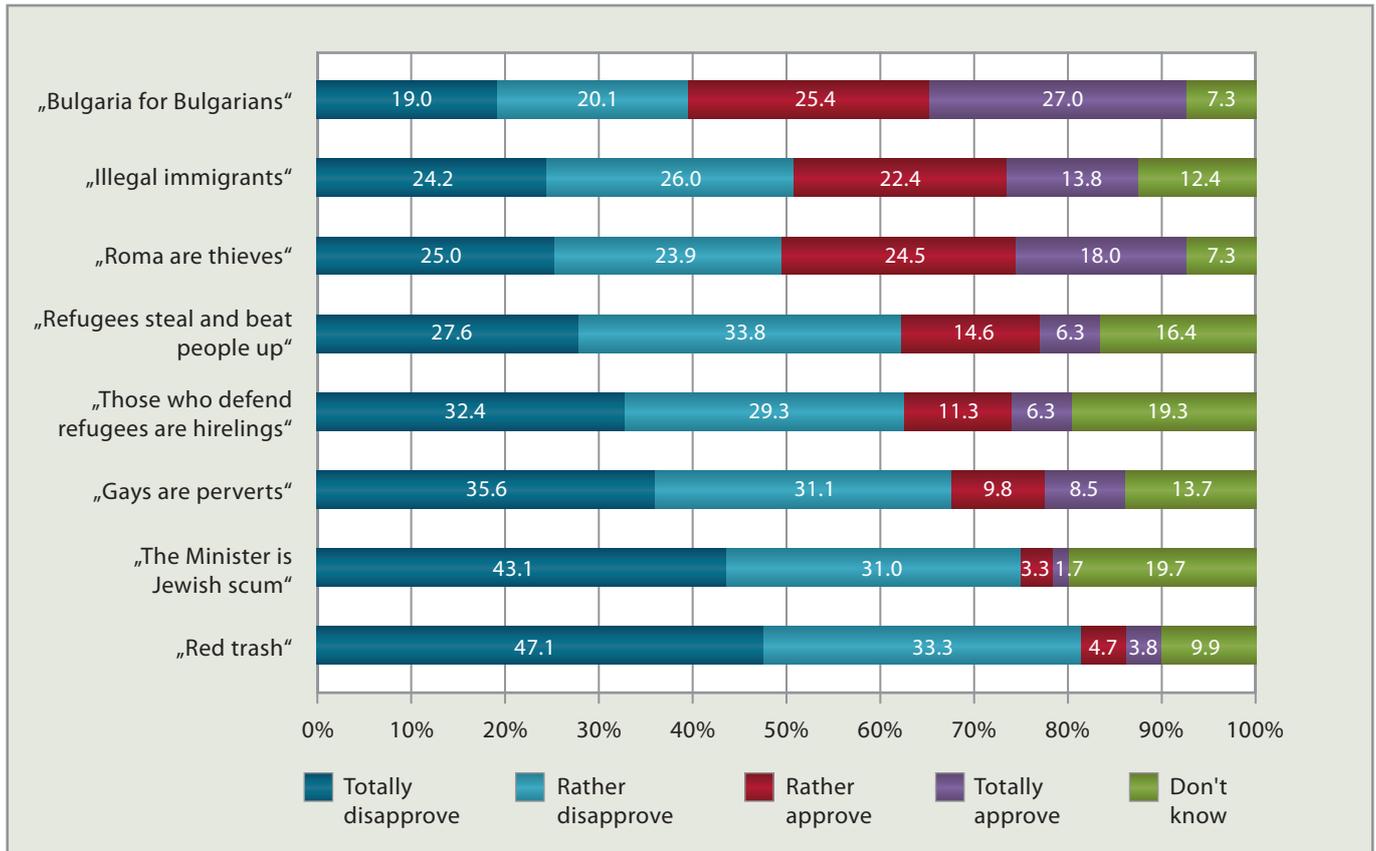
With all other specific phrases, constituting hate speech, which were tested in the survey, the rate of disapproval of their use in mainstream media was higher than the rate of approval. Most explicit is the rate of disapproval of the public use of the phrase “red trash”, which constitutes hate speech against the supporters of the Bulgarian Socialist Party: 80% of the respondents disapprove of the use of this phrase in mainstream media against 9% who approve.

Almost three fourths of the respondents (74%) disapprove, more or less categorically, of the use of the phrase “The Minister is Jewish scum” in mainstream media, while only 5% approve.

Two thirds of the respondents (67%) disapprove, more or less categorically, of the use of the phrase “Gays are perverts” in mainstream media, against 18% who

Teacher, female, regional center:
 „Those who make the rules are not the right people.“

Figure 23. (Dis)approval of hate speech (specific)



Question: *To what extent you would approve the use of each of these statements in mainstream media (television, radio, newspapers)?*

approve. Public attitude towards these three phrases “red trash”, “The Minister is Jewish scum” and “Gays are perverts”) have remained almost unchanged between the 2014 and the 2016 surveys.

In the last two years, however, there has been a significant change in the public attitude towards phrases, expressing extreme nationalism and negative stereotypes about Roma and immigrants. Approval of the public use of the phrase, expressing extreme nationalism, has increased significantly since 2014. In 2014, the majority of respondents (60%) claimed that they disapproved, more or less categorically, of the use of the phrase “Bulgaria for Bulgarians” in mainstream media (television, radio, newspapers). In 2016, the majority (52%) already approves of the public use of this phrase, while the share of those who disapprove has dropped from 60% to 40%.

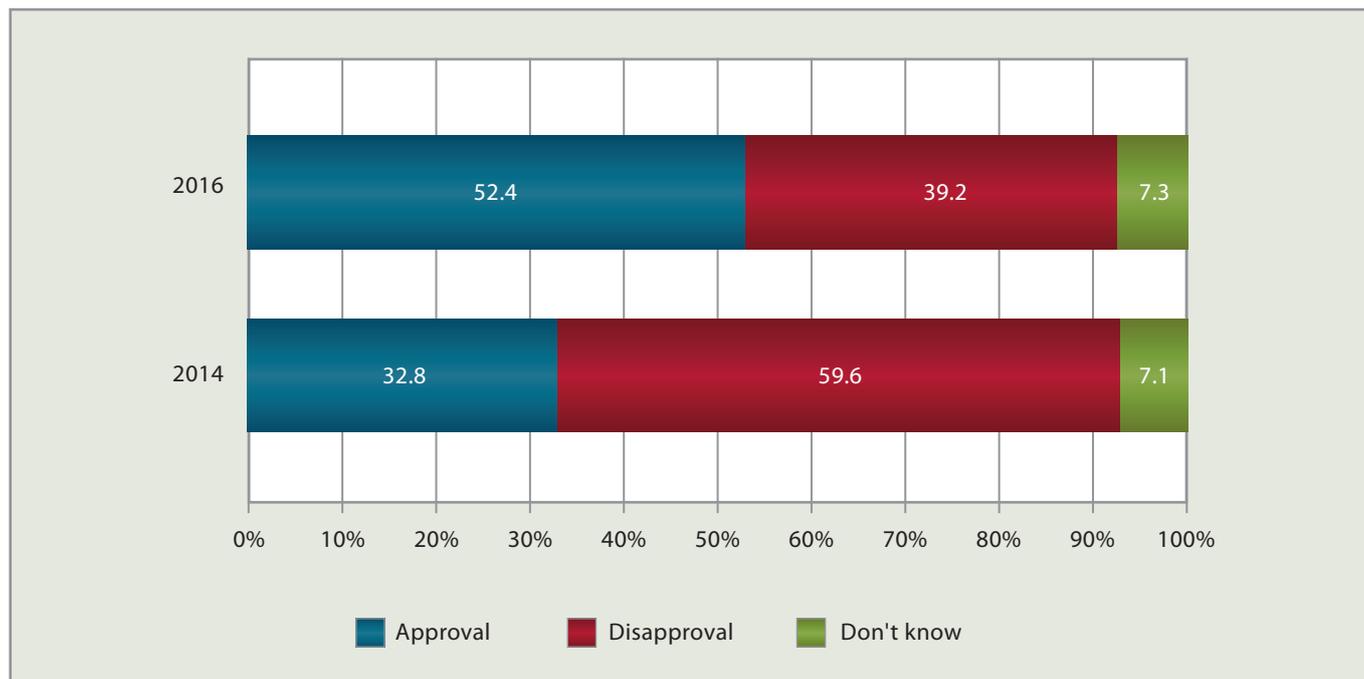
Since 2014, society seems to have grown more tolerant to the public denigration of immigrants. Within two years the number of respondents who approve of the use of the phrase “illegal immigrants” in mainstream

media (television, radio, newspapers) has doubled: from 18% in 2014 to 36% in 2016). In 2014, more than two-thirds of the respondents claimed that they disapproved of the use of the phrase “illegal immigrants” in mainstream media, while in 2016, this percentage decreased to a half of all respondents.

The most significant negative development since the previous survey in 2014, has affected public acceptability of hate speech targeted against Roma. Respondents who approve the use of the phrase “Gypsies are thieves” in traditional media (TV, radio, newspapers) increased from 27% in 2014 to 43% in 2016. It is true that in 2016, the greatest share of respondents (49%) disapprove of the use of this phrase in traditional media, but the difference between the findings of the two surveys suggests a process of “normalization” of hate speech and can be interpreted as a tendency towards growing proliferation of negative stereotypes against Roma.

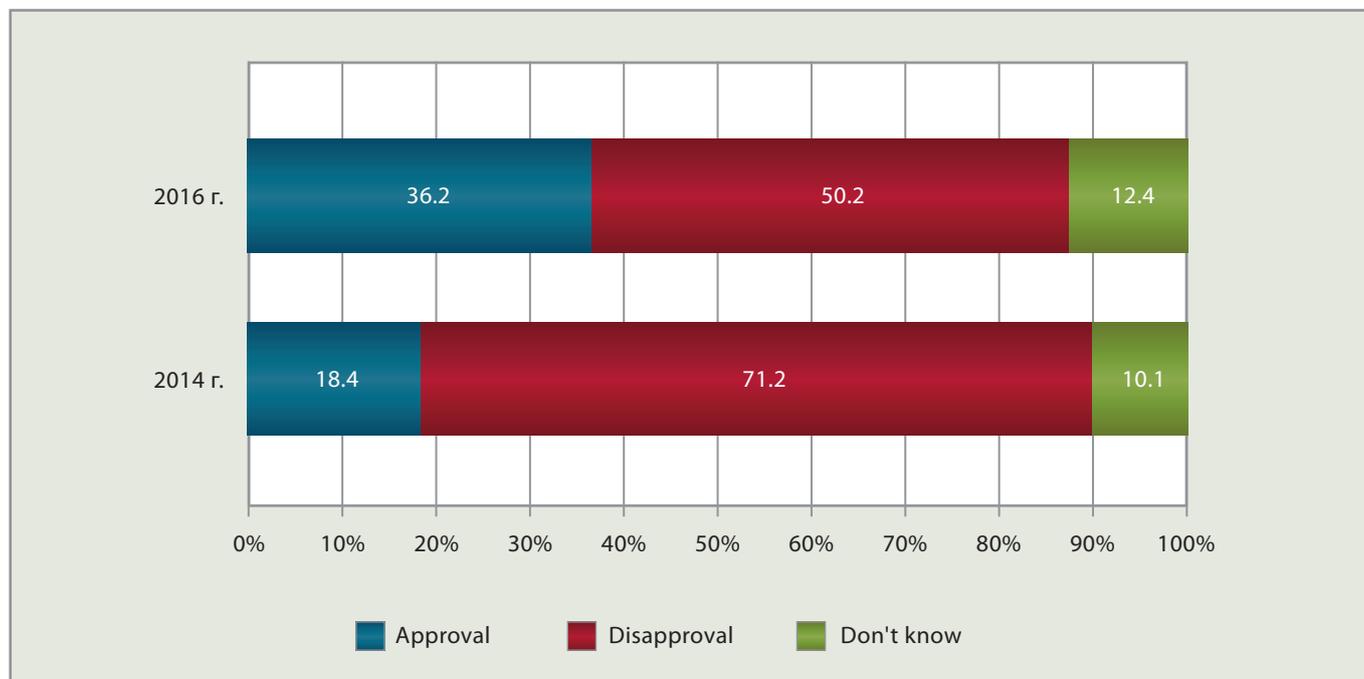
All three surveys conducted so far (2013, 2014 and 2016) indicate that the greatest share of respondents believe that the authorities should protect members

Figure 24. (Dis)approval of hate speech: statement “Bulgaria for Bulgarians”



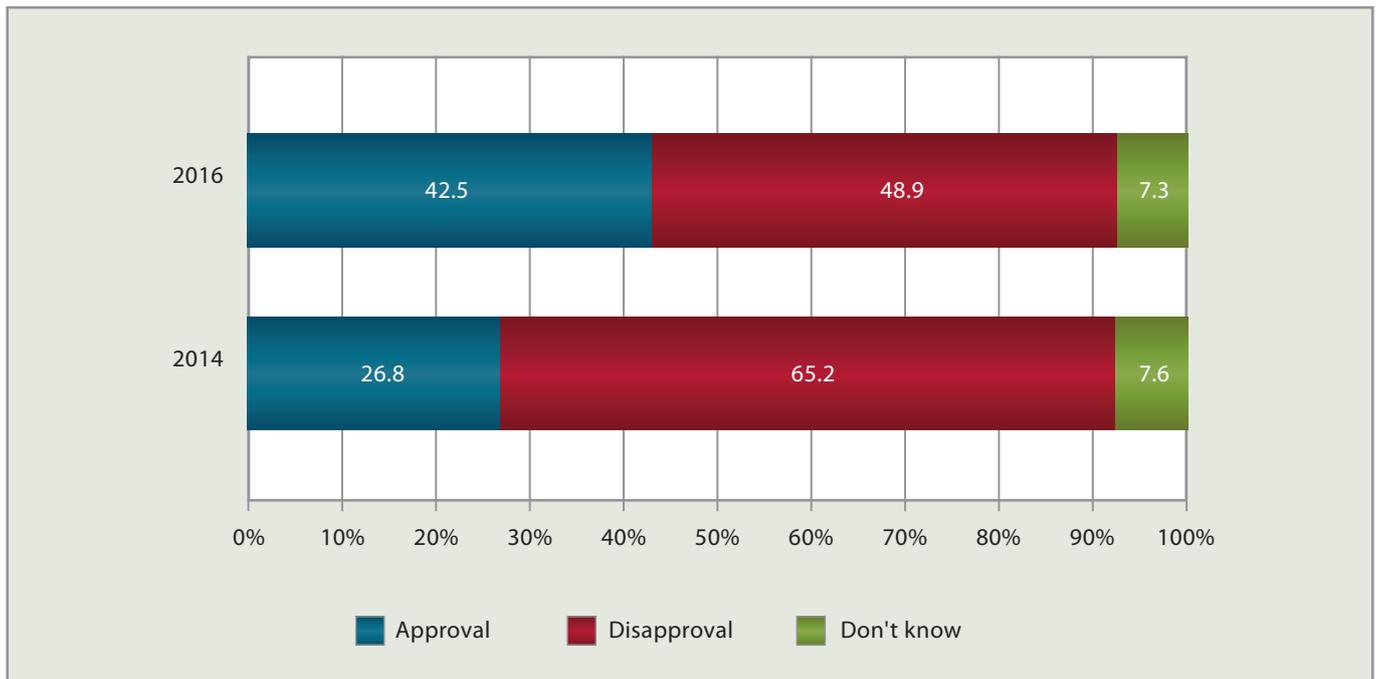
Question: To what extent you would approve the use of each of these statements in mainstream media (television, radio, newspapers)? – “Bulgaria for Bulgarians”. The approval rate here includes the sum of respondents who have answered that they “rather approve” or “totally approve”, while the disapproval rate includes the sum of respondents who have answered that they “totally disapprove” or “rather disapprove”.

Figure 25. (Dis)approval of hate speech: statement “Illegal immigrants”



Question: To what extent you would approve the use of each of these statements in mainstream media (television, radio, newspapers)? – “Illegal immigrants”. The approval rate here includes the sum of respondents who have answered that they “rather approve” or “totally approve”, while the disapproval rate includes the sum of respondents who have answered that they “totally disapprove” or “rather disapprove”.

Figure 26. (Dis)approval of hate speech: statement „Roma are thieves“



Question: *To what extent you would approve the use of each of these statements in mainstream media (television, radio, newspapers)? – “Roma are thieves”. The approval rate here includes the sum of respondents who have answered that they “rather approve” or “totally approve”, while the disapproval rate includes the sum of respondents who have answered that they “totally disapprove” or “rather disapprove”.*

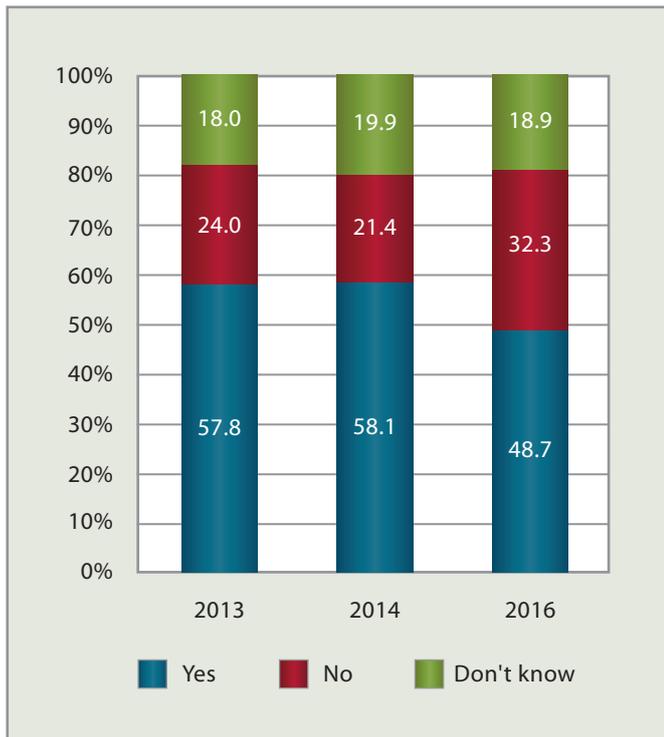
of the Roma community, gay people and foreign nationals against hate speech. In 2013 and 2014, those who agreed with this amounted to 58%, while in 2016, their share has decreased to 49%. Within four years, the number of people who do not agree that the authorities should protect members of minorities against hate speech has increased from 24% to 32% (i.e. from one fourth to one third of the respondents). In 2016, 32% of the people do not agree that the state should protect minorities against hate speech. Although those disagreeing are still a minority, the fact that their share has increased is yet another indication that hate speech is becoming a “normal” phenomenon in the public perception, a common and acceptable part of public discourse, which in turn suggests that public policies to curb it are either missing or ineffective.

Respondents from Sofia are far less likely than the average citizen to agree that the state should protect members of minorities against hate speech: those who believe that there is no need for authorities to provide such protection (40%) are more than those who have answered positively to this question (33% against a national average of 49%). Ratios are pretty much the same among respondents from the Northwestern region as well. In contrast, those who live in the South Central and Southeastern regions are more likely than the average citizen to agree that the state should protect minorities. A clear majority in support of this assumption was registered among respondents who identify themselves as Turks (69% of them believe that the authorities should protect minorities, compared to a national average of 49%), as well as among those who identify themselves as Roma (92% of them answered positively to this question).

A key element of known policies to curb hate speech is criminal prosecution. It is a widespread belief among respondents that the Prosecution Service should take criminal law actions against politicians and journalists who publicly express disapproval, hatred or aggression

Young female, small town:
„The rich are becoming richer, the poor – poorer and this gets in the way of justice in Bulgaria.“

Figure 27. Public support for anti-hate speech policies.



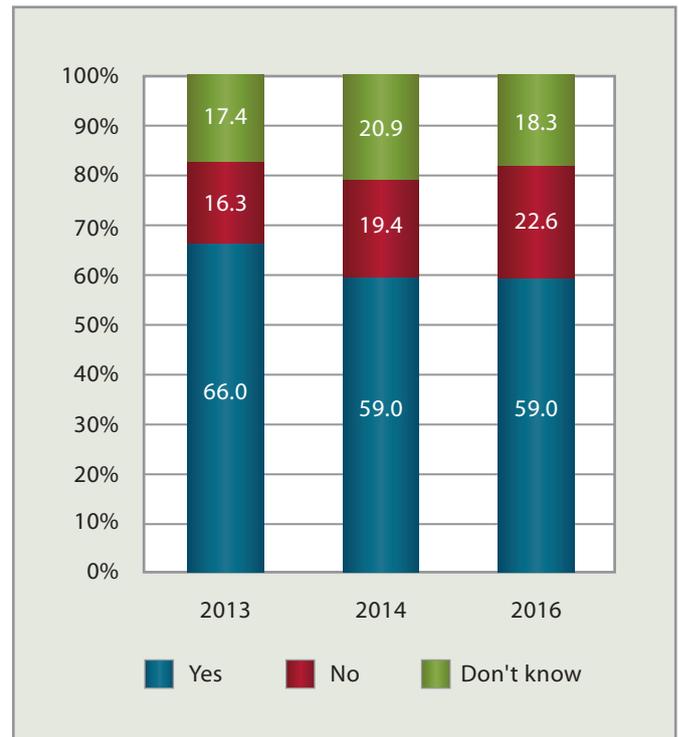
Question: *Do you believe that authorities should protect Roma, gay people and foreigners against public statements, expressing disapproval, hatred or aggression against them?*

towards minorities: the share of those who agree that such cases should be prosecuted was 59% both in 2014 and in 2016. However, those who disagree with this assumption have increased from 16% in 2013 to almost 23% in 2016.

One of the possible explanations for the declining public awareness of the need for criminal prosecution of hate speech is the permanent failure of the police and the Prosecution Service to punish such acts, although since 2013 they have become increasingly widespread.

According to former Chief Prosecutor Boris Velchev: "Grounds for implementing the provisions of Art. 162 and Art. 164 of the Penal Code exist and emerge constantly but they are underestimated by the police and the Prosecution Service in their practice." He suggests two reasons for the small number of criminal cases for use of hate speech. The second one has to do with difficulties in defining the crimes under Art. 108 and Art. 162 of the Penal Code: it is unclear what does the term "incitement" to racial or national hostility involve exactly and whether it can be a one-time act or must be

Figure 28. Public support for criminal prosecution of hate speech



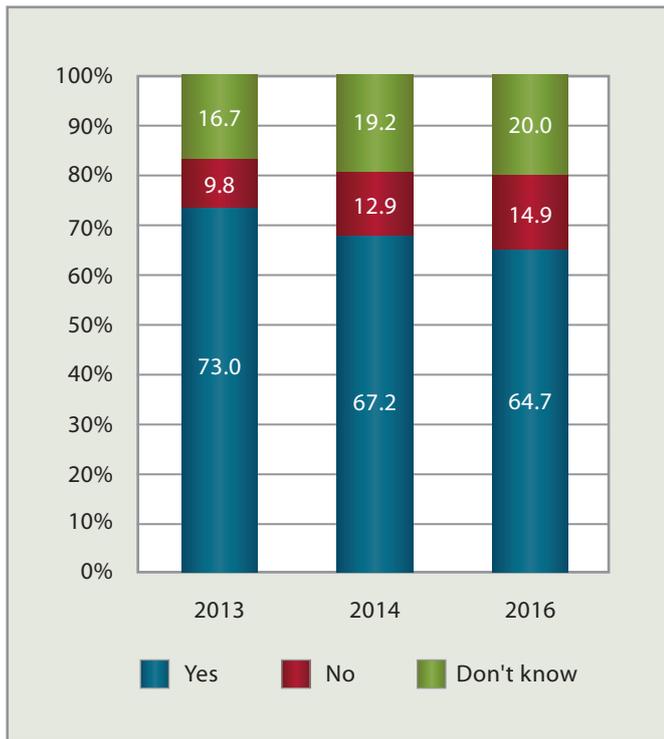
Question: *Do you believe that the Prosecution Service should take action against politicians and journalists who openly express disapproval hatred or aggression against minorities?*

repeated to meet the requirements of the law. The first reason, cited by the former Chief Prosecutor, however, suggests that the Prosecution Service and the police refrain from prosecuting hate speech due to some peculiarity of public attitudes: "The problem is being underestimated. Bulgarian society still does not appreciate the importance of words. As long as someone is "just talking", they do not seem really dangerous. When we add to this perception the complete absence of ethical rules in most media, the total licentiousness of public discourse and the complex that "freedom of speech" should not be restricted, the bouquet of reasons begins to take shape".¹²

However, with regard to public attitudes, the findings of the three surveys conducted so far clearly show that the majority of respondents (between 66% in 2013 and 59% in 2016) believe that the Prosecution Service should take action against the public use of hate speech. Lack of such action is probably one of the fac-

¹² Velchev, B.: *Problems of Penal Policy in the Republic of Bulgaria*, Siela, 2012, p. 247.

Figure 29. Public support for criminal prosecution of aggressive nationalism



Question: Do you believe that the Prosecution Service should take action against politicians and journalists who propagate aggressive nationalism?

tors for the gradual “normalization” of hate speech as a phenomenon and the slight increase in the number of respondents who feel that hate speech is acceptable and should not be prosecuted. These respondents are currently the minority (23%) but in the long term, if inaction on behalf of authorities continues, it is quite possible that public support for criminal prosecution of hate speech would dwindle further.

The majority of respondents (65%) believe that the Prosecution Service should take criminal law actions against politicians and journalists who propagate aggressive nationalism. However, public support for criminal prosecution of such cases has also declined; since 2013, the number of people who do not feel that aggressive nationalism should be prosecuted has increased by 5%.

In its Recommendation No. 15 of December 8, 2015 the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance advises Council of Europe member states, among other things, to “withdraw all financial and other forms of support by public bodies from political parties and

other organisations that use hate speech or fail to sanction its use by their members” and to “provide, while respecting the right to freedom of association, for the possibility of prohibiting or dissolving such organisations regardless of whether they receive any form of support from public bodies where their use of hate speech is intended or can reasonably be expected to incite acts of violence, intimidation, hostility or discrimination against those targeted by it”. The survey tested whether there is public support for the adoption of two of these measures in Bulgaria: withdrawal of public funding from political parties and media outlets that use hate speech.

The majority of respondents (63%) agree that public funding of political parties should be discontinued, if their leaders make statements that express disapproval, hatred or aggression towards different minorities. Only 14% of the respondents disagree with this proposal.

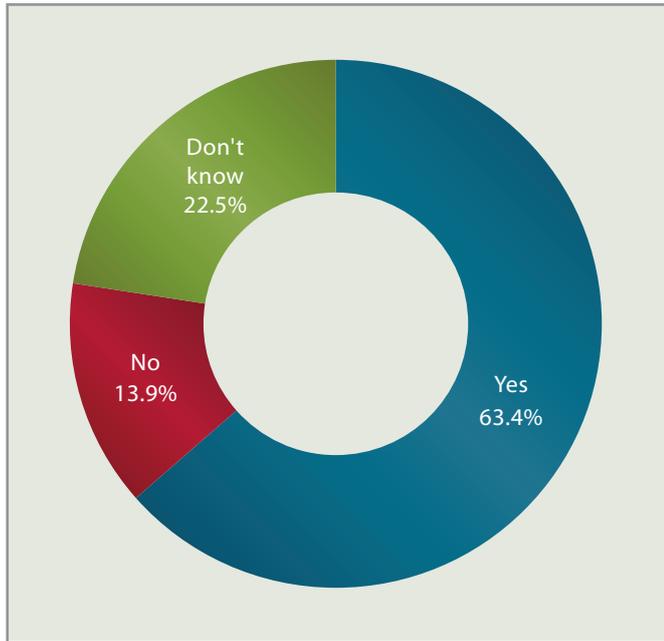
Public support is also high for the adoption of measures against media outlets that disseminate hate speech: 58% of the respondents agree that the provision of public funding, either national or European, should be withdrawn from media outlets whose journalists make statements expressing disapproval, hatred or aggression towards different minorities.

As in 2013 and in 2014, the findings of the 2016 survey indicate that although public support for criminal prosecution of hate speech and aggressive nationalism is high, few people are willing to engage personally by taking specific action against these phenomena. The likelihood for citizens who have witnessed hate speech to report such instances to the authorities remains quite low: 60% of the respondents would not notify the police or the Prosecution Service, if they had heard public statements, expressing disapproval, hatred or aggression against members of minorities. Only 23% claim that they would do so, while every sixth respondent is not sure how they would react.

The likelihood of reporting hate speech to the authorities is slightly higher among the respondents who identify themselves as Roma (40% of them would notify the authorities against a national average of 23%), as well as among the respondents who identify themselves as Turks (35% would report compared to an average of 23% for the country).

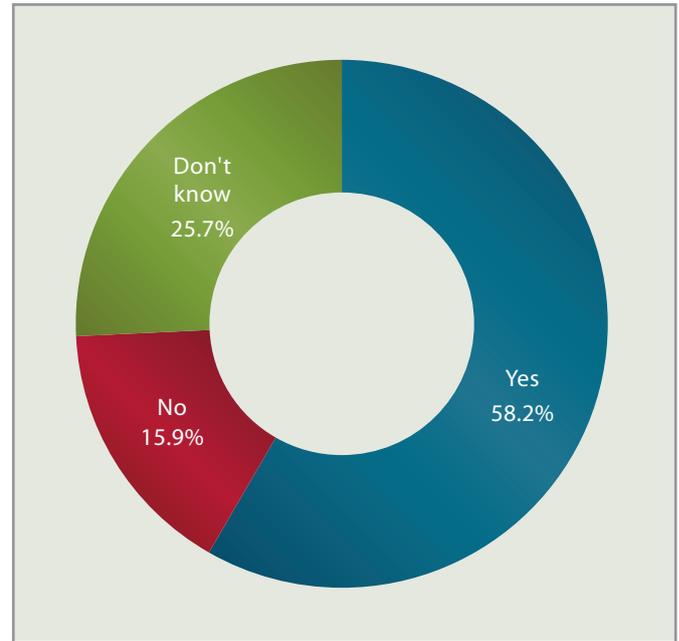
The tendency for notifying authorities is alarmingly low among respondents from Sofia (only 11% of them

Figure 30. Public support for withdrawing public funding from political parties that use hate speech



Question: *Do you believe that public funding of political parties should be discontinued, if their leaders make statements expressing disapproval, hatred or aggression towards different minorities?*

Figure 31. Public support for withdrawing public funding from media outlets that use hate speech



Question: *Do you believe that public funding of media outlets should be discontinued, if their journalists make statements expressing disapproval, hatred or aggression towards different minorities?*

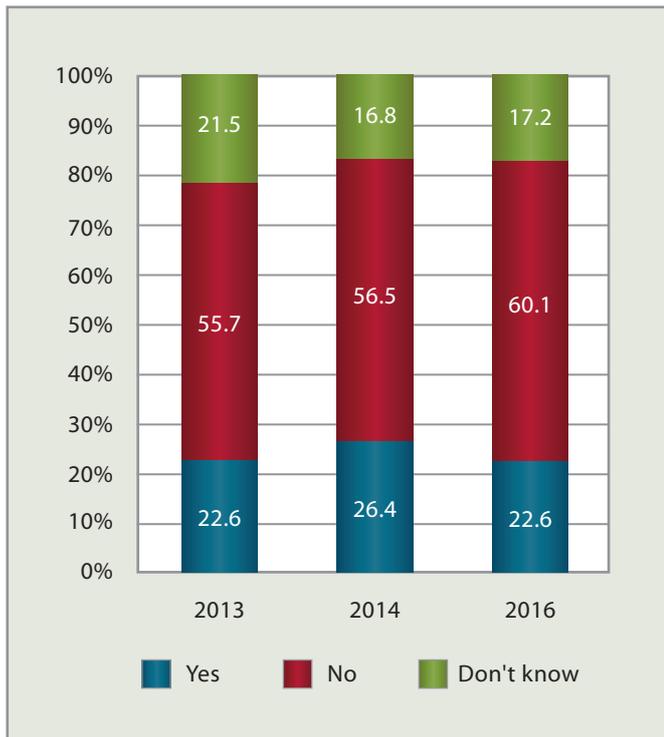
would report hate speech against a national average of 23%) and among respondents aged 18-29 years (13% of them would report compared to an average of 23% for the country). The low likelihood of reporting hate speech to the authorities is hardly surprising given that a considerable share of the respondents are not aware that some forms of hate speech constitute a crime. However, findings also suggest that there might be a specific problem with the confidence people from Sofia and young people have in criminal prosecution authorities. This should be taken into consideration in the development and implementation of public policies against hate speech and hate crimes.

In addition to gauging public attitudes towards hate speech, the qualitative survey also sought to establish to what extent people who have witnessed hate speech are willing to notify the authorities and what are the reasons for the low likelihood to report such instances, which was registered in the quantitative survey. Results from all three focus groups (young people from a small town, Roma from Sofia and teachers from a re-

gional center) showed that people are very reluctant to report hate speech to the authorities, although all of them have witnessed such speech. The main reason cited was related to the low confidence in the judiciary: the participants in all three focus groups arrived at the conclusion that there were two justice systems in Bulgaria – “one for the poor and one for the rich”, while the impunity of the rich and the fact that the law does not apply to them for other crimes, give them the power to use hate speech publicly without any consequences. The participants in the focus group with teachers agreed that one of the reasons for the aggression and use of hate speech in schools was the lack of sanctions, i.e. the systematic non-application of the law.

The focus group with Roma revealed yet another reason for refraining to report hate speech to authorities: all participants were employed Roma who had been exposed to hate speech on a daily basis by their superiors at their workplaces but never reported it because they were afraid their identity would be disclosed and they would lose their jobs.

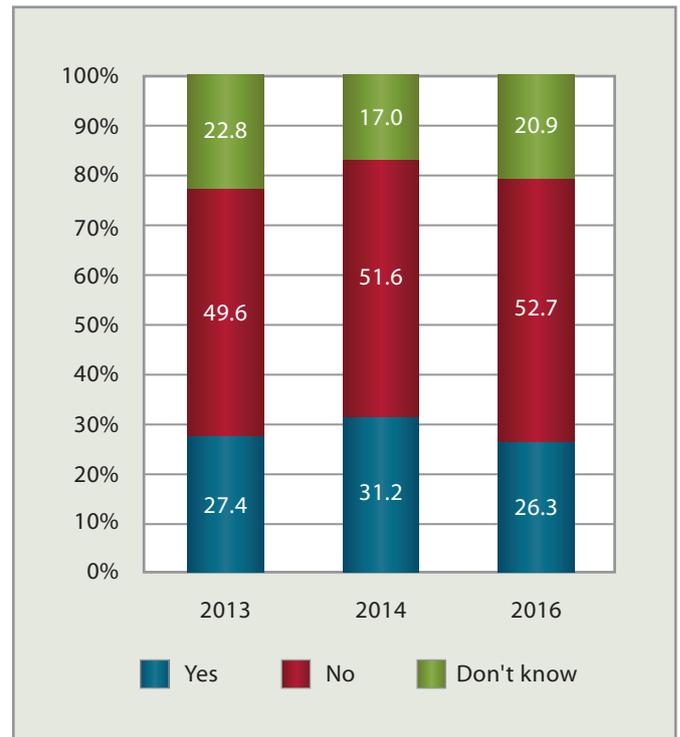
Figure 32. Likelihood of reporting hate speech



Question: *Would you notify the police, if you hear public statements, expressing disapproval, hatred or aggression against minorities?*

The tendency for reporting cases of aggressive nationalism is also quite low: more than half of the respondents (53%) would not notify the police if they heard statements propagating aggressive nationalism. The share of those who would report it is slightly higher than one fourth of the respondents (26%). The likelihood of reporting aggressive nationalism is again somewhat higher among

Figure 33. Likelihood of reporting aggressive nationalism



Question: *Would you notify the police, if you hear public statements propagating aggressive nationalism?*

the respondents who identify themselves as Turks (37% of them would notify the authorities against a national average of 26%), as well as among the respondents who identify themselves as Roma (35% would report compared to an average of 26% for the country). The share of those who are not sure if they would approach the authorities is also quite high – 21%.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS WITH REGARD TO HATE SPEECH PREVENTION POLICIES

- ▶ Hate speech is a widespread and firmly established phenomenon in Bulgarian public life. The 2016 survey registered a tendency for “normalization” and growing tolerance towards hate speech, which is expressed in worsened results on the key indicators of the survey: the share of respondents who in the last 12 months have heard public statements, expressing disapproval, hatred or aggression against members of different minorities, is increasing; the share of those who are aware that certain forms of hate speech constitute a crime is decreasing, while the percentage of those who agree that the authorities should protect minorities against hate speech and the Prosecution Service should take action against it, is declining. As mentioned in the previous two surveys, there is a continued and increasingly pressing need for developing and adopting national policies to curb and combat hate speech. Without such policies the risk of growing discrimination against the most affected social groups (Roma, Muslims, Turks, foreign nationals and gay people) is bound to multiply, while the incidence of hate crimes is bound to increase.
- ▶ The findings of the three surveys indicate that Roma, Turks and gay people are the most frequent targets of hate speech. However, in 2014 and in 2016, Muslims and foreign nationals also emerged steadily as common targets. Hate speech against each of these groups is fueled by different negative stereotypes and requires the implementation of policies that take into account these differences and not only punish instances of hate speech, but also promote tolerance and mutual understanding.
- ▶ Almost half of the respondents (49%) agree that the authorities should protect members of minorities against hate speech; 59% agree that the Prosecution Service should take action against journalists and politicians who express disapproval, hatred or aggression against minorities, while 65% agree that aggressive nationalism must be prosecuted, but at the same time only 23% of the respondents would personally notify the police if they witnessed hate speech. Public policies to curb hate speech and related hate crimes would not be feasible without overcoming the lack of confidence between citizens and law enforcement institutions. Special measures are needed to build such confidence among young people and among people living in Sofia, since in both groups the likelihood of reporting hate speech to law enforcement institutions is much lower than the national average.
- ▶ Insofar as television is the main medium for the proliferation of hate speech in Bulgaria, while journalists and politicians are recognized as major users of hate speech, self-regulation of electronic media and political institutions should be seen as a priority area for intervention in the development and implementation of national policies against hate speech. As suggested in Recommendation No. 15 of December 8, 2015 of the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance, the government could develop a broad range of measures against hate speech, which do not have to be limited to the instruments of criminal prosecution alone but may also include measures related to the public funding of political parties and media outlets.
- ▶ The 2014 survey and the focus groups with young people, teachers and Roma conducted in 2016 re-

Teacher, regional center:

„There should be rule of law; only then aggression would stop. But rule of law for everyone – for the poor and for the rich alike.“

veal that schools steadily emerge as places which far from promoting equality, actually disseminate hate speech. Teachers have little sensitivity to the problem, do not possess specific educational tools to intervene, and often express racist and xenophobic sentiments themselves. The focus group with teachers, in particular, revealed that teachers do not distinguish between the cynical comments and insults students exchange in their interpersonal communication in school and the racist and xenophobic statements they make. This calls for making a clear distinction in future public policies between hate speech and other statements that are degrading to the honor or dignity of the victim but do not involve discrimination or imply inferiority of the ethnic, religious or other minority to which the victim belongs. As emphasized in Recommendation No. 15 of December 8, 2015 of the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance, miscon-

ceptions and misinformation form the basis of hate speech and therefore, specific measures to curb it should be implemented in the education system. These measures should be directed at the youngest and should include civil education and media literacy.

- The existence of significant majorities of people who are not aware that the acts under Art. 108 and Art. 162 of the Penal Code constitute a crime, among the less educated, among those living in the Northwestern region and among people who identify themselves as Turks or Roma should be specifically addressed as a separate priority of the public policies against hate speech. Such policies should provide for educational and public awareness campaigns that take into account the specific informational deficits of the affected social groups.

APPENDIX

QUESTIONNAIRE: A SET OF TOPIC-SPECIFIC QUESTIONS INCLUDED IN AN OMNIBUS PUBLIC OPINION SURVEY OPEN SOCIETY INSTITUTE – SOFIA, APRIL – MAY 2016

2. TOLERANCE

2.1. Would you agree that a member of the following nationalities or ethnic groups living in Bulgaria:

(Mark all YES answers that apply)

	Marries you or one of your children	Lives in your neighborhood	Lives in your town or village
1. British	1	2	3
2. Armenian	1	2	3
3. Arab	1	2	3
4. Bulgarian	1	2	3
5. German	1	2	3
6. Jewish	1	2	3
7. Chinese	1	2	3
8. Roma	1	2	3
9. Russians	1	2	3
10. Syrians	1	2	3
11. Turkish	1	2	3

2.2. In the last 12 months, have you heard public statements expressing disapproval, hatred or aggression against ethnic, religious or sexual minorities?

(Choose ONE answer.)

1. Yes >>> 2.3.	1
2. No >>> 2.7.	2
98. I don't know >>> 2.7.	98

2.3. If yes, how often?*(Choose ONE answer)*

1. Very often	1
2. Often	2
3. Rarely	3
4. Very rarely	4
5. Never (DO NOT READ OUT)	5
98. I don't know (DO NOT READ OUT)	98

2.4. Against whom you have most often heard such statements?*(Choose up to 3 ANSWERS)*

1. Roma	1
2. Turkish	2
3. Africans	3
4. Chinese	4
5. Gay	5
6. Women	6
7. Jewish	7
8. Foreigners	8
9. Evangelists (Protestant)	9
10. Catholic	10
11. Muslims	11
12. Other <i>(Please, specify)...</i>	12

2.5. If YES, where you would most often hear or read such statements?*(Choose up to 3 ANSWERS)*

1. On TV	1
2. On the radio	2
3. In newspapers	3
4. On the internet	4
5. At the workplace	5
6. In the vehicles of public transportation	6
7. In shops, cafeterias, restaurants	7
8. During sports events (at the stadium or in the arena)	8
9. During pre-election rallies	9
10. During protests against the government	10
11. Elsewhere <i>(Please, specify)...</i>	11

2.6. Who have you heard making such statements?*(Mark ALL that apply)*

1. Businessmen	1
2. Public servants	2
3. Experts	3
4. Journalists	4
5. Co-workers	5
6. Friends and relatives	6
7. Ordinary citizens	7
8. Politicians	8
99. Other <i>(Please, specify.)...</i>	9

2.7. Do you approve the public use of statements expressing disapproval, hatred or aggression against minorities (e.g. Roma, gay people, foreigners)?*(Choose ONE answer)*

1. Totally approve	1
2. Rather approve	2
3. Rather disapprove	3
4. Totally disapprove	4
98. I don't know (DO NOT READ OUT)	98

2.8. In the last 12 months have you heard public statements, which in your opinion could incite violence against minorities (e.g. Roma, gay people, foreigners)?*(Choose ONE answer)*

1. Yes	1
2. No	2
98. I don't know	98

2.9. In the last 12 months, have you happened to hear specific statements by politicians or journalists, which left you with the feeling that you may be physically threatened, that you may become the victim of aggression or violence?

(Choose ONE answer)

1. Yes >>> 2.10.	1
2. No >>> 2.11.	2
98. I don't know >>> 2.11.	98

2.10. If yes, what was the statement that left you with this feeling?

.....

2.11. In the last 12 months, have you happened to hear specific statements by politicians or journalists, which you found grossly insulting?

(Choose ONE answer)

1. Yes >>> 2.12.	1
2. No >>> 2.13.	2
98. I don't know >>> 2.13.	98

2.12. If yes, what was the statement that made you feel grossly insulted?

.....

2.13. Which of the mentioned groups you would associate with the word “criminal”?

(Please, present SHOW CARD 2 and code the answers)

(Choose up to 3 ANSWERS)

1. Group 1 ...
2. Group 2 ...
3. Group 3 ...

2.14. Which of the mentioned groups you would associate with the word “threat”?

(Please, present SHOW CARD 3 and code the answers)

(Choose up to 3 ANSWERS)

1. Group 1 ...
2. Group 2 ...
3. Group 3 ...

2.15. To what extent you would approve the use of each of these statements in mainstream media (TV, radio, newspapers)?

(Choose ONE answer for EACH line)

Statement	Totally approve	Rather approve	Rather disapprove	Totally disapprove	Don't know
„Red trash“	1	2	3	4	98
„Illegal immigrants“	1	2	3	4	98
„Bulgaria for Bulgarians“	1	2	3	4	98
„Gays are perverts“	1	2	3	4	98
„Roma are thieves“	1	2	3	4	98
„Refugees steal and beat people up“	1	2	3	4	98
„The Minister is Jewish scum“	1	2	3	4	98
„Those who defend refugees are hirelings“	1	2	3	4	98

2.16. Have you heard any of the phrases “език на омразата”, “реч на омразата” or “враждебна реч”?

(Choose ONE answer)

1. Yes >>> 2.17.	1
2. No >>> 2.18.	2
98. I don't know >>> 2.18.	3

2.17. If YES, what you think it is denoted in the phrases “език на омразата”, “реч на омразата” or “враждебна реч”?

(Mark ALL that apply)

1. Aggressive statements that aim at insulting and hurting their targets	1
2. Statements that aim at inciting discord and division between people	2
3. Statements that express disapproval, hatred or aggression towards different minority groups	3
4. Statements that incite different treatment of people based on their race and ethnic origin or sexual orientation	4
5. Something else (please specify)...	5
99. I don't know	99

2.18. Do you know that any of following actions is a crime in Bulgaria?*(Choose ONE answer for EACH line)*

	Yes	No
1. To propagate and incite hostility or hatred based on race or ethnicity, or to instigate racial discrimination	1	2
2. To commit violence against someone or to destroy someone's property on the grounds of their ethnicity, race, religion or political convictions	1	2
3. To form an organization or group with the purpose of committing violence against someone or destroying someone's property on the grounds of their ethnicity, race, religion or political convictions	1	2
4. To propagate fascist or other non-democratic ideology	1	2

2.19. Do you believe that:*(Choose ONE answer for EACH line)*

	Yes	No	I don't know
1. Authorities should protect minorities (Roma, gay people, foreigners, etc.) against public statements, expressing disapproval, hatred or aggression against them?	1	2	98
2. Authorities should prosecute politicians and journalists who openly express disapproval, hatred or aggression against minorities?	1	2	98
3. Authorities should prosecute politicians and journalists who propagate aggressive nationalism?	1	2	98
4. Authorities ought to withdraw public funding from political parties if their leaders express disapproval, hatred or aggression against minority groups	1	2	98
5. Public funding (both national and from EU) ought to be withdrawn from media if their journalists make statements expressing disapproval, hatred or aggression against minority groups	1	2	98

2.20. Would you notify the police, if you hear public statements, expressing disapproval, hatred or aggression against minorities?

(Choose ONE answer)

1. Yes	1
2. No	2
98. I don't know	98

2.21. Would you notify the police, if you hear public statements propagating aggressive nationalism?

(Choose ONE answer)

1. Yes	1
2. No	2
98. I don't know	98

2.22. Have you happened to hear a specific statement by politician or journalist, which left you with the impression that physical violence against minorities or destruction of property owned by minorities is normal, justifiable or less condemnable than if it was targeted to someone else?

(Choose ONE answer)

1. Yes	1
2. No	2
98. I don't know	98

SHOW CARD 2	
1. Lawyer	1
2. Businessman	2
3. Jew	3
4. Woman	4
5. Immigrant	5
6. Catholic	6
7. Chinese	7
8. Doctor	8
9. Black	9
10. Politician	10
11. Protestant	11
12. Roma	12
13. Muslim	13
14. Skinhead	14
15. Turk	15
16. Gay	16
17. Foreigner	17
99. None of the above	99

Contact us:

Open Society Institute – Sofia
56, Solunska str., Sofia 1000

tel.: (+359 2) 930 66 19, fax: (+359 2) 951 63 48

www.osi.bg