

Translation from Romanian into English

STUDY

**PERCEPTIONS OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN THE
REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA**

Authors: Maria Vremis
Natalia Vladicescu
Patricia Vieru

Chisinau, 2021

Acknowledgements

This study was conducted by the CBS-Research team at the request of the People's Advocate Office (Ombudsman). The research was carried out with the methodological and logistical support of Olga Vacarciuc and Dumitru Roman (People's Advocate Office).

Data collection and interpretation was carried out by the CBS-Research Center of Sociological Investigations and Marketing Research team. It received support in conducting the qualitative study from the civil society, which provides services to different vulnerable groups from a human rights observance perspective. In this regard, we are grateful to the GenderDocM Centre, the NGO "*Youth for the Right to Life*", Balti; the NGO "*Faith*", the „*Law Centre of Lawyers*". The specialists and experts interviewed made a special contribution to this research: Tatiana Badan, Vasile Bolea, Angela Frolov, Vitalie Mester, Victor Muntean, Veaceslav Tofan, Rodica Rusu-Gramma, Oleg Palii, Tatiana Chebac, Nicoleta Hriplivii, Ion Guzun, Vadim Vieru. We thank them for their time and valuable contribution to this report.

Thanks are made to all respondents participating in this study for the information provided and sharing their views on the perception of human rights in the Republic of Moldova.

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Abbreviations

LPA – Local Public Authority

NHIC - National Health Insurance Company

FG – Focus Group

II – In-depth interview

HIV – Human Immunodeficiency Virus

LGBT - Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender

NA – No answer

DK – Do not know

UNDP - United Nations Development Programme

p.p. – percentage points

PAO – People’s Advocate Office

NGO – Non-governmental organisation

OHCHR – The Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights

AIDS – Acquired immunodeficiency syndrome

EU – European Union

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Context of the study

The Republic of Moldova since independence has undergone an extensive process of adapting the legal framework in accordance with the requirements of human rights established at the international level. The assumption by the Republic of Moldova of observance with these rights and their implementation in practice is a desideratum, and civil society and international institutions provide support in this regard, including for monitoring the human rights observance.

Measuring the population's perception of the human rights situation in the Republic of Moldova is an important tool for identifying, from the perspective of the ordinary citizen, the existing problems in this field, the developments in recent years and planning new strategic actions to improve the existing situation.

This study reflects the human rights situation, providing information on people's perceptions of human rights observance in Moldova, highlighting the impact of state policies on the population in general and on vulnerable, marginalised and stigmatised groups in particular, offering recommendations for improving the existing situation. At the same time, trends in the evolution of subjective indicators measuring the population's perceptions of the degree of rights assurance are presented, the information being presented in comparative dynamics with the data from the studies conducted in 2016, 2018 and 2020.

The study shows the opinion of the population on the human rights observance in the Republic of Moldova and is focused in particular on researching their level of knowledge, perceptions and experiences in an opinion survey. The data is complemented with qualitative aspects from the group discussions with vulnerable groups from the perspective of human rights observance in the Republic of Moldova and the opinions of experts working in the field.

Within the study the following aspects are quantified:

1. Knowledge - general awareness of the population about fundamental human rights and freedoms;
2. Perceptions - general attitude of the population on the need and importance to observe fundamental human rights and freedoms in the Republic of Moldova;
3. Experiences - personal experience or of the immediate social circle with regard to the violation of fundamental human rights and freedoms and the mitigation of cases of non-observance.

The study is important in the context that it also presents a dynamic analysis of the human rights situation in the Republic of Moldova. Thus, the study reflects changes in the degree of knowledge and awareness of the population of human rights, their observance by different actors in general and in relation to different vulnerable groups in the country.

The findings of this study show a low level of awareness of human rights among the population, particularly among the rural and low-income population. *The right to health, to social protection, the right to a fair trial*, according to the respondents, are among the three least observed. The bureaucracy, corruption and lack of trust in the justice system are seen as major barriers to people's ability to address when their rights are violated.

At the same time, this study reconfirms the need to ensure the equality and non-discrimination, taking into account the specific problems faced by various vulnerable or marginalised groups, including people with disabilities, LGBT people, people living with HIV, the Roma and non-citizens. Depending on the social groups to which they belong, people face various impediments to the realisation of their inherent rights.

The study consists of four chapters, which include findings, researches, including suggestions for improving the fundamental human rights and freedoms observance in the Republic of Moldova.

Methodology of the study

The study was conducted in line with the methodology of previous studies conducted in 2018 and 2016 to ensure comparability of data.

The following research methods were applied to achieve the purposes and objectives:

- analysis of existing documents in the field;
- quantitative study;
- qualitative study.

Quantitative study

The study was conducted according to the following methodological parameters:

- **Data collection method:** face-to-face interviews, managed by the interviewer;
- **Sample size:** 1006 persons between 18 years and older;
- **Sampling:** stratified, probabilistic, bi-phased;
- **Stratification criteria:** 13 geographic regions, coinciding with the administrative territorial units until the return to districts, residential environment (urban-rural), size of urban localities (2 types), number of population in rural localities (3 types of rural localities).
- **Sampling:** the volumes of urban strata and total per regions (former counties), as well as the volume of rural strata were calculated proportionally to the population number according to the data provided by the National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova.¹

Taking into account the increased involvement of the population of the Republic of Moldova in labour force migration, the distribution of the number of population per regions in which the sample design was carried out, was adjusted by weighting taking into account the number and gender characteristics and age of the population working abroad, based on the data of the Labour Force Survey, conducted by the National Bureau of Statistics.²

➤ **Stages of randomization:**

I. **Locality:** within the adjusted strata, the selected localities were randomly determined based on a random number table.

II. **Family:** a maximum of 5 interviews were conducted at a sampling point. The households were selected using the random route method with a predetermined statistical step.

¹ <http://statbank.statistica.md/pxweb/Database/RO/02%20POP/POP01/POP01.asp>

² <http://statbank.statistica.md/pxweb/Database/RO/03%20MUN/MUN07/MUN07.asp>

III. **Person:** if the selected families were composed of more adult persons, the interviewed person was established by the method of closest birthday.

- **Representation:** the sample is representative for adult population of the Republic of Moldova, with a maximum error of $\pm 3.1\%$.

The data collection period was 24.12.2020 - 25.01.2021. The interviews were conducted at the respondents' residence. The applied questionnaire was developed in Romanian language and translated into Russian language, thus giving respondents the possibility to choose the language of communication in the data collection process.

The analysis of the data is presented based on a number of socio-demographic characteristics grouping them for statistical representation.

Thus, the **age groups** used for data analysis are: 18-29 years, 30-44 years, 45-59 years, 60 years and older.

Educational level of the respondents is analysed through three groups:

- Low level: *No education, unfinished primary school (up to 4 grades), primary (4 grades), incomplete secondary education (9 grades),*
- Average level: *General education (11-12 grades), high school (12 grades), professional (1 year of study), vocational education (3 years of study),*
- High level: *College (2-5 years of study), higher education, Master's degree, Doctor's degree.*

Socio-economic level³ is presented according to respondents' wealth in three groups, respectively:

- Low level
- Average level
- High level

The distribution of respondents by socio-demographic characteristics is shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Socio-demographic features of respondents (sampling structure)

		Number	%
Respondent's gender:	Male	445	44,3%
	Female	561	55,7%
Residence environment:	Urban	452	45,5%
	Rural	554	54,5%
Respondent's age:	18-29 years old	174	20,2%
	30-44 years	277	29,5%
	45-59 years	251	24,9%
	60+	304	25,4%
Nationality:	Moldovan/ Romanian	876	87,5%
	Russian	35	3,5%

³ Information on the presence in the household of a number of utilities/conveniences used over a long period will be used for the definition: water connection, TV, natural gas, car, landline phone, mobile phone, washing machine, cable TV, satellite TV antenna, fridge/freezer, computer, Internet connection. The grouping will be carried out using the Varimax method (Dimension reduction/Factor, http://sites.stat.psu.edu/~ajw13/stat505/fa06/17_factor/13_factor_varimax.html), the sampling was grouped in three groups with equal weights.

		Number	%
	Ukrainian	38	3,5%
	Other	57	5,5%
Respondent's education:	Low level	181	18,0%
	Average level	492	48,5%
	High level	333	33,5%
Occupation:	Economically active	411	42,5%
	Economically inactive	290	31,3%
	Retired	305	26,2%
Socio-economic level:	Low level	350	33,7%
	Average level	354	34,8%
	High level	302	31,5%

Qualitative study

The qualitative research included 9 group discussions and 16 in-depth interviews, 12 interviews with human rights experts and 4 interviews with non-citizens. The experts interviewed were suggested by the People's Advocate Office (Ombudsman). The respondents were guaranteed confidentiality of their answers.

For the recruitment of the respondents participating in the group discussions, the "snowball" method was used, taking into account the following criteria: age, place of residence, studies and other specific characteristics for each group interviewed. In the recruitment of HIV-positive, LGBT respondents, non-citizens, based on the criteria set by CBS-Research, were involved representatives of civil society that provide services to these communities.

Table 2. Group discussion plan

	Category	Number of participants	Completion date
1.	Group discussion with people with disabilities	9 participants	13.03.2021
2.	Group discussion with people living in the security zone	9 participants	13.03.2021
3.	Group discussion with victims of domestic violence	8 participants	14.03.2021
4.	Group discussion with religious minorities	10 participants	14.03.2021
5.	Group discussion with people living with HIV	6 participants	21.03.2021
6.	Group discussion with LGBT people	9 participants	09.03.2021
7.	Group discussion with ethnic minorities	11 participants	20.03.2021
8.	Group discussion with Roma people	9 participants	20.03.2021
9.	Group discussion with people living in deprived rural areas	9 participants	21.03.2021
	Total	80 participants	

Group discussions were conducted online. The period of qualitative data collection was February-March, 2021.

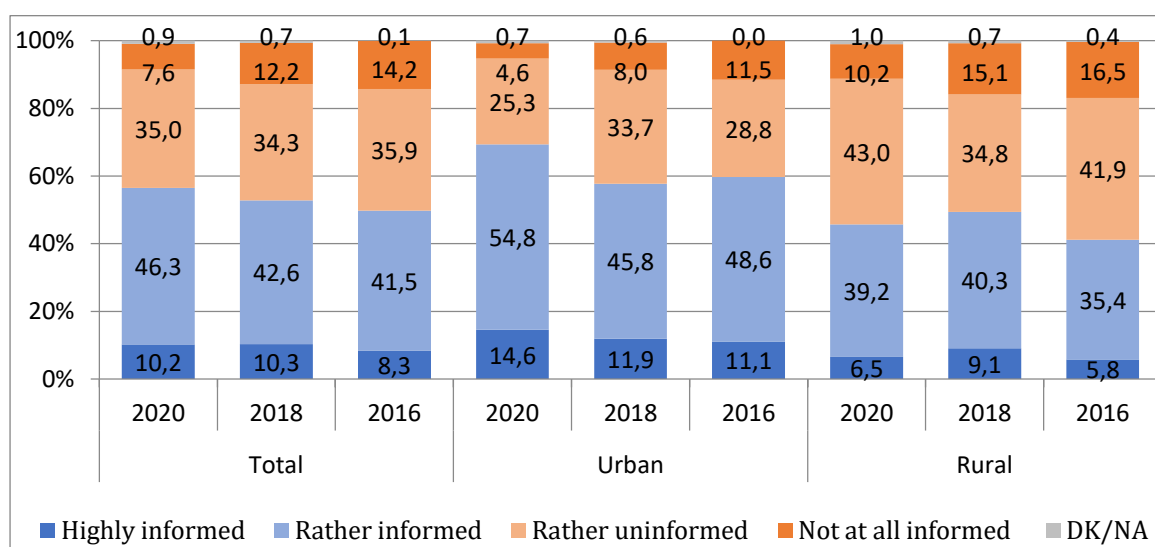
CHAPTER1. Level of information of the population of the Republic of Moldova on the human rights

1.1. Level of population information on the human rights

The level of public information about fundamental human rights and freedoms is directly related to the demand for these rights and freedoms and the means of defence in the event of their violation. It is particularly important to highlight which groups of the population are the least informed and the most vulnerable to human rights violations. Estimating the level of awareness provides an opportunity to identify potential needs for intervention by institutions with responsibilities in this area, as well as concerns and obligations regarding the human rights observance in the state.

The carried out studies show that the level of public information on human rights remains relatively low, although there has been a slight increase compared to previous years. In the current study 56.5% of respondents stated that they are informed about human rights (10.2% very informed, 46.3% - rather informed), an increase of almost 7 percentage points (p.p.) compared to the data of the study conducted in 2016. It should be noted that this increase in the level of information is on account of the answers of urban respondents, among whom the increase is about 10 p.p. (69.4% in 2020 compared to 59.7% in 2016 such answers). Among rural respondents information is lower, only 45.7% of respondents in 2020 mentioned that they are informed in this context, also decreasing by almost 4 p.p. compared to the 2018 study data (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Please tell me, do you think you are informed about human rights, %?



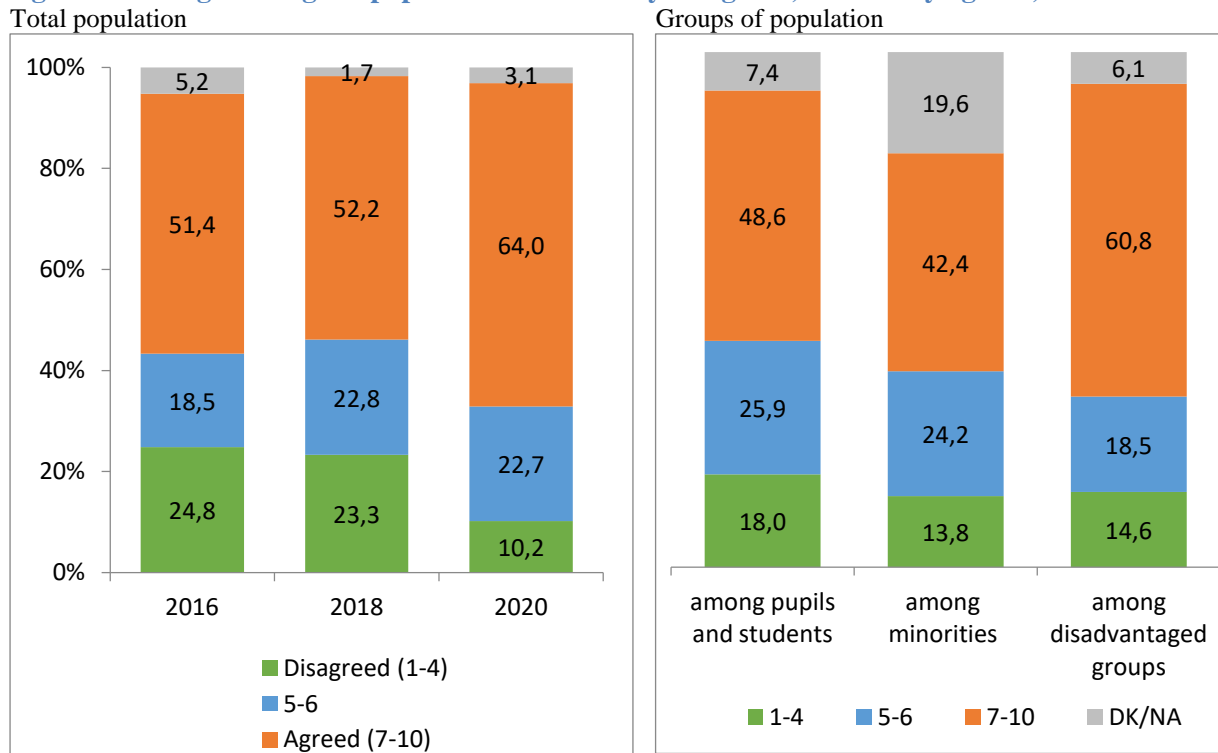
As in the previous study, the most informed respondents are those with a high level of education - 76.9% affirmative answers, young people in the age group 18-29 years - 71.4%, also people with a high socio-economic level - 69.0%. The least informed on this issue are the poor, i.e. people with low socio-economic level, with low level of education, but also pensioners. Among these, less than 40% of respondents said they were informed about human rights (*very informed, rather informed*). These groups continue over the years to remain less informed about their rights, resulting in the need for intervention by the various actors developing information campaigns, programmes and policies in this area.

The carried out studies, both the present one and the previous ones conducted in 2016 and 2018, denote about the lack of knowledge about human rights among the population. This was assessed by assigning ratings on a rate of 1 to 10 to the answers to the question "Is there a lack of knowledge in the field of human rights among the population?", where "1" means "Totally disagreed" and "10" means "Totally agreed".

In the current study a significant share of about 64% of respondents confirm the lack of knowledge in the field of human rights among the population, giving ratings from 7 to 10 to the answer of the above mentioned question, in previous studies the level of awareness of lack of knowledge in the field was lower, just over half of respondents gave the answers 7-10.

In the opinion of the respondents, especially the lack of knowledge in the field of human rights is observed among *disadvantaged groups* (*low-income earners, disabled people, elderly people, etc.*), about 60.8% stated this, giving ratings between 7-10, followed by the group *pupils, students* with 48.6% such statements. With regard to *minorities* (*ethnic, religious, LGBT, etc.*), it can be seen that about 1/5 of the respondents do not know or did not want to say in this context (Figure 2).

Figure 2. To what extent do you agree with the following statement: "There is a lack of human rights knowledge among the population"? 1 - totally disagreed, 10 - totally agreed, %



The human rights were associated by participants in the group discussions primarily with "democracy", "freedom", "equality", "respect", but also with situations of rights violations. According to some respondents, the human rights observance means "happier people". The most frequently mentioned rights by respondents as spontaneous associations were "the right to education", "the right to life" and "the right to health". A few respondents mentioned that human rights primarily mean "responsibility", observance each other's rights and freedoms.

The participants in the group discussions stated that the law in the RM is not observed and/or legal provisions are selectively applied. A number of respondents mentioned that citizens of the RM are poorly informed about their rights and for this reason their rights are frequently violated, especially by state institutions, which are supposed to protect them.

The perception of the majority of respondents in the group discussions is that "human rights" are increasingly known by the population, but the ways and mechanisms through which citizens can claim their rights is a challenge. Representatives of groups who feel more rejected in society (LGBT people, the Roma) feel that "discrimination" is pervasive in the Republic of Moldova. The representatives of religious and LGBT minorities voiced that there is, however, an improvement in attitudes towards members of the community, especially on the part of public service providers, civil servants and some

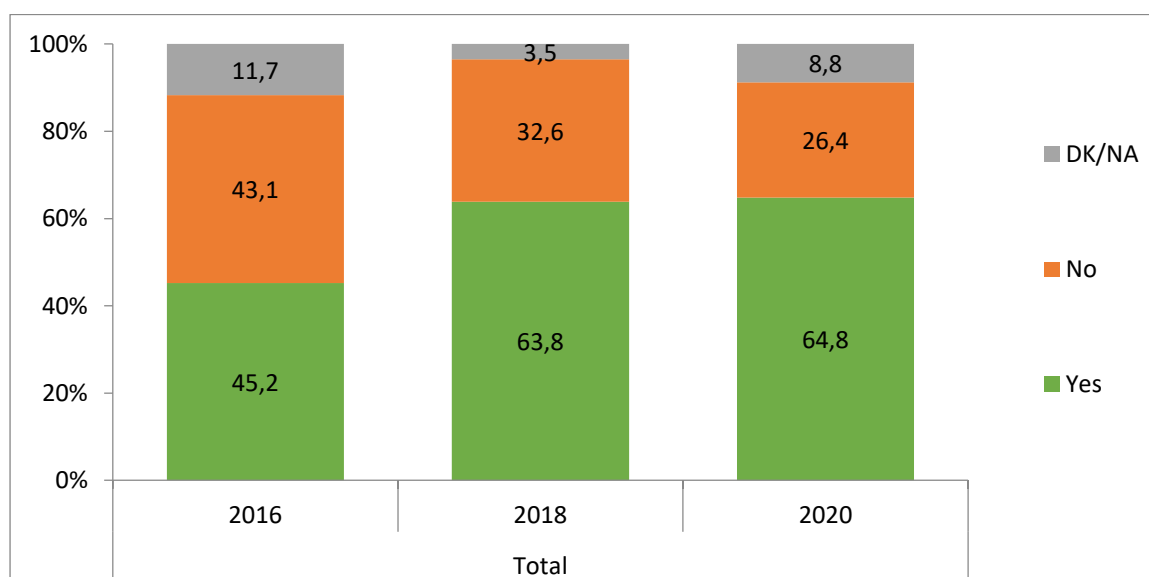
ordinary citizens, largely due to intensive information and education activities by civil society. However, the Roma do not share the same opinion and have voiced concern about the worsening situation of discrimination against the Roma in recent years and the lack of action on the part of the state institutions that are supposed to protect them.

1.2. Accessibility of information on human rights

The level of information and knowledge in general depends to a large extent on the accessibility of information in the field. In the studies conducted in 2020, 2018, 2016 there was an increase in the opinion of the population on the accessibility of information about human rights and the possibilities to defend them. Thus, about 64.8% of respondents consider that the information in question is accessible, with an increase of this indicator by almost 20 p.p. compared to 2016.

The information accessibility is rated higher by respondents from cities, about 69.9% gave affirmative answers compared to 60.6% such answers among respondents from villages. At the same time, a more pronounced increase of positive opinion on accessibility of information with reference to human rights is observed in villages, with an increase of 21.6 p.p. (from 39% affirmative answers in 2016 to 60.6% in 2020) (Figure 3).

Figure 3. Do you think that information about human rights and the possibilities to defend them is accessible, %?



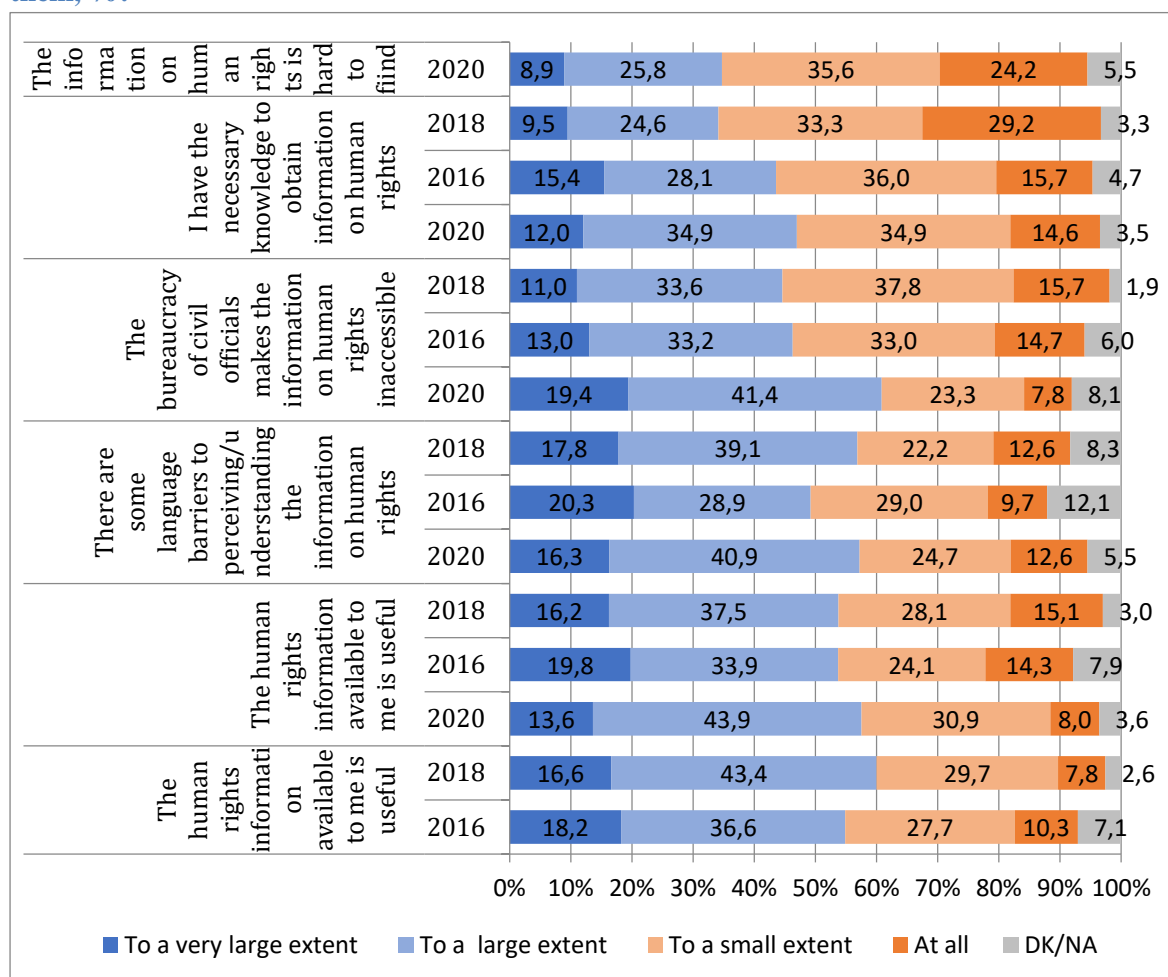
Population groups as in previous studies observed the same differences. A significantly higher proportion of young people (74.9%) consider that information on human rights is accessible, compared to people over 60 (54.5%), as well as respondents with high levels of education and socio-economic status (over 70% affirmative answers), compared to those with low levels (around 54% affirmative answers). Ethno-linguistic minorities also consider, as in the previous study, that they have more limited access to human rights information (53% in 2020 and 47% in 2018) compared to the majority population (65.7% in 2020 and 68.1% in 2018).

The main source of information on human rights is the *mass media* (radio/TV/print media) for the majority of people, 69.7%, for about 58.7% it is the *Internet*, for considerable shares the source of information remains the *close social circle* (friends, acquaintances, neighbours - 30.2%, close relatives - 25.9%), and 11.1% get this information from work. It should be noted that in recent years the Internet has become particularly popular, ranking second in terms of the proportion of affirmative

answers. More than half of the respondents in the 2020 and 2018 studies declared this source of information, when in 2016 only 5.5% people mentioned it.

Other sources of information gathered less than 5% answers in both the current and previous studies. Similar trends with reference to the main sources of information were also observed in previous studies, with the exception of the Internet already mentioned (Figure 4).

Figure 4. Where do you get your information on human rights and the possibilities to defend them, %?



Within the group discussions, respondents confirmed that the media, the internet and people in their circle, especially those who have a connection with the subject they are interested in, are the main sources of information on human rights. Social networks and civil society are important and appreciated as reliable sources of information about rights and the mechanisms through which they can defend them when they are violated especially for certain target groups (LGBT, people with disabilities, HIV+, the Roma, etc.).

"The media is so developed now, I think everyone has access to social media, but if not, we have neighbours, we have in-laws. I mean, if we want to defend our rights, we can do it, we just need to find leverage. If we can't find help in our locality, we can call on the experience of those in another locality who have succeeded and we can find that [people who have faced the same problems] specifically on the internet... With access to the internet, with the media, we can find each other." (F, 29, disabled person)

The ability to perceive, understand and use human rights information varies among the population, and various barriers limiting access to information were also mentioned by respondents. Respondents

were asked to comment on the extent to which they agree with certain statements about human rights information, with both positive and negative connotations.

Thus, it was observed that in the current study about 57.5% of the respondents consider that *the human rights information available to them is useful to them*, accumulating the largest shares of responses *to a very large extent, to a large extent*, while less than half of the respondents, 46.9%, said that *they have the knowledge to obtain human rights information*. No significant differences can be observed when compared to the data from the 2018 and 2016 studies. Those statements with positive connotations garnered higher proportions of affirmative answers among urban, young respondents, as well as those with high educational and socio-economic levels.

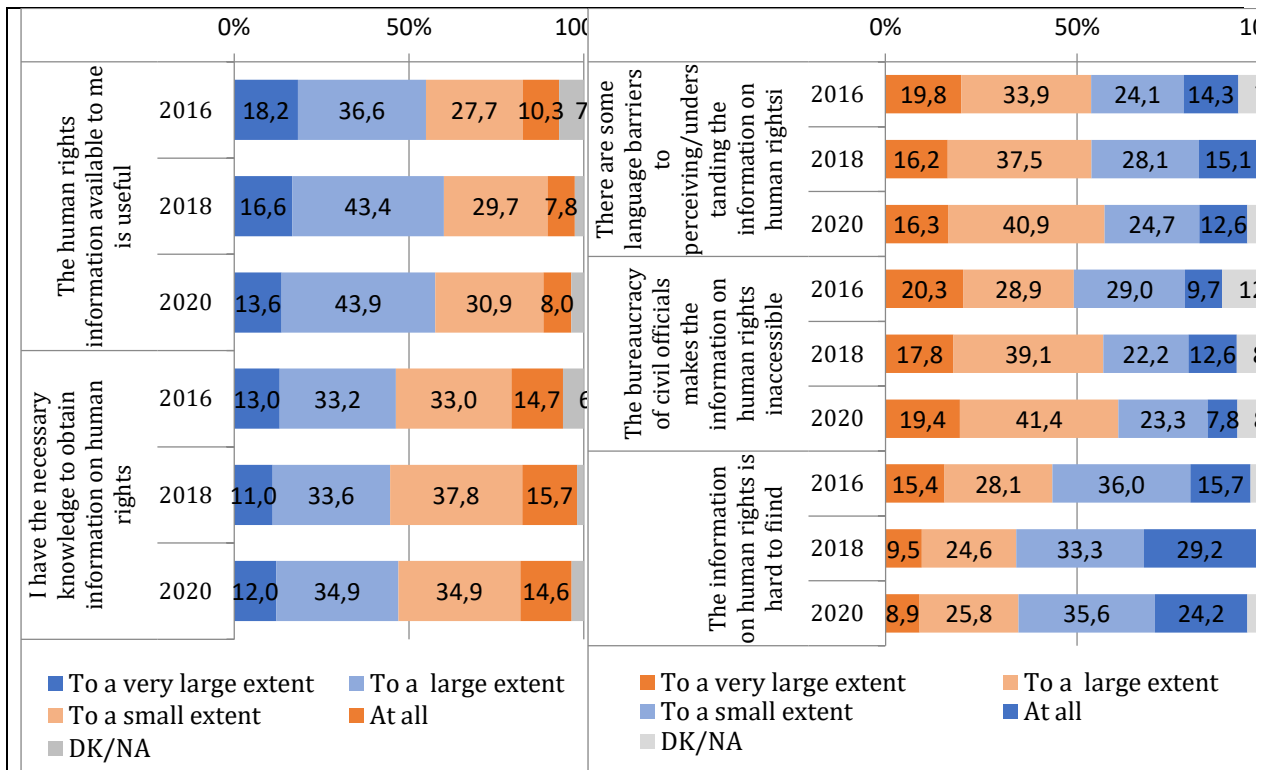
With reference to the statements with negative connotation, it can be noted that, in the opinion of the respondents, *the bureaucracy of public officials makes information on human rights inaccessible* is one of the major impediments to access to information, which accumulated 60.8% answers *to a high extent, to a great extent*, and also increasing compared to previous studies (56.9% in 2018, 49.2% in 2016). This statement was mentioned in higher proportions by respondents from urban areas, people aged 30-44, those with high socio-economic status.

The existence of language barriers in the perception/understanding of information on human rights was also mentioned in considerable proportions, with the share of affirmative answers remaining above 50% in all studies. Language barriers, as in previous studies, were particularly mentioned by speakers of languages other than the state language.

It is also confirmed that such information exists, only 1/3 of the respondents consider that *information in the field of human rights is difficult to find*, and in higher proportions this was mentioned by women, elderly people, pensioners, respondents with low educational and socio-economic levels (Figure 5)

Figure 5. To what extent do you agree with the following statements about human rights information, %?

positive	negative
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CHAPTER 2. Level of human rights observance in the Republic of Moldova

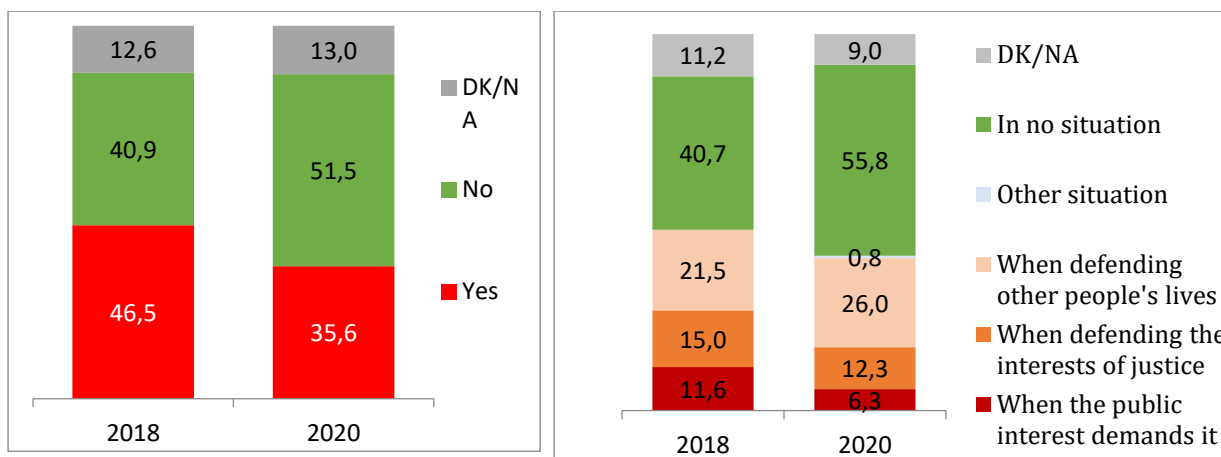
2.1. Perceptions of human rights observance in general

The traditions and customs, in general, can lead to certain impediments in terms of human rights observance. The respondents' perceptions on this issue were divided. Thus, with reference to a country's traditions, about 35.6% of respondents (46.5% in 2018) acknowledged that they can limit fundamental human rights, especially for certain social groups, while over half, 51.5% denied this (40.9% in 2018) (Figure 6). This claim in particular is supported by 18-29 year olds with 41.9% affirmative answers, as well as 41.3% highly educated people.

Regarding the application of torture, more than half of the respondents, 55.8% (40.7% in 2018), believe that it is not justified in any situation, while one in five respondents, 26.0% (21.5% in 2018) accept torture as a measure to defend the life of others (Figure 7). Especially elderly people aged 60 and over, pensioners, about 61%, highly educated and socio-economic people, about 58%, were against torture.

Figure 6. Do you think that a country's traditions can justify the limitation of fundamental human rights, of certain social groups, %?

Figure 7. In which cases is torture justified, %?



The situation on the human rights observance in the Republic of Moldova, in the opinion of 25% of respondents, rather worsened in 2020 compared to 2018 (35.8% said the same in 2018 compared to 2016). At the same time, more than half of the respondents, 55.6%, believe that the situation has not changed (43.8% said the same in 2018 compared to 2016).

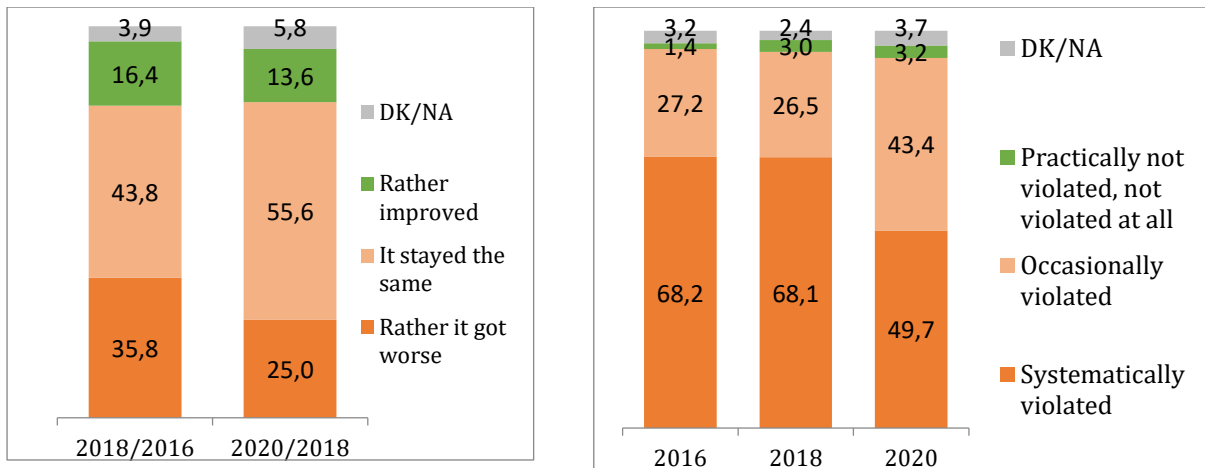
It should be noted that the share of people who believe that the situation has improved is only 13.6%, with a decreasing trend compared to the study conducted in 2018, which recorded 16.4% such answers (Figure 8). The most optimistic about the change for the better of the human rights situation in the Republic of Moldova were young people aged 18-29 and wealthy, with about 18% stating that the situation in this area has improved.

According to the study findings, nine out of ten respondents affirmed that human rights are systematically or occasionally violated in the Republic of Moldova. In the current study 49.7% of respondents believe that violations are carried out systematically, while another 43.4% of respondents believe that they are violated occasionally. Compared to previous studies, the share of respondents who claim that human rights in the Republic of Moldova are systematically violated has decreased by about 18 percentage points (Figure 9).

There is no great discrepancy in the answers according to the profile of the respondents, only with a slightly higher share of almost 55% of those who believe that human rights are systematically violated from the age group 30-59 years, respondents from villages, low-income earners.

It should be noted that the share of people who believe that human rights are not violated at all in the Republic of Moldova is particularly low at around 3%, which is below the margin of error of the sample in all three study.

Figure 8. How do you rate the human rights observance situation in the Republic of Moldova today compared to 2018, %? **Figure 9. In your opinion, how often are human rights violated in the Republic of Moldova, %?**

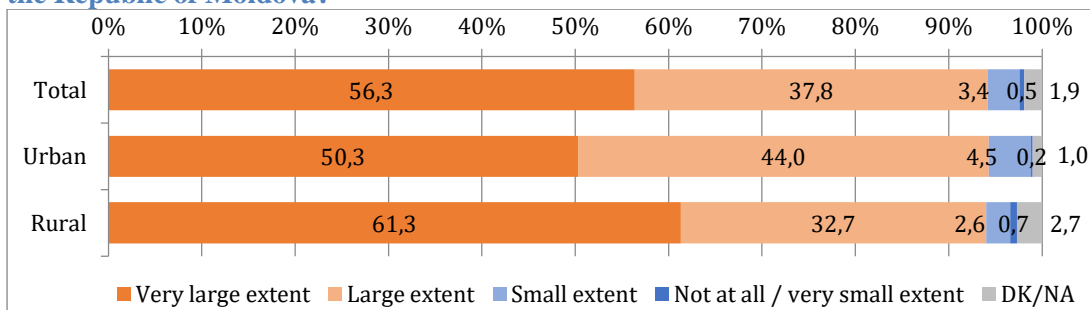


According to respondents, the human rights observance in the Republic of Moldova is substantially affected by corruption. About 94% of respondents supported this statement, of which 56.3% gave the answer to a high extent.

Especially among rural respondents this is perceived more acutely, with about 61.3% answers to a high extent compared to 50.3% among urban respondents (Figure 10).

No major discrepancies are observed in the assessment of the level of human rights observance in the country according to the socio-demographic groups of the population, in all groups, more than 90% received the answers to high extent/great extent. However, more pronounced opinions on this issue are observed among respondents with higher levels of education and wealth, with more than 60% stating that corruption can affect human rights in the Republic of Moldova to a high extent.

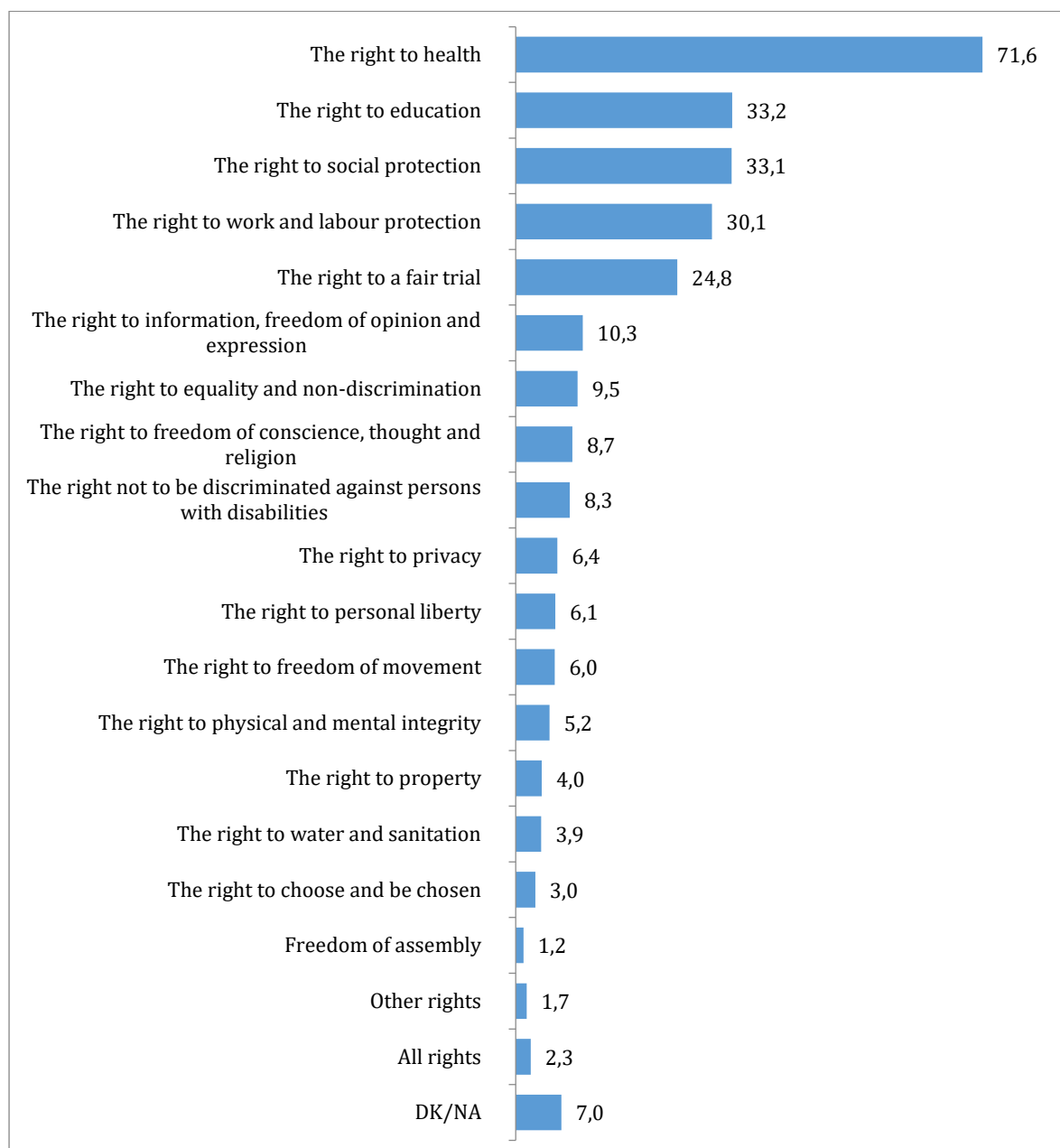
Figure 10. To what extent do you think corruption can affect the human rights observance in the Republic of Moldova?



The qualitative study confirmed this trend in citizens' perceptions that corruption significantly affects the human rights observance. The most frequent reference was to the violation of the right to a fair trial - "even if the law is not on their side, if they have a full wallet, they get justice"; "in our country who has money is also right".

In the studies carried out (in 2020, 2018, 2016) *The right to health, education and social protection* are considered to be among the three most current and important rights, which require more attention from society in the Republic of Moldova. In the current study, this opinion is shared by about 71.6% respondents, who mentioned *the right to health* as the most important, followed by *the right to education* - 33.2%, and *the right to social protection*, with 33.1% affirmative answers. These are followed by *the right to work and labour protection* - 30.1%, *the right to a fair trial* - 24.8%, *the right to information, freedom of opinion and expression* - 10.3%. Other rights and freedoms mentioned in the study received less than 10% affirmative answers. These trends are recorded in all three carried out studies (Figure 11).

Figure 11. The most current (important) human rights and freedoms in the Republic of Moldova that need more attention from society



The respondents' positive views on observance of rights and freedoms in the Republic of Moldova have increased compared to study data from 2018 and the increases varied from 2 to 25 p.p. Compared to 2016, the most pronounced increases are observed in relation to observance for *the right to work and labour protection* (by 25 p.p.), *social protection* (by 20 p.p.), *non-discrimination of persons with disabilities* (by 19 p.p.), *to health* (by 17 p.p.).

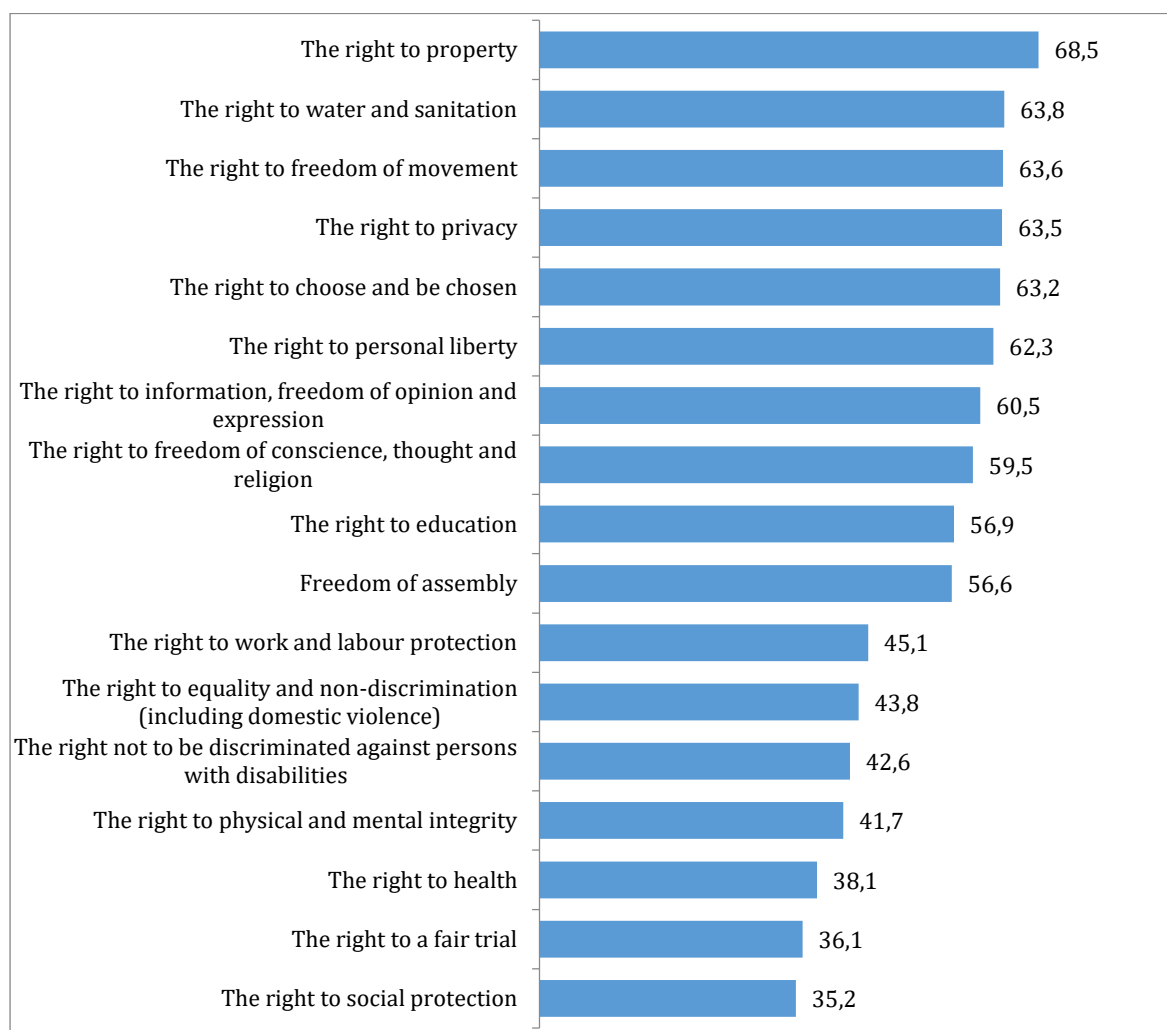
In the opinion of respondents, the most observed right in the Republic of Moldova is *the right to property*, with 68.5% answers to a *high extent*, to a *great extent*, followed by the following: *the right to water and sanitation*, *the right to freedom of movement*, *the right to privacy*, *the right to choose and be elected*, *the right to personal freedom*, all of which received around 63% of answers .

As regards the observance for the right to water and sanitation, there are certain differences in perceptions depending on the respondents' place of residence. Thus, about 70% of urban respondents

believe that this right is observed to a high extent, to a great extent, whereas this opinion is held by about 59% of rural respondents.

Between 56% and 60% of the affirmative answers were cumulative of such rights as: *the right to information, freedom of opinion and expression; the right to freedom of conscience, thought and religion; the right to assembly; the right to education; freedom of assembly.* The rights to social protection, to a fair trial and to health are least observed in the opinion of respondents, with less than 40% of the answers on observance to a high extent, to a great extent (Figure 12).

Figure 12. To what extent are the following rights and freedoms observed generally in the Republic of Moldova? (% to a high extent, to a great extent)



According to the categories of respondents, it can be observed that men in more significant sharers than women (with a difference of more than 5 p.p.) consider that the rights *to freedom of conscience, thought and religion; to assembly; to property; to water and sanitation are observed*, and women - *to health; to social protection.*

The city residents are also more positive in their assessment of observance of all human rights compared to respondents from villages. The observance of rights and freedoms is perceived by higher shares of economically active people, those with higher levels of education and wealth.

Also, more positive opinions were mentioned by ethnic minorities in relation to the majority population regarding the rights to *social protection; freedom of conscience, thought and religion; freedom of assembly; freedom of movement; freedom of information, opinion and expression; freedom to choose and be chosen.*

In the opinion of the participants in the group discussions, the most observed rights in the Republic of Moldova are: *the right to education; the right to vote; the right to freedom of conscience, thought and religion; the right to freedom of opinion and expression; the right to family; the right to work.*

The human rights experts consider that most of these rights are observed, but there are also situations of partial violation of some rights. For example, the right to education is largely observed in the Republic of Moldova, but informal payments are widespread in the education process, thus limiting certain rights for children from vulnerable families. **Also, in the context of online education generated by COVID-19, the right to education is restricted for children who do not have access to information technologies and/or Internet.**

In several group discussions, it was voiced that the right to freedom of opinion is partially observed in the Republic of Moldova. The most frequent reference was made to the violation of this right in electoral campaigns, especially for employees of state institutions, although in theory they have the right to express their political opinions, to support a certain candidate, in fact they are intimidated, threatened with resignation, etc.

"The person has the right to express, he /she expresses, but it depends on what position he/she holds. Many times there are simply people who are afraid of losing their job." (F, 48, border area)

"There is still a fear of expressing oneself, especially among budget workers, who hold on to the jobs they have and anyway it is a fear of expressing everything that bothers him/her. This fear of managers still persists even today." (M, 53, border area)

According to the participants in the group discussions, the least observed rights are: *the right to a decent living, the right to health, the right to equality and non-discrimination, the right to physical and mental integrity, but also the right to work*, especially for older people or those close to retirement age. Some respondents, as well as experts, pointed out that during the pandemic period, the suspension of pre-school institutions and the failure to offer parents alternatives violated their right to work and to an income.

Several experts interviewed and respondents noted that *social rights and the right to a decent living* are flagrantly violated in the Republic of Moldova, especially when social payments do not cover the minimum necessary for existence. Pensioners and people with disabilities also warned that they are on the edge of survival, and without the support of their families, including extended families, they would not be able to cover food and medicine expenses.

In several group discussions, participants voiced the fact that their right *to a healthy environment* is being violated, noting that state institutions responsible for monitoring environmental protection are not taking action. Several experts interviewed also pointed out that the right to information and to a healthy environment is violated because of corruption in state structures starting from institutions managing food safety, to those in construction and forest, water management, etc. Thus, there is uncertainty of food quality, water is polluted, forests are deforested, construction is carried out with serious environmental violations, etc.

"My right to a healthy natural environment is being violated, because the state does not develop

programs, it is violated this right. I am not guilty that the garbage dumps are not authorized, that the plants are not checked, that the Dniester River is poisoned. It is a right that is violated, but it depends more on the authorities, the authorities do not fulfil their obligations." (F, 48, border area)

"The right to a healthy living environment, which is being lost because of the existing corruption in construction and management of forests and water." (8IA, expert)

Some experts believe that the promotion and monitoring of certain human rights is neglected, priority is given to those rights that are on the agenda of international institutions, including the European one, and civil society's work in the field of human rights protection is strongly influenced by donors.

"I think we are exaggerating quite a bit when it comes to discrimination based on gender, race, origin, sexual orientation. Yes, there are such incidents, but there is a very strong impetus behind the prevention of discrimination, which, in large part, is driven by the package of conditionality that we have for becoming part of the European family..., in my view, there are other things that should really compete with these rights not to be discriminated. For example, the right to a healthy living environment, the right to clean water, the right to clean food, the right to health." (8IA, expert)

Another right that is violated, according to some experts, concerns the right to privacy and secrecy of correspondence - *"law enforcement agencies, even statistics show, excessively use some procedures: wiretapping, phone tapping or reading correspondence, including that received by emails"*. Some experts warned that certain rights which are apparently observed in the RM, for certain groups and/or in certain contexts are blatantly violated. In this context, reference was frequently made to the right to vote, which is largely observed in the territory of the Republic of Moldova, but for people in the diaspora it is violated, or with reference to the observance of rights to information, the right to opinion and free expression in the Transnistrian region.

2.2. Perceptions of human rights observance on certain vulnerable groups

The respondents' views on the rights and freedoms observance of certain groups of people differ. The highest shares of respondents who believe that rights are observed *to a very large extent, to a large extent*, were given to the option of observance of *children's rights*, 70.8% with an increase compared to previous years of about 13 p.p. (about 57% in previous years' studies) and observance of *women's rights*, 58% such statements, an increase of 11 p.p. compared to 2016 (46.8% statements).

The rights of citizens are considered to be observed by less than half of the respondents, 47.1%, and in the opinion of about 44.4% *the rights of religious minorities* are observed. The rights of other groups of people are considered to be observed by less than 40%. *The rights of drug and psychoactive substance users* - 17.7%, *of sexual minorities (LGBT)* - 19.4%, *of prisoners and former prisoners* - 19.9% are the least observed in the opinion of the respondents.

In addition to the children and women rights mentioned above, compared to previous years, perceptions of observance of rights in relation to several groups of people have improved, in particular *people living with HIV/AIDS, unemployed, people with disabilities*, at the same time, compared to 2016, perceptions with reference to *the rights of religious minorities, foreign citizens / stateless / asylum seekers in Moldova* have worsened (Figure 13).

Figure 13. To what extent are the rights and freedoms of the following groups observed in the Republic of Moldova? (% to a very large extent, to a large extent)



Depending on the profile of the interviewees and the rights of the respective groups, the survey highlighted certain aspects.

The data show that women are the ones who, in smaller proportions, consider that women's rights are observed *to a very large extent, to a large extent*, with 52.8% affirmative answers compared to 64.4% men. Some experts warned that in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, women's vulnerability has increased from several perspectives, from increased acts of domestic violence, increasing income inequality to lack of socio-economic support for childcare especially for single mothers.

"The women's rights have reappeared on the agenda in the context of Covid-19, because domestic violence has also increased, which in most cases women suffer from, and economic violence, because women receive less, all studies show that women in the same position receive less money than men. The non-ratification of the Istanbul Convention again means difficulties for women who are abused and are forced to sit with potential abusers in lockdown. Women have suffered the most the schools were closed, being forced to stay at home with their children. They have also lost their jobs and income. Not to mention single women, that was practically a catastrophe, because in

single-parent families, usually that parent is the mother." (IIIA, expert)

The children's rights are largely observed in the Republic of Moldova, a view held by over 75% of respondents from young families aged 18-44, compared to just over 65% of respondents from older age groups. The experts interviewed highlighted the increase in child abuse cases during the pandemic and online schooling.

And respondents from villages to a law extent, 32.3% compared to 39.5% respondents from cities, believe that *human rights in rural areas* are observed (9.5% from villages said they are not observed at all, compared to 5.5% respondents from cities).

Inactive people and pensioners in higher proportions of about 12% compared to 8% economically active people say that *the rights of unemployed people* are not observed at all. Similarly, 16.7% of pensioners compared to 12.0% of inactive and economically active people consider that the rights of older people are not observed at all.

More than 12% of respondents with medium and lower levels of wealth compared to around 7% of those with high levels of wealth consider that the rights of low-income earners are not respected at all.

The lack of the certain human rights observance in the RM was also confirmed in the group discussions by representatives of vulnerable groups from this perspective, as well as by experts working in this field.

The LGBT representatives have voiced that *their right to family* is being violated. One of the experts voiced the view that the right to marriage is actually being violated in this case and not the right to family that LGBT representatives can enjoy. Gay and lesbian participants in the survey listed several challenges arising from the lack of this right, such as: the inheritance of property by a partner, access to personal data, his or her acceptance to a doctor to accompany his or her partner, medical papers, etc. In the opinion of LGBT group participants, issues such as the adoption of children by same-sex couples are far from feasible in the society of the RM.

"The medical diagnosis is not disclosed to anyone other than first-degree relatives or family members such as mother, husband and wife. In the case of LGBT people if I will be ill, my partner will not have the right to know my diagnosis for the simple reason that legally I am nobody. Respectively the doctors will not disclose medical secrets to other people considered strangers."
(gay, 22 years old)

"I live in cohabitation more than three years already, but legally we are nobody to each other. Every time we have to make up various lies that either she is my sister who doesn't prefer to go to doctors and I can come in and listen to what and how... God forbid something happens somewhere down the road I won't be able to be with her because they won't let me and they won't let her stay with me. In my opinion this is a serious matter". (lesbian, 42 years old)

The GENDERDOC-M expert interviewed said that in addition to the barriers mentioned by respondents due to the lack of observance of the right to marry, couples where one of the partners is a foreigner also face difficulties, given the fact that in the case of a heterosexual couple, marriage offers the possibility of receiving a permanent residence permit. In the case of a homosexual couple, the non-citizen has no legal right to stay with his or her partner in the Republic of Moldova. In addition, the

biggest problem in this respect is that even the *European Court of Human Rights* does not recognise that when homosexual marriages are refused registration a right is violated.

"We can't even say that a right is being violated, because this right is not perceived by the Council of Europe as an absolute right for all LGBT couples, for all homosexual couples in all states. We cannot ask for this right at a court in the Republic of Moldova or at the European Court of Human Rights, because we are told that we do not have this right." (expert)

The representatives of the LGBT community said their *right to physical and mental integrity* was also being violated. Society condemns them, blames them, threatens them and in some cases they are assaulted. When disclosing their sexual orientation, many LGBT people are psychologically pressured and even physically assaulted, including in their families. Gay people are most frequently bullied, while society is more tolerant of lesbians. The experts interviewed said there are several explanations for homophobic attitudes, such as the outgoing prison culture, shameful attitudes towards sex, and the image of women as sex objects promoted in porn films, which diminishes aggression towards lesbians but accentuates sexual harassment and objectification.

"LGBT people are attacked, even beaten by their own parents, often when they find out about their sexual orientation, their gender orientation. People are attacked in the street, especially men, they are beaten... prison subculture, rape is how power relations are regulated. If you're not powerful, you're sexually violated by those who are more powerful. Moreover, the person who is in the position of a raped man he can't get up, he can't get out of this position... women's relationships are not even taken seriously, because there is no penis and it's just a game. Plus to this, porn culture, which widely spreads the idea that two women are playing around waiting for a male." (41A, expert)

If in the previous studies, the LGBT community was more concerned about discriminatory attitudes towards themselves and rejection from society, especially from those close to them, in this study they say they are more psycho-emotionally prepared for these attacks, but they are still worried about those close to them, who are not prepared to be able to fight back and have to face consequences they did not anticipate.

"I opened up to a larger group of people and at one point in my home town, my mother being a school teacher suffered, my granddaughter also suffered and she had to change schools because she was treated differently... my granddaughter already transferred to a school in Chisinau 3 years ago. She was called a lesbian because your uncle is like that and you are also. This child suffered a lot. And this is probably not just a unique case for me, which makes you more withdrawn and not very open about being gay in Moldova, because you have to bear some consequences that you don't even know you will have." (gay, 36)

At the same time, several respondents, including experts, mentioned that 4-5 years ago there was a significant change in the attitude of police workers towards LGBT people, and this progress is due to informing, empowering police workers to interact with LGBT people. Although there are still some incidents, gay people are no longer being tailed for extortion in exchange for not disclosing their sexual orientation to family, community members.

"I think as much information as possible is needed. There was a time when the police used to go around the 'plesca'⁴" and catch our people, blackmail them, fine them. Thanks to GenderDoc-M

these seminars were done, they worked with the police and these things stopped. If there will be more information about these people, that they are not monsters as they are believed and the attitude will change." (gay, 38)

⁴ *Gay meeting place*

Views on sexual orientation disclosure and among the LGBT community continue to differ. Some believe that they have the right to privacy and not to be discriminated against on the basis of sexual orientation, and society should accept/observe them without certain conditionality, especially if they provide public services. Others, however, consider that the Moldovan society is not ready for this and thus the representatives of the LGBT community should be more cautious and not reveal their sexual orientation when it is not appropriate, thus causing negative reactions or changing attitudes towards them.

„With my partner when we go to the clinic we say we are sisters or friends, but we are not partners. I can see by their face that they are not ready to hear that.... I once had such pink hair, just looking like that if I walked into the polyclinic everyone would look at me badly, but if I also told them I was a lesbian in general I think I don't know what their reactions would be." (lesbian, 42)

Some LGBT group participants mentioned that they choose to disclose their status to friends, employers because it gives them freedom and safety. For the most part the reaction of employers and colleagues was one of acceptance, but sometimes with the manifestation of excessive curiosity.

"For example with my head and my office colleagues I was quite open and talked to them right from day one. They were very curious to know and gave me a lot of questions. Afterwards they asked me who I was in a relationship with, even to show them pictures." (gay, 22)

In several group discussions, the **Roma** were identified by interviewees as among the categories of people whose rights in the Republic of Moldova are frequently violated. The Roma interviewed in the group discussion mentioned that stereotypes persist in our society that affect them in their daily life and they feel that they are rejected in society, labelled by public officials, avoided by employers, etc.

People living with HIV noted that they most often face *non-observance of social rights and the right to health*. Some health professionals avoid doing certain medical procedures them if they know their HIV status or have a perceived disrespectful behaviour towards them, and these situations lead them to conceal their status - *"whenever I ask for any referral from the family doctor, I ask him not to indicate that I am HIV positive, because I want to be treated like any other patient."*

In recent years, important progress has been made in protecting the confidentiality of people living with HIV, but also in informing the public about HIV/AIDS (transmission routes, risks, etc.). Although some labelling of HIV-infected people as associated with drug users, commercial sex workers still persists, stigma and discrimination against people living with HIV has been reduced in the opinion of respondents. One respondent said she was surprised by the support she received from friends, community after her decision to disclose her HIV status in an information campaign.

"When we attended the event I was telling you about and we all unveiled our faces, I understood that people are ready to listen to us... We are often mistaken when we think that they will not accept us in the collective, that they will treat us with contempt. Yes, possibly, the first days they will be shocked, then they will analyse, they will ask you questions, you will answer them and here you can be the one who will inform people correctly, even a small group... There was absolutely not a single person who had a negative attitude towards me or rejected me... Not a stone was pointed at me and I convinced myself that all the fears are the fruit of my imagination." (F, 45, HIV+)

Representatives of **religious minorities** mentioned that in recent years they have practically not faced situations of discrimination on religious grounds, compared to 5-10 years ago, when conflicts often arose with Orthodox leaders and their supporters, especially in rural areas. They were disrupted, driven out of their villages and/or even physically attacked. Nowadays people are much more tolerant to religious denominations. However, a more hostile attitude towards Muslims persists in society. According to representatives of the religion, this is partly due to ignorance, but also to stereotypes in society about Muslims often being associated with terrorists. A Moldovan woman who converted to Islam by marriage mentioned in the group discussion that she faces contemptuous attitudes from some people in her entourage. It was also mentioned that children were labelled and discriminated against in the educational institution by some teachers.

"In Moldova, religion is observed only when it comes to Christianity, at least from my own experience. I have been married to a Muslim for 25 years and respectively my children are still Muslims, even at school the teachers sometimes focused on this that they are Syrians and why they came here. The child didn't want to go to school because of this." (F, 43, religious minorities)

"I am of another religion. I am Muslim, from Syria. My teacher knew this and always stressed that I am not from Moldova, that I don't belong here, that I should go back to the country where I was born, and more accusations of this kind, although I didn't understand why, as I didn't violate her rights in any way. It made me very angry." (F, 19, ethnic minority)

Other respondents, representing religious minorities, mentioned that teachers are tolerant towards religion, children's beliefs, especially as this is usually the parents' choice and not the children's.

Some representatives of religious minorities and ethnic minorities noted the non-coincidence of holidays/rest days with religious holidays. And if as employees they manage either to negotiate with the employer or to leave the job if they do not reach a compromise, but pupils and especially students find it difficult to do so.

"At Adventist the day starts at sunset and it would be good on Fridays to be off early, sometimes not all employers arrange it, but if you don't state your position up front it's more difficult. In private you get along, elsewhere as state organisations more complicated... For students and pupils who have in biblical principle a day of worship which is on Saturday, in some institutions it's bureaucratic, it's not really accepted by some professors, deanery, in defending your right to be absent on this day." (M, 37, religious minorities)

"Christianity prevails in our society, but minorities like Jews have a totally different way of life. Take for example the simple fact that their days off start on Friday for religious reasons, but the state cannot ensure their right to observe their religious beliefs. These are problems that will not find a solution and we can only accept this fact." (F, 23, ethnic minorities)

The ethnic minority representatives participating in the study say that they are not discriminated on the basis of ethnicity, some of them were born and/or live in multi-ethnic localities, i.e. they are

integrated into society and are not marginalised. However, one aspect they find disturbing is the language they speak, so most of them are fluent in Russian but have limited knowledge of Romanian. Some of the participants in the survey felt that they have difficulties especially when they go to public institutions to access certain services. In their view, they have the right to benefit from public services provided in Russian, as some of them do not even know how to read in Romanian and find it difficult to analyse/fill in forms/statements. The elderly, who do not know the Latin alphabet, find it most difficult in this respect.

"In talking to people you get by, but it's very difficult when you go to the town hall for benefits or to fill out certain applications. First of all, absolutely all the paperwork is in the state language, in Latin characters. Not all older people can read Latin characters, even those who know the language. If you speak Russian, you are asked to address yourself in the state language, Romanian." (F, 79, ethnic minority)

With reference to **people with physical disabilities**, the need to ensure equal opportunities was emphasised above all. The lack of infrastructure for people with disabilities to move independently and autonomously in public space is a big problem that makes them dependent on third parties and significantly limits their options, including education, employment, access to other services.

The experts have pointed out that both citizens and non-citizens are poorly informed and concerned about human rights. Thus, some non-citizens may face bureaucratic problems and/or limitation of some rights due to low levels of education, information and involvement respectively. Many of those who come to the attention of civil society have a higher level of socio-economic vulnerability.

"I don't know much about rights, I don't know my rights, I don't know how to do my paperwork, I keep trying and failing. I went to the Public Services Agency, they asked me for so many documents, I don't even have such documents, it's impossible to find them, I don't have such certificates... I don't know where else I can go, I've been to the Immigration Centre, I've received this stateless person's certificate, which is given for one year, every 3 months it has to be extended, so far I haven't had any documents." (M, 46 years old, stateless)

The non-citizens interviewed voiced that they are most bothered by the fact that their right to free movement is not observed, some of them having spent more than 10 years on the territory of the Republic of Moldova, without the possibility to leave the country. At the same time, the survey identified a case of a non-citizen of the Republic of Moldova, who managed, with the support of the Bureau for Migration and Asylum, to obtain a travel document, but a visa is required for each trip.

"I went to the migration office and they helped me to get a travel passport (red, biometric) to go to the sea with my children, but I need a visa everywhere, including Ukraine. It is a bit difficult for me to go permanently to apply for visa, but thanks for that too." (F, 54, stateless)

Another right violated for non-citizens is the right to vote, but most of them are not bothered by this issue, being mostly concerned with daily worries, securing an income, which is difficult for some of them. In the interviews it was noted that some non-citizens have difficulties in employment, although legally they can be employed, they are often discriminated against. On the other hand, some non-citizens participating in the survey reported that they had managed to register with the ANOFM (National Employment Agency) and were looking for a job. Another difficulty faced by non-citizens is the impossibility of accessing certain banking services (loans) due to the lack of identity documents that meet the requirements of the banks.

The violation of the **rights of citizens residing on the left bank of the Dniester River** was particularly noted by the experts interviewed, who pointed out that the Moldovan population in the Transnistrian region cannot enjoy the same rights and freedoms as Moldovan citizens in other regions. The experts interviewed point to numerous violations on the left bank of the Dniester River concerning *political rights, freedom of assembly, freedom of opinion, etc.*

The right to free movement is restricted for people travelling to the Transnistrian region. In particular, the inhabitants of the immediate vicinity of the Dniester River on both sides are affected. Travel restrictions imposed because of COVID-19 have exacerbated these problems. Thus, pupils from the left bank of the Dniester who attend Romanian schools on the right bank of the Dniester, people who work on the other bank of the Dniester and have to travel every day, as well as those who have not been able to travel to their families and relatives have faced difficulties.

"In this period of the COVID-19 crisis, it is not so easy to get to the Transnistrian region without special permits, without many things that are not according to our legislation." (F, 48, border area)

Several experts mentioned that Moldovan citizens residing or temporarily staying on the left bank of the Dniester are not protected at all from possible human rights violations. Most often the right to life, liberty and security, the right to a fair trial, etc. are violated. The experts warn that there are no functional mechanisms for monitoring and sanctioning human rights violations in the Transnistrian region, and the authorities in Chisinau do not take action in this regard.

"We need to discuss every time about the human rights observance in the Transnistrian region, because we give facilities to the region, we talk about political dialogue, but when we come to the human rights observance we have a deadlock and we do not come to an answer with the citizens who were kidnapped... not to be institutional deadlock, as far as the work of the People's Advocate Office is concerned, we have had several occasions when his work is not taken into consideration." (6IA, expert)

"I'm not an expert on the occupied territories, but it's an issue that the authorities need to draw attention to... let's even start with access to information, because you don't know where to point if you don't have access to the real information what is going on in the Transnistrian region. Let's not even talk about the rights of people in state custody or people in detention in the Transnistrian part, torture is at home there and there is no possibility to monitor, at least, what is happening there. The state does not protect its citizens..." (11IA, expert)

The residents of small rural areas are a vulnerable group in terms of limited access to various health and educational services. In order to benefit from these services, they have to move to other localities of the municipality they belong to. While the villages have been provided with transport for children to schools, for other services people have to look for solutions, especially as in most of these villages there is no public transport or it has a limited timetable, and the inhabitants have to walk several kilometres to the points from where they can take a means of transport to the neighbouring villages. This problem is even more acute as many of the inhabitants are elderly.

"We live 2 km from the road and all the time on foot, at the road all the old people, all of them, on foot and back again, it's a tremendous hill... Transport doesn't come because there are few people,

it only goes to the commune." (M, 41, small rural area).

"The transport, the bus moves on three times a week, also because the population is small. The population is around 400 on record, but they live in these two villages I suppose, with all the children, if there are 200." (M, 41, small rural area)

Another problem of small settlements relates to *low investment in their infrastructure*. Their residents understand that the efficiency of investments and the low number of beneficiaries is being considered a problem, but they believe that minimum living conditions should be created for the people in these localities.

"The communes need to share resources with small towns as well. They consider us theirs, but when they have to invest something, then we are already not theirs... when it suits them they count us, when it doesn't, they don't." (F, 34, small rural area)

"The villages seem to be left in the shade on purpose, nothing is done, no lighting, no water, no roads. It's like they think it's another couple of years and people are cooking and what to put the money into." (M, 41, small rural area)

Another aspect highlighted by the inhabitants of small villages refers to the discriminatory attitude of service providers, public officials towards them. In their opinion, they are discriminated against in relation to the natives of the localities where they go to benefit from certain services, the latter being favoured when they stand in line, and the specialists have a more benevolent attitude towards them compared to those who come from other localities. The same atmosphere is also felt by some pupils who travel to neighbouring villages to survey.

"We are situated in a valley. And we are surrounded by forest. And many times when we apply either to the school, to the doctor, to the town hall, we are maybe a little bit discriminated, that where you are from, the village... Well, from the forest over there. You know, we're a bit backward... If we're from these smaller villages, it means we're discriminated against, it's like they don't pay attention to us." (F, 40 years old, small rural areas)

"And at school our children are often called, sort of nicknamed... I don't know why, it's as if we're sitting on their heads, as if we're not people... We're not guilty of having a small population, but in the communes we're not welcomed like at home." (F, 36 years old, small rural areas)

The experts interviewed consider that the most vulnerable population groups in terms of human rights observance are: detainees and persons in pre-trial detention, inhabitants of the left bank of the Dniester, including because of the difficulties in monitoring situations of rights violations, as well as women victims of domestic violence and persons with disabilities.

Other categories, groups considered by the experts as vulnerable from the perspective of the human rights observance refer to: drug users, commercial sex workers, people with intellectual and psychosocial disabilities who represent marginalized and stigmatized groups in our society, but also some more specific groups such as young children in prisons with their detained mothers.

Some experts have pointed to the pronounced vulnerability of certain population groups with regard to the observance of certain rights, such as for example: sexual and reproductive rights for women with disabilities, for those in detention.

2.3. Right to education

One of the fundamental human rights is the right to education. Respondents were asked a series of questions to assess the extent to which the right to education is ensured in the Republic of Moldova and were asked to rate their answers on a rate of 1 to 10.

Respondents were asked to rate *the extent to which parents' financial possibilities affect their children's right to education*, by rating on a rate from 1 to 10, where 1 means that it affects to a very small extent and 10 - affects to a very large extent. Compared to the data of the study conducted in 2016, there is a decrease in the share of respondents who agreed to a large extent (grades 7-10) with the statements that parents' financial possibilities affect (negatively) the right to education in schools in the Republic of Moldova, from 65.8% in 2016 to 46.6% in 2020, but with an increase compared to 35.2%, recorded in 2018. More acutely this is perceived by urban respondents, those aged 30-44, economically active, but also with high levels of education and wealth, with more than 50% respondents providing such answers.

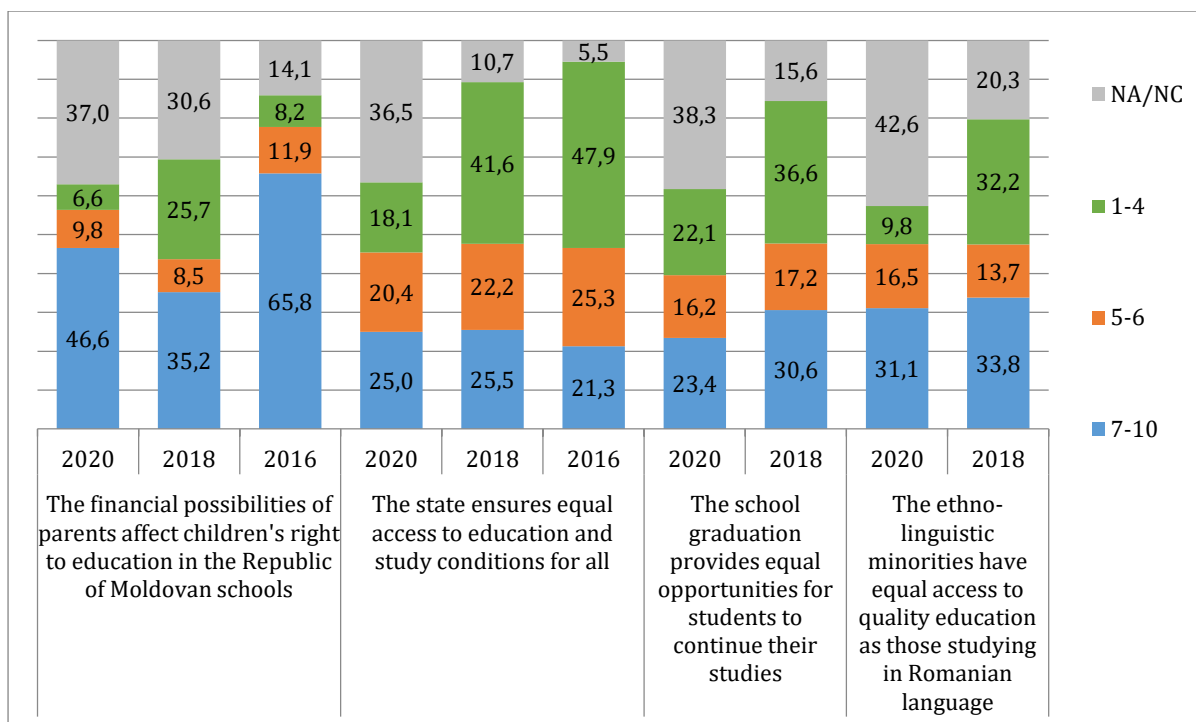
As in the 2018 study, in the current study about 25% of respondents rated with ratings of 7-10 the extent to which *the state provides equal access to education and equal study conditions* for all (1-provides to a very small extent, 10 - to a very large extent), with an increase compared to 21.3% respondents, recorded in 2016. By groups of respondents, it can be seen that this opinion is supported in higher proportions, over 30%, by those aged 18-44, economically inactive, with a high level of wealth.

In the current study, in the opinion of only 23.4% respondents, *school graduation provides equal opportunities for students* to continue their studies with a decrease of 7 pp in relation to the study conducted in 2018. More pronounced this statement is supported by people aged 30-44 and the wealthiest, with over 30% grades of 7-10.

Also, only almost 1/3 of those interviewed believe that *ethno-linguistic minorities have equal access to quality education as those studying in Romanian*, with a decreasing trend of those who supported this statement in the 2018 survey (ratings 7-10, equal access to a large extent). And this more pronounced statement is supported, with about 40% grades of 7-10, by people aged 30-44 and the wealthiest.

The results of the dynamic assessments report on the persistence of the respective problems related to the right to education, the degree of awareness and perception of them by the population.

Figure 14. Rate on a rate of 1 - very low extent to 10 - very large extent (NA/NC - no answer, no children of pre-school, school, university age), to what extent do you think that:)



The right to education in mother tongue for Romanian speakers is violated in the Transnistrian region. Some of them choose to move to the right bank of the Dniester River to study, but others are forced to study in Russian.

"I have Romanian-speaking acquaintances who have problems getting their child to a Romanian-language school in Tiraspol because there are so few schools. They are Romanian speakers, but their child studies in a Russian school. They would like their child to study at a Romanian-language school. The right to education for Romanian speakers in Transnistria is violated." (F, 50 years old, border area)

Another topic that came up in several group discussions concerns the violation of the right to education for children who have not been immunised, by not accepting them in pre-school institutions. The subject of vaccination is an issue that is increasingly present in the public arena, with some parents believing that if they are given this right not to immunise their children, their children should not have other rights violated.

"In the Republic of Moldova it is the right of the parent to vaccinate or not to vaccinate their child. It is not compulsory. The child is not placed in the pre-school institution because he does not have the vaccines. So where do you turn?! The parent doesn't want to vaccinate their child, it's their right, because that's what the law says. At the same time, the child is not enrolled in the pre-school institution. Who can you complain to?! Nobody gives you justice." (F, 36 years old, disabled person)

The experts working in the field of protection of the rights of persons with disabilities highlighted the failure of the Republic of Moldova to comply with the recommendations of the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities on ensuring educational conditions for children with hearing and visual disabilities.

"In the Republic of Moldova there is no provision of sign-based education for pupils/students with hearing disabilities. Neither are the children/students trained, the right to know sign language is not ensured... Visually impaired pupils/students are not provided with assistive technologies, the information needed therefore for the visually impaired." (5IA, expert)

2.4. Right to health protection

Right to health protection of certain categories of persons

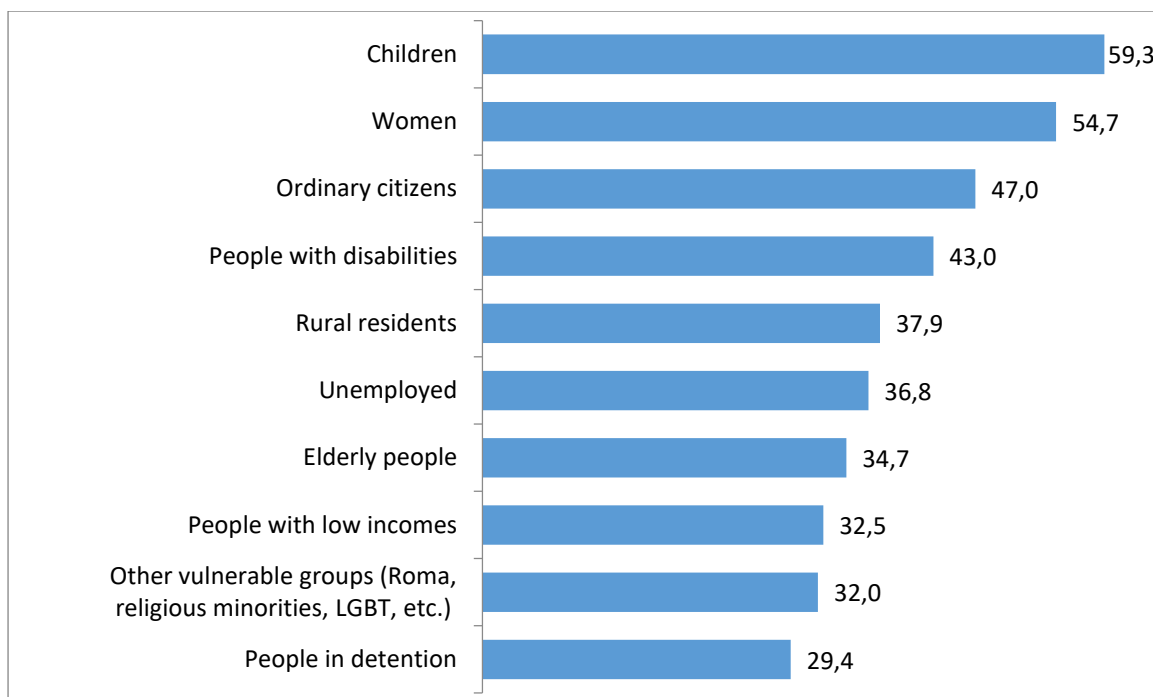
The state's provision of the right to health care to different groups of people is perceived differently by respondents. At the same time, there is an increase in positive opinions for all groups of people mentioned in the studies, and the increase compared to previous years varies between 10 and 20 p.p.

The study data reveal that the highest shares of respondents believe that *children* are best assured of their right to health care, with 59.3% as *being fully or largely assured*, with a continuous increase in these opinions compared to 2018 and 2016. People aged 30-44 are the majority, around 70%, who say that children's right to health care is ensured by the state.

About 54.7% of respondents believe the same *for women*, with an increase in the share of these opinions compared to previous survey data of more than 16 p.p. No significant differences are observed according to the gender of the respondent, at the same time respondents from rural areas are those who are more reserved in their opinions, only about 49% believe that women's rights are *fully ensured, largely* compared to about 61% respondents from cities.

About 47% mentioned such options with reference to ordinary citizens and 43% - the elderly. Respondents were less likely to agree with this statement in the case of people in detention, vulnerable groups (the Roma, religious minorities, LGBT, etc.), people on low incomes, with around 30% answers that the right to health care is fully or largely ensured for these groups (Figure 15).

Figure 15. To what extent do you think that the state ensures the right to health protection for the following categories of people in the Republic of Moldova? (% answers completely, on a very large, in a large extent)



In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, two main issues were highlighted in the group discussions: on the one hand, the fact that during the pandemic period the right to health protection of people with chronic diseases was violated by restricting access to health services, and on the other hand, the fact that the costs of COVID-19 treatment were covered by patients who were treated at home. Subsequently, attempts were made to redress the situation, but patients who are treated with COVID-19 at home still cover most of their treatment costs. Moreover, experts warned that these patients had been denied their right to medical investigations as they were barred from having a Roentgen lung scan or CT scan. Also, some uninsured returned migrants who were treated in COVID-19 hospitals were asked by their families to pay for medical services, including in the case of deceased persons.

"We have also had a case where the person came from abroad, a citizen of the Republic of Moldova, fell ill with Covid, was admitted to hospital and was asked to pay for the bed, although the gentleman died. The relatives, all of us had to seek information to help the family once to expose the hospital that a right is being violated, that they cannot take payment for a person sick with Covid during the pandemic period." (I2IA, expert)

At the same time, the phenomenon of informal payments in medical institutions continues to significantly limit the access of low-income people to medical services regardless of whether they have a health insurance policy or not. In this context, reference was often made to people on modest incomes and the elderly.

"We are not observed for the rights we should have with medicine. If you go to the family doctor, they don't take you in, you buy everything you need. They don't even have cotton wool to give you an injection. I also have a disability policy, and from work and for nothing, you don't do anything with it. Everywhere they're waiting for money." (M, 63, disabled person)

In pandemic conditions, when for various reasons (reduced access to health services in public institutions, but also fear of infection) the population's access to private institutions increased significantly, but vulnerable groups largely did not have this opportunity.

"Let's even refer to the current pandemic situation. To have to go through a commission, to ask for a consultation with doctors is almost impossible. Personally, I've been faced with the situation that doctors are hiding in offices... For a prescription you call the doctor and he will issue it. But if you need to pass a commission, the doctors don't fulfil their obligations... I don't have money for private." (M, 53, HIV+)

Some patients received consultations over the phone, and this led to many complications and many omissions on the part of doctors, specialists admit - *"because the patient on the phone sometimes, can't tell you what a doctor sees at the consultation"*.

Another group whose right to health is often violated are people with disabilities. Although they are medically insured by the state, access to various medical services is difficult and some high-performance services are not covered by the state.

"They tell you, for example, that you need to receive examination to a certain device that costs MDL 5800, maybe you try to raise money. From what?! From your 570 lei monthly pension?! This is not real. It's like you can't say that your right to health is not observed, you have a policy, you stay in hospital for free, but when you get there, they ask you to pay anyway." (F, 36 years old, disabled person)

Access to health services

Five questions were used to assess respondents' opinions on access to health services (four with positive connotations and one with a negative connotation), and respondents were asked to give their opinion, ranging from 1 - strongly disagreed to 10 - strongly agreed.

In general, there is a predominantly negative attitude of respondents towards the way in which their rights to health services are observed, while there is an improvement in opinions in the current study compared to previous ones (Figure 16).

Thus, with reference to the questions with a positive connotation, the following observations can be made. Only 1/3 of the respondents (33.2% in 2020 compared to 11.9% in 2016), agree (ratings 7-10) that the state ensures equal access to quality health care for all, only 1/5, (19.9% in 2020 compared to 9.3% in 2016) confirm that the health insurance policy allows its holder an adequate level of health care. It can be seen that there are more answers disagreeing with these statements (ratings 1-4), although opinions in dynamics have improved significantly. Disagreement with these two statements was more pronounced among respondents from rural areas, the over 45s and the poor.

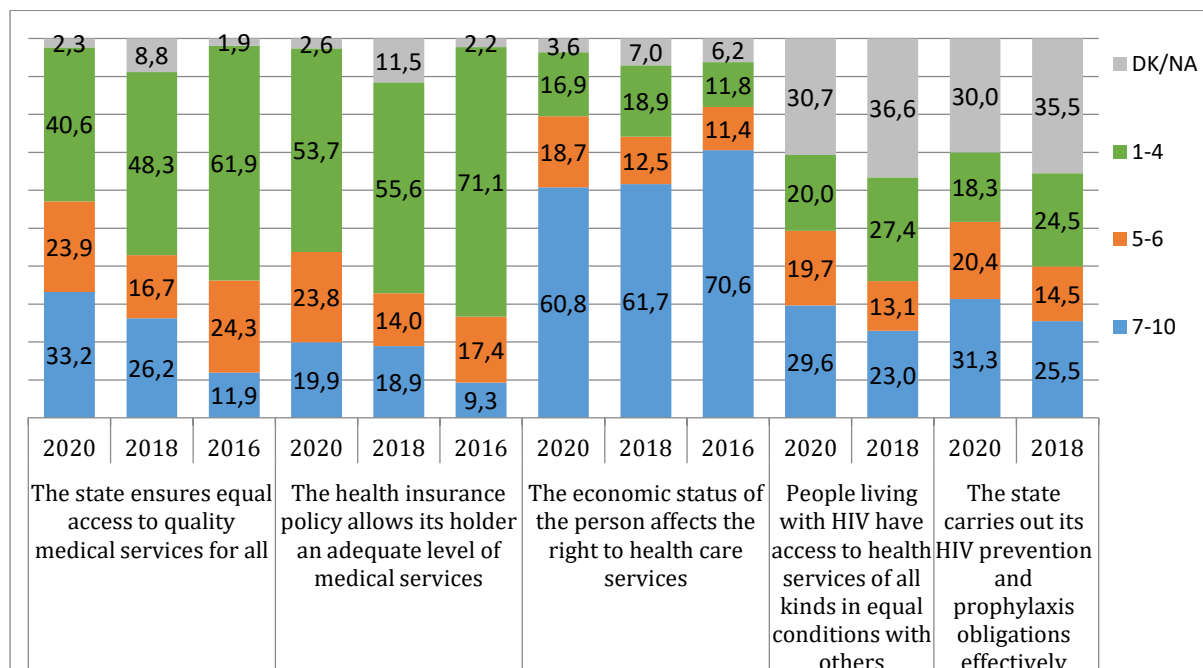
The following can be observed with regard to statements on the rights of people living with HIV. About 29.6% respondents (23% in 2018) confirmed their agreement with the fact that people living with HIV have access to health services of all kinds on equal terms with others, and 31.3% believe that the state is carrying out its HIV prevention and prophylaxis obligations effectively, with ratings from 7-10 given to the mentioned statements, and the share of those who have a contrary opinion is about the same.

With reference to these two statements, there is a lack of knowledge of the situation among the population, more than 30% of respondents did not provide answers to these two questions, the share of non-answers is about 40% among respondents from villages, elderly, those with low education and welfare.

With reference to the statement with negative connotation, the economic status of the person affects the right to health care services, about 60.8% respondents agree with it (ratings 7-10), however it is continuously decreasing compared to 61.7% in 2018 and 70.6% in 2016, such answers. In particular this is supported by over 65% economically active respondents with high levels of education and wealth.

These findings, although opinions have improved compared to 2018 and 2016, indicate that there is still a high degree of dissatisfaction with the services provided and the health system in general

Figure 16. Rate on a rate of 1 to 10, where 1 means totally disagreed and 10 - totally agreed, to what extent do you agree with the following statements?



Some of the experts interviewed pointed out that access to health services is sometimes unjustifiably restricted for certain categories of people, such as detainees, asylum seekers, etc. For example, asylum seekers are not allowed to obtain health insurance. And in the case of chronically ill people in detention, the right to adequate medical care is not observed.

"An asylum seeker, who is, after all, still a foreign citizen staying temporarily on the territory of the Republic of Moldova until his asylum application is settled, is not only not insured by the state, but is also denied the possibility of obtaining the policy... The UN Refugee Agency, which has a mandate to represent refugees globally, has informed the Government of the Republic of Moldova that it is ready to pay for medical insurance policies for asylum seekers. So the government has had assurances that the policies will be paid for, just let us buy them." (2IA, expert)

"People who end up in prison and have chronic illnesses, from the system they get out or they can't get out at all, that is, the illnesses get worse at a fast pace and people suffer respectively. This should not happen, the person is sentenced to deprivation of liberty, but not to untreated illness or death." (7IA, expert)

In the opinion of other experts, access to health services in the RM is largely ensured, practically for all RM citizens, whether insured or not, have access to the services of the family doctor. The main challenge concerns not access to health services, but their quality.

"Access to health services in the Republic of Moldova is different from other countries, because you will not see many countries where the entire population is registered with the family doctor,

regardless of their insured or uninsured status. In our country, even if you don't have insurance, you have access to the services of the family doctor, which is extraordinary. Another is that we are talking about quality, we are talking about many other moments." (3IA, expert)

There is a very large difference in access to health services between rural and urban populations, and between district centres and the capital. Some services are available only in the Chisinau municipality.

"In our country today, health services are in such a shape that if you were born in Chisinau, you are much luckier and can survive, if you were born in some of the country's districts you may not have this chance. Namely, if you have a heart attack in Chisinau, you have the chance to be taken by ambulance to a cardiology centre, to have the same operation and to survive. But if you are in Vulcanesti or Ocnita, you don't have access to such services, because the treatment centres are only in Chisinau... For example, now mammography is only done in Chisinau... or other investigations, which the patient has to come especially to Chisinau, but this means expenses on the way, this means time and many of them postpone, postpone, until they reach that they are already in a very advanced state of diseases." (3IA, expert)

Quality of medical act and malpractice

According to experts, the quality of medical services is also influenced by the territoriality factor, citizens understand the difference in services offered in the capital and the whole population comes to Chisinau for medical assistance, because they do not want to stay in district X or Y for interventions or other medical manipulations, being aware of the level of endowment of medical institutions, but also the qualification of specialists.

Another issue concerns the low quality of medical services in state institutions. The quality of medical services and access to them leads many people, including the insured, who can afford it, to turn to private institutions even if the services are included in the health insurance for which they contributed. The patient's right to benefit from insured medical services from a private provider is not ensured in the RM, so that the patient has a choice but is not double-charged.

"People who have a better income in the Republic of Moldova and even if their health insurance is deducted from their salary, understanding that the quality is very poor, they go to private medical institutions. And it is received, that these people are unfairly put to pay twice for medical services. Because the insurer doesn't give them the quality they need, but they have no other option. So, if there were any changes, for example in the conditions of the insurance of the population, that would give me the possibility, for example that the insurer would contact the same services from different providers, based on quality." (3IA, expert)

Several experts interviewed drew attention to problems in the health sector, starting from the provision of specialised human resources in medical institutions to the issue of equipping them with the necessary instruments, equipment and medicines. In some district centres there are no specialists at all: oncologists, endocrinologists, allergists, etc., even paediatricians. Ambulances are used more as a means of transport, as many of them are not equipped with the necessary first aid equipment and are very old. Medical equipment is outdated and in some cases endangers patients' lives - *"we have medical equipment from the 1980s that is outdated and actually harms the patient because it is a source of intra-hospital infection, breaks down, etc."*

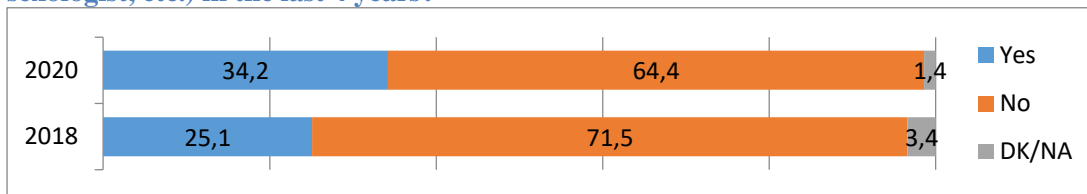
The citizens of the Republic of Moldova have secured the right of the patient, the right to complain about the quality of medical care, but there is no law on medical malpractice. After the submission of the petition there are no functional mechanisms to react to the non-conformities that are detected. The

medical commissions that are formed, according to the interviewees, often cover up the cases and going to court is a difficult and lengthy process.

Sexual and reproductive health services

The studies conducted in 2020 and 2018 also included an assessment of the situation regarding the accessibility of sexual and reproductive health services. According to the current survey about 1/3 of respondents in the last 4 years have received sexual and reproductive health services (gynaecologist, urologist, sexologist, etc.), up from 25.1% found in the 2018 study (Figure 17). As in the previous study, it is observed that women (51.2%) more frequently than men (13.0%) receive these services, people up to 44 years age compared to those older, those with higher levels of education compared to those with lower levels of education.

Figure 17. Have you received sexual and reproductive health services (gynaecologist, urologist, sexologist, etc.) in the last 4 years?



In the group discussion with representatives of the LGBT community, it was pointed out that due to stereotypes related to sexual life, some gays and lesbians have barriers in communicating with professionals about the problems they face and consequently identifying solutions, as they cannot always be open with them.

2.5. Right to a healthy environment

This right is rated as observed by 57.5% of respondents, who gave answers to high, great extent to the question (Figure 18). More positive in their appreciation, 60.1% of such answers, are respondents in rural areas, compared to 54.3% in urban areas (Figure 18).

The most serious problem related to the observance of the right to a healthy environment is considered by 61.1% of respondents as the lack or poor quality of sewage systems, followed by the problem of waste disposal with 57.1%, water quality - 53.4%, lack of authorised waste disposal/ waste management - 46.5%.

The majority of respondents, 97.1%, indicated that they agree to sort waste, as is done in other countries, and the shares of affirmative answers do not vary significantly according to the socio-demographic profile of the respondents.

Other issues assessed in the study received less than 40% affirmative answers. Medical waste - 33.3% (in rural areas the share was only 29.3%) and electronic waste - 36.2% (32.4% in rural areas) - are the least perceived as environmental problems by the survey respondents. It should be noted that electronic waste as a serious environmental problem is recognised more strongly by young people aged 18-29, with a share of 45.5% affirmative answers.

By residence, it can be seen that, in general, all environmental problems are perceived more acutely in cities, except for the lack or poor quality of sewage systems, which is perceived by a higher proportion of rural respondents (Figure 19).

Figure 18. To what extent do you consider that the right to a healthy environment is observed in your locality, %?

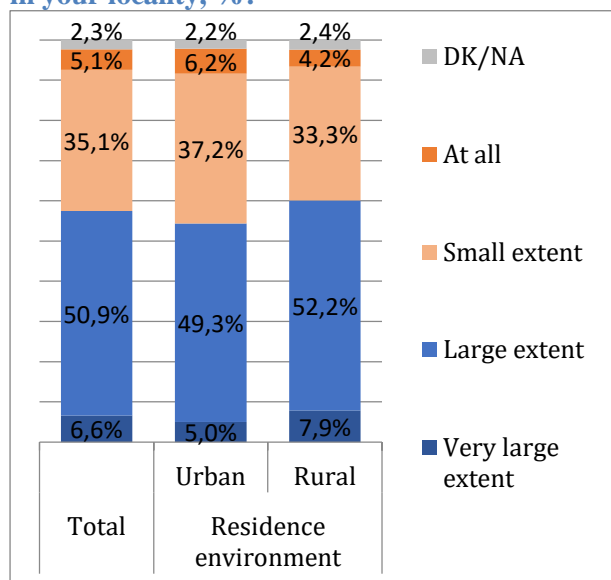
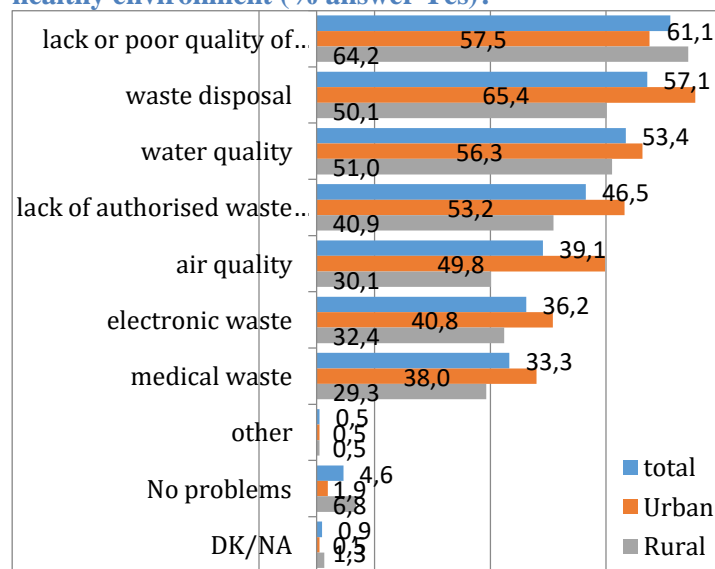


Figure 19. In your opinion, what are the most serious problems related to the observance of the right to a healthy environment (% answer Yes)?

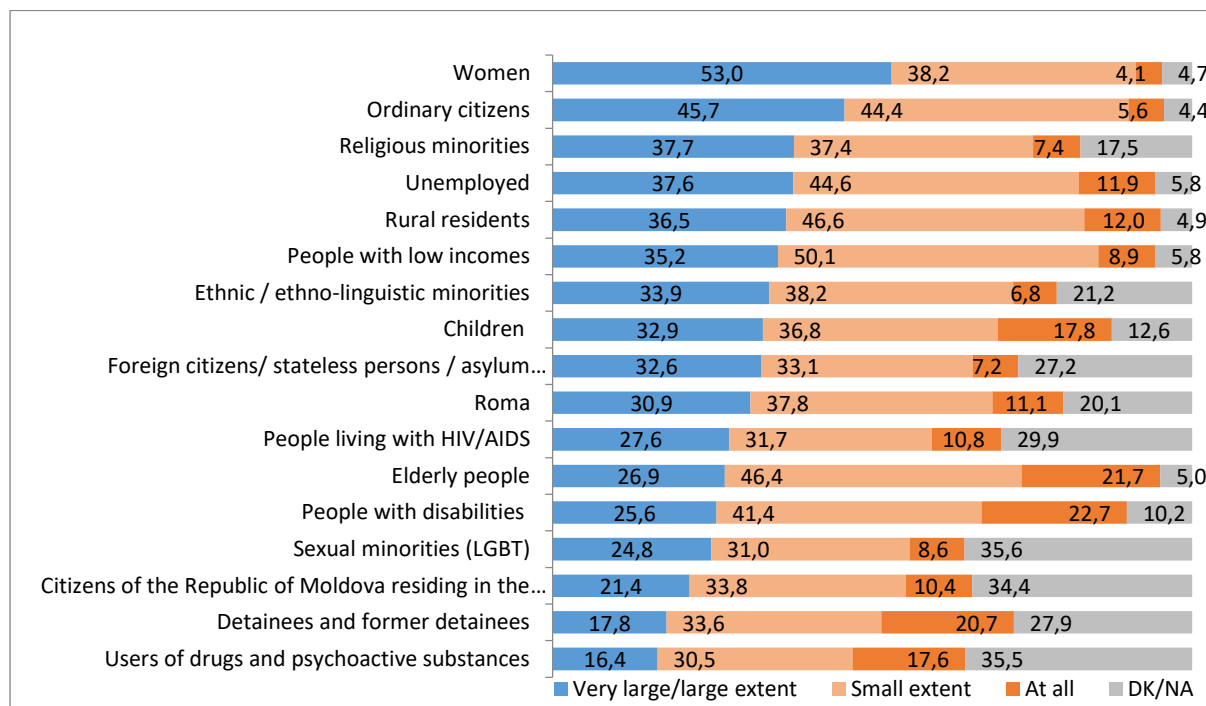


2.6. Right to work and labour protection

In the respondents' opinion, as in the 2018 survey, the right to work is most observed in the Republic of Moldova for women, with 53% answers to a *very large*/to a *large extent*, with an increase of these opinions by 10 p.p. (43.1%) compared to the previous survey. This group was followed by about 45.7% (32.2% in 2018) such opinions with reference to ordinary citizens, 37.7% (29.0% in 2018) for religious minorities, 37.6% (24.1% in 2018) - unemployed, 36.5% (25.6%) - rural dwellers.

The lowest ratings in the rights observance in a very large/a large extent were given to users of drugs and psychoactive substances (16.4% in 2020 and 13.6% in 2018), as well as to prisoners and ex-prisoners (17.8% in 2020 and 14.6% in 2018). Other groups of people accumulated between 35%-20% positive views on the rights observance. It should be noted that for all groups of people there were increases to a very large extent /to a large extent of 3%-13% compared to the study conducted in 2018, except for opinions on the rights observance of Moldovan citizens domiciled in the Transnistrian region (Figure 20).

Figure 20. To what extent do you think the state ensures the right to work for the following categories of people in the RM, %?



In the group discussions it was stressed that the right to work is most often violated for people close to retirement age. People at this age are aware of the difficulties of finding employment and employers in many cases take advantage of this vulnerability.

In the case of people with physical disabilities, there is an improvement in the openness of some employers to employ them and, where necessary, to adapt the necessary infrastructure. One respondent with mental health problems was also given the opportunity to work.

"I work as an accountant. I did not face any barriers to employment. I had support both to learn and to get employed. More barriers I face in terms of accessibility in the public space... The [private] employer has invested, ramped up, so everything is fine." (M, 29, disabled person)

However, in some situations people with physical disabilities are discriminated against in the workplace. The study found that even employees who had previously worked in institutions and after an accident lost some physical abilities may be rejected by their employer. And even if they are aware that a right has been violated, at the time being emotionally affected, they do not fight back to defend this right.

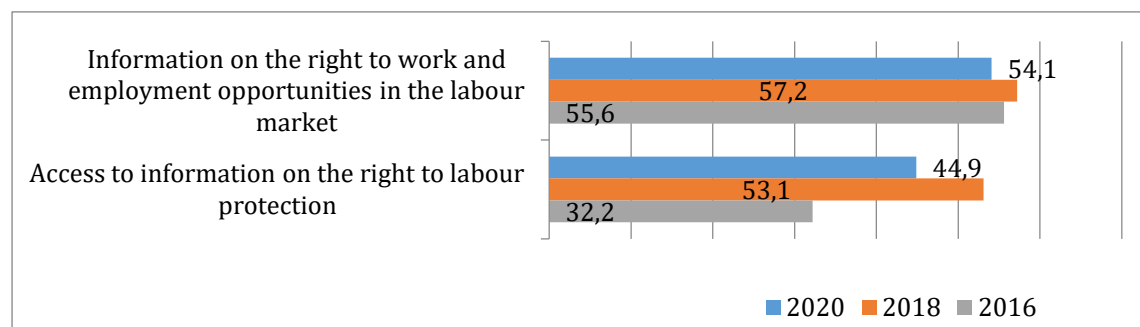
"Honestly, I studied pedagogy, I worked in this field for many years until I became ill. Afterwards I encountered such a barrier that as a teacher I could no longer work. And not because it was a health problem that hindered the instructional process, it was a problem in society, in the view of parents, colleagues. Not everyone can accept a person with a disability, especially when it's something visible. It's very problematic... When it came to the question of going back, I was told not

to get upset, but the children would get scared, the parents wouldn't accept it. For someone physical change, appearance matters a lot. Here in the Republic of Moldova it's a big problem." (F, 36 years old, disabled person)

More than half of the interviewees mentioned that they would need information on the right to work and employment opportunities to a very large extent/to a large extent, this share is consistent across the three surveys conducted, with fluctuations in the answer weights being below the margin of error of the sampling.

At the same time, access to information on the right to employment protection is considered to be provided to a very large, large extent by about 45% of respondents (ratings 7-10), with an increase of about 12 p.p. compared to the 2016 study data, but a decrease of 10 p.p. compared to the 2018 study (Figure 21).

Figure 21. To what extent do you need...? (% answers to a very large/ to a large extent)



The estimation of possibilities and opportunities to find a well-paid job, made on a rate of 1 to 10 (1 - strongly disagreed, 10 - strongly agreed) reveals the following findings. The majority of respondents agree that *well-paid jobs can only be found with the help of relatives, friends*, more than 70% rated 7-10, expressing agreement with the statements provided in the research, and almost 70% expressed agreement that *access to well-paid jobs involves acts of nepotism and corruption*. At the same time, there is a trend towards a decrease in these statements compared to previous survey data (Figure 22).

According to the profile of the respondents, if we refer in particular to those who gave a rating of 10 (totally agree), it is observed that both these statements are supported predominantly by respondents from rural areas, those with low levels of education and wealth.

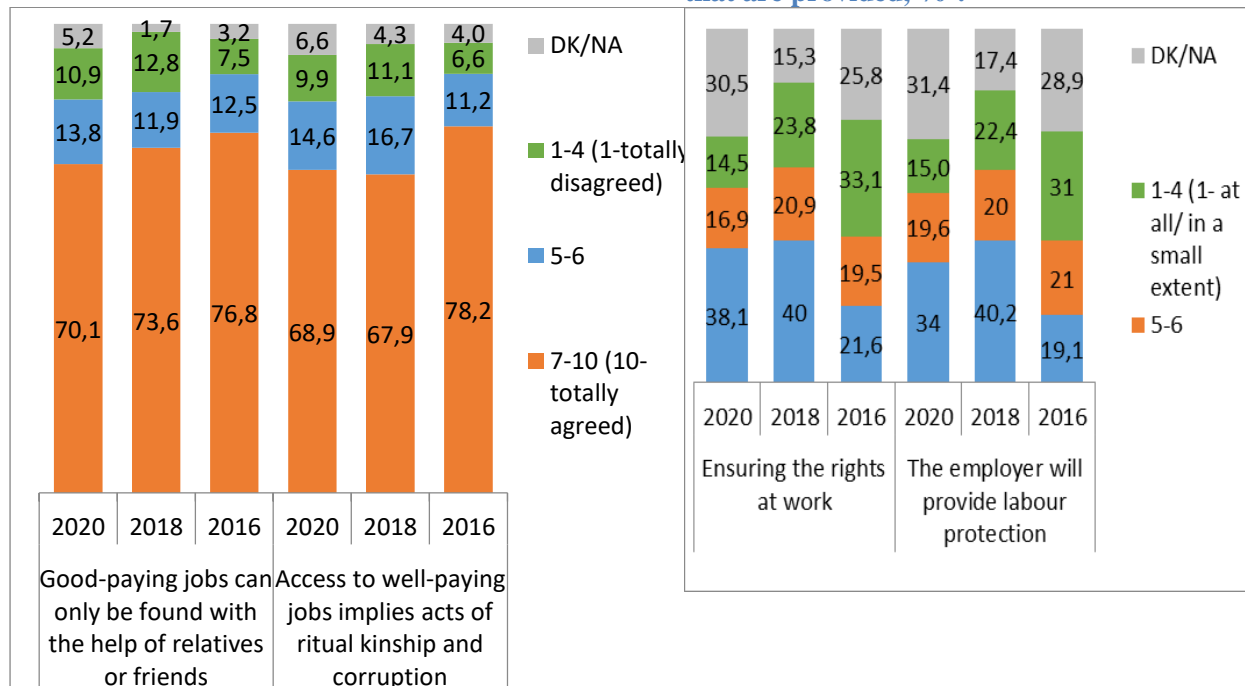
In terms of ensuring rights at work and labour protection, the survey shows that almost 40% agree with the statement on ensuring rights at work (ratings 7-10). There is a doubling of the weight of these answers compared to the study conducted in 2016. With reference to the statement that the *employer provides them with protection at work*, this is supported with ratings of 7-10 by only 1/3 of respondents, with a decrease compared to the 2018 data, but an increase of about 15 p.p. compared to 2016 (Figure 23).

These two statements were rated 10 (very highly assured) in higher proportions by urban respondents, those in the 18-44 age group, and highly educated, economically active respondents.

Figure 22. Rate on a rate from 1 (totally disagreed) Figure 23. Rate on a rate from 1 (not at

to 10 (totally agree) to what extent do you agree with the statements, %?

all/to a small extent) to 10 (to a very large extent) to what extent do you consider that are provided, % ?



In several group discussions, the participants mentioned that in the Republic of Moldova, labour legislation is frequently violated by the employer to the detriment of the employee, partial payment of wages in envelopes, non-payment of holidays, bonuses, non-payment of overtime, lack of working conditions, etc.

"The right to work, the right to leave are violated, many employers don't pay the 13th salary, don't give leave, half of the amount is put on your card, half is handed to you." (F, 43, border area)

"I work at the factory as a seamstress and I can tell you that our wages have been cut a lot... I work overtime, I go out to work on Saturdays and all these working hours should be included in the pay table, but none of this happens. The IRS went to check, but they bribed them and it's all over. I'm a mother of three children, I work, but I live as if I don't work." (F, 40, HIV+)

Several experts warned that in the context of Covid-19, medical workers and ancillary staff in health facilities were not provided with safe working conditions, the lack of protective equipment being a big problem, especially at the beginning of the pandemic.

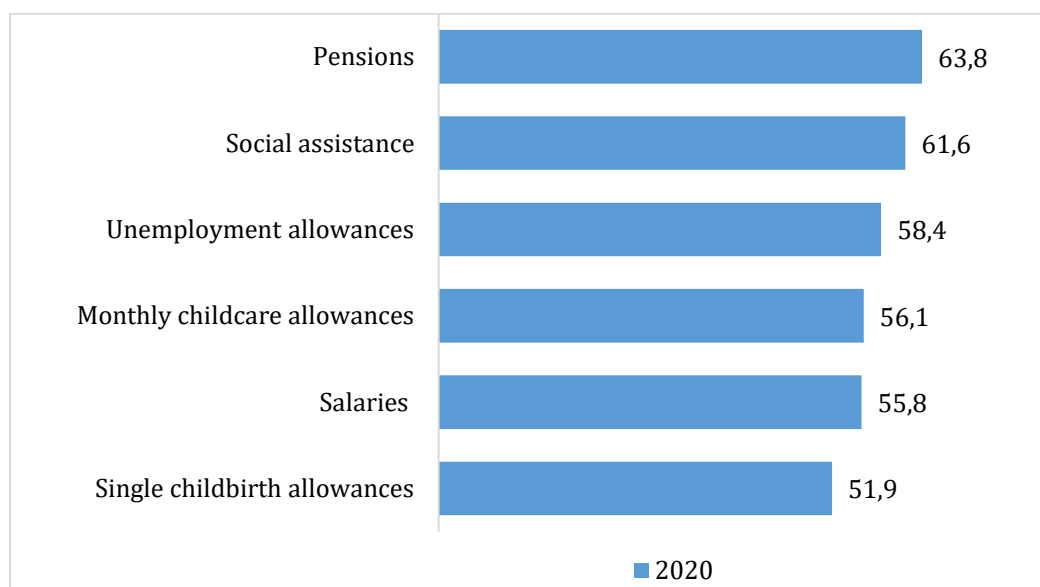
"Many of the doctors, did not have the elementary masks or disinfectant and therefore they refused to receive patients. We had, moreover, many medical institutions where doctors applied for clearance and refused to go out to work... When they are 3 doctors altogether, and 2 of them put the request and leave. And then what do you do, where do you get doctors from!" (3IA, expert)

2.7. Right to social protection

According to the results of the studies carried out, the right to social protection of the population, assessed in terms of monetary income, is still not or only to a very limited extent ensured in the Republic of Moldova in the opinion of more than half of the respondents of the current study. Also the worst is estimated the level of protection provided by the size of pensions, which recorded about 63.8% of responses, followed by the size of social assistance by 61.6%. At the same time, there was

an improvement in the situation for all income categories. Thus, the share of respondents who mentioned that the protection of the population is provided to a small or very small extent decreased in comparison with the 2016 study data by 23-32 p.p., in comparison with 2018 - by 13-16 p.p. (Figure 24).

Figure 24. In your opinion, to what extent does the average size of monetary income in the RM provide an adequate level of social protection for people? (% answers to a small extent, to a very small extent)

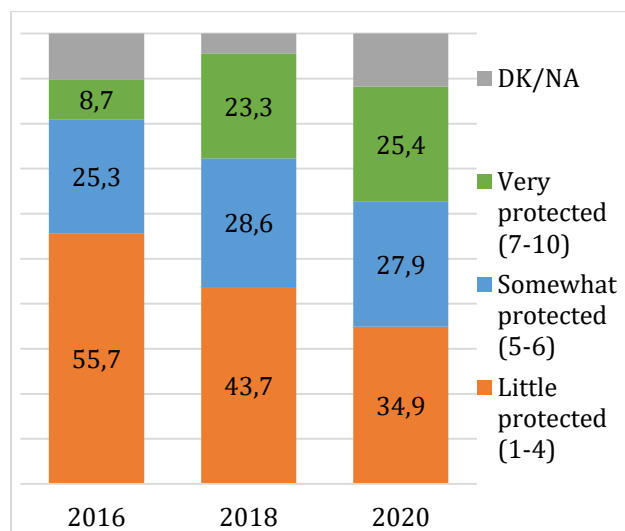
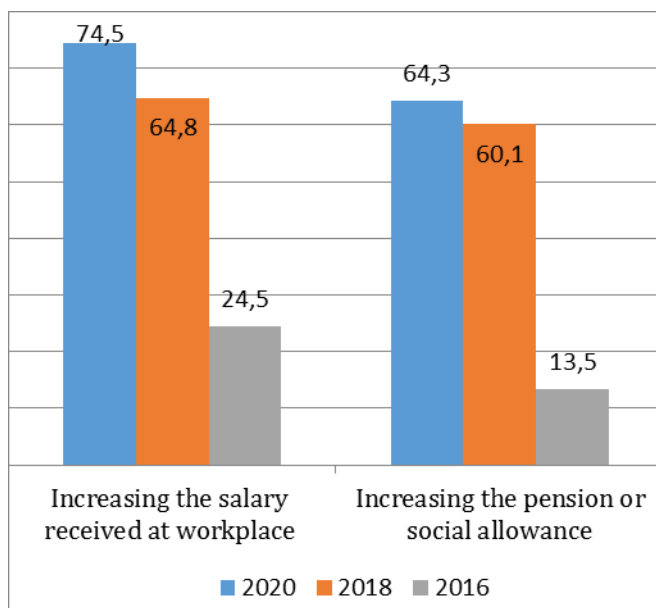


The assessment of ensuring the own level of the right to social protection by increasing the amount of own salary, allowances and pensions reports on the same trends. Thus, about ¾ respondents of the current study (74.5%) consider that a possible salary increase would ensure to a relatively large extent (grades 7-10) the right to social protection, and about 64.3% - have the same opinion with reference to own allowances and pensions. Thus, there is a significant positive trend in the population's perception of the right to social protection, and in relation to the first study conducted in 2016, the increase in positive opinions is a major one of about 50 p.p. (Figure 25).

With reference to the protection and realization of the rights of socially vulnerable persons by state authorities, a positive trend in the opinion of the population is observed. The share of ratings 1-4 (poorly protected and realised) decreased compared to previous surveys (by 10 p.p. compared to 2018 and 20 p.p. compared to 2016). At the same time about ¼ of respondents reported that rights are secured to a large extent, giving ratings 7-10 on this question (Figure 26).

Figure 25. To what extent would the following have ensured your right to a decent living? (% ratings 7-10)

Figure 26. To what extent do you consider that the rights of socially vulnerable people are protected and fulfilled by the state authorities, on a rate from 1 to 10, where 1- Not at all and 10 - in a very large extent?



For the most part, respondents in the group discussions expressed compassion for older people and people with disabilities, and in the vast majority of the group discussions they were mentioned among the categories of people whose rights are frequently violated.

"People with disabilities and older people are ill-treated by the state, they have a meagre pension that is not enough and they are basically stay with their hands out. They can't afford to pay for comforts, they live on the edge, they need to be supported." (F, 38, victim of domestic violence)

Several respondents, but also experts interviewed noted the need to create conditions, in particular the adaptation of premises for the inclusion of people with disabilities in society. Some people with disabilities highlighted the need for them to be empowered, to know their rights, to raise awareness in the community and to insist on their rights. Although they recognise that this can be a difficult process, it does pay off over time.

Several experts noted that in terms of the human rights observance of people with disabilities in the Republic of Moldova, much progress has been made thanks in large part to the insistence of civil society. Firstly, people with disabilities are better informed about their rights. At the same time, it has been pointed out that there is still the problem that offering excessive facilities to people with disabilities, especially with reference to the labour code and other legislation, actually creates barriers to their employment in the labour market. In this context, it was noted that although these issues have been discussed, civil society has alerted public opinion and decision-makers to the fact that: people with disabilities cannot be employed for a fixed (probationary) period; reduced working time without reduction of salary; the right to an increased number of leave days, etc. these issues have not been changed at legislative level and thus employers are discouraged from offering employment to people with disabilities.

"The employer gives me this chance for the employee to express themselves, match the person with the workplace for which they claim or not match. According to the Labour Code, this right is not guaranteed to people with disabilities. And that is, as long as the employer cannot test the candidate, so he is looking for various levers, so to speak, there may be tricks to avoid hiring people with disabilities. Because if he is going to hire him/her, he is obliged to hire without a term... All the burden of employing people with disabilities, all the expenses (less hours worked per day, extended leave, etc.) are put on the employer. So somehow it is not the duty of the state, but it is the duty of the

employer, the economic agent to bear all the costs, all the expenses." (5IA, expert)

These aspects are also confirmed by people with disabilities, who in order to have access to the labour market, for fear of losing their jobs, avoid using these rights or even because of prejudices and stereotypes refuse to be legally classified as disabled and hide, if possible from the employer, that they have certain health problems, especially since this status, in the opinion of those interviewed, requires annual renewal, even if from a medical point of view the person cannot recover and the benefits offered are insignificant. In some situations disabled people find it difficult to cope with the employer's requirements, working conditions.

"By the time I got my first job, I was diagnosed with diabetes. I did all the investigations, but when I was offered a group, I refused, because in our society there is a stereotype that if you have a group, you are somehow looked at differently... Especially as I was offered the third-degree group, which I had to reconfirm every year. I don't understand why this is necessary if it's a chronic illness that doesn't heal over time. In addition, the amount I was to receive was paltry. After I refused, I worked for three years, never telling anyone I had diabetes. At work, by chance, at some point, it came out, because one of the employees also had diabetes and, in a moment of crisis, needing insulin, obviously, I offered her the necessary help." (F, 29, disabled person)

"Sometimes I need to stay overtime to get things done and meet the required workload. For grouped people there is unfortunately no possibility in the company to work part-time. But if I rebel, I'll be out of a job. I think many people know the line: If you can't work, there are a hundred ready to take your place. Everyone is trying to keep their job. So, whether I have the strength or not, I take painkillers and do my job. It's difficult to work when you have health problems, but you can not complain. We can only hope that for the grouped people there will be easier working conditions, to work as much as they are able. Unfortunately, many are working at the limits of their capacities." (F, 56, disabled person)

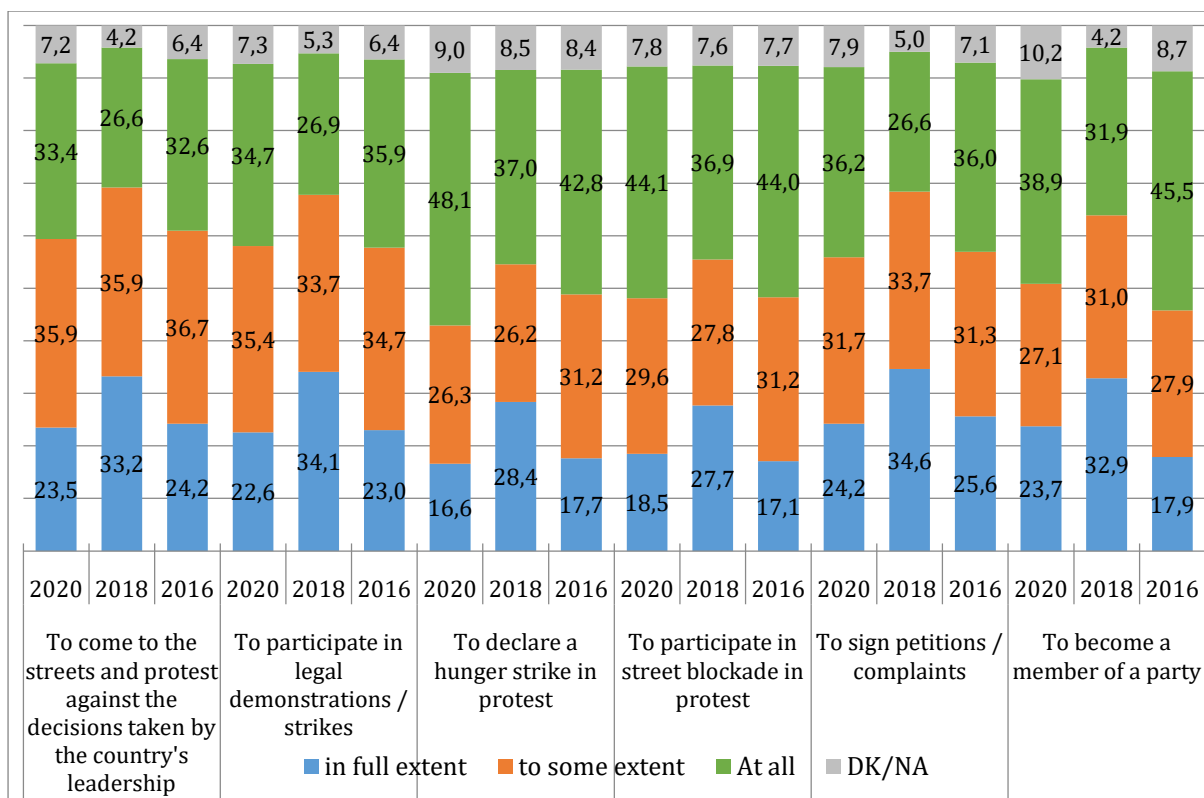
2.8. Freedom of assembly and association

In the current study compared to previous studies, there was a reduction in civic activism among the population, measured by a decrease in the proportion of respondents who said they felt free to participate or carry out a physical or protest action.

Thus, only less than ¼ of respondents gave the answer on participating or carrying out fully with reference to all actions offered for evaluation, with a slightly higher share of those who *would sign petitions/complaints* (24.2%). Fewer respondents would participate or carry out such actions as declaring a hunger strike (16.6% stating fully) or blocking the streets in protest (18.5%), in these cases almost half of the respondents are not open to participate or carry out such actions at all (Figure 27).

More active seem to be men compared to women, rural respondents, those aged up to 44 years, with higher level of education, but the differences are not very pronounced, only 4-8 p.p. higher share of those who mentioned full participation.

Figure 27. To what extent do you feel free to participate in or carry out the following actions..., %?



In several group discussions it was noted that it is a right of people to protest, but when protests are organised conditions should be created so that other citizens do not suffer by blocking roads, institutions. Also, in several group discussions reference was made to the "LGBT March" as a manifesto that "challenges other people's beliefs".

The LGBT community mentioned that already in society there is more tolerance towards the "LGBT March", people's perception of LGBT is changing, although still the rejection is pronounced, especially in rural areas, among people with less education. In group discussions with different categories of people it was mentioned that society needs to be informed, prepared to accommodate, so that these demonstrations do not amplify hatred and discrimination against these people.

"It's nothing serious, it's their right to get on with their lives. I don't think that a person who has some values can be influenced by these things. They have rights too, but in the case of the Republic of Moldova we need education first. As they tried to do the parade, but people are totally unprepared and this leads to hatred, verbal and physical violence. First we have to prepare society for acceptance." (F, 30, religious minorities)

However, some participants in other group discussions, who claim to be tolerant of LGBT people but are unhappy about their public displays, are disturbed by the organisation of the "LGBT March".

"When it was last year at an activity in the city centre and I needed to cross a street, but I was stopped by the police because they were giving rights to those people who are a minority and I as a natural felt marginalised. I need to walk my own path and I don't have the right because rights are given to others. Sometimes sexual minorities are too high and seem to have more rights than those who are the majority." (M, 37, religious minorities)

2.9. Right to a fair trial

In the respondents' opinion, the right to a fair trial is better ensured for children and women. Respectively, about 47.7% consider that this right is ensured to a very large extent/to a large extent to children, followed by the group of women who aggregated about 43.5% of such statements.

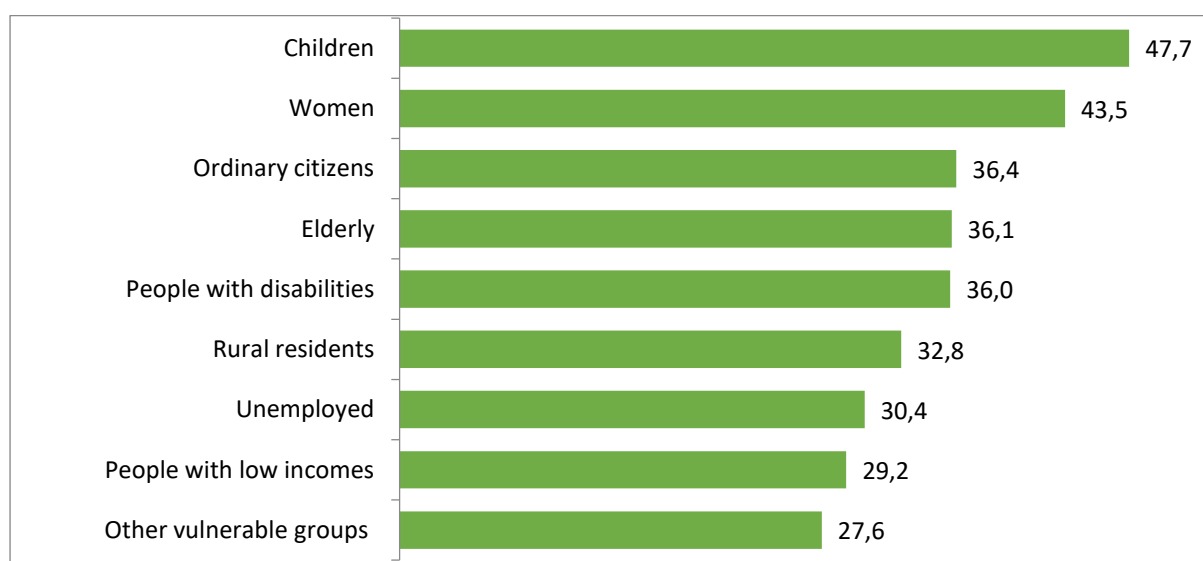
Respondents consider that the rights of other vulnerable groups (the Roma, religious minorities, LGBT, etc.) are most poorly ensured, with only 27.6% of respondents saying that this right is guaranteed, followed by the poor with 29.2% and the unemployed with 30.4%.

There is a continuous increase in the degree of trust in the judicial system, in the current study the share to a very large extent/large extent answers increased by about 9-18 p.p. compared to the 2018 study and by 15-24 p.p. compared to the 2016 study.

At the same time, it should be noted that the degree of confidence in ensuring the right to a fair trial for different groups of the population remains quite low, the answers to a very large extent / ranging between 28-48% in the current study (Figure 30).

The most positive in this context are urban respondents, younger people up to 44 years old. At the same time, the least positive are respondents from villages and the elderly, especially with regard to respecting the rights of low-income people and other vulnerable groups, with less than 20% stating that these rights are observed at a very large extent/large extent.

Figure 28. To what extent do you consider that the right to a fair process (trial) is ensured for the following categories of persons? (% answers in a very large/in a large extent)



Among the respondents interviewed in the group discussions, mistrust in the justice system in the Republic of Moldova persists. It was noted that justice is selective and marked by corruption. Thus, the interviewees consider that people with higher incomes and socio-political support are favoured.

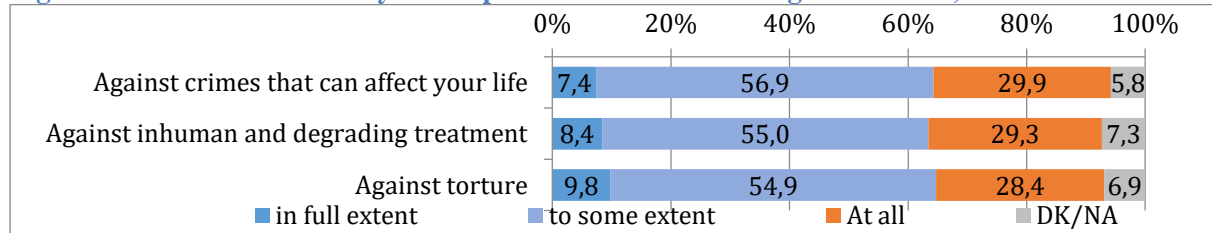
At the same time, it is considered that informed people and those who know where/to whom to address increase their chances for a fair trial. According to several experts, the right to a fair trial is a right little known by the population, but at the same time, it is one of the most frequently violated rights.

2.10. Right to life, physical and mental integrity

The right to life, physical and mental integrity is another right for which respondents' opinions were assessed. In the current study, in the context of this right, respondents were asked for their views on the extent to which they feel they are protected against life-threatening crimes, inhuman and degrading treatment and torture.

About 64% of respondents consider that they are protected to a very large extent/to a large extent in all three aspects assessed. There is a slight difference in the respondents who said that they are protected to some extent, i.e. 7.4% - against crimes that can affect your life, 8.4 - against inhuman and degrading treatment, 9.8% - against torture (Figure 29).

Figure 29. To what extent do you feel protected in the following situations..., %?

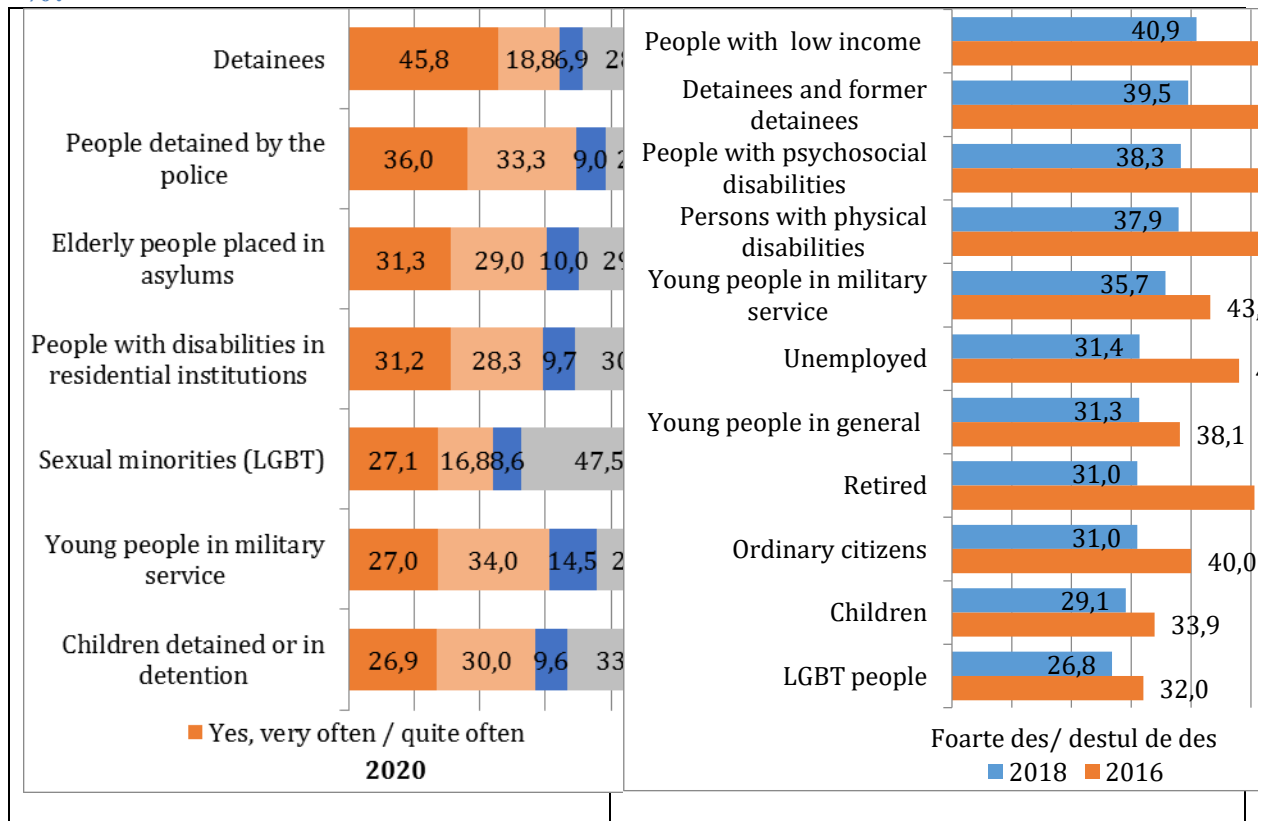


According to the results of the current study, the most frequent violations of the right not to be subjected to torture and inhuman and degrading treatment are, in the opinion of the respondents, in the case of detainees, with 45.8% answering *very often/ quite often*, and in the case of persons detained by the police, with 36% saying so. For the other population groups, around 30% of respondents consider that this right is violated very often/fairly often.

There is also a high degree of ignorance on this issue, between 20%-48% of respondents did not provide answers with reference to the violation of the rights of the mentioned groups of people (Figure 30).

According to the data of previous studies (2018 and 2016) very often/ quite often the rights of poor people are considered to be violated by about 40.9% respondents (about 55% in 2016), prisoners, 39.5% stated (51.2% in 2016), people with psycho-social disabilities, 38.3% (53.5% in 2016), less LGBT people, 26.8% (32.0% in 2016) (Figure 30).

Figure 30. How often do you consider that the right not to be subjected to torture and inhuman and degrading treatment of certain categories of persons in the Republic of Moldova is violated, %?



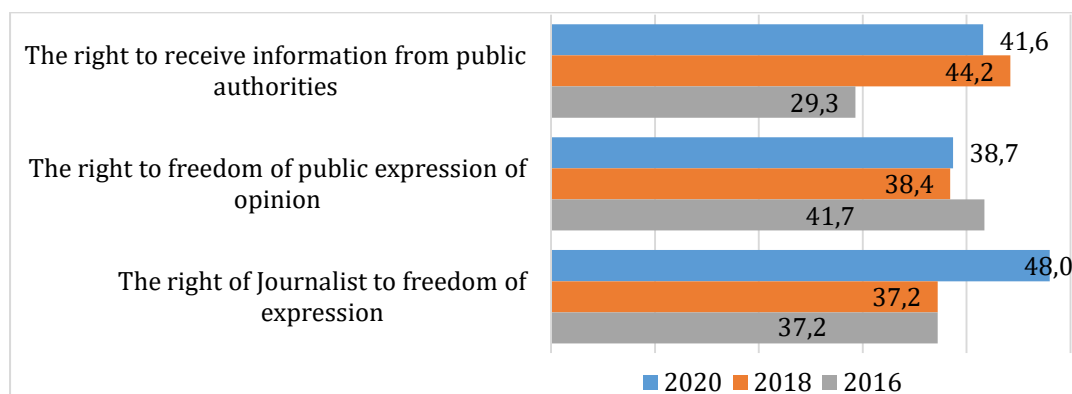
2.11. Right to information, freedom of opinion and expression

The respondents' opinions on the extent to which the right to information, freedom of opinion and the journalist's right to freedom of expression are ensured were rated on the same rate from 1 - not at all ensured to 10 - very much ensured.

The data of the current study report on the fact that there have been some trends towards increasing the positive opinion of the population in this regard compared to the data of previous studies. Thus, about 41.6% of respondents (44.2% in 2018 and 29.3% in 2016) consider that the right to receive information is largely ensured (grades 7-10), and 48.0% the same answers given to the statement on the right to freedom of expression of the journalist (37.2% in the 2018 and 2016 studies). At the same time, there is a stagnation of positive assessments regarding the observance of the right to freedom of public expression of opinion by about 38.7% in the current study compared to 38.4% in 2018 and 41.7% in 2016 (Figure 31).

It should be noted that the level of awareness of journalists' rights among the respondents is more limited, about 14% could not elaborate on this statement.

Figure 31. To what extent do you think the following rights are observed in the Republic of Moldova? (% ratings 7-10)



The study data show that perceptions of risk from free speech persist among respondents and are increasing compared to previous studies.

In particular, they consider it risky to express opinions with reference to the state leadership, with some 72% of respondents believing that this risk persists to a very large/a large extent (68% in 2018 and 63% in 2016). Approximately to the same extent the risk is also mentioned in relation to politicians, with 70.8% such answers (66% in 2018 and 61% in 2016), as well as in relation to acts of corruption, with 70% statements recorded in the current survey.

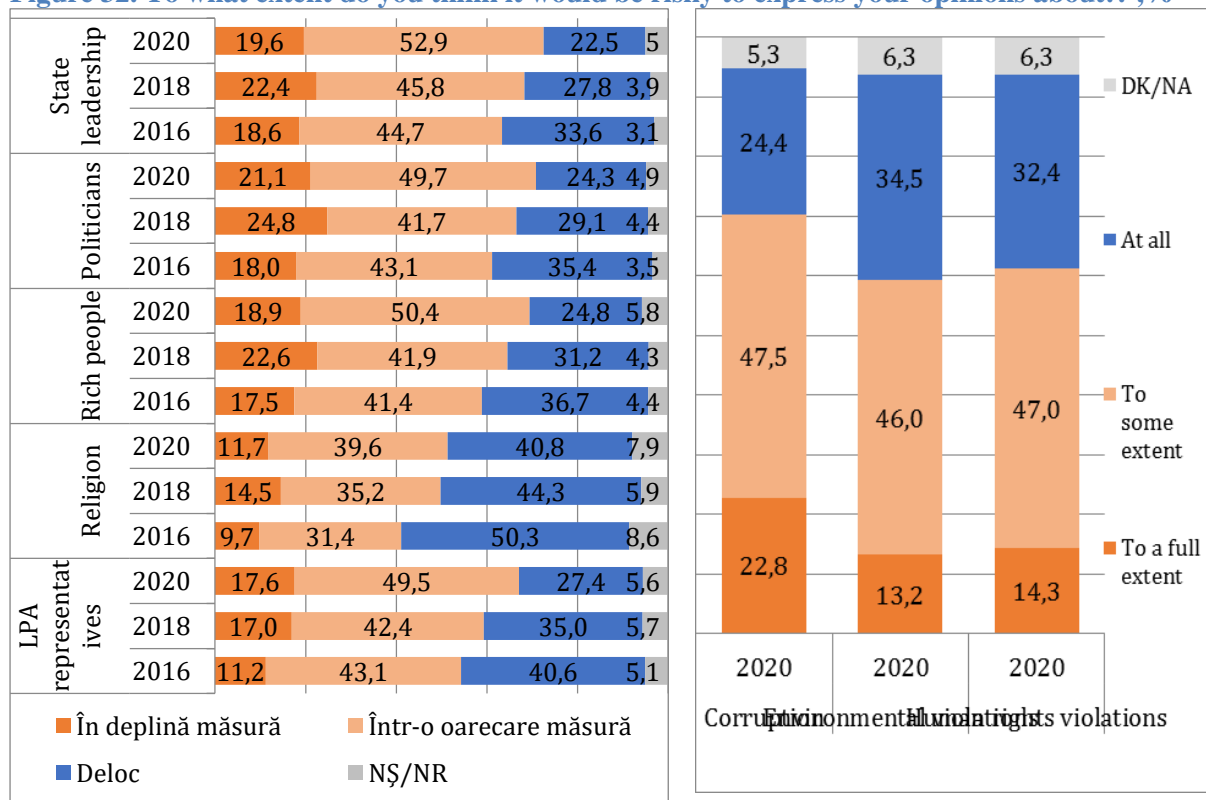
It can be seen that the share of those who say that there are risks in expressing their opinion in relation to the state leadership, politicians, rich people, corruption⁵ remains quite high, around 20%. In relation to these groups, women, respondents from villages, people aged 30-44, and those with low levels of education and wealth consider it more risky to express their opinion.

There is also an increase in the opinion of those who consider it risky to express their opinion on LPA representatives from 11.2% in 2016 to 17.0% in 2018 and 17.6% in 2020. More pronounced is the awareness of this risk among rural and poor respondents.

Less risky is considered expressing opinion with reference to religion, environmental and human rights violations, with less than 15% considering that the risk persists to a very large extent, with no significant differences depending on the profile of respondents. (Figure 32)

⁵ Options related to corruption, environmental and human rights violations are included only in the current study, 2020

Figure 32. To what extent do you think it would be risky to express your opinions about?: %



In different contexts, participants in the qualitative study mentioned that it was risky, especially for civil servants, to express their opinions on the state leadership, politicians. Although it is believed that in the last 1-2 years, the fears of people employed in state institutions to express their opinions publicly have diminished, there are still pressures to do so.

"At the moment we still have something to say, whereas a couple of years ago it was very difficult to say the whole thing. It was all politicised, and the police and the politicians were involved. We didn't really have much right to say that it was intimidating everybody. Starting from the schools, the staff working in the budgetary sphere were very much oppressed... Now something, about 20% something has changed, but still not to the end." (M, 53, border area)

Several experts warned that the right to opinion and freedom of expression in the context of the Republic of Moldova is often misperceived or exaggerated on certain issues. Here, too, two extremes are perceived: on the one hand, there are those who have warned that sexist or homophobic messages are sought where they do not actually exist, or, on the contrary, the dignity of individuals is attacked under the pretext of freedom of expression.

"A person's rights end where other people's rights begin. In our country, often the right to free expression goes beyond certain limits, in the sense that it violates other rights, or the message may be slanderous, or the expression may contain less pleasant words... it offends dignity." (IIA, expert)

Another concern of some experts, as well as respondents to the group discussions, relates to the way in which certain rights are promoted at the expense of others, the boundaries in this respect being difficult to establish, and one of the most affected rights in this respect is the right to free expression - "these restrictions and the fight against fake news and hate speech interfere with the right to freedom

of expression"; "you don't have the right to free expression that you can easily be labelled as you discriminate".

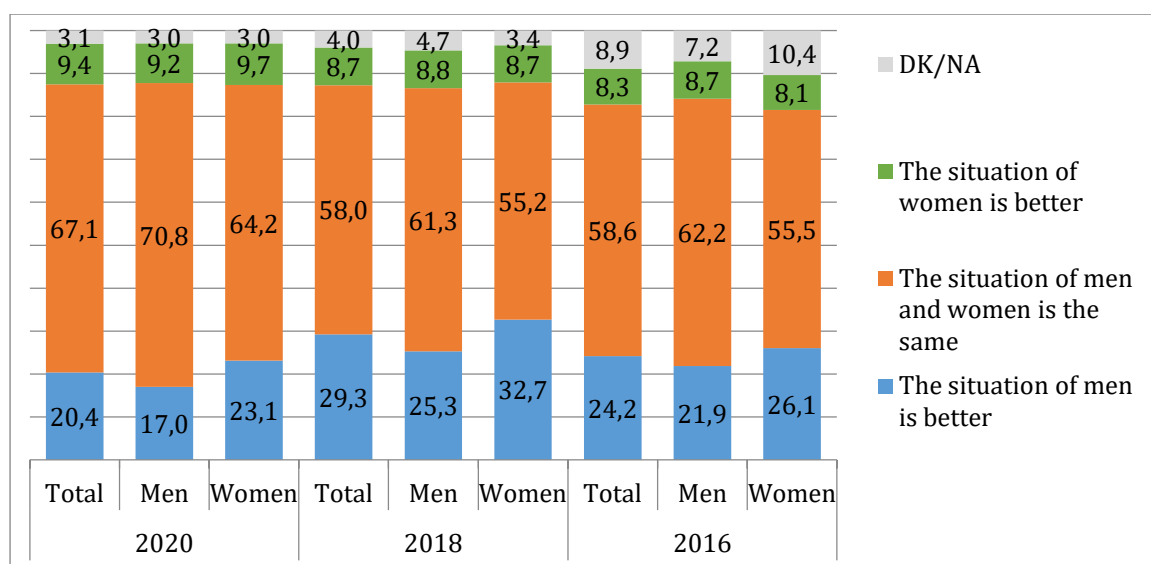
2.12. Right to equality and non-discrimination

Equality of rights between men and women is considered equal by 67.1% of respondents, while every fifth respondent considers the situation of men to be somewhat better than that of women. There is also an upward trend in statements that the situation of men and women is the same in the Republic of Moldova by about 9 percentage points compared to previous study data.

Male respondents in higher proportions of about 70.8% compared to 64.2% of women consider that women and men are equal, and about 23% of women compared to 17% of men claim that the situation of men is better. At the same time, only about 9% of respondents, with no gender differences, believe that the situation of women is better (Figure 39).

Equal opportunities between men and women are also supported in higher proportions by young people aged 18-29 (around 71%) and by the more affluent (around 73%).

Figure 33. What do you think about gender equality between men and women, %?



However, study respondents say that discrimination persists, with women in particular being more frequently discriminated against in the family, with some 43% answering that it occurs frequently/very frequently, and an increase in opinions compared to previous years. It should be noted that in all other contexts of discrimination against women in the current survey there is a decrease in these opinions compared to previous surveys.

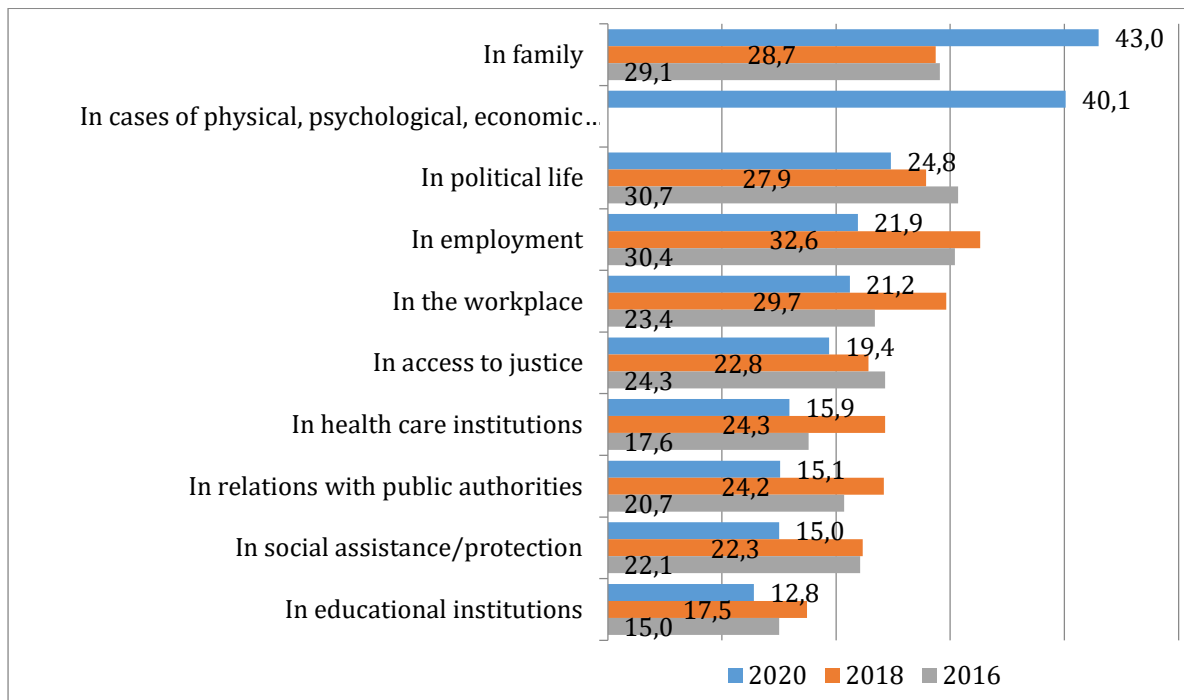
Also, about 40% of respondents claim that women are frequently/very frequently discriminated against in cases of physical, psychological, economic violence⁶, about ¼ of respondents (24.8%) - in political life, about 1/5 - in employment, in the workplace, and in access to justice.

Other options accumulated 15% and less such statements, and the least considered that women encounter discrimination in educational institutions (Figure 34).

It can be seen that women more frequently than men consider that they are discriminated against in employment, at work, in the family, but also in the context of physical, psychological, economic violence.

⁶ Option included only in the current study 2020

Figure 34. In your opinion, how often are women discriminated against in the following contexts:? (% answers frequent/ very frequent)



During the group discussions, it was noted that in recent years there has been a greater involvement of women in political and social life. Ensuring equal opportunities on the labour market and in social life is a trend for the younger generation. However, in the family, there are still largely discrepancies in the distribution of gender roles and the superiority of men over other family members, and these attitudes persist, especially in rural areas. These aspects were particularly evident in the group discussion with victims of domestic violence, with an emphasis on certain beliefs and behaviours passed down through generations.

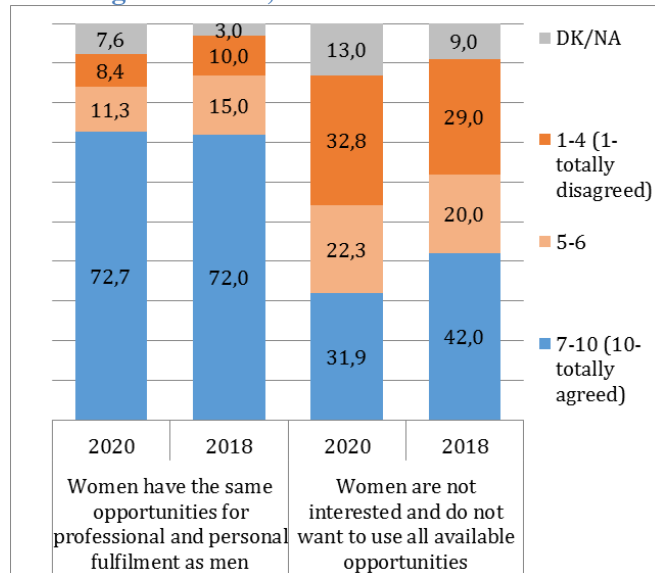
"The man always feels that he has priority and has more rights. He often puts his rights above the woman's... For me it has always been the man who has spoken in the family. And I don't know, I always had to observed what he says, otherwise you get some out of the ordinary, even painful things... This is an idea that probably comes instilled for a man from the past. That's what our ancestors used to say. That's how they had this idea that a woman should always listen to a man, not go out of his word." (F, 46, victim of domestic violence)

The qualitative study found that some women still have perceptions of inferiority to men, of gender role allocation, but also the belief that this is something natural, inherited from generations.

"I believe that men have more rights than women anyway. Because so, I don't know it's said by the world, the man has to be 'bigger' than the woman, that is, he has to make more decisions than a woman. He takes on his family, he takes on his work, that is, the woman just has to take care of the children and the house, that's all, to support him in everything. " (F, 19 years old, victim of domestic violence)

Rating on a rate of 1 to 10, where 1- totally disagreed, 10- totally agree, of women's opportunities in relation to men reveals certain trends.

Figure 35. To what extent do you agree with the following statements, %?



Overall, the majority of respondents, 72.7% (72% in 2018) believe that women have the same opportunities for professional and personal fulfilment as men, giving ratings of 7-10 to this statement. At the same time, one in 10 respondents disagreed with this, giving ratings 1-4.

At the same time, 31.9% of respondents support with 7-10 marks the statement that women are not interested and do not want to use all available opportunities, however these opinions are decreasing compared to the data of the study conducted in 2018, when the share of these answers was 42% (Figure 35).

This statement is supported in higher proportions by men, also by respondents with higher education.

In the group discussions with the Roma, it was mentioned that women and men have different opportunities, and this is largely perceived not as a challenge, but as something attributed to customs and traditions in the Gypsy communities. First of all schooling of Gypsy girls is more problematic, and then certain roles and responsibilities are clearly defined according to gender.

"Among the Roma it is not welcome, for example, for a man to help a woman with household chores, there are several things. There are very few women, if we are talking about driving licence, to get this licence or for the family to accept." (F, 40, Gypsy)

"If we refer to a non-gypsy family, a woman has access and the husband would allow her to go and at 30-40 years old to do a qualification course in some field. But in the Gypsy communities the woman is kind of limited, as she is already the woman of the house, she has to take care of the children, be an exemplary woman for a man." (F, 39, Gypsy)

2.13. Protection of women against domestic violence

According to some experts, violence against women in the family continues to be a problem in our society, both because of stereotypes and because of the inaction of the authorities. During the pandemic period, acts of violence against women have intensified and there is still a need for actions, information campaigns both for the community in general and for professionals who should provide support to victims of domestic violence and contribute to their prevention.

Some experts have also pointed out the existence of functional gaps with reference to the protection order, which after all does not fully protect the victim of domestic violence. On the other hand, experts specialists in the field of domestic violence reiterated that there may be some gaps (inaction, personal relations with the perpetrator, cronyism) in the documentation of the case by the sector police officer, but in terms of granting the protection order in court the system works well. However, there is a lack of information on the conditions under which protection is granted and for these reasons a good proportion of victims do not appeal.

"As far as the court is concerned, when they go to get a protection order, here it's really quite well set up, the courts give protection orders without much problems. The only obstacle is that the victim doesn't know that he can come to court without evidence, because according to the legislation, in the amendments of two years ago it says that the presence of the victim is sufficient for the issuance of a protection order. And very often victims are afraid that if they have no blow, no assessment report, they will not be given a protection order. Plus, added to that is the idea that if the house belongs to the abuser, the victim will be kicked out, even though it's the other way around." (9IA, expert)

Some women victims of domestic violence noted that partners/former partners continue to abuse them psycho-emotionally, even if they live separately, they have stopped communicating, the perpetrators find ways to put pressure on the victim. They have gone to the police, but the results are perceived as ineffective.

"I left him, broke up with him, still pregnant. He through social media started sending various voicemails, uncensored words to my friends, my family, my parents and so on. Pictures, some big nonsense, and I went to the police, because I saw once, two, three... And they just sent him a fine, then it was only a few hours later and he started again, that this doesn't take me, that if I said so, it will be so. I tried it again and again. I mean, I sent him another ticket and still nothing was resolved." (F, 19, victim of domestic violence)

CHAPTER 3. Role of the State in the human rights observance in the Republic of Moldova

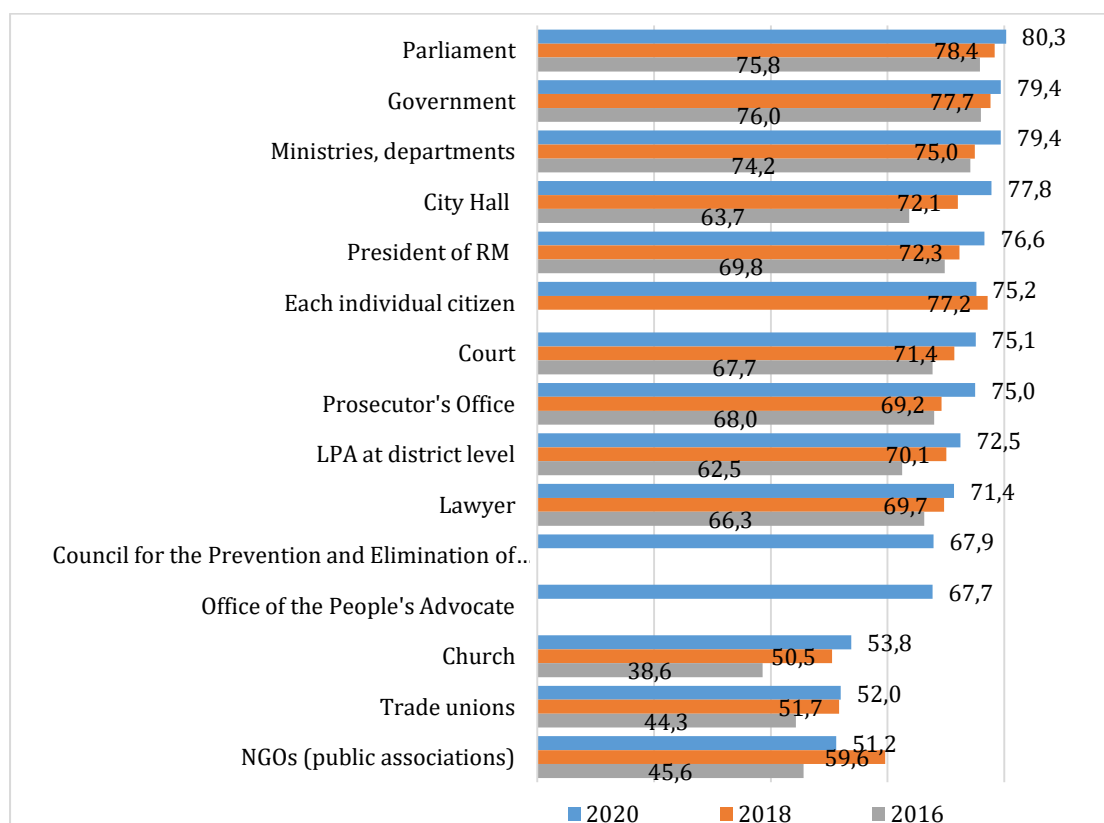
3.1. The role of institutions in human rights observance

The state institutions, other institutions and organizations operating on the territory of the Republic of Moldova have an important role in promoting and observing the human rights, which is also one of the core tasks of the national authorities.

The extent to which the improvement of the situation in this regard depends on the various institutions has been assessed in the studies carried out. In the current study respondents were also asked to rate the impact on the institution in terms of 1 to 10, where 1 means that respondents do not think at all/very little depends on the institution, and 10 - very much depends.

Some 80% of respondents believe that the improvement of the human rights situation depends to a large extent on Parliament, Government, ministries and their departments, giving ratings of 7-10 to this option. About 77% believe that it depends on the mayoralties, the President of the Republic of Moldova, and between 75%-70% - on each individual citizen, as well as on legal institutions (prosecutor's office, court, lawyer's office), district leadership (district-level LPAs). Less depends on the church, trade unions and NGOs, which each received just over 50% of the answers with 7-10 marks. Compared to previous surveys, the share of respondents who believe that the improvement of the human rights situation depends on state institutions has increased, while there is a trend towards less responsibility for each individual citizen (Figure 36).

Figure 36. To what extent do you think the improvement of the human rights observance depends on the following: ? (% ratings 7-10)



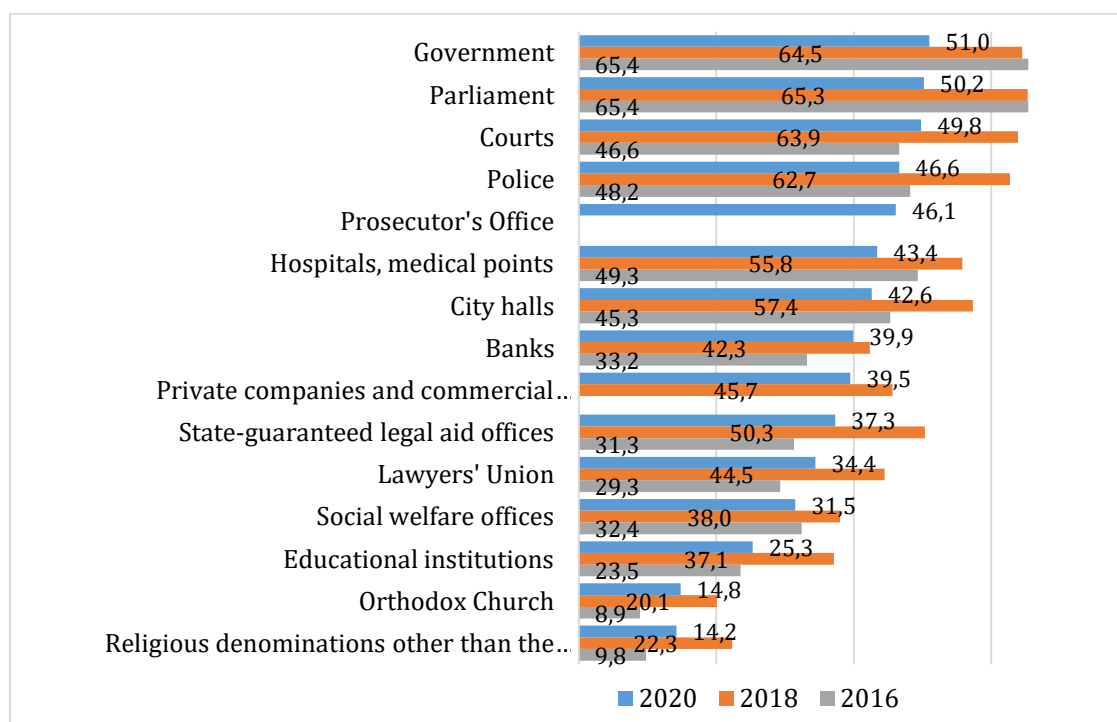
They have the highest expectations for improvement in the human rights situation: from the Parliament, Government, ministries and departments, mayoralties, LPA II, courts - people with high socio-economic level; from the President - men and respondents from villages, economically active people; from NGOs, trade unions - respondents from rural areas; from lawyers, People's Advocate

Office- rural areas and seniors aged 60 and older, from the prosecutor's office - people over 45, more affluent, from the church - people from villages, with low educational and socio-economic levels.

There is a decrease in respondents' views on human rights violations compared to previous studies, and the decrease ranges from 3 to 15 percentage points.

However, with reference to a number of state institutions, about half of the respondents say that human rights are violated to a large extent (ratings 7-10), these being the Government, Parliament, courts. More than 40% of respondents say the same with reference to the police, prosecutor's office, hospitals/medical facilities, town halls. Other institutions accumulate less than 40% of similar answers, and the least violate human rights are churches, religious cults, with only about 14% of such statements (Figure 37).

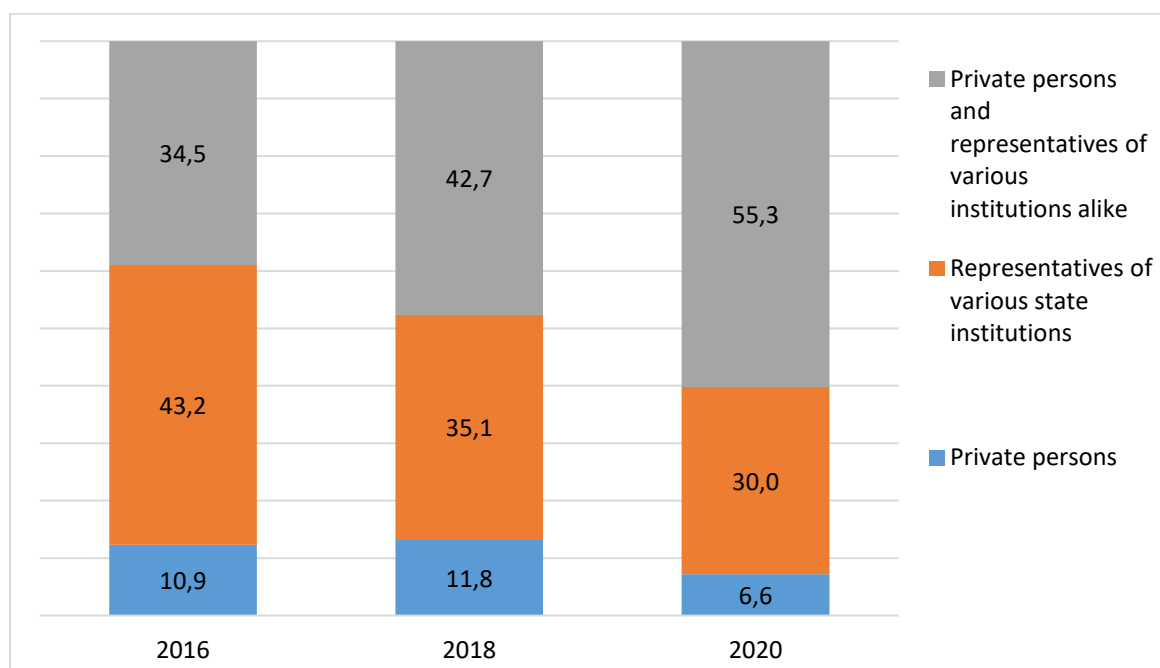
Figure 37. To what extent do you think the following institutions violate the human rights? (% ratings 7-10)



In the opinion of respondents, human rights are violated equally by private individuals and representatives of various institutions, with some 55.3% of respondents mentioning this, and a continuous increase compared to previous studies (Figure 38).

Women - 58.6%, urban respondents - 57.5%, support this opinion in higher proportions, respondents aged 30-44 - 60.1%, highly educated respondents - 59% and economically active respondents - 61.1% affirmative answers.

Figure 38. Who do you think violates your rights more often, %?



The LGBT representatives, the Roma and some experts have pointed out that people in public office allow themselves to have discriminatory, irresponsible, even hate speech against certain categories of people. Several experts warned media outlets that allow hate speech to be promoted on their websites and social networks and are not sanctioned for it.

"There are many TV stations, news sites and various channels that promote homophobia openly and brazenly. And the Audio-Visual Council does nothing about it. And the hate comments, which are not moderated even by the free press, giving the opportunity to people with different prejudices to express themselves." (4IA, expert)

The respondents participating in group discussions reported situations where in educational institutions teachers discriminate against children on the basis of religion, disability and promote certain hate messages - *"there are a lot of recorded cases about absolutely inappropriate behaviour of teachers in schools, who even during lessons use homophobic hate speech"*.

3.2. Human rights protection system in the Republic of Moldova

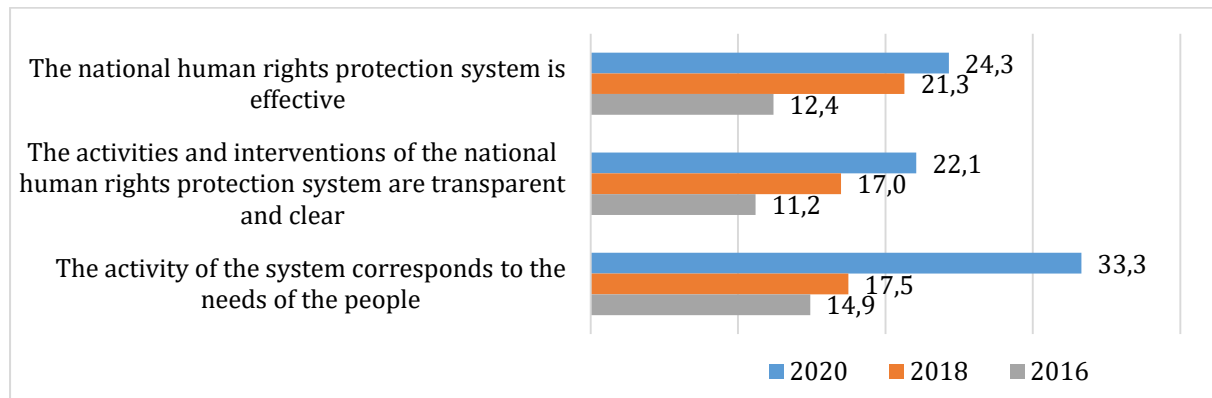
The study included a set of statements referring to the human rights protection system in the Republic of Moldova, giving respondents the opportunity to express their opinion by assigning ratings from 1-totally disagree to 10-totally agree with the statements. These data are intended to provide a picture of the degree of functionality and efficiency of the system in general.

As in previous studies, there remains a prevalence of assessments with a negative connotation of the system of human rights protection in the country, with grades below 7 constituting more than 2/3 of the answers. At the same time, there is an improvement in the opinion of the population, compared to the data of previous studies, the weights of positive statements (grades 7-10) recorded a continuous increase, with a doubling compared to the 2016 study.

More positive opinions, about 33.3% ratings of 7-10 (14.9% in 2019), were given to the statement *Activity in the system meets people's needs*, and about ¼ of the respondents of the current study (12.4% in 2016) appreciate the efficiency of the system.

The least respondents agreed with the statement on the transparency of activities and interventions in the system, with 22.1% answers (11.2% in 2016) agreeing with the statement (Figure 39).

Figure 39. To what extent do you agree with the following statements about the human rights protection system in the Republic of Moldova? (% ratings 7-10)

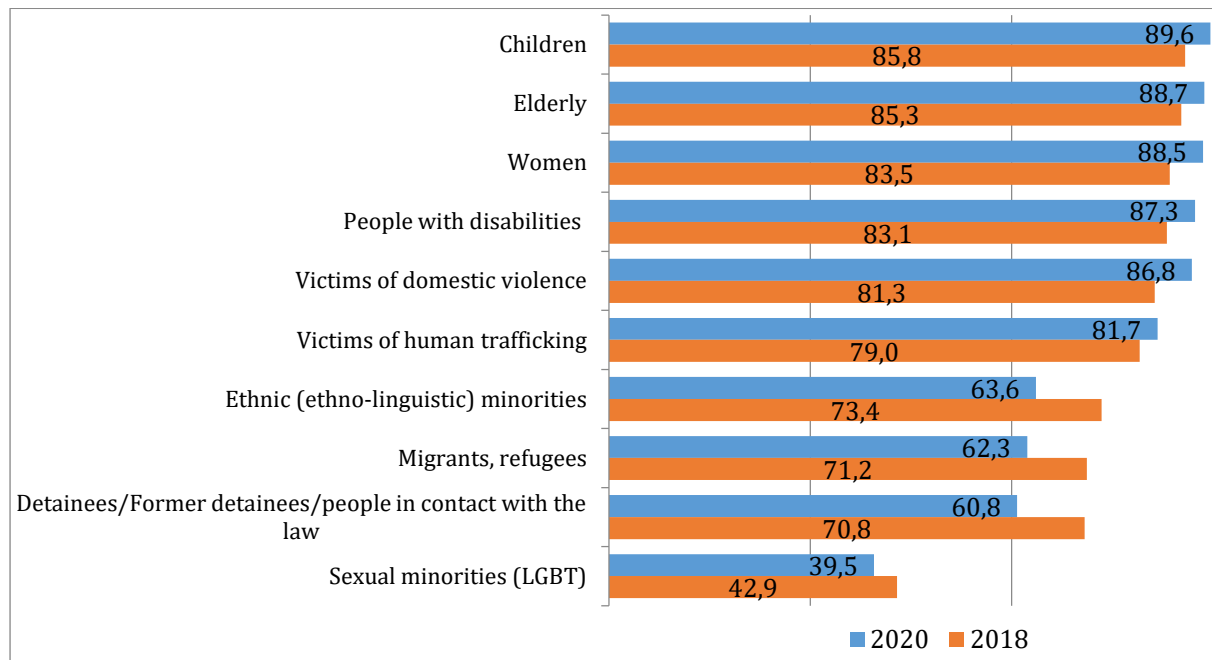


Respondents were asked to give their opinion on the attention that certain groups of people require, giving answers from 1 to 10, where 1- very little attention and 10 - very much attention.

Both studies carried out (in 2020 and 2018) show the same trends with reference to which groups need the most attention on the human rights observance. At the forefront are children with the highest share of 89.6% statements (ratings 7-10), followed by older people and women with 88%, people with disabilities, victims of domestic violence - about 87%, victims of human trafficking - about 82%. In the case of these groups, compared to the previous study, there has been an increase in the weight of these opinions by 3-6 percentage points.

Other population groups mentioned in the study, recorded less than 65% affirmations, the least respondents consider that attention should be paid to sexual minorities, in the context of respect for human rights, with only about 40% positive affirmations (grades 7-10 awarded). In the case of the last four mentioned groups (ethnic minorities, migrants / refugees, detainees / ex-prisoners, sexual minorities), there is a decrease in the weights of the respective answers in relation to the 2018 study data (Figure 40).

Figure 40. How much attention should be paid to the human rights observance for the following categories? (% ratings 7-10)



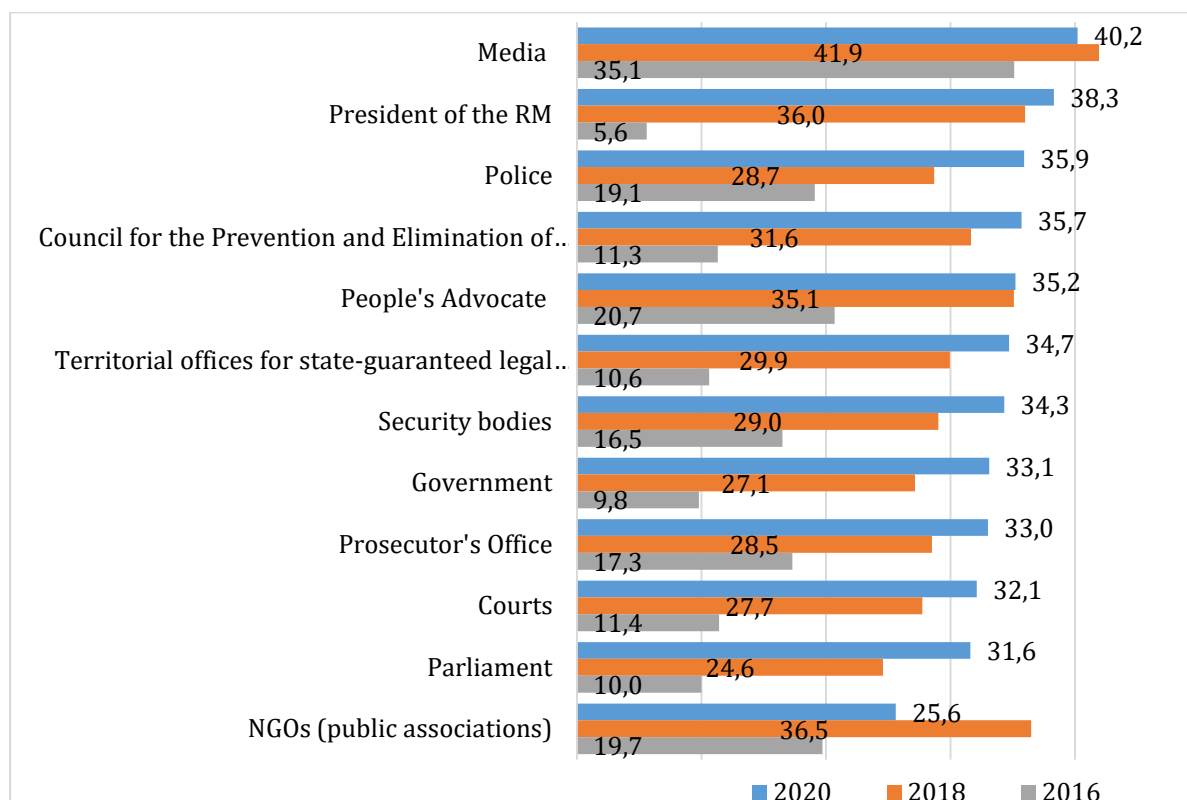
The rural respondents, those aged 60 and over, those with low levels of education and wealth are more concerned about the rights of older people and those with disabilities, women and children - especially the rural respondents. Urban, economically active, educated and well-off respondents were more likely to mention the need to pay more attention to sexual minorities' rights observance.

The respondents' assessment of the extent to which certain public institutions of the state ensure or contribute to ensuring human rights in the Republic of Moldova (on a rate from 1 to 10, where 1 - not at all/to a small extent and 10 - to a very large extent) reveals an increase in the level of appreciation compared to previous surveys, especially the 2016 survey data.

The mass media is the institution that accumulated the highest weight of 40.2% of positive answers (ratings 7-10), which means that it ensures or contributes best to ensuring human rights in Moldova, followed by the President of the Republic of Moldova - 38.3%. The lowest ratings were recorded for NGOs with only 25% such answers, Parliament and judges with about 32% ratings.

The other institutions were rated 7-10 by about 32-35% respondents, which reports a relatively low assessment of the extent to which most public institutions ensure the human rights observance in the Republic of Moldova (Figure 41).

Figure 41. To what extent do the following public institutions ensure the human rights observance? (% ratings 7-10)



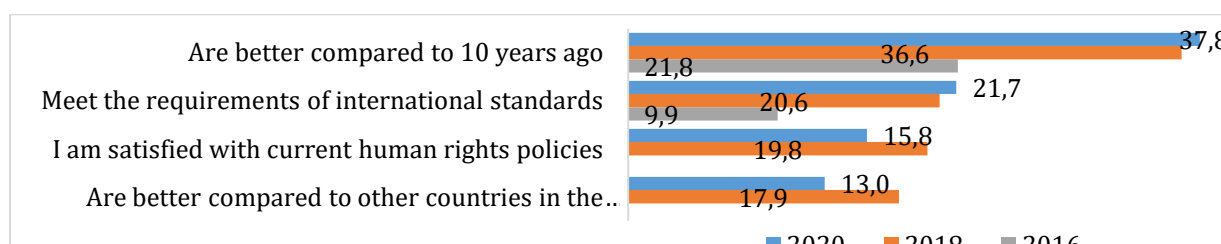
On a rate of 1 - totally disagreed to 10 - totally agreed, the extent to which respondents agree with statements referring to human rights policies was assessed, as well as their satisfaction with current human rights policies.

There were some positive trends in the assessment of the quality of these policies, i.e. their quality compared to 10 years ago and their observance with international standards. However, the level of appreciation remains quite low with 37.8% of respondents expressing agreement with the quality of policies compared to 10 years ago (ratings 7-10), and 21.7% of respondents expressing agreement with the quality of policies in relation to the requirements of international standards.

It is also noted that satisfaction with current policies is particularly low, with 15.8% scoring 7-10, and is also decreasing compared to the previous survey data - 19.8% of such answers.

Roughly the same trends are observed with reference to comparability with policies of countries in the region in the given field, with 13.0% positive ratings in the current study and 17.9% in 2018 (Figure 42).

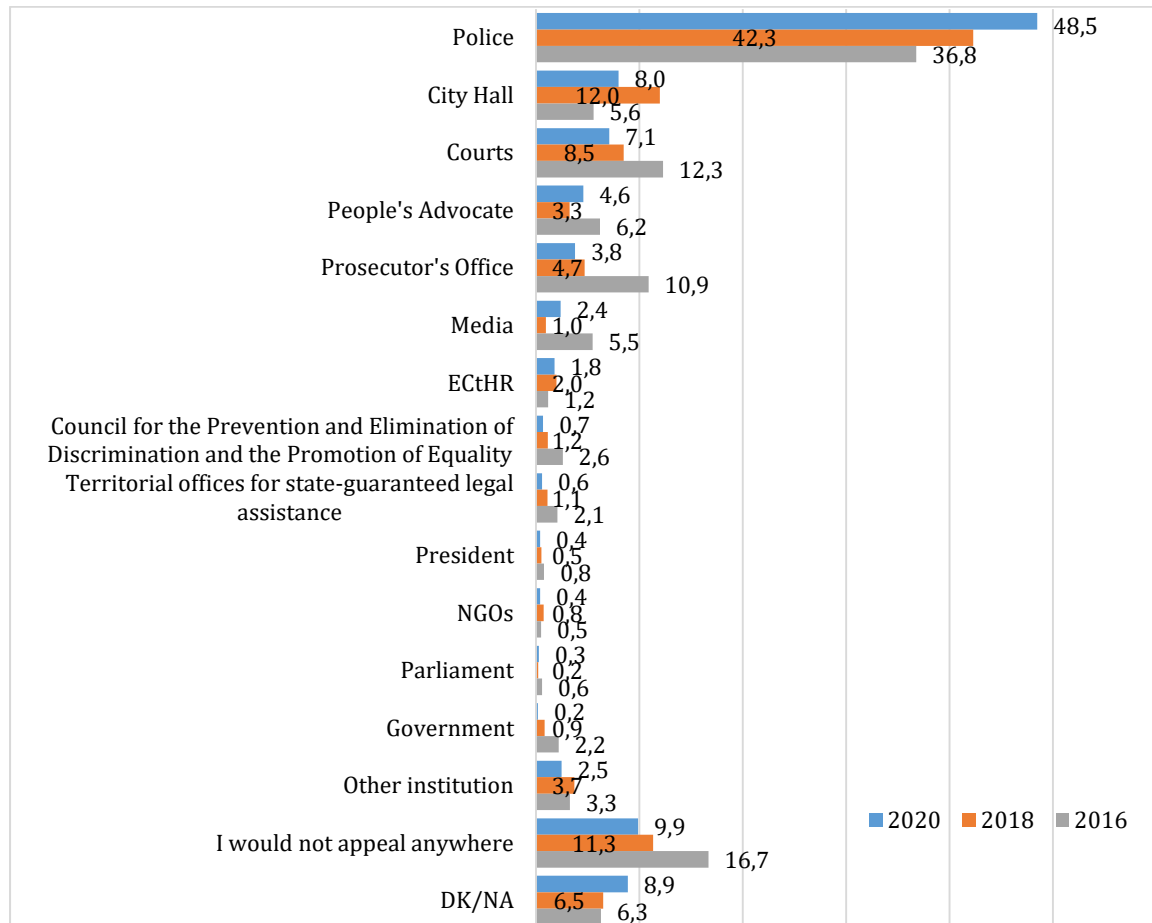
Figure 42. To what extent do you agree with the current human rights policies in the Republic of Moldova? (% ratings 7-10)



The most popular institution to which respondents would address, in case of violation of their rights or those of their relatives, remains the police with 48.5% of respondents, with an increase compared to previous surveys (42.3% in 2018 and 36.8% answers in 2016), 8% - to the city hall, 7.1% - to the courts.

Other options have accumulated less than 5% answers. At the same time, the population is not aware that they could defend their rights in the courts, about 10% reported that they would not go anywhere, and 8.9% - could not express themselves in this context (Figure 43).

Figure 43. Where would you go first in case of violation of your or your relatives' rights, %?



The participants in the group discussions noted that you can appeal to different institutions or social actors depending on the right that has been violated. The city hall/LPA is one of the institutions you can address to with the widest range of problems and is the most accessible, if they cannot help you there they will refer you to the relevant institutions. If you are the victim of an assault or crime, you should go to the police.

"Depending on what rights are being violated, that's where you can go. First we go to the police or the town hall, then to all the courts of power, starting with the police and following all the institutions further on, the court, the prosecutor's office and so on." (M, 53, border area)

A few respondents mentioned that they are lawyers, advocates, who provide services for free, whether in the LPA or NGOs. There is a perception among some citizens that the services offered for free are not exactly qualitative, but they still give you guidance.

"There is an office in the town hall where a lawyer works to defend human rights. I know that for

sure. Consultation is free, help is given if needed. An acquaintance came to me with a certain problem, an injustice, and they helped her to formulate a request correctly. In Balti there are lawyers who offer consultation and defend rights for free. Although they say they don't defend your interests with maximum commitment. But in any case, it's better than nothing." (F, 56, disabled person.

However, according to representatives of vulnerable groups receiving support from civil society, they noted that NGO advocates are very well trained and know the specifics of their problems.

In the group discussion with people from the border area, the representative of the People's Advocate was also mentioned - "there is a branch office of the People's Advocate Office in Varnita, and everyone comes to us. People come, our people and those from the left bank of the Dniester can also turn to us to defend their rights".

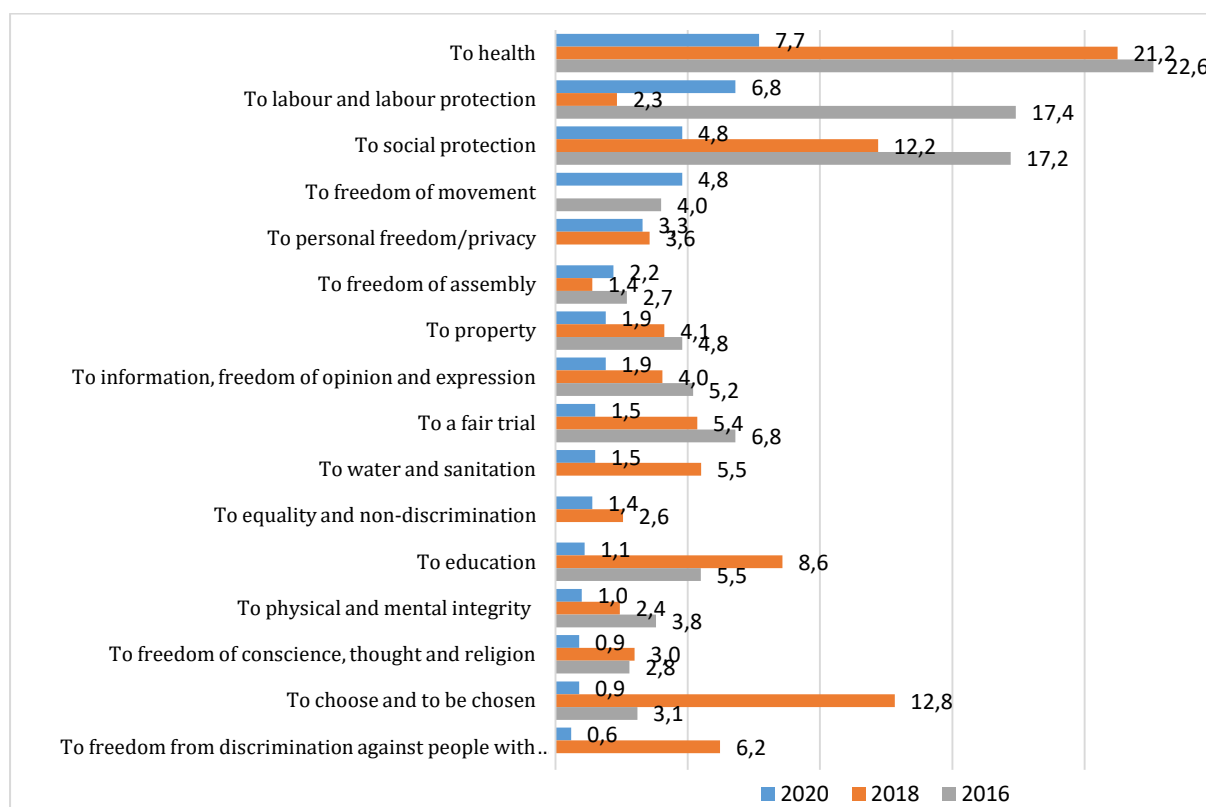
During the group discussions, it was specified that knowing the human rights and the institutions you can turn to in case of violation of them protects you and ensures your access to information and services.

3.3. Human rights violations in the Republic of Moldova

The study assessed respondents' opinions on violations of fundamental human rights and freedoms. About 2/3 of all respondents stated that no rights had been violated in the last 2 years, and the proportion of affirmative answers in this context is decreasing compared to previous studies.

At the same time, according to the respondents, cases of violation of fundamental rights and freedoms of citizens in the Republic of Moldova are recorded. The data show that in the last two years the right to health has been violated most frequently, with 7.7% affirmative answers, the right to work, about 6.8%, as well as the right to social protection and the right to freedom of movement, with about 5% affirmative answers. The other rights and freedoms were mentioned with weights of 3% and less (Figure 44).

Figure 44. What rights have been violated personally in the last 2 years, %?



During the group discussion with people from the border area in the immediate vicinity of the Transnistrian region, it was noted that in addition to the fact that their right to freedom of movement is frequently violated, their right to physical and mental integrity is also violated, as they are constantly on the alert for the possibility of an outbreak of conflict in the region, and the certainty that they will be protected by the Republic of Moldovan state is reduced or even absent in the opinion of some respondents.

"We live here in Varnita, I feel like we live here on the volcano. We are always waiting for these military conflicts. We were once scared, we lived in the basement and ran away from home and all the time I have this fear that I will not be protected. I don't have this confidence that tomorrow, overnight, I, my house, my family will be protected, I don't feel safe. We are at the border, at the front line. All the time we are waiting: God forbid something should start. God forbid war. All the time we live with this fear." (F, 48, border area)

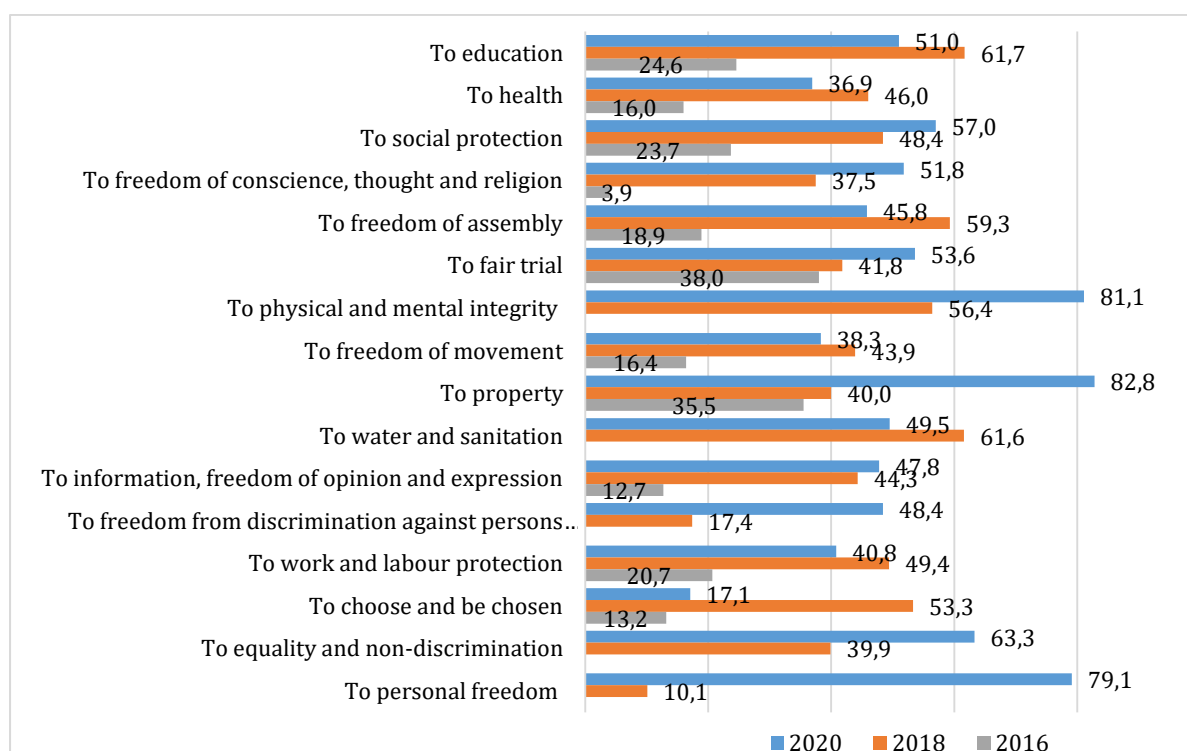
The survey also highlighted issues related to 'Hate Speech', which refers to the incitement and encouragement of hatred, discrimination or hostility towards a person based on prejudice against that person because of a particular characteristic (e.g. their sexual orientation or gender, ethnic or racial identity). About 14% reported that had such experiences, with higher proportions observed in rural areas and among those with lower levels of wealth (Table 3).

Table 3. Please tell me if in the last 2 years you have been a victim of "Hate Speech"?

		Yes	No	DK/NA
Total		14,0%	81,0%	4,9%
Residence environment:	Urban	11,2%	83,5%	5,4%
	Rural	16,4%	79,0%	4,6%
Socio-economic level:	Low level	15,7%	79,5%	4,8%
	Average level	14,1%	81,5%	4,5%
	High level	12,2%	82,2%	5,6%

With reference to the violation of the rights of relatives and acquaintances, the last two years show approximately the same trends as in previous years, only with a considerable decrease in the share of statements. However, in the first place, about 7.7% reported that their right to health had been violated, followed by social protection and the right to work, with almost 5% of statements. The other rights recorded less than 4% claims of violations over the last 2 years (Figure 45).

Figure 45. Which of the following human rights or freedoms have been violated in the last 2 years by your relatives or acquaintances, %?

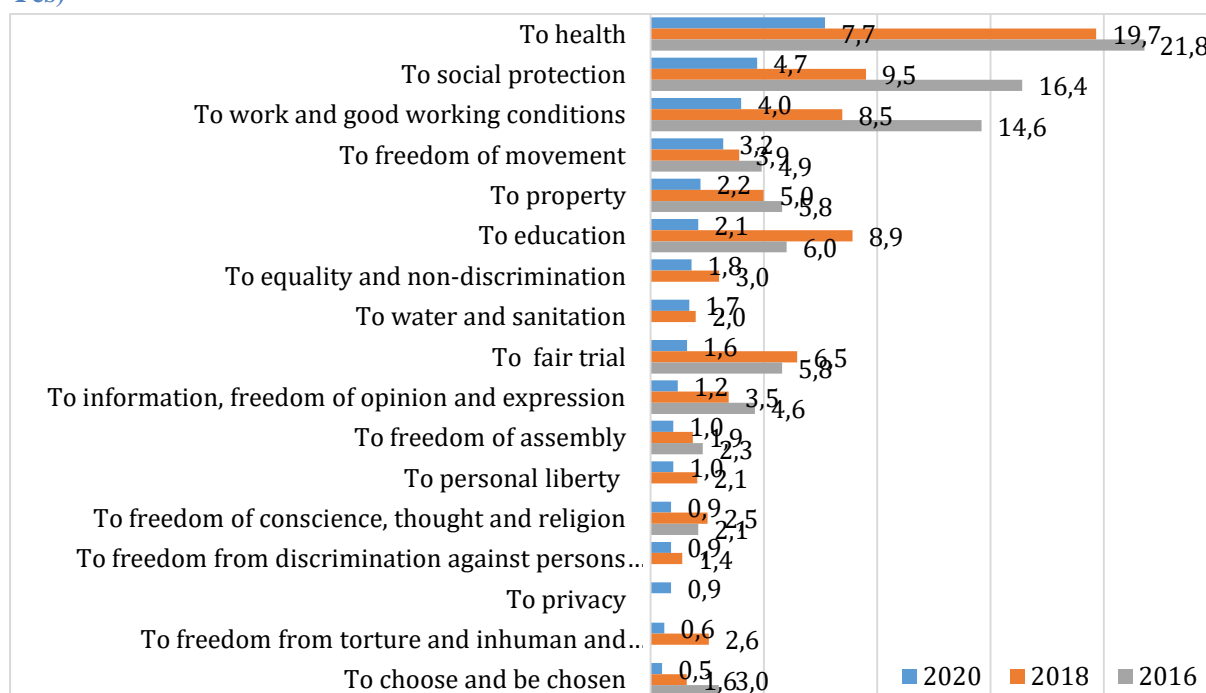


3.4. To claim rights

In general, the addressability for claiming / defending human rights violations remains low. Of the people who faced violations of his rights, most often, about 80%, appealed to claim their rights to property, physical and mental integrity, personal liberty, about 60% - equality and non-discrimination, to social protection, and about 50% each - to a fair trial, to private life, to freedom of conscience, thought and religion. In these cases there is also an increase in addressability compared to the study conducted in 2018.

In the case of the other listed rights, the share of those who appealed for the defence of rights is below 50% (Figure 46).

Figure 46. Have you tried to claim/defend these rights when they have been violated? (% answer Yes)



At the same time it should be noted that the data should be interpreted carefully, only as trends, due to the limited number of cases recorded (Table 4).

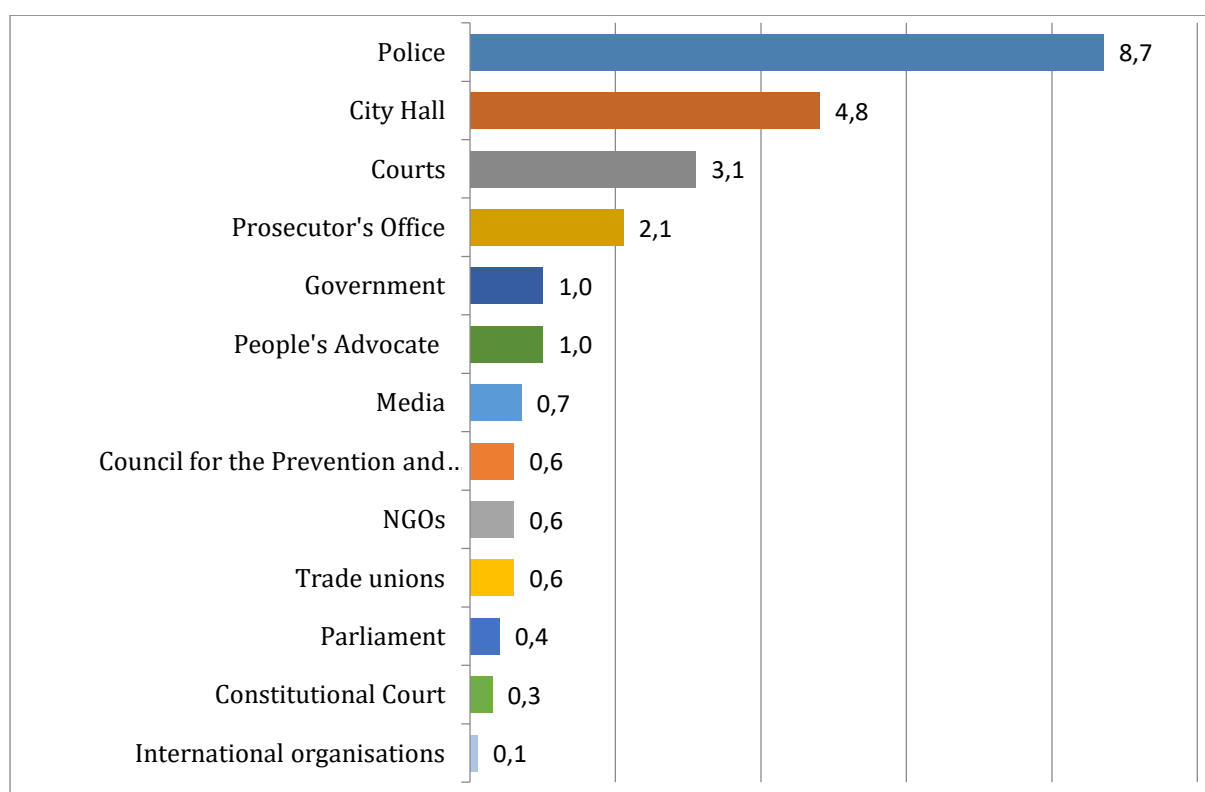
Table 4. Did you try to claim/defend your rights when they were violated, 2020?

	YES		NO		DK/NA	
	No	%	No	%	No	%
The right to education	5	51,0%	4	38,5%	1	10,5%
The right to health	28	36,9%	48	61,6%	1	1,5%
The right to social protection	28	57,0%	20	40,6%	1	2,4%
The right to freedom of conscience, thought and religion	4	51,8%	3	35,6%	1	12,6%
The freedom of assembly	9	45,8%	8	40,6%	3	13,6%
The right to a fair trial (including the right to legal assistance, to a fair and public hearing within a reasonable time by an independent and impartial court)	8	53,6%	6	38,6%	1	7,8%
The right to physical and mental integrity (the right not to be subjected to torture, cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment)	8	81,1%	1	7,7%	1	11,2%
The right to freedom of movement	17	38,3%	27	57,3%	2	4,4%
The right to property	16	82,8%	2	11,1%	1	6,1%

The right to water and sanitation	8	49,5%	6	42,9%	1	7,5%
The right to information, freedom of opinion and expression	9	47,8%	8	46,2%	1	6,0%
The right not to be discriminated against persons with disabilities	3	48,4%	2	33,2%	1	18,4%
The right to work and labour protection	28	40,8%	38	57,6%	1	1,7%
The right to choose and to be elected	2	17,1%	6	70,2%	1	12,7%
The right to equality and non-discrimination (including domestic violence)	8	63,3%	5	36,7%	0	0,0%
The right to personal liberty	12	79,1%	1	7,4%	2	13,5%
The right to privacy	9	52,7%	8	42,4%	1	4,9%
Other rights	4	51,8%	4	48,2%	0	0,0%

The most popular institution to which respondents turned in case of violation of any of their rights was the police, with 8.7% of respondents, followed by the city hall. Other institutions accumulated less than 4% of statements (Figure 47).

Figure 47. If you have complained about the violation of a right, to which institutions did you appeal?



In the last 2 years, 5.4% of the respondents went to court, about 7.9% of urban respondents and 3.2% of rural respondents (Figure 48).

More than 1/3 of the respondents who went to court were satisfied with the experience (9.6% very satisfied, 27.4% quite satisfied), women mentioned a higher degree of satisfaction with the experience, with 11.7% very satisfied answers (Figure 49)

Figure 48. Have you gone to court in the last 2 years?

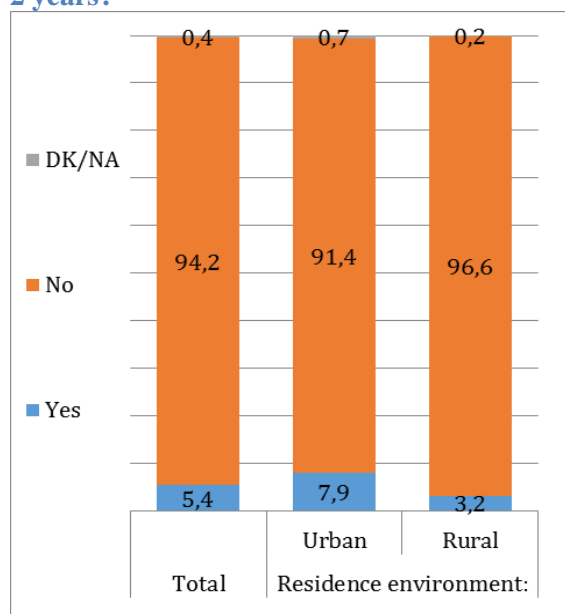
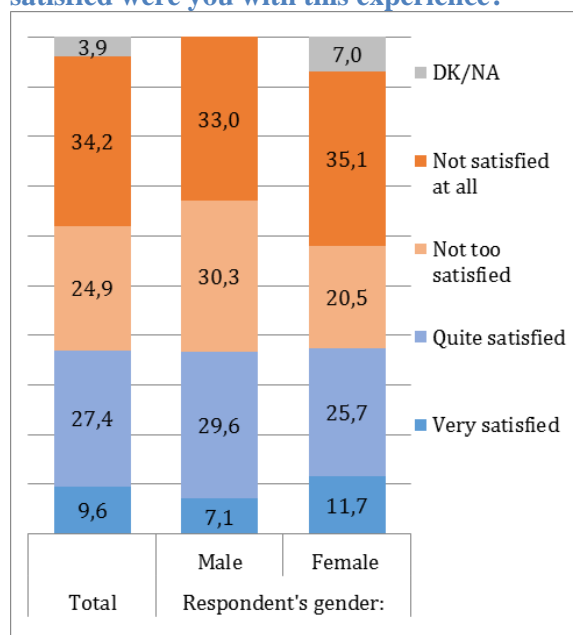


Figure 49. If you went to the courts, how satisfied were you with this experience?



Participation in human rights activities is particularly low, with only units mentioning that they participated in any actions (Figure 50). Participation in some public meetings is slightly more pronounced among the more affluent with 7.8% stating that they participated in signing petitions, with about 10% of the highly educated respondents aged 18-29 years participating.

The level of knowledge of the international human rights foundation document is rather limited among respondents. Only 11% mentioned the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the others gave various answers, and 17.2% - admitted that they did not know what it was (Figure 51).

Figure 50. In the last 2 years, have you participated in a human rights activity, %?

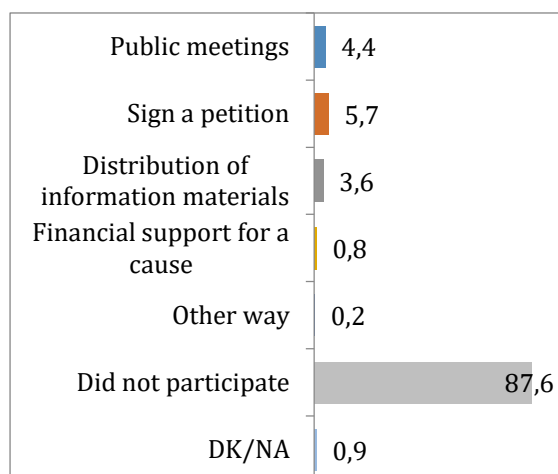
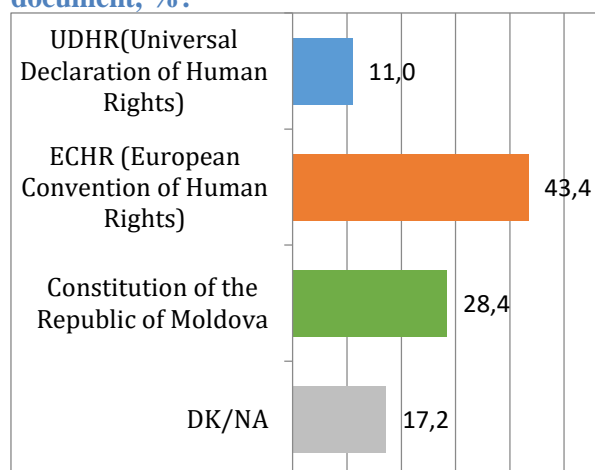


Figure 51. What do you think is the international human rights foundation document, %?



In group discussions with vulnerable groups it was noted that lack of knowledge - "they don't know the law", low level of information, but also the bureaucratic process, lack of confidence that they will get justice are impediments to claiming their rights. In the case of specific groups such as victims of domestic violence, the reasons are much more complex, ranging from shame, "the world", "worrying about causing negative emotions, pain to their loved ones" (children, parents) etc. to financial dependence on abusive partners and lack of support from family, authorities, distrust of authorities.

CHAPTER 4. The suggestions for improving the human rights observance and freedoms in the Republic of Moldova

The participants in the group discussions and the experts interviewed suggested the following needs to improve the human rights observance in the Republic of Moldova, many of which were also voiced in previous studies:

- Literacy of the population on human rights, increasing their knowledge;
- Informing the population about the institutions they can turn to in case of human rights violations;
- Insistence of the population in addressability;
- Ensuring a functional and fair justice system - in this respect, the need to fight corruption, protectionism and de-politicisation of legal institutions was emphasised;
- Informing and empowering service providers in their interaction with vulnerable groups from a human rights perspective;
- Continuous monitoring of the human rights observance;
- Eliminating bureaucracy and delay in court proceedings and holding perpetrators accountable - "establishing legal mechanisms whereby the victim can find justice in court and not necessarily have to spend seven years before reaching the Supreme Court and either the perpetrator is granted justice or the victim is no longer interested and withdraws their claim".
- Making the population accountable through sanctions, harsher punishments for human rights violators;
- Educating a tolerant society that is sensitive to the human rights observance, setting an example in the family;
- Protecting people in vulnerable groups by providing specialised assistance;
- Harshly penalising judges who pronounce sentences that violate human rights;
- Increasing public involvement in community decision-making and activities;
- Providing people with disabilities with assistive devices;
- Developing information, support and counselling services to assist people whose rights have been violated, as well as perpetrators;
- Improving detention conditions;
- Enhancing the value and credibility of the conflict mediation system;
- Strengthening and fortifying the institution of the People's Advocate Office - "to have more staff, to be a stronger institution"; "to have more voice in the defence of human rights";
- Provide levers for sanctioning those who violate, do not respect decisions, recommendations of the Council for the Prevention and Elimination of Discrimination and Ensuring Equality. Empower this institution to apply these sanctions;
- Requesting and conditioning from development partners the observance of human rights, through concrete mechanisms when making certain investments, support is provide.

The experts interviewed highlighted the following shortcomings and urgent needs to improve the human rights observance in the Republic of Moldova:

- **Functioning justice** - "*the justice system does not work, the human rights protection mechanism at the pragmatic level does not work...*";
 - a) No political involvement in justice;

- b) *"Organised crime controls all decision-making processes in justice. This organised crime has come to control the political institutions of the state, parliament and government";*

According to several experts, as long as the justice system does not function, people cannot enjoy their rights, because the mechanism for applying sanctions is dysfunctional, and the consequences are the lack of confidence of the population in state institutions, in the fact that they can guarantee their security.

- **Adoptions, legislative amendments;**

- a) Adoption of the law on hate speech and incitement to discrimination - "if a representative of a party or a representative of the government or parliament knew that for such a statement they could go to prison or pay a heavy fine, then they would think again...";
- b) Adoption of the law on medical malpractice;
- c) Inclusion in national legislation of Article 19 on the right to independent living and community integration of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities;
- d) Legislative amendments on granting residence status in the Republic of Moldova to refugees who in the meantime fall into other categories for the issuance of a residence permit, excluding their obligation to leave the country - "the law allows him to obtain a residence permit, but for this he must leave the territory of the Republic of Moldova, then re-enter and proceed to complete the paperwork for another residence status";
- e) Ratification of the Istanbul Convention / Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence.

- **Quality education**

In different contexts, both respondents participating in the group discussions and some experts mentioned that the focus in society should be on education, the quality of education, moral principles, so we will have educated, open and tolerant people, empathetic, more difficult to manipulate, with much less risk of violating other people's rights - "if we do not intervene in education, and in the right to education, and in the quality of education, I think we have no chance for the near future".

The perspectives of human rights observance in the Republic of Moldova

The opinions on the future of the human rights observance in the Republic of Moldova are largely pessimistic, with a good number of respondents expecting setbacks in this regard, given some attempts, worrying trends in recent years. An example in this respect refers to the return to military ranks for the police, in the context where the "demilitarisation" of the police was one of the main objectives set out in the Concept for the reform of the Ministry of Internal Affairs. Another initiative on changing the status of the Carabinieri could undermine progress on the prevention of torture, inhuman and degrading treatment.

"The Law on Carabinieri, it was approved very easily by the president. In reality, the Carabinieri are military officers on term, with zero knowledge of human rights, most of them can't read or write, and this huge group of soldiers has been given the right to act as a police officer and to restore public order. They're competing with the civilian police, that one, and two, we run the risk that any demonstration by people in the street we'll end up with the military acting in a military manner." (8IA, expert)

Some respondents believe that as long as the interests of corrupt, criminal heavily influence politics groups we will not make significant progress in this area. Another concern voiced by several experts

relates to the manipulation of the population, mass misinformation, fake news and the complexity of their consequences in the medium and long term.

The massive exodus of the population, especially young people, is, according to some respondents, also a consequence of the lack of the human rights observance in the Republic of Moldova - "migration is not only economic, social, migration is also a consequence of the violation of certain rights of citizens"; "there is corruption, people do not feel protected".

Some experts expressed concern about the social-political context in the Republic of Moldova, stating that political games and group interests are significant barriers to the implementation of human rights reforms and contribute to stagnation and even setbacks in their promotion and observance.

The experts interviewed, as well as some respondents, consider that in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, under the pretext of preventing the spread of COVID-19, actions violating human rights are increasing, especially in areas guaranteed by the state, such as health protection, education, but also the right to assembly and demonstration or attempts to excessively limit the right to information. An attempt to suppress the right to freedom of expression and an attempt to institute censorship was also seen as the Broadcasting Council's provision of March 24, 2020⁷ requesting that "during the period of the state of emergency, presenters, moderators, editors shall unilaterally renounce the unadvised enunciation and favouring of both their own opinion and the free formation of arbitrary opinions in the coverage of topics concerning the COVID-19 pandemic, both in the national and external context". This decision was reversed at the insistence of civil society representatives, PAO and the media.

Some of the respondents, especially representatives of vulnerable groups (LGBT, religious minorities, HIV+ people) who have received/are receiving support from civil society, are optimistic about the improvement of the human rights situation, arguing that the process has already started, people are more informed, on the one hand they are starting to insist that their rights are observed, on the other hand community members are more tolerant towards certain groups, public officials more informed. Also, constant monitoring and pressure from non-governmental and international organisations on the human rights observance is forcing state institutions to make progress in this area. Respondents consider that the proximity to the EU requires the authorities to observe the human rights, including those of minorities. In this respect, some respondents continue to be concerned (with particular reference to religious minorities) that the EU promotes the rights and freedoms of sexual minorities, which they feel are contrary to religious and traditional norms.

However, according to some respondents, the current possibilities of information through the Internet, social networks and the professional and free support provided by civil society representatives are very important resources in the contribution on respect for human rights in the Republic of Moldova. Modern technologies facilitate the possibilities for the inhabitants of the Republic of Moldova to be informed, protected, by rapid documentation and requesting the support of the communities they belong to or the assistance of specialists in the field.

⁷ <http://www.audiovizual.md/news/n-aten-ia-furnizorilor-de-servicii-media-audiovizuale-din-jurisdicia-republicii-moldova>

Conclusions

Level of information of the population of the Republic of Moldova on human rights

Knowing the level of information helps to identify the needs of state institutions to intervene on the violation of rights, to raise awareness of obligations to observe the human rights in the state. The carried out studies show that the level of awareness of human rights among the population remains relatively low, with a slight increase compared to previous years, due to the urban environment. Vulnerable groups, such as the poor, the poorly educated, the elderly and the rural population, remain the least informed.

Access to information about human rights and information opportunities is increasing, and the development of information technologies has played a key role in this. In addition to the media, the internet has become a second source of information in this area. Bureaucratic civil servants are one of the major obstacles to access human rights information.

Level of the human rights observance in the Republic of Moldova.

Traditions and customs, in general, can lead to certain impediments in terms of the human rights observance, they can limit fundamental human rights, especially for certain social groups, with this statement about 1/3 of respondents agree. More than half consider that the use of torture is not justified in any circumstances.

The situation regarding the human rights observance in the Republic of Moldova worsened in 2020 compared to 2018, nine out of ten respondents believe that human rights are systematically or occasionally violated. Corruption can greatly affect the human rights observance in the Republic of Moldova, about 60% of people agree with this statement. The pandemic situation has contributed to the worsening of certain rights observance, in particular the right to health and education, but also the right to freedom of movement, assembly, etc.

The right to health, education and social protection are considered to be among the three most topical and important rights that require greater attention from society in the Republic of Moldova, an opinion supported in all three studies. At the same time, the right to health and social protection, in the opinion of the respondents, are among the three least observed, together with the right to a fair trial.

With regard to the rights and freedoms observance of certain groups of people, more than half of the respondents consider that the rights of children and women are observed to a very large extent, with an increase compared to previous surveys. The rights of drug and psychoactive substance users, sexual minorities (LGBT), prisoners and ex-prisoners are observed the least, with only less than 1/5 of the respondents of the surveys saying that their rights are observed, with a slight trend of increasing positive opinions in the current survey.

Children's right to education in the Republic of Moldova schools is considerably affected by parents' financial possibilities, almost half of the respondents agreed with this statement, only one in four considered that the state provides equal access to education and equal conditions for all and that school graduation provides equal opportunities for students to continue their studies. In the context of Covid-19 and e-schooling, the deprivation of the right to education of children from vulnerable families who did not have access to technology and/or the internet was highlighted. One in three respondents agree that ethno-linguistic minorities have equal access to quality education as those studying in Romanian language. Roughly the same trends remain in relation to the previous study in

2018, which reports on the persistence of the respective issues related to the right to education, awareness and perception of them by the population.

In the current study, the positive views on the state's provision of the right to health care to different groups of people showed a positive dynamic for all groups of people mentioned, and the increase compared to previous years varies between 10 and 20 p.p. More assured are considered to be the rights of children and women, less assured - people in detention, vulnerable groups (the Roma, religious minorities, LGBT, etc.), people with low incomes. Only 1/3 of the respondents consider that the state ensures equal access to quality health care for all, almost 2/3 support the view that the economic status of the person affects the right to health care, and only 1/5 agree that the health insurance policy allows the policy holder an adequate level of health care. The experts interviewed stressed that the problem is not in access to health services, but in the quality of health services, with huge discrepancies between rural and urban areas.

On the right of people living with HIV, some 30% of respondents confirmed agreement that people living with HIV have access to health services of all kinds on equal terms with others and that the state is carrying out its HIV prevention and prophylaxis obligations effectively. There is also a high degree of ignorance of the situation among the population, with almost 1/3 of respondents not giving any answer.

Slightly more than half of the respondents consider that the right to a healthy environment is observed in the localities where they live, and the most serious problems are the lack or poor quality of sewage systems, followed by the problem of waste disposal, water quality, lack of authorised waste disposal/waste management. The majority of respondents, 97.1%, indicated that they agree to sort waste, as is done in other countries, and the proportion of affirmative answers does not vary significantly according to the socio-demographic profile of the respondents.

In the opinion of about half of the respondents, the right to work is mostly observed in the Republic of Moldova for women, but also for ordinary citizens, less so for drug and psychoactive substance users, prisoners and ex-prisoners. With reference to all groups, positive opinions have increased compared to the 2018 survey data.

Just over half of respondents consider information on the right to work and employment opportunities largely available. At the same time, well-paid jobs can be found mainly through the close associated circle and access to them implies acts of corruption, cohabitation. Some 70% of respondents support these views, with a slight downward trend compared to previous surveys.

The population's right to social protection, as measured by the average size of monetary income, is still not guaranteed to a large or very large extent in the Republic of Moldova, an opinion held by more than half of the respondents to the current survey. At the same time, there was an improvement in the situation with reference to all income categories, the share of low/very low answers decreased significantly (by 13-16 p.p. compared to 2018 and by 23-32 p.p. compared to 2016). Also with reference to the protection and realization of the rights of socially vulnerable people by the state authorities, a positive dynamic of the population's opinion is observed, the share of respondents who consider that they are poorly protected by the state has decreased compared to previous surveys (by 10 p.p. compared to 2018 and 20 p.p. compared to 2016).

There has been a reduction in civic activism among the population, as measured by a decrease in the proportion of respondents who said they felt free to participate or carry out a physical or protest action. Less than ¼ of respondents reported participating or performing to a very large extent with

reference to all actions offered for evaluation. More active seem to be men than women, rural respondents, those aged up to 44 years, with higher level of education, but the differences are not very pronounced, only 4-8 p.p. higher the share of those who mentioned participation to a large extent.

The degree of confidence in ensuring due process for different groups of the population remains quite low, with answers to a large/to a very large extent ranging from 28-48% in the current survey. To the greatest extent in the Republic of Moldova the right to a fair (trial) process is ensured to children and women, less to the poor, vulnerable groups (e.g. the Roma, religious minorities, LGBT, etc.). At the same time, there is a continuous increase in the degree of trust in the judicial system compared to previous surveys (by about 9-18 p.p. compared to the survey conducted in 2018 and by 15-24 p.p. compared to the survey conducted in 2016).

Almost 2/3 of respondents consider that the right to life, physical and mental integrity is on a large/on a very large extent ensured from all three aspects assessed: against crimes that can affect your life, against inhuman and degrading treatment, against torture.

Violation of the right to freedom from torture and inhuman and degrading treatment of some categories of persons persists in the Republic of Moldova, and very often/fairly often in the opinion of 45% of respondents this right is violated in the case of detainees, less often, with 27% stating this concerns young people in military service and children detained or in detention.

The right to information, freedom of opinion and the journalist's right to free expression are considered by some 40% of respondents as observed, with some tendency towards an increase in positive opinion compared to previous survey data. At the same time, the perceptions of risk to freedom of expression persist among respondents and are increasing in the current survey. Some 72% of respondents believe that this risk persists to a very large/a large extent (68% in 2018 and 63% in 2016). More risky is the expression of opinion in relation to state leadership, politicians, rich people, corruption, less risky - with reference to religion, environmental and human rights violations.

In the opinion of the majority of 2/3 respondents in the Republic of Moldova women and men have equal rights, and every fifth respondent believes that the situation of men is somewhat better than the situation of women. Equal opportunities between men and women are also supported in higher proportions by men, young people and the more affluent. However, women are frequently/very frequently discriminated against in the family (43% of respondents) and in cases of physical, psychological and economic violence (40%). The majority of respondents, 72.7% (72% in 2018) believe that women have the same opportunities for professional and personal fulfilment as men. At the same time, 31.9% believe that women are not interested and do not want to use all available opportunities.

Role of the state in the human rights observance in the Republic of Moldova.

The majority of respondents, 8 out of 10, consider that the improvement of the situation in the field of human rights observance depends to a large extent on Parliament, the Government, ministries and their departments, but also on the municipalities and the President of the Republic of Moldova. Compared to previous surveys, the share of respondents who consider that the improvement of the human rights situation depends on state institutions has increased, while there is a tendency towards a decrease in the responsibility of each individual citizen.

There is a decrease in the respondents' opinions on the violation of human rights by state institutions compared to previous surveys, and the decrease varies between 3 and 15 p.p. Most frequently it is

considered that they are violated by the Government, Parliament, judges, less by the church, religious cults. More than half of the respondents believe that human rights are violated equally by private individuals and representatives of different institutions.

The greatest attention should be paid to the human rights observance by children, the elderly, women, people with disabilities, victims of domestic violence, victims of human trafficking. In the case of these groups, compared to the previous survey, there is an increase in the weight of these opinions by 3-6 p.p.

The media is the institution which, in the opinion of the respondents, most ensures the human rights observance (40.2% of the respondents), which means that it ensures or contributes most to the human rights observance in the Republic of Moldova, followed by the President of the Republic of Moldova (38.3%). The lowest ratings were recorded for NGOs with only 25% of such answers, Parliament and judges with about 32% ratings.

The most popular institution to which respondents would turn in case of violation of their rights or those of their relatives remains the police with 48.5% affirmations, with an increase compared to previous surveys (42.3% in 2018 and 36.8% answers in 2016). Other options accumulated less than 10% answers. At the same time, the population is not aware that they could defend their rights in court, about 10% reported that they would not go anywhere, and 8.9% - could not express themselves in this context.