



Empowered lives.
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The position of Roma women and men in the labour markets of the Western Balkans



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1. Introduction

The Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005-2015 was launched by the Prime Ministers of Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Hungary, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia and Slovakia. In 2008, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Spain joined, while Slovenia, Moldova, Norway and the United States participated in the initiative as observers. The Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005-2015 was an unprecedented political commitment by these governments to tackle discrimination against Roma and close the unacceptable gaps in opportunities and living conditions between Roma and the rest of the society. The Roma Decade focused on improving the situation of Roma in the four priority policy areas of education, employment, health and housing, and committed governments to take into account three other cross-cutting issues, namely poverty, discrimination and gender. Participating governments undertook to allocate resources to achieve results in these policy areas, aligning their National Roma Inclusion plans with the existing funding instruments of multinational, international and bilateral donors, since the Roma Decade was not intended to be another new institution, bureaucracy or fund. At the end of this first Roma Decade in 2015, it was acknowledged that the Decade had yielded modest, yet unprecedented changes in the lives of Roma. It had played an important role in sparking off a process of positive change for Roma, and it had contributed to a better understanding of the problems they face. However, it was also acknowledged that significant work remained in achieving its ambitious goals.

We are currently in the middle of a new generation of Roma Integration Strategies (2015-2020) in the Western Balkans region. However, the evidence suggests that the Roma population in the region still faces large barriers to labour market inclusion, and indeed that their situation has deteriorated since 2011. Previous studies have argued that the

Roma population was one of the main losers of the transition process (O'Higgins, 2009; Ivanov et al. 2006). Marginalised Roma in the Western Balkans today have lower labour market activity rates, lower employment rates and face a much higher incidence of unemployment than their non-Roma neighbours. They also have lower incomes from work and are less likely to have access to the social security systems; i.e. the quality of jobs open to them tends to be lower than that of their neighbours. Their educational attainment also remains much lower than that of their non-Roma neighbours, and there is ample evidence that returns to education for Roma (in terms of wage and employment prospects) are relatively low, suggesting that discrimination and/or lack of access to tailored active labour market policies and other forms of support continue to be problematic. It now seems clear that raising the education level among Roma will not on its own impact their labour market situation: there is a need for comprehensive approaches, including those aimed at improving access to employment services, ensuring better links between different government and NGO offices at the local level dealing with employment, social protection, vocational training, business support services etc, as well as measures to raise awareness about discriminatory attitudes and biases among employers, staff of employment agencies and the general population.

The main goal of the report is to provide an analysis of the position of Roma in the labour markets of the Western Balkans, and the barriers which they continue to face in accessing decent jobs. The report has been developed under the UNDP Istanbul Regional Hub's sub-regional project "Regional Roma Survey" in the Western Balkan countries and territory of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Kosovo.*

* For the United Nations: All references to Kosovo shall be understood in the context of UN Security Council Resolution 1244/1999

* For the European Union: This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

The survey data used for the analysis were collected during 2017 and are drawn from a sample of Roma populations living in areas and/or communities with higher densities or greater concentrations of the Roma population than the national averages. The sample frame is thus restricted to what we term 'marginalised Roma,' i.e., those who are less integrated into the societies they live in. The survey design also includes a smaller sub-sample of the non-Roma population living in close vicinity to the marginalised Roma. The assumption is that these non-Roma neighbours have the same characteristics and opportunities, apart from their ethnic background. The sample is thus not representative of the whole Roma population or of the whole non-Roma population in the Western Balkans countries covered by the survey. Rather, a conscious effort has been made to capture the more marginalised Roma, i.e., those most in need of support through inclusion strategies. The sampling of non-Roma living in the same area allows us to use the survey results to look at gaps between marginalised Roma and their neighbours in living conditions, opportunities and other factors contributing to exclusion. A total of 4,592 marginalised Roma households and their 2,168 non-Roma households participated in the survey. The sample size in each country is approximately 750 Roma households and 350 neighbouring non-Roma households. The survey was conducted using face-to-face interviews at the respondents' houses. In line with EU practice, the survey and this study use the term 'Roma' as an umbrella term to capture all those who identified as Roma, Ashkali, Gypsies or Egyptians.

The 2017 survey builds on the UNDP's first major data collection exercise on Roma living standards, which was carried out in 2004, and which provided

baseline data for the Decade of Roma Inclusion. It also builds on the second round of the regional Roma survey carried out in 2011, in partnership with the European Union¹, World Bank and in coordination with the EU's Fundamental Rights Agency. In fact, the 2017 survey design deliberately replicates (with some adjustments) that of the 2011 regional survey, in order to allow comparison of results both across time and between countries.

The data collected through the quantitative survey were supplemented by a qualitative study (micronarratives) designed to take a more in-depth look at the position of Roma in the labour market, in particular their experience of labour market discrimination, their expectations and preferences regarding the types and characteristics of jobs and the concrete options open to them, etc. This richness of information complements the analysis of the quantitative data and provides valuable inputs and insights to inform future policy and programming interventions.

The structure of the report is as follows. Section 2 provides some descriptive statistics of the sample (by country) as well as comparative analysis of the situation of Roma in the labour markets of the Western Balkans, using data from the 2017 UNDP-WB-EC quantitative survey. In addition, it presents some trends in the education and labour market outcomes between 2011 and 2017. This draws mainly on analysis of the 2017 UNDP-WB-EC survey data, while references and comparisons are made to the 2011 results. Section 3 provides an overview of the key insights emerging from the qualitative study. Where appropriate, personal experiences and stories derived from the qualitative study are used to illustrate and complement the data analysis.

¹ 2011 Regional Roma Survey implemented in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Hungary, Moldavia, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia <http://www.eurasia.undp.org/content/rbec/en/home/ourwork/sustainable-development/development-planning-and-inclusive-sustainable-growth/roma-in-central-and-southeast-europe/roma-data.html>

2. Descriptive statistics and comparative data on the position of marginalised Roma in the labour market in the Western Balkans region

Descriptive statistics for the overall survey sample are presented in Table 1. As expected, the neighbouring Non-Roma population has on average a higher level of educational attainment than marginalised Roma. In addition, both marginalised Roma and neighbouring non-Roma women have lower levels of completed education than men. This holds both for household heads and for other household members.

There are no large differences in the average age of the respondents, either by gender or by ethnicity. The average age of the respondents is about 34.6 - 37.2 years. 63% of females, both Roma and non-Roma, reported to be married, which is slightly higher than the share of married men. The average household size is larger for Roma (4.8 members) relative to non-Roma (about 4.2 members). Non-Roma respondents reported slightly higher ownership of their homes. There is a large difference in the number of appliances

at home, something that can be used as a proxy for the welfare of the household (non-Roma neighbours report on average 6-6.2 appliances at home and Roma reported 4.3-4.7). Almost the same shares of Roma and non-Roma (especially by gender) reported to living in urban areas.

Employment is higher for non-Roma men living in the vicinity than marginalised Roma men, and for non-Roma women relative to Roma women. However, employment rates are relatively low for both sub-samples and lower than the (already low) regional average employment rate of 39.6% in 2015.² Self-reported employment is slightly higher than the International Labour Organization (ILO)-based employment rate for all sub-samples. Descriptive data show that the mean wage of non-Roma is much higher than the mean wage of Roma for both women and men.

	Non-Roma		Roma	
	Females	Males	Females	Males
Years of schooling (head)	9.8	10.2	7.1	7.7
Years of schooling (other HH members)	9.8	10.4	7.2	7.9
Age	37.2	36.2	35.3	34.6
Married	0.63	0.57	0.63	0.59
No of HH members	4.1	4.3	4.8	4.8
Home owned by HH	0.81	0.84	0.75	0.76
No of appliances at home	6.0	6.2	4.3	4.7
Urban	0.8	0.7	0.8	0.7
Employed (ILO def.)	0.15	0.36	0.07	0.26
Employed (self-reported)	0.16	0.40	0.09	0.31
Monthly wage (EUR)	260.4	294.8	191.1	207.3

Source: Authors' calculations based on unweighted 2017 UNDP-WB-EC Regional Roma Survey data

² <https://www.seejobsgateway.net/charts>

Below, we present data on the main education and labour market indicators, with comparisons across the Western Balkans region, as well as over time (using the 2011 and the 2017 survey results)³. It is noted that Kosovo did not participate in the 2011 survey, meaning that comparison across time is not possible, and only the 2017 results are reported.

Table 2 shows that there are large differences between marginalised Roma and neighbouring non-Roma in terms of the share of young people aged 15-24 years, who are not in employment, education or training (NEETs). The NEET rates are well above 70% for young Roma in all Western Balkans

economies, and the differences with non-Roma are statistically significant. There are divergent trends in the NEET rates between 2011 and 2017 across the countries. For instance, while the NEET rates for young Roma in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) and Montenegro increased, those in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Serbia experienced a decline. The last column shows that in this time period, the gap between the NEET rates of marginalised Roma and neighbouring non-Roma widened in Albania, Montenegro and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, while it declined in Serbia and BiH.

Country	2017		Percentage Point Difference bw 2011 and 2017		Change in Gap over time bw Roma and Non-Roma
	Roma	Non-Roma	Roma	Non-Roma	Diff in Diff
Albania	77.9%	41.7%	9%	-5%	-13%
Bosnia and Herzegovina	86.5%	59.5%	4%	17%	13%
Montenegro	81.8%	37.2%	9%	-13%	-22%
the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	73.6%	32.8%	-5%	-13%	-9%
Serbia	72.6%	41.8%	-5%	8%	13%
Kosovo	77.8%	46.6%			

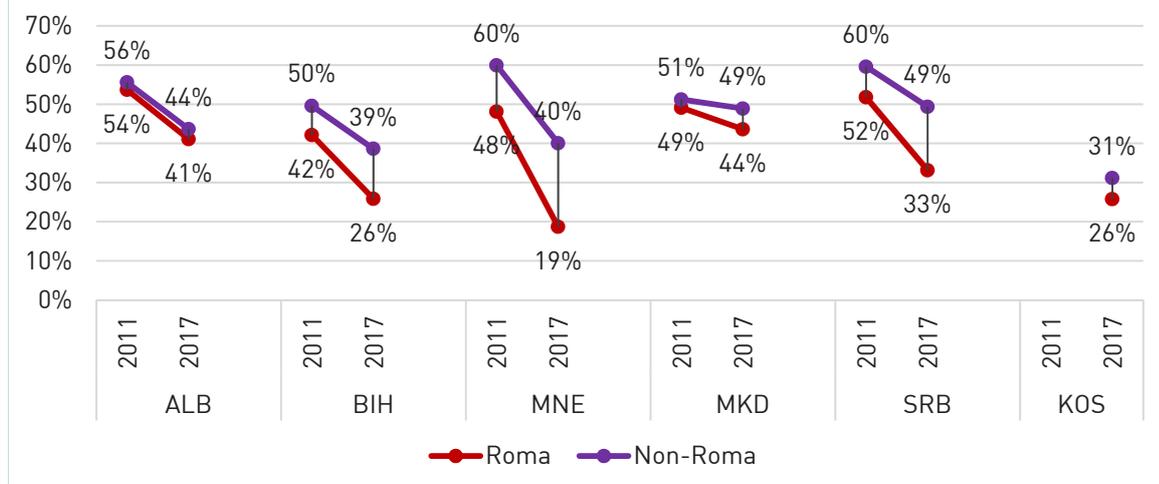
Source: Authors' calculations based on unweighted 2017 UNDP-WB-EC Regional Roma Survey data.

Several observations related to labour force participation rates in the Western Balkans can be made based on Figure 1. First, the labour force participation rates within the observed samples have fallen between 2011 and 2017 across the Western Balkans. Second, both marginalised Roma and neighbouring non-Roma experienced a decline in labour force participation rates, although the decline

was more pronounced for Roma. For instance, in Montenegro, the Roma labour force participation rate declined from 48% to 19% (by as much as 29 percentage points), by 19 percentage points (p.p.) in Serbia, etc. The differences in labour force participation rates between Roma and non-Roma are statistically significant in all countries in the Western Balkans, with the exception of Albania.

³ <http://www.eurasia.undp.org/content/rbec/en/home/library/roma/regional-roma-survey-2017-country-fact-sheets.html>

Figure 1. Labour force participation rates
(% of population, ages 15-64), 2011 and 2017

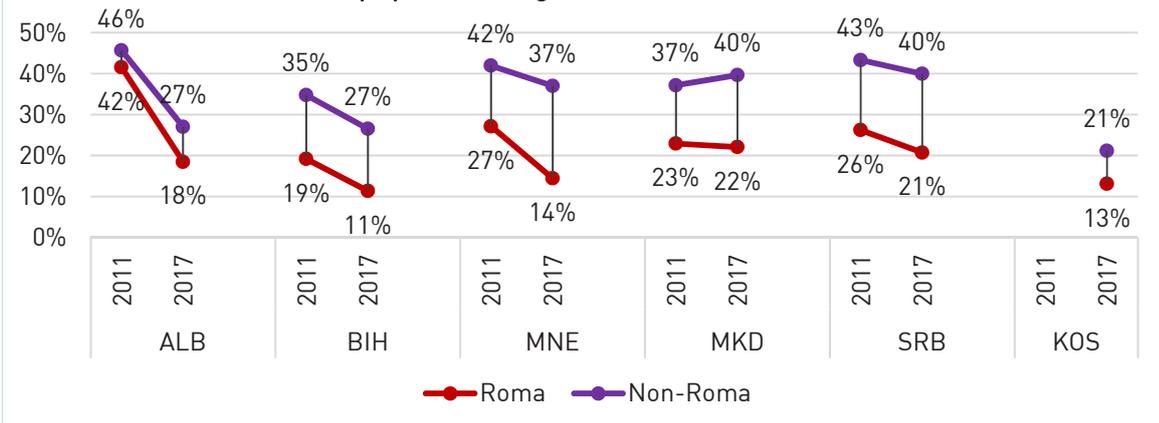


Source: Authors' calculations based on 2011 and 2017 UNDP-WB-EC Regional Roma Surveys.

The employment rates of marginalised Roma are much lower than those of non-Roma, and this difference is statistically significant in the whole Western Balkans region. The difference is largest in Montenegro (23 p.p.) and Serbia (19 p.p.), and in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and BiH (15 p.p.) (see Figure 2). These employment rates are much lower than the average employment rate in

the region, showing the labour market vulnerability not just of marginalised Roma but also of the non-Roma population living in close proximity. As with the labour force participation rates, there has been a general decline in employment rates of both marginalised Roma and their non-Roma neighbours between 2011 and 2017, with the exception of non-Roma in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

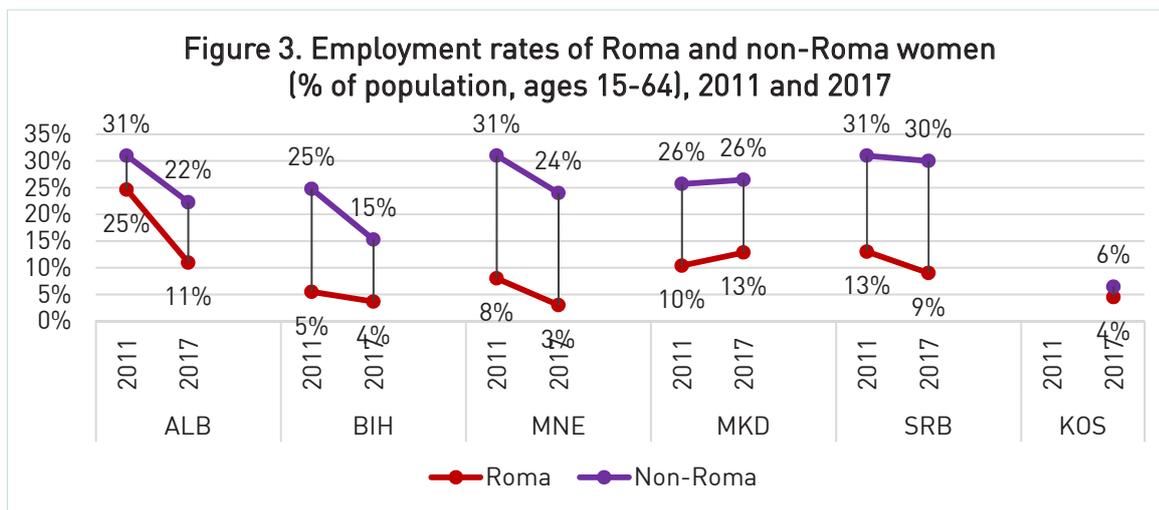
Figure 2. Employment rates
(% of population, ages 15-64), 2011 and 2017



Source: Authors' calculations based on 2011 and 2017 UNDP-WB-EC Regional Roma Surveys.

The employment rates of women (both Roma and non-Roma) are much lower than those of the men (Figure 3) across the entire Western Balkans region. For example, marginalised Roma women in Montenegro have an employment rate that is five times lower than that of marginalised Roma men,

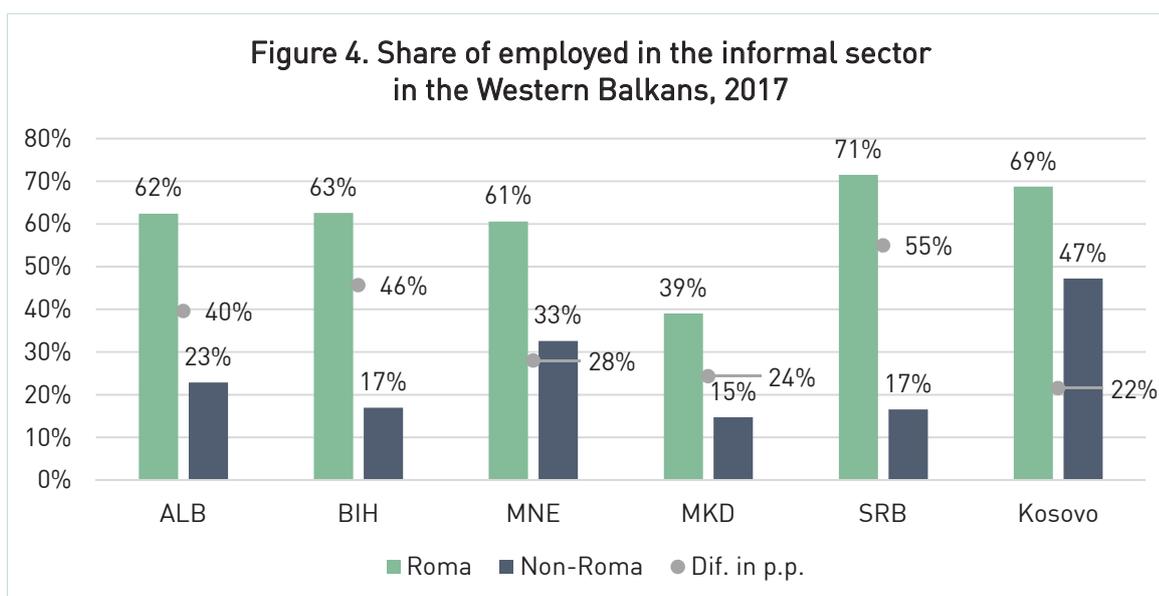
and eight times lower than neighbouring non-Roma women. Between 2011 and 2017, the employment rates of Roma women declined in Western Balkans region with the exception of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.



Source: Authors' calculations based on 2011 and 2017 UNDP-WB-EC Regional Roma Surveys.

The above core indicators of labour market status already show a large discrepancy in the labour market outcomes between marginalised Roma and neighbouring non-Roma. The share of those employed in the informal sector, provides another indication of the vulnerability of marginalised Roma in the labour market. In particular, more than 60% of (employed) marginalised Roma in the region are

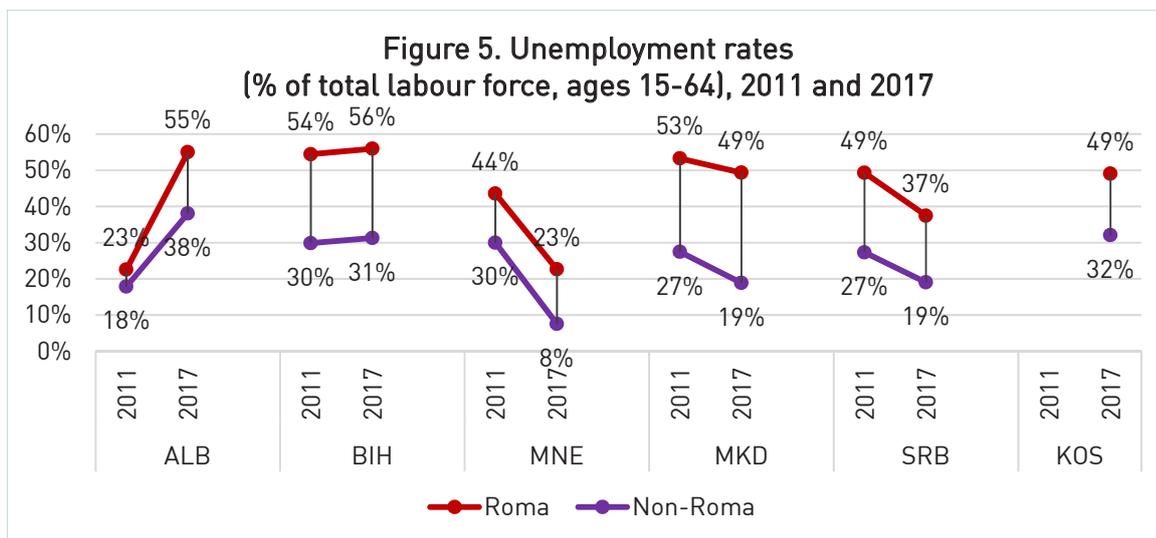
employed informally, with the exception of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, where 39% of the employed Roma do not have any health or pension insurance (see Figure 4). The gap in informality is the highest in Serbia (55%) and the lowest in Kosovo (22%); the differences in all Western Balkan region are statistically significant.



Source: Authors' calculations based on unweighted 2017 UNDP-WB-EC Regional Roma Survey data.

Marginalised Roma face much higher unemployment rates relative to non-Roma living in proximity. Across the Western Balkans, around half of Roma active in the labour market were unemployed (ILO definition, see Figure 5). Between 2011 and 2017, the unemployment rate of marginalised Roma in Albania increased threefold (by 32 p.p.), increased

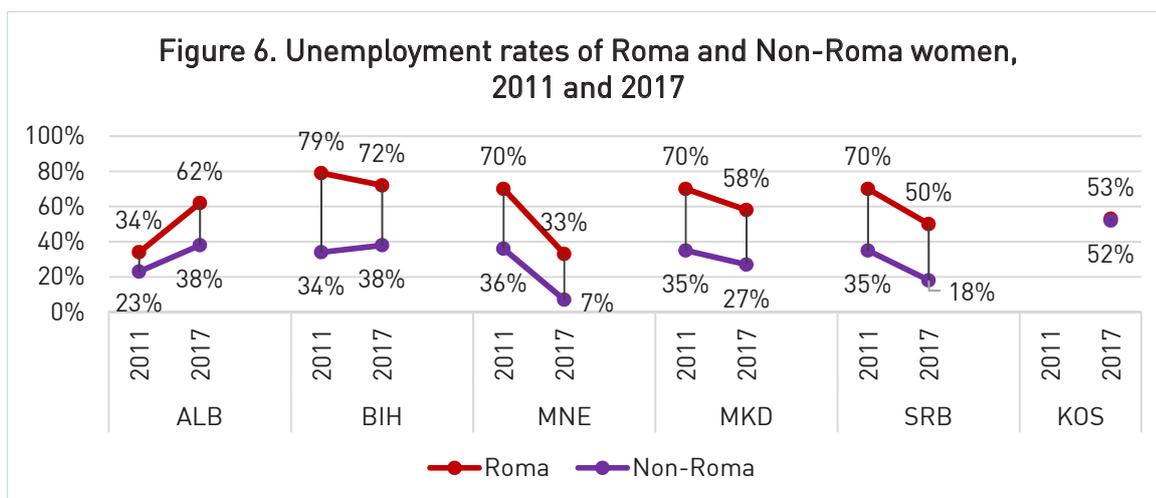
slightly in BiH and declined in the other economies. The unemployment rate of Roma is the lowest in Montenegro (23%), while the gap between Roma and non-Roma is also largest there: marginalised Roma face three times higher incidence of unemployment relative to that of non-Roma.



Source: Authors' calculations based on 2011 and 2017 UNDP-WB-EC Regional Roma Surveys.

The particular barriers to employment of marginalised Roma women across the region are also evidenced in their unemployment rates, which are much higher than those of neighbouring non-Roma women, as well as Roma men (Figure 6). In line with trends in overall unemployment rates,

the unemployment rate of Roma women declined between 2011 and 2017 in most economies of the Western Balkans, with the exception of Albania (in the context of an overall increase of the unemployment rate), as well as in BiH.



Source: Authors' calculations based on 2011 and 2017 UNDP-WB-EC Regional Roma Surveys.

Overall the regional results from the 2017 quantitative survey confirm that the position of marginalised Roma on the labour market has deteriorated since 2011. The same can also be said of their non-Roma neighbours, but, on the whole, the deterioration in terms of labour force participation rates and employment rates has been worse for Roma. Unemployment rates have declined in most countries, which may be seen as a positive result, but it may also

be due to the decline in activity rates and the rise in discouraged job seekers. The quality of employment opportunities for marginalised Roma also remains poor, as is evidenced by the continuing high shares of employed Roma in informal employment, without protection from health and safety regulations, and without access to pension and sickness insurance. The employment indicators for marginalised Roma women are low and declining.

3. Insights from the qualitative data

The particular barriers to employment of marginalised Roma women across the region are also evidenced in their unemployment rates, which are much higher than those of neighbouring non-Roma women, as well as Roma men (Figure 6). In line with trends in overall unemployment rates,

the unemployment rate of Roma women declined between 2011 and 2017 in most economies of the Western Balkans, with the exception of Albania (in the context of an overall increase of the unemployment rate), as well as in BiH.

**‘Give us a recent example (good or bad) of a time when you tried to get a job or build a business’
or
‘Share a recent experience of trying to feed your family by getting a job or doing some work on your own’**

The respondent is then requested to analyse the story using a certain framework (a set of questions), and the combined results from all the stories are used to create metadata, which are then coded using specially designed software (SenseMaker). The method thus goes beyond the usual qualitative approaches such as in-depth interviews, where the analysis relies heavily on the subjective interpretation of the researcher. Instead the respondents/storytellers are asked to analyse their own stories. The micronarrative approach avoids direct questions and can thus be useful for soliciting information on sensitive topics. The size of the sample is not important, i.e. it does not matter whether there are 200 or 400 stories collected and analysed. The SenseMaker software is used to group the stories into clusters, which illustrate the points in the framework where narrators have located different points of their narrative. These clusters can be further analysed by adding variables such as the

demographic characteristics of the storytellers, the emotional intensity of the stories, etc.

This research has used the micronarrative methodology to collect and analyse information on the employment experiences and expectations of Roma, told by Roma themselves. Moreover, the methodology has been used to engage Roma themselves in the process of analysis, rather than leaving this to a small team of researchers. A team of Roma activists and UNDP Roma focal points from Albania, BiH, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Kosovo, Montenegro and Serbia were engaged to design the specific micronarratives framework used for this study (see Annex 1). The team was trained by Narrate Ltd on the methodology used to collect stories and on how to use the framework for analysis. The Roma activists collected a total of 1,000 stories in localities with more compact Roma populations.

RESULTS

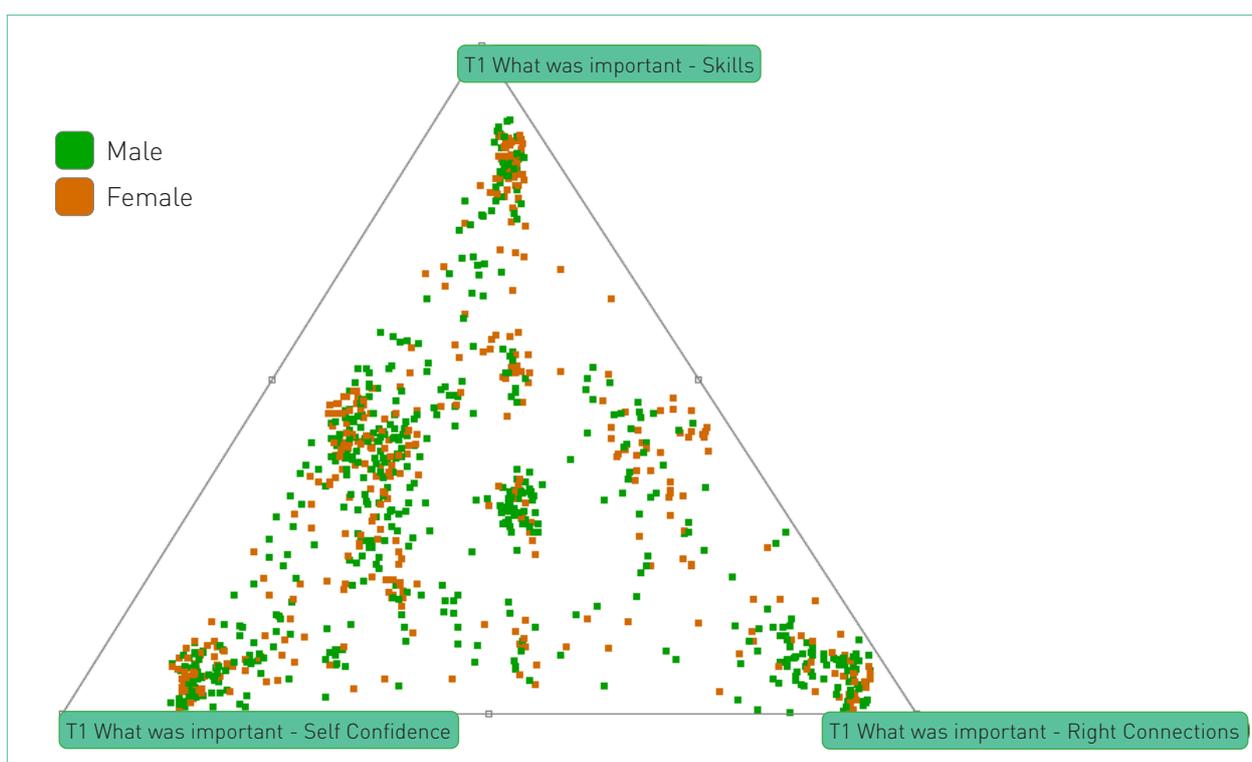
3.1. Relative importance of skills, self-confidence and the right connections for finding a job or starting a business

The framework is used first to explore the views of Roma narrators on the relative importance of having skills, self-confidence and/or the right connections for finding a job or starting a business. *(In your example what was important, having skills, having the right connections, or having self-confidence?)* The perceptions of the 899 narrators are clustered in Figure 7.

Most micronarratives (164) for both men and women reflect the opinion that a mixture of skills and self-confidence have been important for the narrator's employment experience. (The majority of stories are situated along the left-hand axis in Figure 7.) Among the stories, there are some positive examples of people who have managed to secure a job using their skills and self-confidence, but who have also been helped through various types of support both from NGOs and/or employment services:

I have a secondary school degree to be a construction worker. I got temporary jobs in urban planning. I got paid in cash. It was only a temporary job as they did not want to have Roma in their firm on a permanent contract. I got information from an NGO about support for self-employment; I applied and opened a car-wash. Now I am doing fine, I have insurance and a paycheck [50-54 year-old male, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia].

Figure 7. Pattern of responses regarding importance of skills, self-confidence and the right connections (N=899)



There is a similar number of narrators who think that self-confidence is important (105) and those who think that the right connections are important (105). However, more women than men think that self-confidence is important, and there are more men who think right connections are important for their employment experience. Those that emphasise the importance of self-confidence mostly talk about taking the step to get more education and/or skills as a path towards a better job or promotion, such as this example of a 45-49 year-old man:

I worked as a cleaner in a secondary school when a law providing opportunities to finish high school on a part-time basis for those aged 25 to 35 was passed. I decided I could do that. So, after I passed the exams for all four years of high school, I got promoted, and now my salary is higher (the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia).

Those who think right connections are important provide examples of finding a job through friends or finding information about a job opening through friends and acquaintances:

I found out through a friend that a company is looking for a construction engineer, and I sent my CV. I went for an interview, and they said my CV was really good and I could start working immediately (30-34 year-old man, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia).

There are 82 stories where skills are perceived to be important, and most of them are by women. Some provide positive examples of using their skills and education to find a job, although the returns on investment in education and skills are not always immediate:

I have a secondary school diploma for nursing. I kept looking for a job in my field for a long time, but I couldn't find a job as a nurse. I found out that they are looking for a nursery nurse, and since I had relevant experience, I applied and got the job. So now I have been working there for 2-3 years, and I provide for my family (30-34 year-old woman, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia).

A smaller number (69 people) think that all three factors are equally relevant to their experience. A number of them stress the help that they got from different organisations and/or employment programmes in finding a job. For example, a 20-24 year-old man says:

After I finished a technical secondary school, I managed to get a job in my field at a water supply company with the help of a programme for active employment measures for people younger than 29. I am doing fine for now, and I am hoping to develop my career further in the future (the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia).

Overall, the clusters in the triangle suggest that it is not just skills training that is important for labour market integration, but skills training combined with other forms of support to boost confidence and help overcome discriminatory attitudes. Another form of support is personal connections. The stories suggest that in many cases education and skills training may not be sufficient to open up doors, and additional support (for example, in the form of tailored active labour market programmes) can make a difference. They show the importance of support to boost self-confidence, particularly in the face of discriminatory attitudes, and the role which NGOs play in providing this. This is particularly needed in the case of Roma women, who face not only discrimination in the business world, but also attitudes within the home and community which may encourage traditional roles and discourage employment outside the home.

3.2. Sources of income

The micronarrative framework is then used to get a better understanding of the relative importance of formal jobs, informal jobs and social benefits as sources of income for marginalised Roma. (*In your example, are the main sources of income from formal jobs, informal jobs, social benefits?*) These were identified in 926 stories. The overall results by gender are illustrated in Figure 8.

By far the majority of the narrators suggest that informal (239 stories) or formal (233 stories) jobs are their main source of income with both genders being represented roughly equally in both these clusters. Only a small number of people report that social benefits are their main source of income.

Narrators who claim that their main source of income is informal work often stress the lack of job opportunities for people without sufficient or appropriate education. They point to the lack of jobs specifically for Roma (due primarily to discriminatory attitudes) and to the necessity of making ends meet by working wherever they can to survive, i.e. doing informal temporary jobs. The following example illustrates this:

I do not get welfare, they took me off for not being diligent in registering there, but I am not sorry for that as I have been registered there for 20 years, and they never offered me a job. I always did something privately and found myself jobs, I worked in construction and I still do that and feed my family, but I always do that on a day-to-day basis rather than on a permanent basis (50-54 year-old man, Bosnia and Herzegovina).

Another example tells a similar tale:

There are no jobs for us Gypsies, who will take us? I have applied to a number of places and got no answer. During the summer, I go to pick raspberries, blackberries... in 40 degrees, I work like a horse there. Then before winter I chopped fire wood and did physical labour around the neighbourhood. Agony! They do not call me from the employment office. I have to make ends meet the best I can on my own (25-29 year-old man, Serbia).

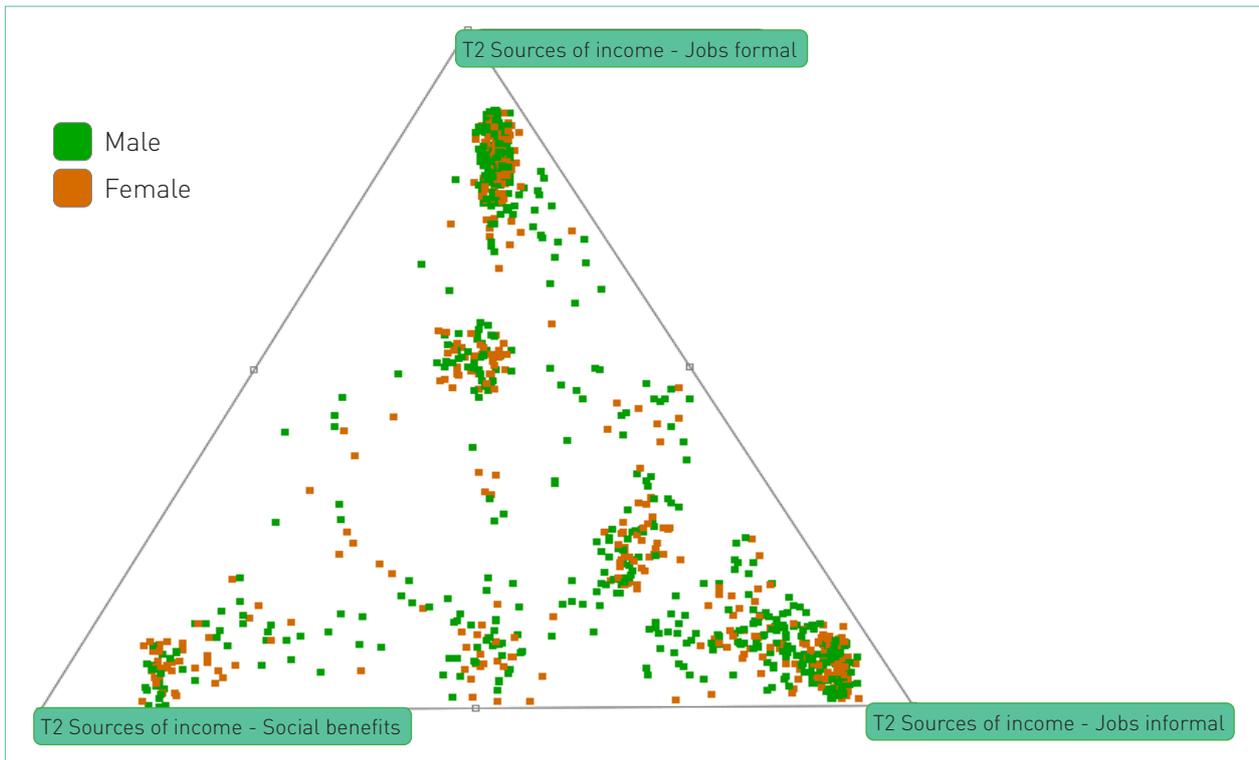
The second-biggest cluster (almost the same size as for informal jobs) is made up of people who stated that their main source of incomes is formal jobs (233). Their stories are mostly positive, with many either having at least a secondary education degree or receiving help from different employment programmes in finding a job. See for example the following story:

I was an excellent pupil in primary school and then I went to the Gymnasium in secondary school and was an excellent pupil as well. I went to University, although I am from a working family with low income. Now, I am a social worker and work in the Center for Social Work (35-39 year-old woman, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia).

A smaller number of people report that social benefits are their main source of income. They usually stress the lack of appropriate job opportunities or having a bad experience with informal jobs in the past, as in the following example:

I worked as a seasonal worker in wood cutting/logging. My boss made me do the hardest jobs and harassed me and I was paid the lowest. After some time, he fired me and now I am unemployed and live off welfare (25-29 year-old man, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia).

Figure 8. Pattern of responses for sources of income (N=926)



The results show clearly that social benefits are not the most common or the most sought-after source of income for the narrators. They are often a last resort due to lack of ability to cope with the risks and hardships inherent to informality. In the sections below, there are also stories from more elderly Roma who lament the lack of access to pensions, and the need to carry on doing risky or hard work even in old age. On the whole, informality is perceived as an important option, while there is an awareness that both lack of education as well

as discrimination represent formidable barriers to formal sector and more regular work. However, there is also a significant number of positive stories regarding formal employment, suggesting again that with appropriate support and encouragement, positive labour market outcomes are possible. These stories also often display the sense of worth, dignity and integration that decent employment has brought to the narrators. They provide role models and lessons learned for future programmes to build on.

3.3. Preferences and prioritisation in employment according Roma narrators

The framework is next used to explore the relative prioritisation of Roma narrators regarding health and pension insurance, long-term work/money (continuous not always formalised source of income) and qualification/experience/accomplishment. (In your example, people were seeking health/pension

insurance, long term work or money [continuous, not always formalised, stable source of income], or qualification, experience, accomplishment?) The opinions of 882 story tellers are presented in Figure 9.

The highest number of respondents is clustered around the preference for long-term work/money (228 people), with more males being represented here. A number of stories in this cluster is actually of people who are unemployed or in vulnerable employment, and who would like to have more stable incomes, such as the story of a 35-39 year-old woman from Serbia:

I live with my husband and four children. As we are both unemployed, we go to the landfill every day, and we collect secondary materials that we sell to bring food to the table. We struggle every day. Recently they put fences around the landfill and hired a guard, so we can't even go there anymore. Now we go to the dumps to find something.

Other stories are of people with informal but more permanent jobs as their main source of income:

I work informally, we sew linens at home with my wife and kids, and we sell them at the markets. It is hard, we had inspections twice and they took our stuff: we paid a fine, and we still do that for living. It is not economically viable to register a company as there are too many taxes to pay to the state (40-44 year-old man, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia).

See also the experience of a 55-59 year-old man from Kosovo:

Small business: I have a kiosk where I sell different things, such as clothes, shoes, house equipment, technical equipment. All of these are things that my son finds in containers. Sometimes people give him things they don't need when they see him. I do not keep high prices, because they won't sell. And at the same time, I do not have the means to buy them. This how we survive. We are 9 members in the house, and we should have more incomes.

The next cluster of answers is from Roma who look for health/pension insurance (84 in total) where females are more represented than males. Most of these stories come from people who either already have formal jobs or have formally registered companies.

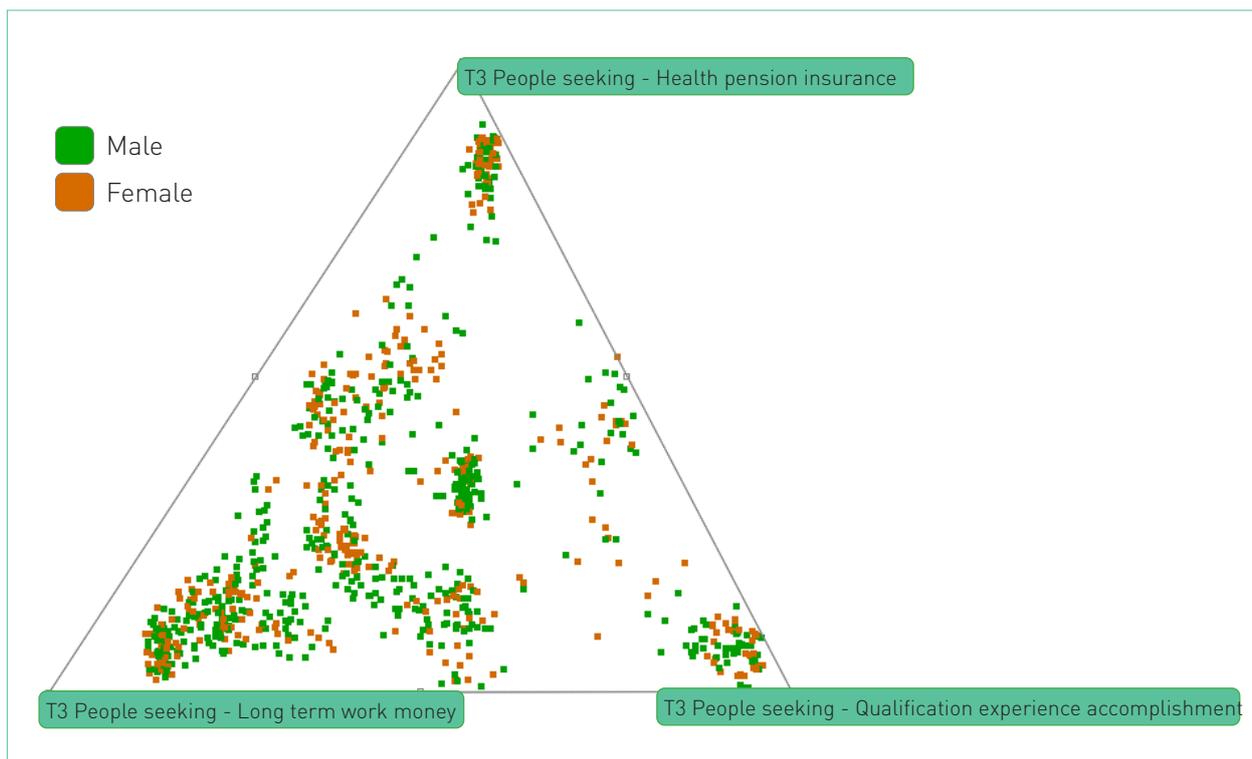
The combination of all three factors was relevant for 81 people, and there is a mixture of stories of people looking for more permanent employment and people who have already managed to find a formal job. An illustration of this is the story of a 25 to 29 year-old woman from BiH, who stresses the lack of employment opportunities although she has qualifications:

I have secondary school for hairdressing, and I have been registered at the employment agency for 4 years now. Last time I was looking for a job nobody wanted to hire me, they all said we don't need help or we found workers. I have a small space at home and work there, but it is like my hobby, it is informal.

The smallest cluster (with 75 people) is the one referring to qualifications/experience/accomplishment. The stories in this cluster are of people pointing to some specific set of skills that they obtained through some programmes to help Roma people or of people pointing to their education as main factor for finding a job. The following story illustrates this:

A few years ago, I went to a number of seminars and workshops and got a job working with children from our community through NGOs. I learnt a lot from the seminars about the rights of our community. I am still working in the field, and I will try to relay my experience to other unemployed women (40-44 year-old woman, Montenegro).

Figure 9. Pattern of responses for people seeking... (N=882)



The clustering of stories along the left-hand axis clearly points to a desire on the part of many Roma for more integration in the labour market in terms of accessing more permanent/less precarious options, whether this is in the formal sector or not. Although there are examples of skills acquisition opening up job opportunities, skills acquisition is not listed by

most as a priority, perhaps because of an awareness that skills alone (without other forms of support to facilitate entry to the formal labour market) are not enough. Moreover, the stories clearly illustrate that informal activities are embarked on usually because of lack of other options, and are often looked on as coping mechanisms, rather than employment.

3.4. Vulnerabilities that Roma feel in their work environment

The fourth set of factors investigated in the study relate to the risks (health, legal, safety), prejudice and discrimination and undesirable work in the jobs that people undertake. *(In your experience, does work involve risks (health, legal, safety), prejudice/discrimination, undesirable work?)* These factors speak to the poor quality of employment options open to many Roma. This question was answered by 668 people, and the clusters of responses by gender are presented in Figure 10.

Most of the stories (145) are clustered around work involving various risks, with males being more represented in this cluster. The stories in this cluster clearly speak to the vulnerability that Roma feel in their work environment. Some stories from people who work informally refer to legal risks, such as the story of this 50-54 year-old man from BiH:

Recently, I had a very bad experience. I was selling handmade cigarettes on the market, and the inspection caught me and took all the goods. I got a fine for 1500KM, and if I don't pay it I will go to jail. Currently, I am working with secondary materials to try to collect the money.

Others refer to the monetary risks connected with the lack of formal insurance:

I have completed secondary education. I haven't been working for a long time. Once I collected money and started working as a taxi driver. I could not complain, I had a nice life then. But three years ago, I had an accident, and my car was completely ruined. The car was not insured, and I lost the car and the job. Now I have to make ends meet by doing whatever I can find (50-54 year-old man, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia).

Finally, the third type of stories refer to health risks and work injuries, such as the one of a 40-44 year-old man from Serbia:

I worked in a private business, I stayed long hours, even worked on Sundays. I was always available as I wanted to show loyalty. I thought they loved me, I was not there for 2 days, I was there for 5 years. But it wasn't like I thought. I had a work injury, I broke my leg and instead of them caring for me, they fired me. Where will I find a job now at age 40? I am repulsed by the private owners and the unemployment I experience, how will I live now?

The next cluster (on the right-hand axis) is of people doing undesirable work (133 people), with both males and female providing such answers. Most of the stories here include resentment for the position that they find themselves in, such as the story of a 50-54 year-old man from Serbia:

I did not finish my education, I had to make ends meet my whole life. I had a very hard life, I struggled a lot. Even now in my old days, I still have to chop wood for people, carry coal. I help them with whatever people ask me to do. I even went to ladies with higher status, and they gave me clothes for my kids. I met some nice people, what can you do, such is life.

The stories in this cluster come from people in informal and vulnerable employment. Another example from a 30-34 year-old man from Kosovo:

I am unemployed. I receive social assistance for the children. I go [to work] to the containers every day early at 5 in the morning in order to find something better. Then, I sell them, anything I find, clothes, house equipment, plastics, metals, anything there is... It is problematic, because I also caught a disease from this job that I have been doing since after the war. It is hard for me to live this kind of life, around the containers of Prishtina and the trash that people throw away.

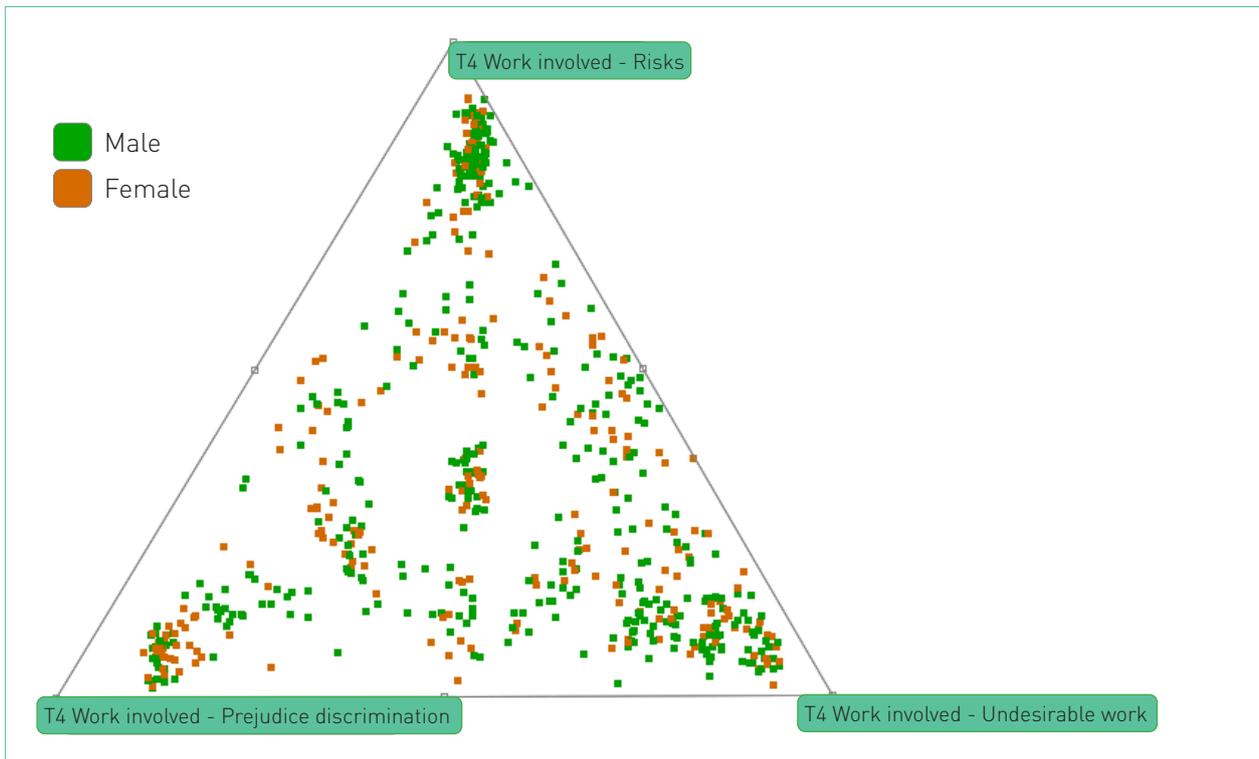
A smaller cluster, where females are more represented than males, is the cluster around discrimination. The stories here are of people saying that they could not get a job due to their ethnicity, such as the that of a 25-29 year-old woman from the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia:

I have been unemployed for 5 years now. I have a secondary school diploma to be a radiology technician, but I can't get a job because of my look and ethnicity.

Others point to prejudices to the effect that Roma are dirty or unreliable, implying that it is their own fault if they cannot find a job:

I finished school as a cook, I thought I could get a job with that, I would be able to work in a stable job. However, everywhere I went I had a problem of being a Gypsy. Everybody thinks we are messy and not fit for the job. I had awards at school, but it's all for nothing when they see I am a Gypsy, they do not even give me a chance to show them. I even went to the employment agency, begged people to help me and nothing (20-24 year-old man, Serbia).

Figure 10. Pattern of responses for work involving risks, prejudice and discrimination, undesirable work (N=668)



This set of stories illustrate clearly the vulnerabilities faced by many marginalised Roma in the labour market. In order to work, they often take on risks, whether these be fines due to informal activities; or lack of insurance coverage, whether for financial loss or for sickness/ injuries; or short and long-term

health hazards. A lack of education and skills, as well as discriminatory attitudes, limit the choices open to Roma and lowers their self-confidence, creating vicious circles of exclusion. Informal activities are taken on despite the risks involved as they are the only possible source of income.

3.5. Types of risks that Roma narrators face on the labour market

The next question in the framework delves deeper into the types of risks that Roma people face on the labour market. *[In your example, what risks were there for people? Long term health (illness, chronic condition), immediate physical injury/ disability, legal sanctions [e.g. police, tax authorities]]?* A total of 552 people answered the question, and the clustering is depicted in in Figure 11.

One cluster is around long-term health (110 people), and a large number of answers (227) is scattered along the left-hand axis of long-term health and immediate physical injury/disability. The stories are usually connected to the vulnerability that Roma face regarding their health due to the nature of their employment, not having secure employment

or not being able to work due to an underlying health condition. The following story illustrates the vulnerability and the hardship faced by people with such conditions:

I don't have a permanent job, I'm in ill health, I am old now and, being 63, I still have to work a heavily physical job, such as manual worker in agriculture where I dig the fields when there is a need for that and even in unfavourable conditions such as snow. I live in financial hardship. My wife, son and daughter-in-law and all my grandchildren are all deaf, only I have good hearing and speech, and I help them as much as I can. But we need special support for the children, for their schooling (Roma man in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia).

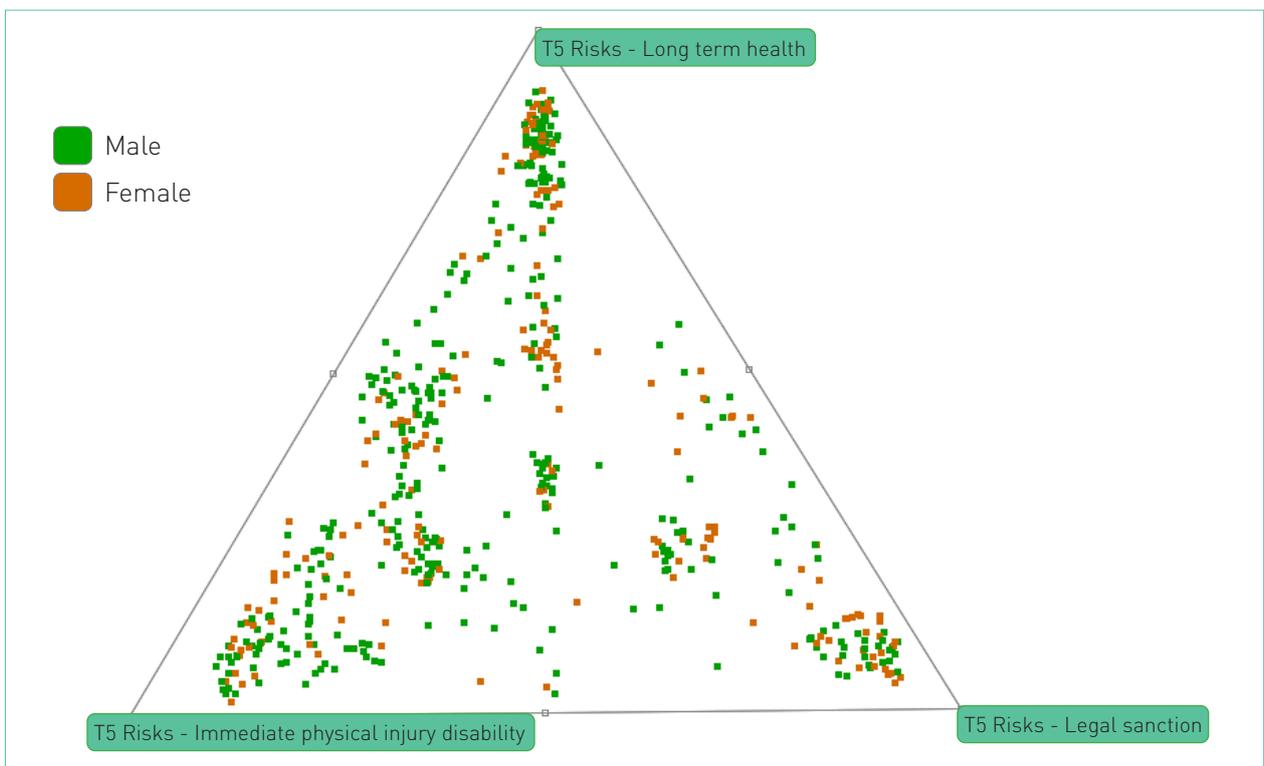
Others speak of their shattered dreams and perpetuation of the hard life from one generation to the other due to the vulnerability of Roma employment and/or lack of support during illness. See for example the story of one 20-24 year-old woman from Serbia:

I was at University in Belgrade in the fourth year. I was a good student and I had only a few exams to do before finishing. My parents never had much money, so I had to do various jobs to have enough money. It was never hard for me. Then, the worst happened in my life. My mother fell ill a few months ago, she has a tumour. I had to come back to my hometown, she stopped working and my father has occasional jobs, he is sick as well. Here I work at whatever I can find, even two jobs at the same time. I can't believe what has happened to me.

The stories connected to legal sanctions [74] are mainly connected to problems with the authorities faced by those people with private businesses in the grey economy. They speak of the stress of trying to bring food to the table while also worrying about police raids, inspections and the fines that their financially-unstable businesses may face. See for example the story of an over 60-year-old man from the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia:

I had a number of jobs over the years in textile factories, but when the last factory went bankrupt, I had three years of paid layoff benefits and now I can't get a job, so I drive a taxi without insurance. When the police come, I have to run and hide.

Figure 11. Pattern of responses on the types of risks that Roma people face on the labour market (N=552) (N=668)



This set of stories reinforce the results and messages emerging from the previous triangle: part of the vulnerability experienced by marginalised Roma in the labour market is due to the long and short-term health risks which they face, coupled with lack of

access to insurance. This, as well as the risks of legal sanctions and fines, are often inherent to work in the informal sector, where large shares of marginalised Roma are active, mostly through lack of choice.

3.6. Perceptions of Roma regarding employers' preferences when hiring workers

The next question explored the perceptions of Roma regarding employers' preferences when hiring workers. (*In your example, employers preferred workers who were... from the same background/community, skilled, trustworthy/reliable?*) In total, 786 people provided answers and the clustering of answers is displayed in Figure 12.

The cluster with most responses (241) claimed that employers look for workers who are both skilled and trustworthy/reliable. Both men and women hold this view. Most of the stories in the cluster are of people who have worked hard and proven their worth to their employers, such as the story of a 25-29 year-old man from BiH:

Immediately after finishing school, I went to the employment agency and, in a few days, I started volunteering in a Roma organisation. In a few months' time, they offered me a full-time job with insurance, and I accepted it. I have been working in that organisation for 3 years and it's great.

A similar story of perseverance is given by a 40-44 year-old woman from Montenegro:

My friend told me that they are looking for a cleaning lady in the hospital in Herceg Novi. The next day I went there and applied for the job. I talked to the main nurse. After she told me the job terms, I agreed. The next day I started working. In the first year, I was getting monthly contracts and then I got six-month contracts twice. After two years, I got a permanent post.

The second biggest cluster is the one where people thought that employers prefer skilled workers, where more females than males are clustered. The stories include cases when having the right type of skills for the job was enough to overcome any discrimination on ethnic grounds:

I work as a nurse in the hospital in Tetovo. I got the job regardless of my background, and I get positive feedback from the patients and the medical staff (30-34 year-old woman, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia).

Some stories point to the need to provide opportunities for Roma people to gain more skills so that they have more and better employment opportunities:

I was looking for a job as a cleaner in a number of places around town and nobody would hire me. I heard some time ago and that would be really nice if some organisation would have workshops or trainings for uneducated women, so maybe I could get more knowledge and skills and get a job (20-24 year-old woman, Montenegro).

Most of the stories here stress the need for better access to education for Roma to enable better job prospects.

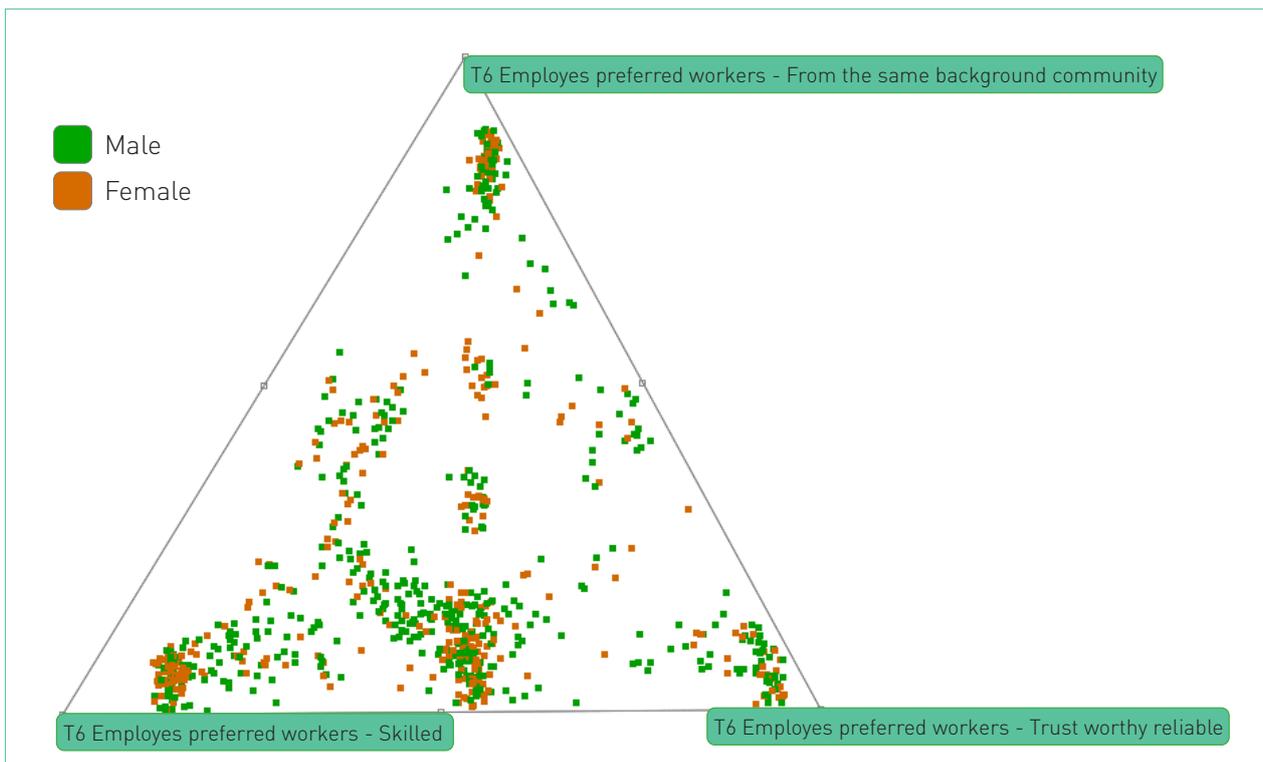
The cluster (85 people) around employers looking for workers from the same background indirectly brings out stories of discrimination and prejudice against Roma looking for jobs. The following story illustrates this:

I have a university degree in Macedonian literature, and, so far, nobody has hired me in a position relevant to my education. It has been 10 years since I finished school, but the ethnic Macedonians always had the advantage in getting the jobs. I have worked occasionally in boutiques, I am not married, and I live with my parents (35-39 year-old woman, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia).

A similar story of prejudice against Roma is visible in the next micronarrative:

I am a housewife with a secondary school diploma in hairdressing. Last time I asked at a hair salon about a job, the boss told me that she is very sorry, but Roma women can't get job as nobody will then enter the salon. That killed every desire to ever again enquire about a job, I felt so awkward (35-39 year-old woman, BiH).

Figure 12. Pattern of responses for employers' preference for workers who were: from the same background, skilled, trustworthy/reliable (N=786)



3.7. Lack of education, skills or opportunities perceived by Roma narrators

The next question in the framework investigates further how Roma people feel they need more help. *(In your experience, did workers/ jobseekers have a lack of education, skills, opportunities?)* The question was answered by 799 respondents in total and the clustering is presented in Figure 13. The answers of the women are quite scattered while those of men are more clustered.

The largest cluster of stories refers to lack of opportunities (201). Some stories refer to the lack of jobs but also to the lack of help in finding appropriate jobs for Roma people. The story of one 45-49 year-old man from the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia illustrates the struggle to ensure a better future for his daughter and having to look for a job abroad due to the general lack of job opportunities:

I have a secondary school education as an electrician. I am middle aged, unemployed and have been looking for a job for a long time. If somebody calls me, I work as electrician. My only hope was to go to Afghanistan for 3 years, and I invested the money in the house, and they are gone now, and I have a daughter at university.

A number of stories also highlight the lack of opportunities for finding a different job after working at a company for a number of years:

I don't work. I used to work in a company that went bankrupt. I was left on the street and have been sitting at home for 6 months. I have 2 daughters who are married, and I live with my wife. Where will I go now with my age? My health is not like before as well, I can't do whatever. Our daughters and sons-in-law help us, but I don't want to be a burden. I don't even satisfy the conditions to retire (50-54 year-old man, Serbia).

The second cluster (175 people) draws attention to the lack of education that puts Roma at a big disadvantage when it comes to searching for a job. The stories accentuate the need for better education for a better position on the labour market. The following story illustrates the regrets of a woman who hasn't completed her education:

I have incomplete education, I finished only up to 6th grade and, when I was in 7th grade, I left school. I now realise that was a mistake and would like to have a chance to complete at least 8 grades of schooling. I am 34 years old, and I am not married and do not have kids. I am actively looking for a job and have worked in a number of jobs: 3 months in CIK, I worked in Inventa as a cleaner, I worked in Germany and Switzerland with papers, and I was taking care of children and I was an asylum seeker for a while. I am not embarrassed to do any kind of work and would like to do anything.

Another story reiterates the hard-living conditions of people without proper education:

I live in very bad conditions, my family is uneducated, and it is hard to find a job. My brother started a trade business, and I am sort of employed there selling clothes at markets hoping to get a better job in the future (35 to 39 year-old woman, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia).

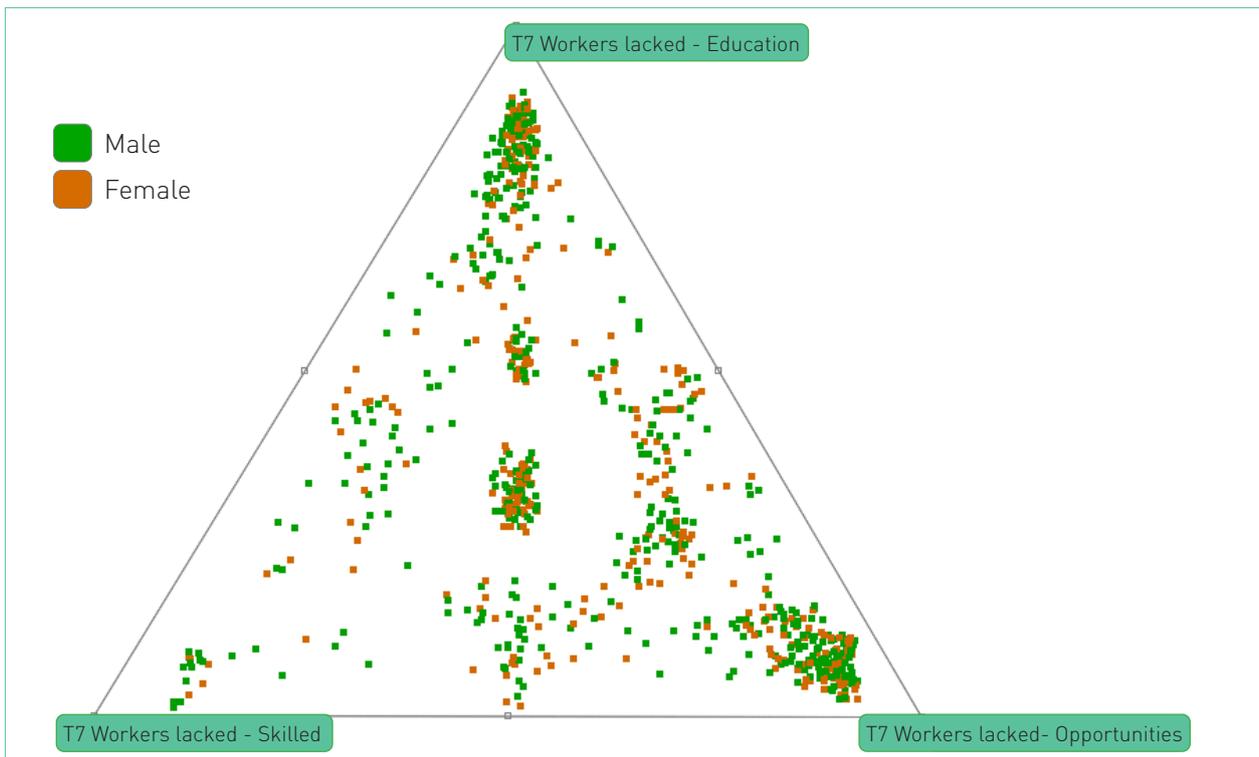
There are also some stories where, with proper support, people managed to get a job that they are satisfied with:

I came back with my family after seeking asylum. I went to the employment agency, and they made me finish primary school, 7th and 8th grade. After that I got a job in public works. It's not a big pay check, but it is good. I work as a house painter on the side, so I make ends meet (35-39 year-old man, Serbia).

The third cluster (91 people) points to the equal importance of all three factors, and the narratives indicate the interconnected nature of those three factors in getting a good job. The following story illustrates that:

I work with my parents, and I do not work on a regular basis. I sometimes go with them to the markets and flea markets and we trade military goods. There is no money there, but once a year I go to Germany and drive a truck there with my uncle, but it is always for a month and illegally. I do not have a single working day in the workers booklet. Then I come back, I bring some money, and we live off that. I do not have education to do any kind of job, I am on welfare, they do not call me from the employment agency (25-29 year-old man, Serbia).

Figure 13. Pattern of responses for workers/jobseekers who had a lack of: education, skills and opportunities (N=799)



3.8. Perceptions of discrimination in the labour market

The next question explores the perceptions of the storytellers on the reasons why Roma are treated unfavourably. *(In your example, people treated other people unfavourably because of their gender, ethnicity, age?)* A total of 510 people provided answers (see Figure 14), which is about half of the all respondents (this is the second-smallest number of responses provided in the qualitative study, indicating perhaps a reluctance to talk about, and the sensitivity surrounding, perceptions of discrimination).

The biggest cluster is around ethnicity (184 people), with both males and females highlighting this as the main factor. The stories in this cluster again highlight the bad treatment that Roma get due to their ethnicity, for example in the following story of a 25 to 29 year-old man from the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia:

I work in a car wash, I was looking for other jobs, but they all refused to take me. In this job, I get frequent insults by my boss or the people who bring their cars just because I am Roma. A number of times I have been in a conflict that wasn't my fault.

There are a number of stories where Roma talk about their perceptions of prejudices against Roma and their levels of hygiene, which also prevents them from being hired for some types of jobs, especially in the food sector. This is illustrated well by the following example:

I worked in a bakery for 3 months in production. The employment agency sent me there as I have a diploma to be a baker. It was hard, but I was doing my job. Five days ago, I stopped working as they did not continue my contract. I did not know why as I was really trying hard. Then a colleague of mine tells me that some customers complained that they will no longer buy bread made by a Gypsy. The owner decided to fire me. Where is the justice there? Then when they see a Gypsy begging on the street, they say why don't you go work, but when we want to earn our own money, they don't let us. It can only happen in Serbia (25-29 year-old man, Serbia).

Other stories stress the difficulties faced in finding a job due to the general distrust of Roma:

I don't have any work experience, I am a mother of two, I am looking for a job, but it is hard to find one. I want to clean houses, but it is hard to find a job when people won't take us as we are Roma, and they think us Roma steal things and do not trust us (40-44 year-old woman, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia).

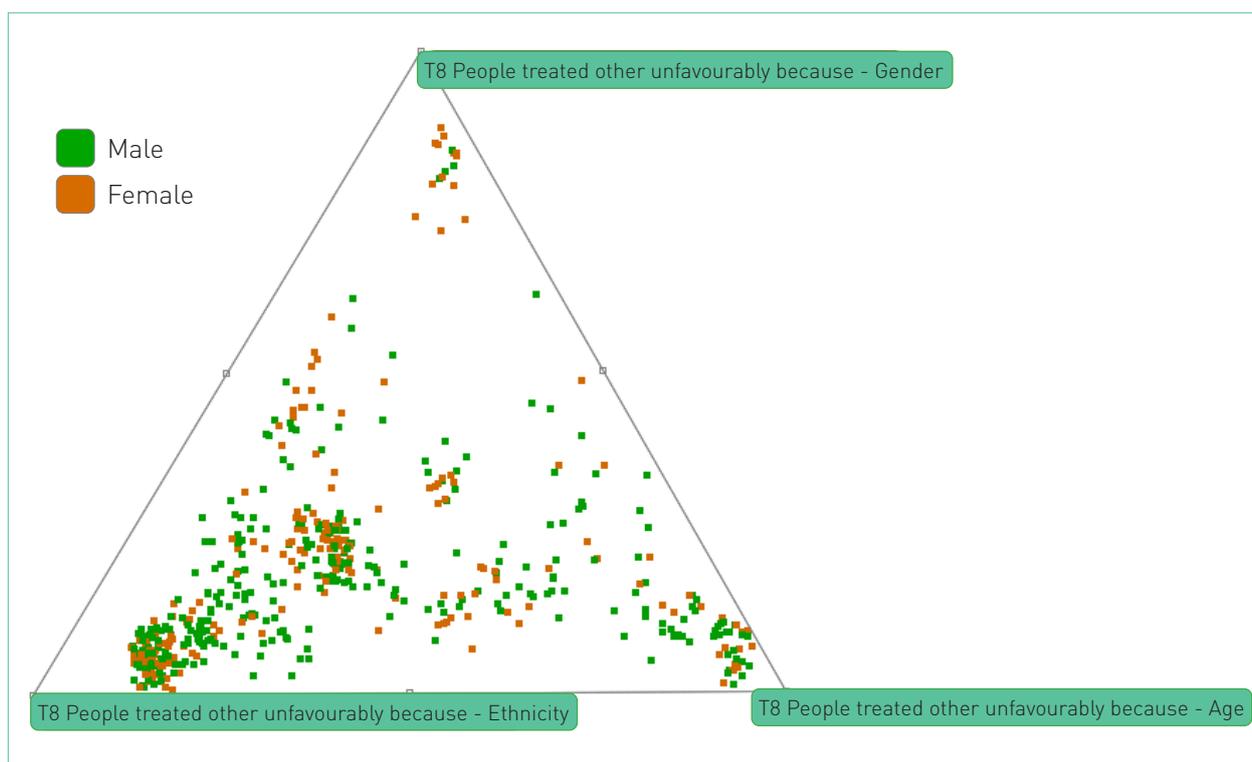
These stories clearly illustrate the need to work further on raising awareness of prejudices against Roma in the society and tackling structural discrimination.

The second cluster is stories regarding unfavourable treatment based on age (48 people), where the narratives reiterate the hard position of older people who are in vulnerable employment or have lost their jobs in recent years:

I was working in a company for 40 years. Ten years ago, I was made redundant. A year ago, I was taking minimal financial help, and now I am on welfare, and it will be as so until I am old enough to get pension when I turn 64. It is hard living on welfare, but I hope better times will come when I am a pensioner if I ever live that long (man who is 60 years old or older, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia).

Very few narrators perceived gender as a factor leading to unfavourable treatment in the labour market.

Figure 14. Pattern of responses for unfavourable treatment based on gender, ethnicity and age (N=510)



3.9. Treatment of Roma workers in comparison to other workers

The next question delved deeper into how the narrators felt about the treatment that Roma workers get in comparison to other workers. *(In your example, compared with other workers, Roma workers were rewarded the same, had the same skills, were given similar work?)* There are two bigger clusters of answers, with both men and women having similar pattern of answers (see Figure 15).

The first large cluster is of stories and storytellers who attach equal importance to all three factors (106 people). The stories in the cluster are mostly very positive experiences, which tell of successful job search and equitable treatment in the companies where Roma work. The following story of a 30-34 year-old woman from the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia focuses on the atmosphere at the work place, which makes participants feel good about themselves and their jobs:

I started working in a company, it is a private company and, at the beginning, I didn't know what to expect. The owners and the workers are very nice, so I started liking my job...

Some stories are not as positive, such as the one of a 45-49 year-old man from the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia who lost his job:

I was working in a factory that made molds, and it went bankrupt but not completely. There were workers that were kept but the Roma people were the first to get fired. I was the only one employed in the family. Now I work wherever I can find to feed my family.

The second cluster (97 people) is around the factor of being “rewarded the same.” Most of the stories in the cluster are around Roma workers being satisfied with their pay checks and the treatment they receive from their co-workers. The following story illustrates that:

They told me that a bank is looking for a cleaning lady. I went for an interview and got the job. I am paid well and everybody treats me well although I am a Roma (30-34 year-old woman, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia).

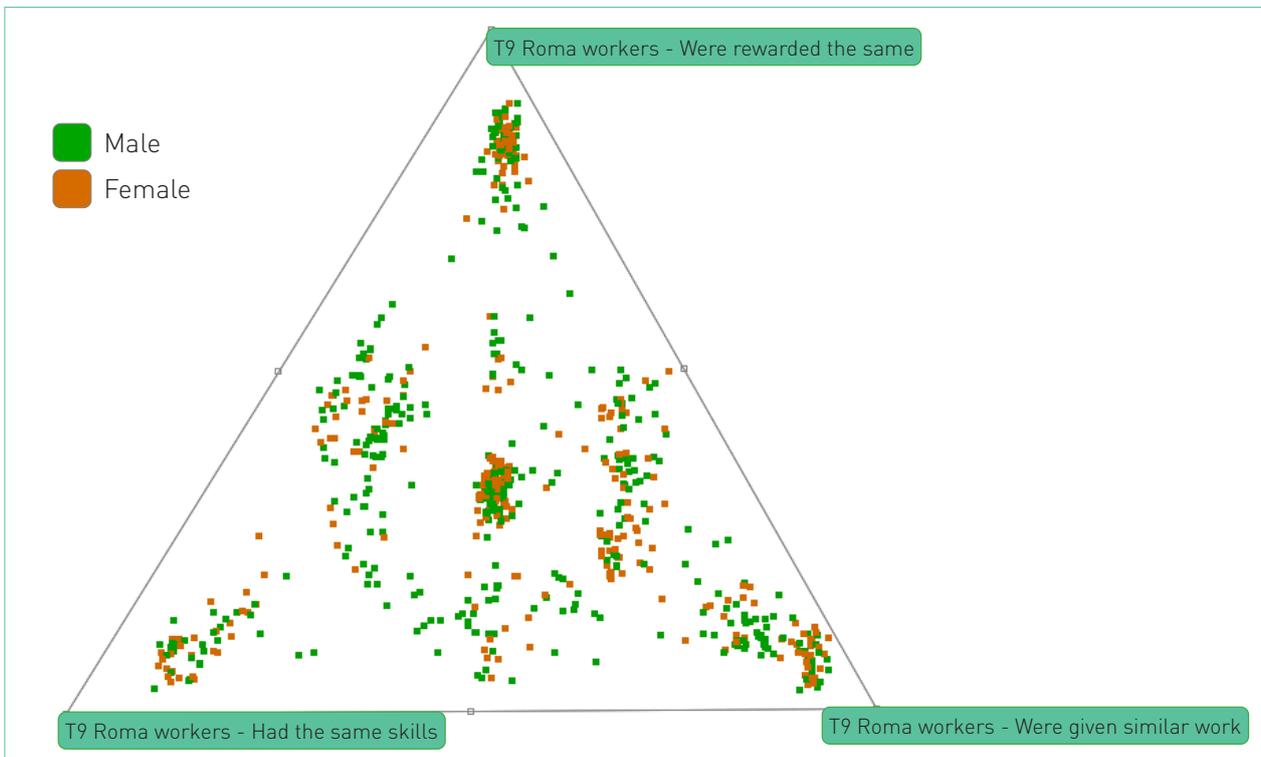
Most narrators in this cluster report working in retail, cleaning or factories. A number of people also talk about successful privately owned businesses.

A larger pattern of responses (86) is scattered on the axis “rewarded the same” and “had the same skills.” The stories here are similar to those in the previous two clusters.

Other responses are clustered around “given similar work” (97 responses). The responses here are not as positive as in the previous examples. Some stories suggest that even though the Roma people were given similar work, their employment is much more precarious than that of other workers. The following story illustrates a move by an employer to hire a vulnerable Roma person only as long as the firm can benefit from state subsidies for hiring an unemployed person:

I worked in a company for 2 years, the boss liked me, we got along well. Everything was going really well, I went to work regularly, and I didn't have any problems with the people. And instead of getting a permanent contract, I got fired. They kept me as long as they had some benefits for me. I was unemployed before and, when they took me, they took money for that. I am very bitter and can't believe that something like that happened. Now I only work during weekends in a bar, but I make far less than when I was working in a company (25-29 year-old man, Serbia).

Figure 15. Pattern of responses for treatment of Roma workers in comparison to other workers (N=662)



3.10. Behaviour of other people towards Roma in labour market

The last set of factors explored in the research focused on the behaviour of other people towards Roma. (In your example, how do people behave to the main person in the story? Avoided, excluded, refused them; bullied humiliated them; rewarded them differently/undervalued them?) The question was answered by only 339 people, and the pattern of responses is presented in Figure 16.

The biggest cluster is stories of Roma people being avoided/excluded/refused (139 people), and the smaller one is focused on being rewarded differently (62 people). The rest of the answers is scattered. Both men and women have similar patterns of responses.

The stories of avoidance/exclusion/refusal again show that Roma are often the least preferred workers by employers for various reasons. The following story illustrates this:

I applied to at least 10 jobs and did not get any job offers. Currently, I've been on welfare for 2 years. I never got any job offers from the state employment agency after I finished secondary school. I have to beg to feed my family. I was hoping to be offered a job, but nothing happened (35-39 year-old woman, BiH).

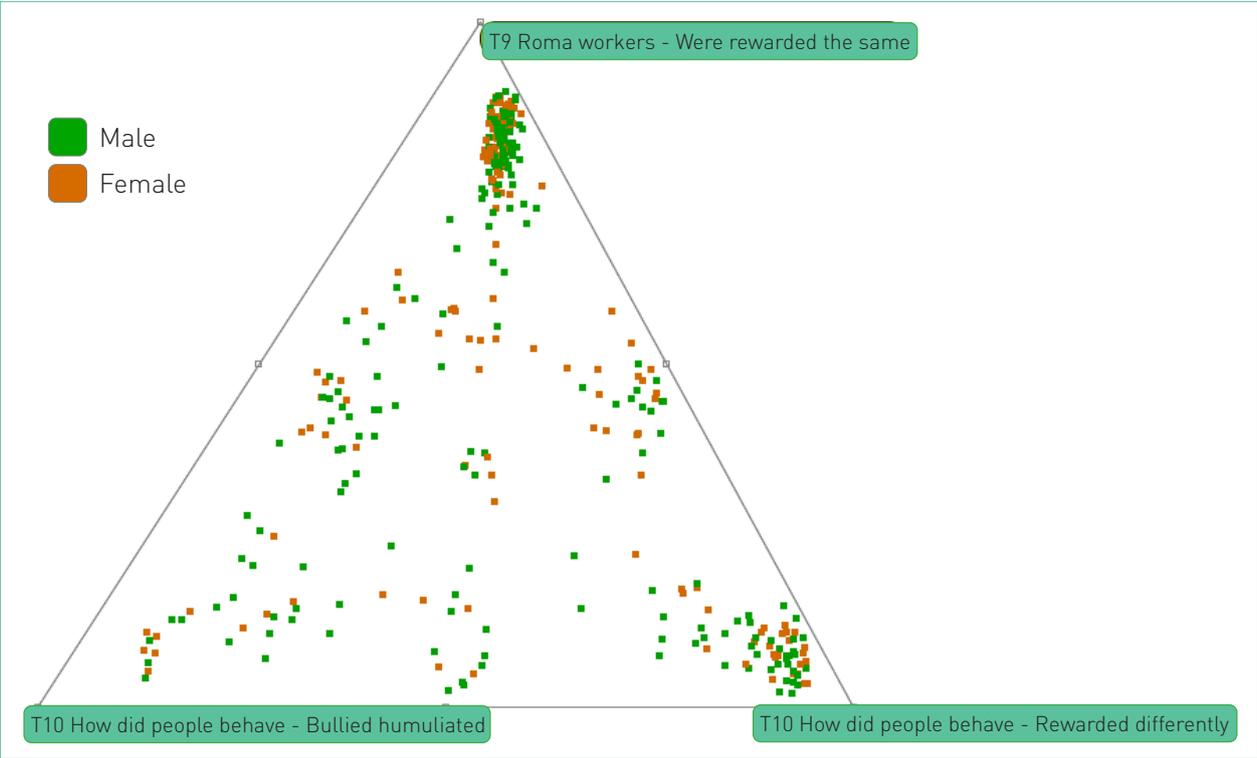
Another story reiterates the sentiment of being unwanted:

I was at the employment agency to look for a job with a certificate to be an auto-mechanic. They advised us that they will contact us in case anybody wanted such workers. I have been waiting for 3 years, and nothing happened. Every three months, I call the agency and ask whether they have some job for me that I am qualified to do or any other job, but they never contacted me, just to tell me whether there is hope or not (30-34 year-old man, Montenegro).

The stories of being rewarded differently again revolve around negative employment experiences for Roma in comparison to other workers such as the following story:

I worked as a mediator in education for a year. During that year it was ok, until I got my foreigner ID and went to the employment agency. Then they reduced my salary as they had to pay insurance and everything. I decided to leave the job as they did not treat me fairly. Other people were paid 250 euros, and I was paid 150 euros. I stopped working as you can't do anything with 150 euros (25-29 year-old woman, Montenegro).

Figure 16. Pattern of responses for behaviour of other people towards the main person in the story (N=339)



3.11. Concluding observations

The above summary of the personal experiences and perceptions of the Roma in the labour markets of the Western Balkans captures some of the success stories which give the foundation for future support programmes and policies to build on. Many show optimism, determination and perseverance, and speak to a range of programmes (both state and NGO) which have used different forms of outreach to help Roma access education, skills and jobs. But there are also many stories that speak of the vulnerabilities, frustrations and outright discrimination faced by the narrators. Regarding discrimination, some of the most telling evidence emerges not in response to direct questions on the experience of discrimination, but indirectly, in response to other questions on work and job search experiences. The following concluding observations may be made:

➤ During the Decade of Roma Inclusion, there was some success in increasing enrolment and inclusion of Roma children in mainstream schooling. The micronarratives overwhelmingly reflect the value attached by most narrators to school education, not least because it is perceived as the minimum requirement for opening up more formal sector (and less precarious) job opportunities. Particularly older respondents often lament their lack of education, and the barrier this represents to finding a job. This should be built on in the work with parents to ensure that children are not only enrolled in school education, but attend regularly and complete compulsory education, as an important step to ensuring minimum qualifications facilitating entry into the labour market. (The quantitative survey results point to large gaps between the share of Roma children enrolled, and the share actually completing.)

*I do not have an education. This is the worst thing, I can't find a job. The same problem is present everywhere in the [Roma] community, because most of us are uneducated. We try to live as we can. Some receive social assistance, and that is how they get by. I go out to look for work, and I work doing anything just to make some money.
(35-39 year-old man, Kosovo)*

➤ The stories and triangles reveal some awareness that skills training may open up more opportunities, but the attitudes here are more ambiguous. On the whole, Roma tend to be employed in low-skill jobs, and many display either little faith in the returns to investing in more skills, or the lack of awareness or confidence in following up skill training options or just the lack of such options. On the one hand, there are positive stories regarding those who have skills finding jobs; and on the other hand, there are stories of skilled Roma facing discrimination and prejudices when applying for jobs in line with their skill profile. Skills training may not be enough without other forms of support which help build confidence and raise the ambition and expectations of Roma themselves.

➤ Much of the discussion since the end of the Decade of Roma Inclusion has centred on why gains in education indicators have not translated into improvements in labour market outcomes for Roma. Part of the answer lies in the slow recovery of labour markets after the 2008 crisis, and the overall low activity and employment rates in the Western Balkans. It also lies in the fact that the demand for low-skill workers has been particularly slow to pick up. However, the stories and the analysis by the narrators provide some insights into the biases and prejudices faced even by Roma with skills and qualifications. And discrimination is experienced not just in hiring, but also in the treatment of workers once hired. Again, many stories clearly suggest that access to skills training is not enough unless complemented by other forms of support (whether from NGOs or government programmes) to help build confidence among Roma, facilitate access to jobs, and to work with employers and local populations to overcome discriminatory attitudes.

- Another aspect of employment and labour market integration centres around the role of social protection, and whether access to social benefits for unemployed or inactive Roma discourages searching for a job and encourages passivity. However, the majority of the stories collected reveal a desire to work and not relying on social benefits. Some stories do reflect a sense of tiredness or resignation and relief in relying on benefits as a way of escaping from the risks and hardships of informality. But many stories reflect anything but passivity: rather an energy and perseverance in searching for jobs.

I want to make it! Tirana is very expensive. I don't live with my family here, and education has its own expenses. I want to get educated. My parents don't have much income, because they don't have many job opportunities in the city where they live. Through NGOs, I have been positioned in a health organisation, and I'm doing a paid internship there. This way, I pursue my studies and work at the same time (female 20-24 years old, Albania).

- However, the stories also show that social protection is not always available or adequate when it is needed; and that lack of access to social benefits and support has led to tragic outcomes for several of the story tellers, not least the women who feel they have no other option but prostitution. See for example the story from a 35-39 year-old woman in Albania, who titles her story 'A wrong way':

I'm unemployed, and my husband died years ago and left me and the kids. I don't have any other work to do apart from sleeping with other men for 2000 ALL because my kids want to eat, and they expect it from me. I do this job out of desperation.

- An issue raised in discussions with stakeholders is the fact that eligibility for social assistance benefits can cease once the recipient is employed in the formal sector, including being formally registered as being self-employed. This may be an incentive for marginalised Roma to stick with informal activities, since they can continue to receive benefits, which offer a certain security, compared to the vagaries and risks normally associated with employment. Moreover, those

engaged in self-employment or small business activities in the informal sector frequently cite high taxes as one of the reasons for remaining informal.

My endeavour to provide for my family is through working as a blacksmith. I have my own forge in the neighbourhood, and I work on request. But I'm afraid that one day they might come to collect the taxes and consequently close down my premises, and then I won't have anywhere to work. Until now this didn't happen, and I wish it won't happen in the future, so I can continue to provide the income for my family. (30-35 year-old man, Albania)

- Informal sector employment remains the norm for many of the most vulnerable Roma narrators, and many stories speak to the risks and hardships involved in their work, whether these be health risks, lack of insurance for loss of income, capital or health and/or the periodic crackdowns by authorities on informal activities. The stories also speak to the sharp contrast between the desire for more secure employment, and the high prevalence of occasional, informal and seasonal work. However, the stories also show how many informal activities are seen not as work in the sense of employment but as coping or survival mechanisms. For this reason, campaigns to crack down on informality have to be carried out carefully. If they are carried out on their own, without support mechanisms to facilitate alternative formal work activities (e.g. tailored job search or activation programmes coupled with benefits), they will most likely lead to more hardship and exclusion of Roma, as they risk losing essential coping mechanisms which they use for survival.

I am unemployed. I live with my wife. I don't have any income. I survive through selling items I find in containers. I go out early in the morning in order to be able to find something. I have a bike. I clean and repair the things I find and then sell them at the market. I am searching for a job, but there are no jobs for anyone, and neither is there one for me. It is problematic. It's hard to live like this. (35-39 year-old man, Kosovo)

I've gone to the Agency for 7 years now and have health insurance... regarding work they offered me a seasonal job only once and I worked in the urban cleaning service. It was nice when I had a job, my wife and children did not have to do anything, now they have to beg and I collect paper (35 to 39 year-old man, BiH)

I worked at a frozen food company for the whole summer, I was picking raspberries and blueberries, I do those seasonal jobs. I was left without a permanent job, and I can't get a more permanent job anywhere now. Wherever I looked, I couldn't get a job. I am trying to make ends meet this way, I will go to clean streets or maybe do something in the grey market. We all have to make ends meet, we don't choose our jobs. (40-44 year-old man, Serbia)

➤ In general, the stories show the perils and shortcomings of using standard ILO definitions to estimate the labour market status (activity, employment and unemployment rates) of marginalised Roma. In fact, these standard definitions are used to analyse the quantitative data collected in the 2017 survey (see section 2 above, and the following sections with country-level analyses): Roma in informal employment are categorised as active and employed, if they were paid in the week preceding the survey or say that they have a paid job (see Annex 1 for definitions of indicators). However, the micronarratives show that there is often a fine line between (i) activities which are coping mechanisms used by Roma due to lack of access to regular jobs and (ii) paid jobs in the informal sector. The first category includes at the extreme end begging and prostitution, but also recycling, collecting scrap metals and doing seasonal agricultural jobs. In many cases, self-employment in the informal sector is also used (at least initially) as a coping mechanism (e.g. selling second-hand objects at markets). And, in many cases, Roma respondents do not report such coping mechanisms as paid employment.

➤ These informal jobs often involve risks and are engaged in not just because of the lack of alternative employment opportunities, but also due to the lack of access to adequate social protection benefits, and access to other forms of support to raise confidence and ambition of Roma, etc. For this reason, any use of standard employment definitions to inform policies and programmes should always be accompanied by further information on the quality and the type of the work which Roma are engaged in, as well as the social protection benefits and support available to them. Moreover, the alignment of social protection with employment policies should not just be seen in terms of the effect which social protection can have on reducing disincentives to searching for a job. It should also be seen in terms of how lack of adequate protection, coupled with lack of access to appropriate active labour market programmes, can lead to the use of coping mechanisms which contribute not just to poor health outcomes, but to the perpetuation of the cycle of poverty and exclusion for Roma.

Begging out of necessity... I'm uneducated and I don't have anywhere to work. In order to survive, I beg in the streets, and I take my little one with me, because otherwise people don't give me money. This is how we earn our bread. We don't get any help because nobody cares about us (20-24 year-old female, Albania).

I have been collecting cans for my whole life, but this wasn't so easy. I had to work from the early morning until late at night just to earn my bread. People in the street would always look at me with disgust. I would go to ask in shops or make calls for the job announcements for a cleaner. Immediately when they would see me, they would say NO directly. Of course, who likes the black race? I have always tried hard...I would like to have a pension one day when I get old. I would like to work in a clean job, but who will take me?! Nobody (40 to 44 year-old male, Albania).

After I got back from France, where I spent 15 years as an asylum seeker with my wife and children, I went to ask for jobs in a number of private companies, but because I have only a primary education I could not get a job, so I decided to start working at the market with my wife selling fruits and vegetables, so we do that now and we live off that (40-44 year-old male, BiH).

I am legally unemployed for a number of years. At the moment, I have a stall at the market - family business because my wife helps as well and our two children come to help at the weekends. We do not have insurance, because to pay them, we have to earn a lot of money and we can't do that as the competition is really fierce (30-34 year-old male, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia).

I've been going to the Employment Agency for a year now. I go there regularly when they call me. They have not offered me anything yet. I must do hard physical labour to survive. I also help my brother who is in retail. He had no other option. We tried to do that more, but we don't have many sales. I would still like a more stable job (20-24 year-old man, Montenegro).

I'm unemployed, and my husband died years ago and left me and the kids. I don't have any other work to do apart from sleeping with other men for 2000 ALL because my kids want to eat, and they expect it from me. I do this job out of desperation.

I often tried to get a permanent job. I've been going to the Employment Agency for 5 years now, since I lost my job, I worked at chocolate factory, I had a permanent job but the factory went bankrupt, and I lost my job. Since I had little children, I tried to look for another job, and I couldn't find one so I had some savings and I tried to get some goods and start working. I bought some t-shirts and jeans to sell at the market. The sales were good until police and inspection came and surrounded the whole market, the police took our data, and the inspectors were writing fines, and it happened 10 times. Everyday struggle and running from the police, chasing, harassment can bring a person to madness, you can't properly work and I have to work to feed my family. I am trying to get a job as a night guard in a coffee shop, so I could sell goods during the day and guard that small place at night. My wife told me about the job as she cleans there. I told you this story to show that destiny can turn in a second: one moment you have a stable job, the next you lose ground, and you keep fighting to succeed again, you get fined by inspection, you get chased by police. Whatever will be - will be, but I know one thing, I go to the Employment Agency every day, I keep bugging them to find me a job. I am trained as a ceramic maker, and I am hoping to get a permanent job that I am trained for. (35-39 year-old man, BiH)

- Another coping mechanism for Roma in the Western Balkans is circular [or permanent] migration, particularly to Western Europe. This is mentioned in several of the micronarratives, but is not discussed in detail in this report, as it is the subject of another parallel publication⁴.

⁴ <http://www.eurasia.undp.org/content/rbec/en/home/library/roma/roma-returnees-to-the-western-balkans.html>

3.12. Recommendations

Overall, the stories highlight the importance of comprehensive and coordinated approaches to the integration of Roma into the labour market. This is perhaps best achieved at the local (municipal) level, involving the figure of a mediator to coordinate between Roma and the local government, NGOs and the local population. Comprehensive approaches would involve:

- Tailored activation programmes, involving employment services (which have to be encouraged to go beyond just being mediators between employers and Roma jobseekers), local educational institutes, business support services and centres for social welfare;
 - Not just first but also second chance education programmes for Roma;
 - A review of the tax rates which the self-employed and small businesses are subject to, and use of tax breaks or subsidies to help with formalisation, coupled with subsidised access to business support services;
 - Measures to tackle biases and prejudices within the employment services and other national and municipal bodies interacting with Roma;
 - Coordination between centres for social welfare and employment services using individual case management techniques, and the possibility to decide on a case-by-case basis whether social benefits should be curtailed if the recipient is engaged in informal paid activities, or once formal employment or formal business activities is taken up;
 - Given the lack of confidence and also the discrimination often faced by Roma, there is a need to ensure access to support and advice not just on a one-off basis, but throughout the first years of work activity, perhaps with mentors working with Roma workers, as well as with employers and co-workers;
- In the discussion of the results of the study with stakeholders, it was often mentioned that (at least some of) the countries participating in the study have legislation which requires that ethnic groups be represented in public administration jobs in proportion to their relative share/representation in the overall population. The share of Roma in the overall population is always a matter of debate and estimates vary substantially, however, the representation of Roma in public sector jobs is below even the minimum estimate of the share of Roma in the population. Public sector jobs are sought after by Roma and non-Roma, due to the security they offer, and also due to the shortage of permanent private sector jobs. However, if the aim is to encourage employment of Roma in the formal sector, more Roma in the public sector would send a good message to private sector employers and help promote more interaction with the general public;
 - Roma women need particular support to boost confidence and help tackle traditional attitudes within the home and community which prevents them from pursuing first education and then a place in the world of work. They also need support in accessing care services for children and elderly dependents.

I am on welfare. I don't have work experience or education. I am not looking for a job as I have small children, and there is nobody else that can take care of them (25 to 29 year-old female, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia).

After I finished 6th grade, my father gave me permission to get married, and I stopped my education then. Now I can't get a job anywhere because I don't have any education or any diploma, and nobody gives you a job without it. I will try to go to some course to get some skills (20-24 year-old woman, Montenegro).

Finally, as with other aspects of Roma inclusion, efforts to promote more integration in the labour market cannot be separated from other aspects of integration/inclusion strategies. The links with education policies are obvious and widely discussed; poor health outcomes for Roma are also connected with the poor quality of their work options; and the lack of personal documentation closes the door for formal sector employment. But the following story illustrates how poor housing conditions can also constrain job hunting:

I live in a barrack together with my two children. I wanted to do any work I could find. I would go to the public employment service every day, but they would send me back. They would tell me that I don't know how to speak and that I had to be dressed well. Naturally, they don't know my situation. Of course, I can speak, dress well and shower every day, but I don't have a house. However, now I work in a company, I clean windows. An organisation, which works on projects on the Roma, suggested me this job. For me, this job is very nice because I worked the same thing when I was in Greece (25 to 29 year-old man, Albania).

Annex 1.

Prompt question

Give us a recent example (good or bad) of a time when you tried to get a job or build a business

OR

Share a recent experience of trying to feed your family by getting a job or doing some work on your own

Describe what happened...

Please give your experience a title

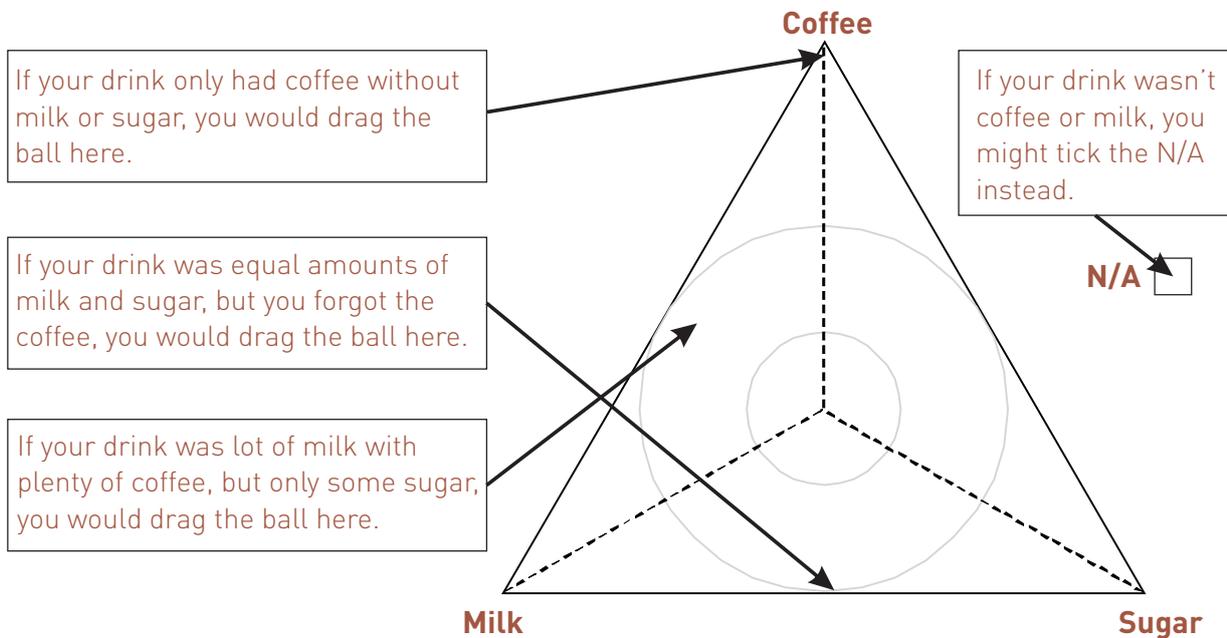
**This is the first set of questions about your experience.
Your perspective is what matters.**

- For the following questions, put a mark in each triangle by moving the ball to a position that best describes the experience you shared.
- The closer the ball is to any one corner, the stronger that element is in the experience you shared.
- If you do not move the ball in a given triangle, then no response will be registered for that question.

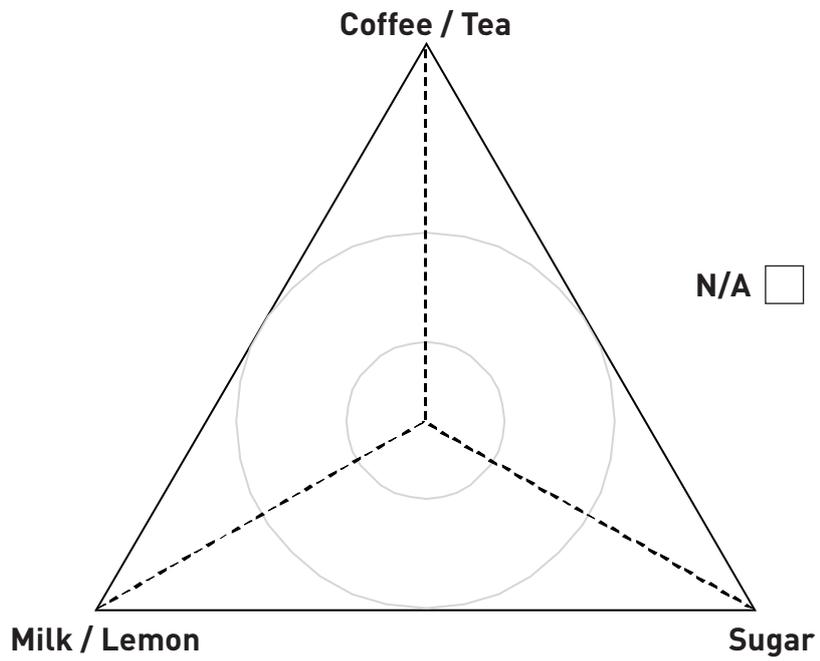
If a triangle does not relate to your experience, check the N/A box.

The example below may help - thinking about how you take your coffee

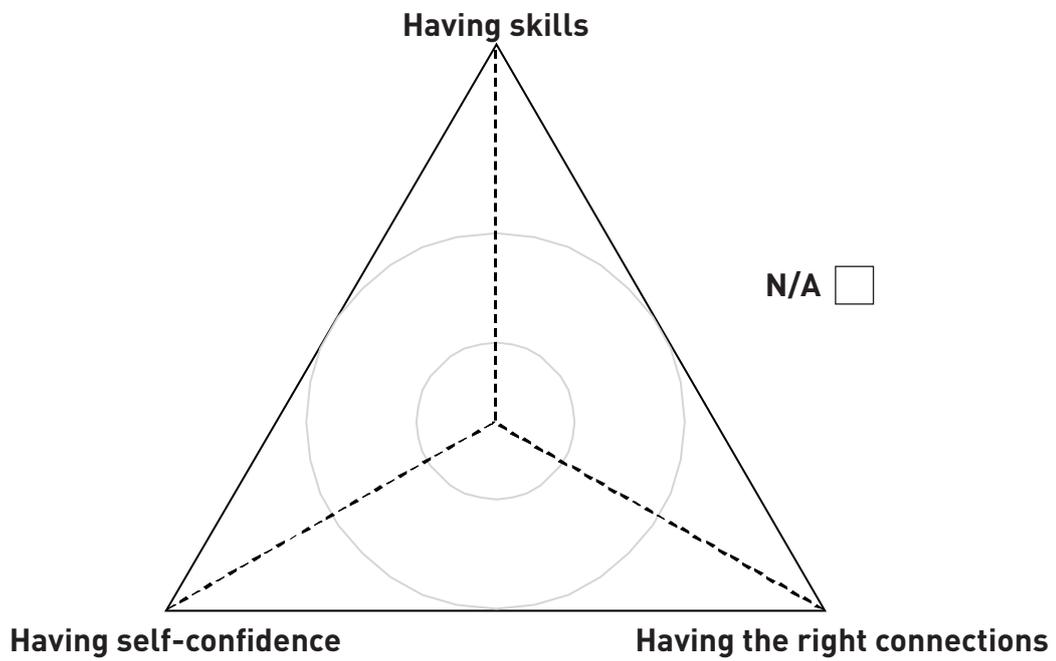
How did you take your last coffee?



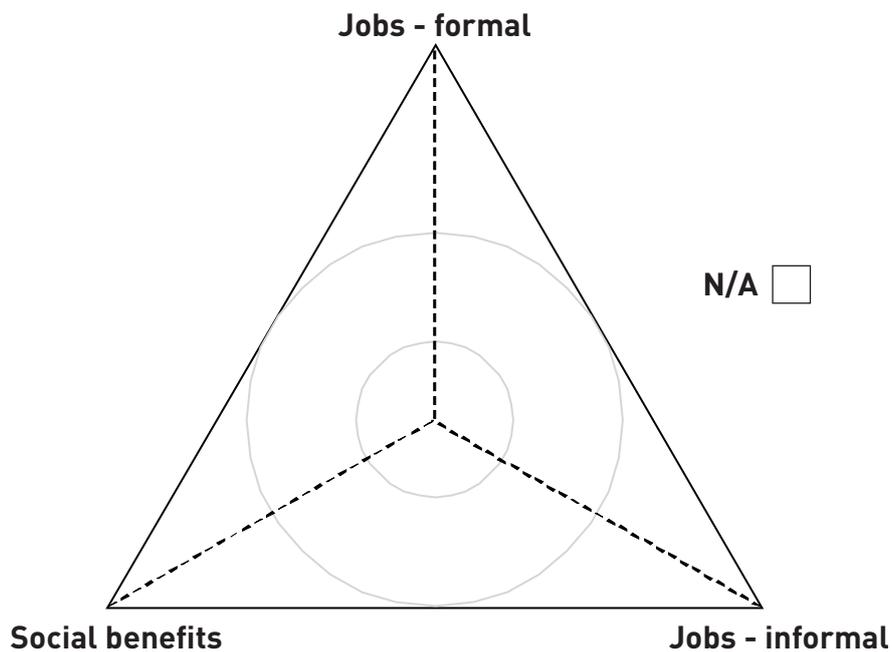
T0. So how was your last cup of coffee /tea?



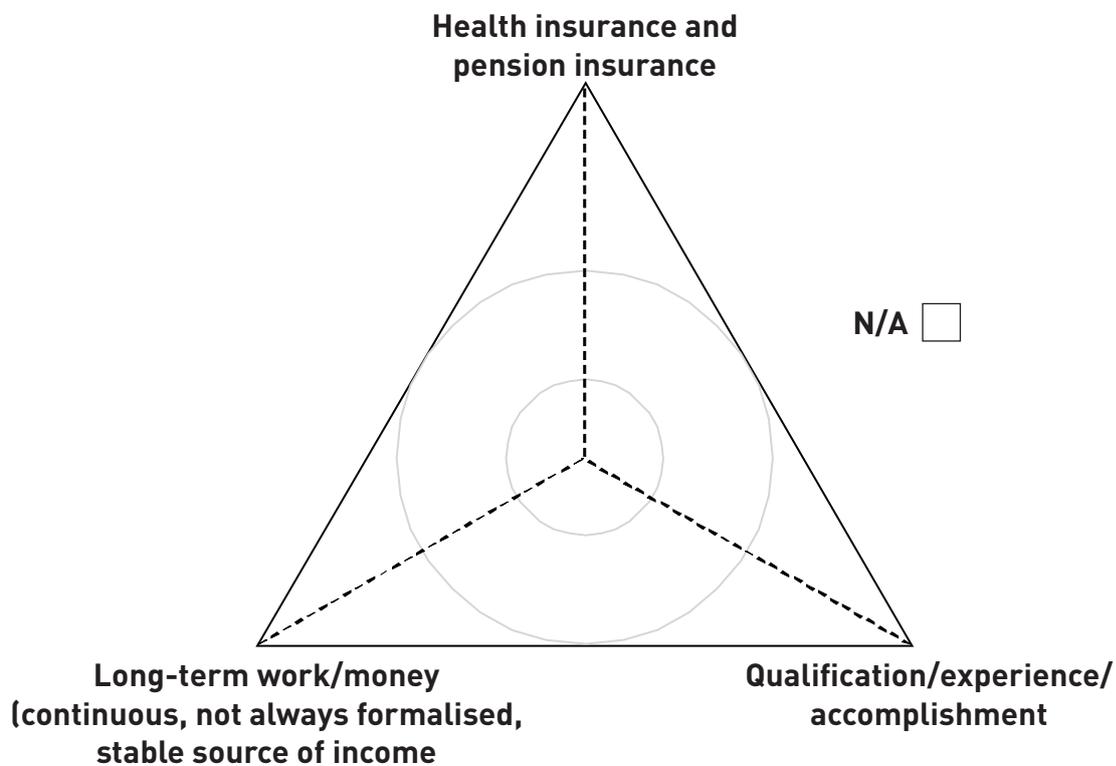
T1. In your example, what was important?



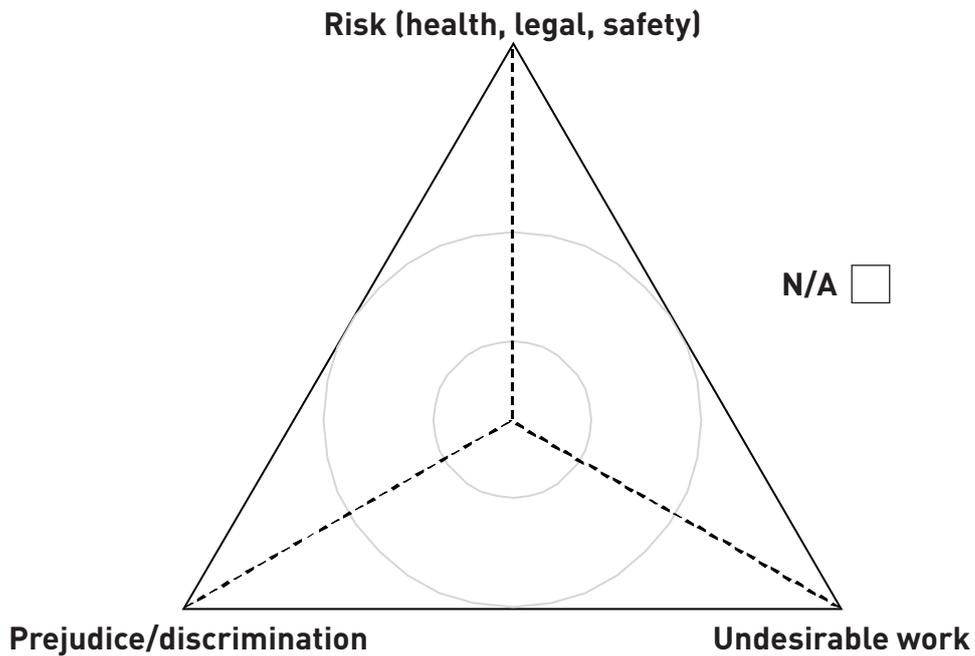
T2. In your example, sources of income are?



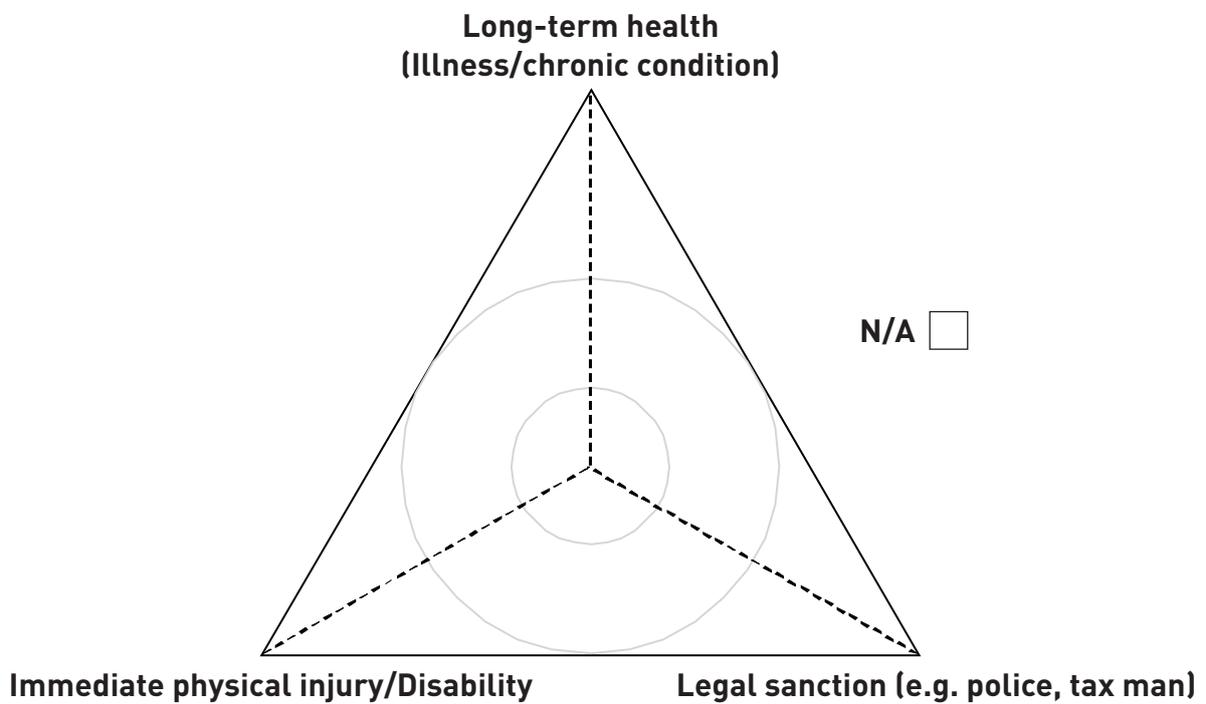
T3. In your example, people were seeking ...



T4. In your example, work involved

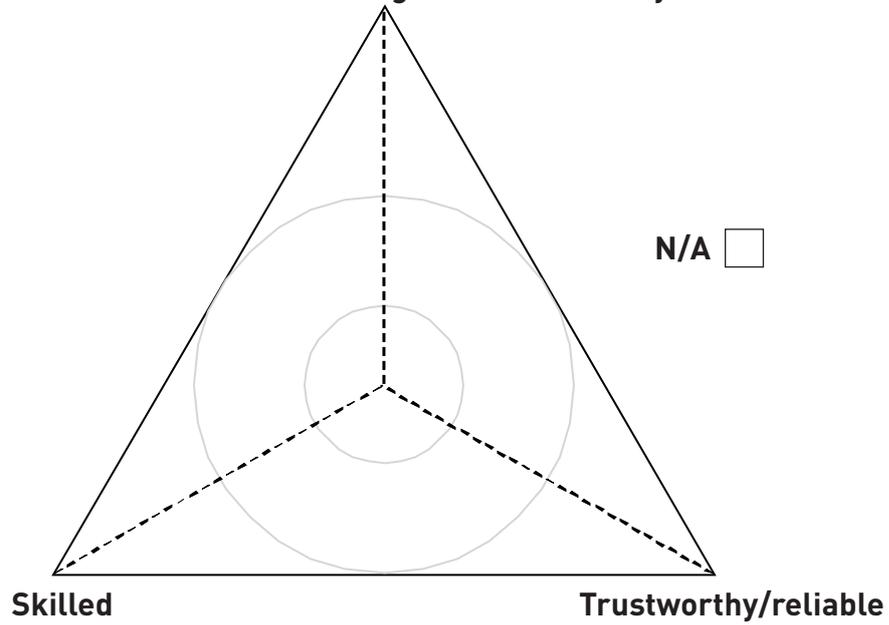


T5. In your example, what risks were there for people?



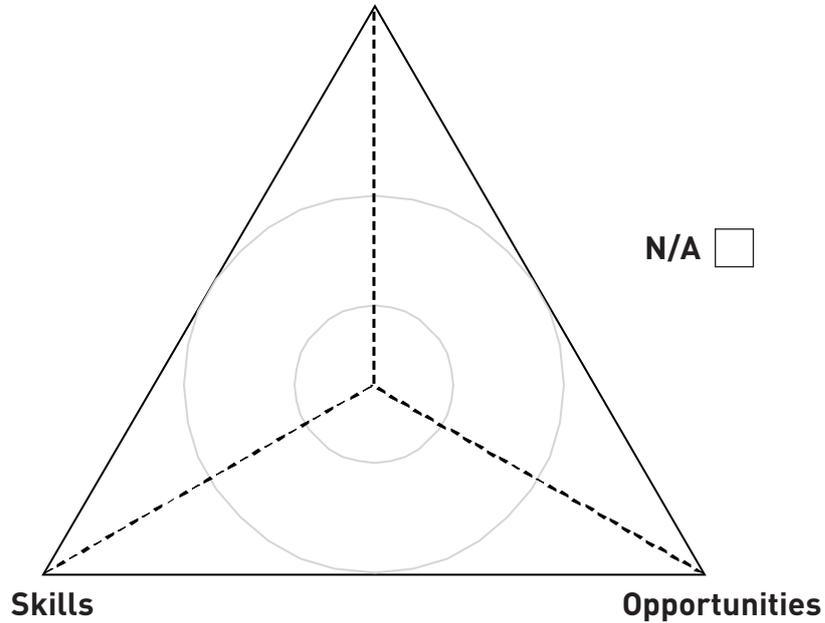
T6. In your example, employers preferred workers who were ...

From the same background/community

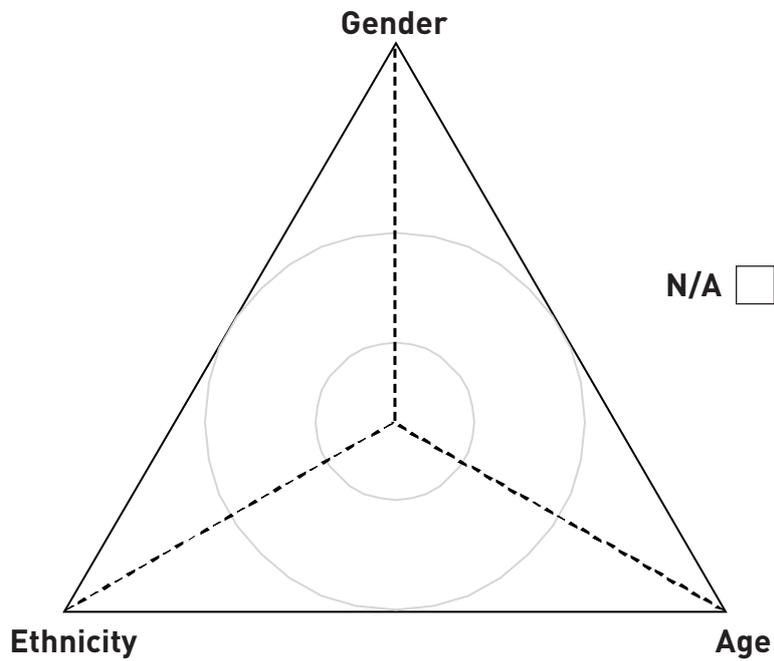


T7. In your example, workers/job-seekers had a lack of ...

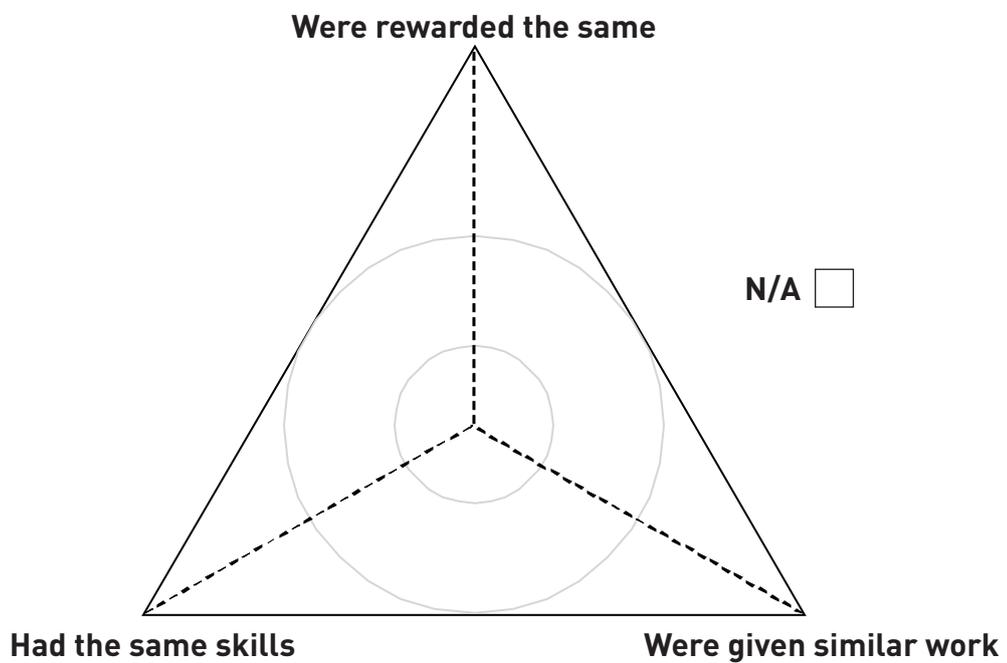
Education



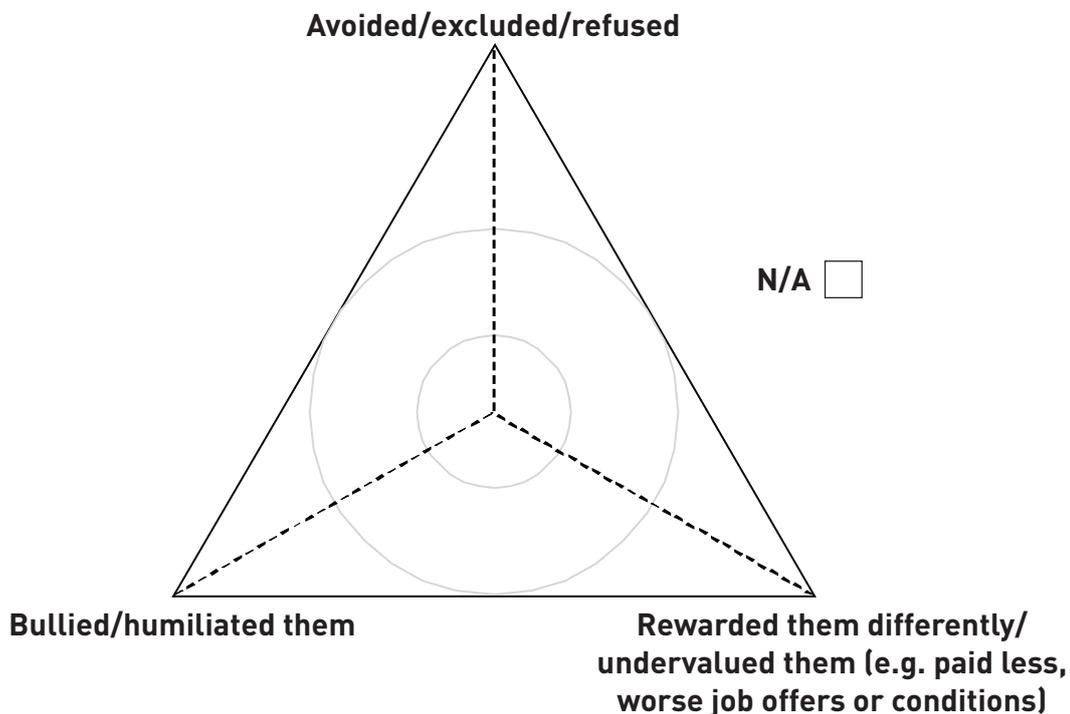
T8. In your example, people treated other people unfavourably because of their ...



T9. In your example, compared with other workers, Roma workers ...



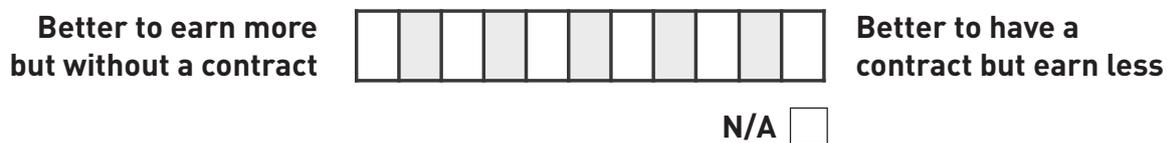
T10. In your example, how did people behave to the main person?



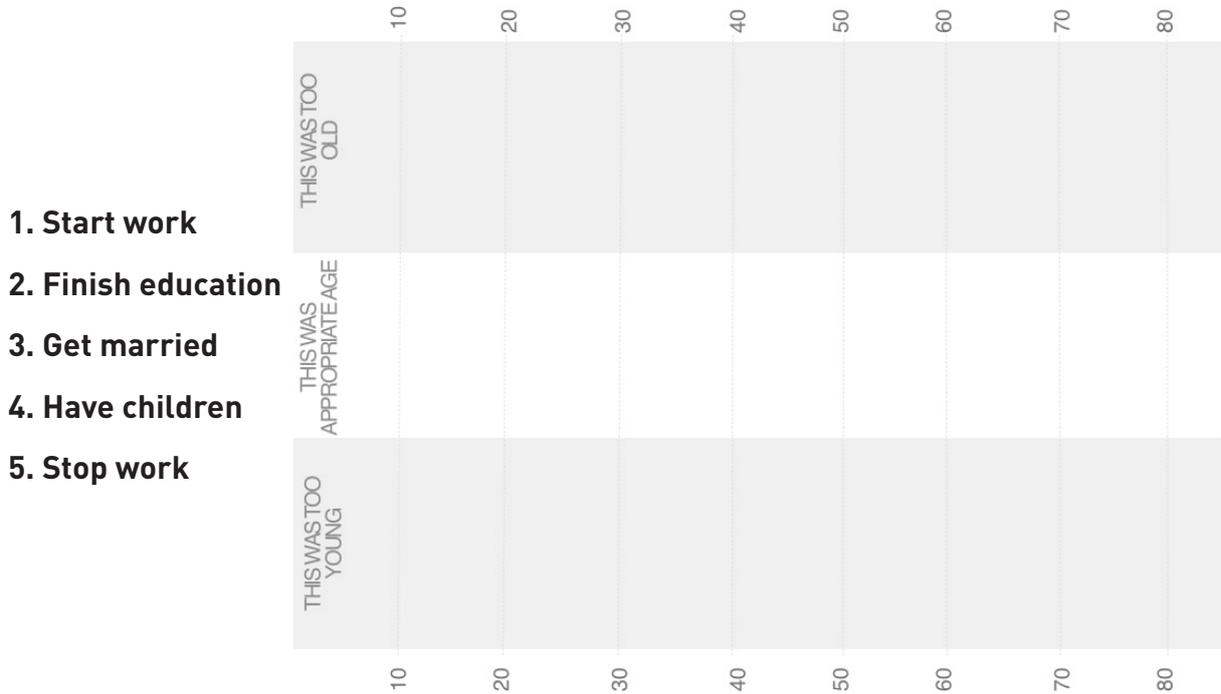
- For the following questions, put a mark on each scale at a position that best describes the experience you shared.
- The closer the mark is to an end, the stronger that element is in the experience you shared.

If a scale does not relate to your experience, check the N/A box.

D1. In your example, people felt it was ...



S1. Place the stone according to the age at which people in the story did/can expect to...



About your example

Q1. How common is this sort of story?

Never before/since

Very rare

Happens sometimes

Quite common

All the time

Q2. The emotional intensity of this story is

strongly negative

negative

neutral

positive

strongly positive

Q3. To improve the outcome of the example, people need (select up to 3)...

Access to information

Supportive employment office staff

Policy improvements

Support for specific Roma skills (e.g. Blacksmith/artisan work)

Mentorship from employed Roma people

Help with writing applications

Information on available jobs

Job application workshops

Labour union

Prequalification

Skills training

Other (please tell us) _____

Q4. Your story includes... (pick up to 3)

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Security | <input type="checkbox"/> Co-workers |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Politics | <input type="checkbox"/> Respect/tolerance |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Poverty | <input type="checkbox"/> Education |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Work | <input type="checkbox"/> Violence |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Migration | <input type="checkbox"/> Trust |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Corruption | <input type="checkbox"/> Justice |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Democracy | <input type="checkbox"/> Crime |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lack of opportunities/jobs | <input type="checkbox"/> Tradition |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Social protection | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please tell us)_____ |

Q5. In your example, people were working in ...

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Waste management | <input type="checkbox"/> Begging |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture | <input type="checkbox"/> Sex industry |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mining | <input type="checkbox"/> Construction |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Manufacturing | <input type="checkbox"/> Food/restaurant |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Healthcare | <input type="checkbox"/> Local government/public sector |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cleaning (outside/streets) | <input type="checkbox"/> Supporting Roma community/NGOs |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Retail | <input type="checkbox"/> Cleaning (buildings) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Trade | <input type="checkbox"/> Unemployment |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Arts and crafts | <input type="checkbox"/> Beauty/hairdressing |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Education | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please tell us)_____ |

Q6. In your example, people were influenced by ...

- | | | | |
|---|---|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Police | <input type="checkbox"/> Social media | <input type="checkbox"/> Regional leaders | <input type="checkbox"/> Religious leaders |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Teachers | <input type="checkbox"/> Newspapers/magazines | <input type="checkbox"/> Doctors/nurses | <input type="checkbox"/> Community leaders |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Family/Relatives | <input type="checkbox"/> Politicians | <input type="checkbox"/> Local authorities | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> TV/radio | <input type="checkbox"/> Boss/employer | <input type="checkbox"/> Central authorities | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please tell us)_____ |

Q7. In the example, the person received (pick up to 5)...

- Health insurance
- Pension insurance
- Free daycare for children
- Sick leave
- Paid parental leave
- Vacation (paid)
- Vacation (unpaid)
- Free transportation
- Opportunities for paid overtime
- Free meals at work
- Other benefits (please tell us) _____

Q8. In the example, work was ...

- Full-time
- Part-time
- Ad-hoc
- No work
- Prefer not to answer

Q9. In the example, work was ...

- Formal
- Informal (paid in cash)
- Informal (paid in kind)
- Prefer not to answer

Finally, we want to know some things about you...

DQ1. How old are you?

<input type="checkbox"/>	15-19	<input type="checkbox"/>	20-24
<input type="checkbox"/>	25-29	<input type="checkbox"/>	30-34
<input type="checkbox"/>	35-39	<input type="checkbox"/>	40-44
<input type="checkbox"/>	45-49	<input type="checkbox"/>	50-54
<input type="checkbox"/>	55-59	<input type="checkbox"/>	60 and over
<input type="checkbox"/>	Prefer not to answer		

DQ3. Are you ...

<input type="checkbox"/>	Employed (with a contract)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Working (without a contract)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Unemployed, looking for work
<input type="checkbox"/>	Unemployed, not looking for work
<input type="checkbox"/>	Prefer not to answer

DQ4. Are you registered with public employment service?

<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes
<input type="checkbox"/>	No, but eligible
<input type="checkbox"/>	No, ineligible
<input type="checkbox"/>	Prefer not to answer

DQ2. Gender

Male	<input type="checkbox"/>	Female	<input type="checkbox"/>
Prefer not to answer	<input type="checkbox"/>		

DQ5. What is the income of your household?

<input type="checkbox"/>	Higher than others living in my settlement
<input type="checkbox"/>	More or less the same as others living in my settlement
<input type="checkbox"/>	Lower than others living in my settlement
<input type="checkbox"/>	Prefer not to answer

DQ6. What is the highest education level you have attained?

<input type="checkbox"/>	None/Incomplete lower basic	<input type="checkbox"/>	Secondary vocational/technical
<input type="checkbox"/>	Lower basic (1-4)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Associate (2 yr) College
<input type="checkbox"/>	Upper basic (5-8)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Incomplete university
<input type="checkbox"/>	Incomplete secondary general	<input type="checkbox"/>	Bachelor
<input type="checkbox"/>	Secondary general	<input type="checkbox"/>	Masters
<input type="checkbox"/>	Incomplete secondary vocational/technical	<input type="checkbox"/>	PhD/Specialist
<input type="checkbox"/>	Incomplete special school disabled		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Prefer not to answer		

DQ7. Are you currently? Select one

Living together, not married	<input type="checkbox"/>	Married	<input type="checkbox"/>
Separated	<input type="checkbox"/>	Divorced	<input type="checkbox"/>
Single	<input type="checkbox"/>	Widowed	<input type="checkbox"/>
Prefer not to answer	<input type="checkbox"/>		

DQ8. Your story is anonymous and it is impossible for anyone to identify you from this survey. However, if you would like your story kept confidential so that no-one else can read it, please tick here:

To be filled by the collector

C0. Collector ID:

C1. Collection date (dd.mm.yy)

C3 Collection country

- | | |
|---|-------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Albania | <input type="checkbox"/> Macedonia |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bosnia and Herzegovina | <input type="checkbox"/> Montenegro |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Kosovo | <input type="checkbox"/> Serbia |

C4 Collection district

- | | |
|--------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please tell us)_____ |

C9. How was the story?

- | |
|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Must read - positive |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Must read - negative |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Might be good to read |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Some interest, but not crucial |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Ignore it |

C5. This settlement was in a ...

- | |
|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Segregated area - regulated |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Segregated area - unregulated |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mixed neighbourhood |

C7. This settlement was in a ...

- | |
|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Center of town/city |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Outskirts of town/city |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Rural area |

C8. This settlement has access to ...

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sewage services | <input type="checkbox"/> Health centre/workers |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Water | <input type="checkbox"/> School |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Electricity | <input type="checkbox"/> Municipal authorities |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Organised, regular waste collections | <input type="checkbox"/> Employment centre |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fire hydrants | <input type="checkbox"/> Sports facilities |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Gas | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please tell us)_____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Public transport | |

C10. Collector's notes (was someone else present, were answers influenced by others, other considerations, etc)



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