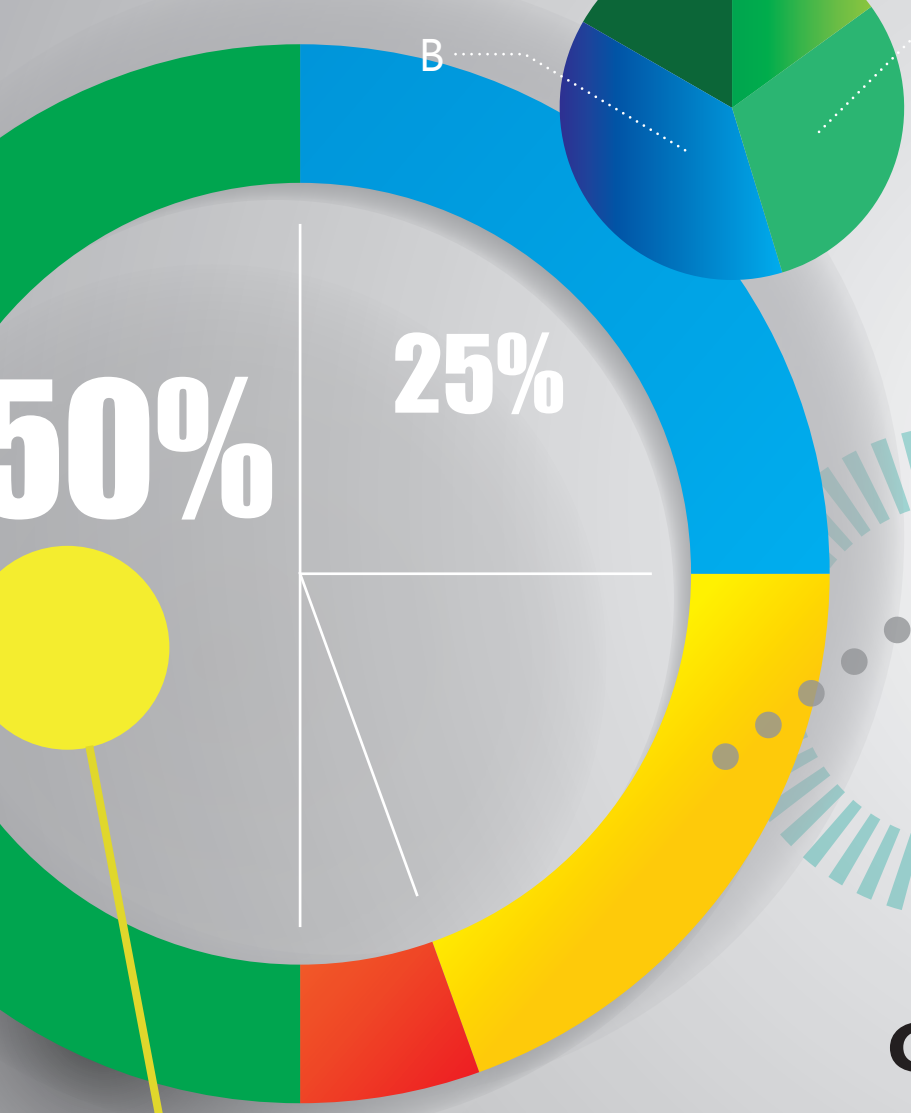


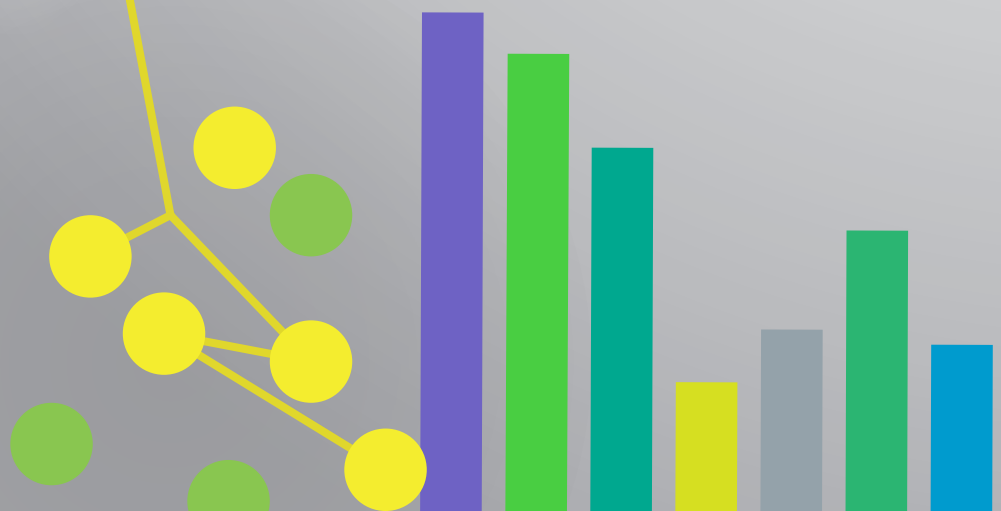
mics analysis

The analysis of Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey data

01

Gender Aspects of Life Course in Serbia Seen through MICS Data

2015



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Preface and Acknowledgments

The Republic of Serbia is one of the few countries in which all five rounds of the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) have been implemented. The third (2005), fourth (2010) and fifth round (2014) of MICS included two surveys. The standard one, representative at the national level, and the other representative for the population from Roma settlements — with the aim to close the data gap for this very vulnerable population group. Implementation of all rounds of MICS allows for observation of trends in the selected areas.

The latest, 2014 Serbia MICS and 2014 Serbia Roma Settlements MICS were carried out by the Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia with technical and financial support provided by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). In addition to the traditional MICS indicators, the country-specific indicators were included. The standard outputs of the 2014 surveys include the key findings report and the final MICS report. Both reports are of a descriptive nature and present important social and development indicators by selected background characteristics of the households and individuals.

In order to utilize the full potential of the surveys, UNICEF supported secondary data analyses in different domains (early childhood development, education, rural/urban disparities, gender equality, child protection and poverty). The analysis being presented examines the issue of gender aspects of life course of children and women in Serbia. The analysis was conducted by Marija Babovic, Professor at Faculty of Philosophy of the University of Belgrade. We thank her for her commitment and efforts to bring new knowledge that will inform policy making and the advancement of child rights.

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Executive summary

The main objective of this study is to provide additional insights into the gender aspects of the situation of children and women in Serbia explored through the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) framework. The focus of the analysis is on gender disparities among children and differences between groups of women defined by various aspects of wellbeing.

The approach in this study is shaped as a life-course approach to the situation of children and women in five areas of key importance for the development of their human potentials and wellbeing:

- health (including reproductive health of women and antenatal care),
- education,
- household environment,
- social interactions that should support children's growth and development as well as wellbeing of both children and women, and
- subjective wellbeing of young women.

The analysis in this study is grounded in the assumption that gender specific situations, problems, needs, as well as gender gaps and inequalities are age-related and influenced by the differences in access to resources specific to different stages in the course of life. The analysis in this study is developed around four life-course phases, each of them including specific age cohort sets:

- early childhood that includes children aged 0-4,
- middle childhood and early adolescence that includes children aged 5-14,
- late adolescence that includes children aged 15-17,
- adulthood that includes adult women aged 18-49, but with sub-stages that include: young women (18-24); prolonged youth (25-30), as it is recognized by the relevant national policies (National Strategy for Youth, different support measures targeting young population); younger middle-aged women (31-40), and older middle-aged women (41-49).

However, due to the fact that sex disaggregated data in MICS 2014 (which is the main database used for the analysis) are available up to the age of 17, above this age, the analysis no longer focuses on gender differences but on the wellbeing of different groups of women. Furthermore, the scope of analysis becomes limited by MICS indicators, with strong focus on reproductive health and childbearing.

The analysis is mostly cross-sectional, using data from MICS 2014 with longitudinal trends presented for some aspects that are considered important and for which comparable data were available. The analysis is in the form of descriptive statistics. Other sources of data were not used, except in the case of mortality rates. All data are based on author's calculations, unless other sources are indicated (mainly previous MICS reports).

Gender differences in early childhood (age 0-4 years)

In this analysis, early childhood is defined as a period of life from birth until the age of four (before the fifth birthday). MICS indicators allow for an analysis of certain developmental aspects of children in this initial life stage. The attention is mostly focused on some of the key aspects of survival and physical development and learning support children get for their overall development.

Health and nutrition

Health and early physical development of children under the age of 5 years is observed through several aspects: infant and child mortality, nutritional status, nutritional practices, and immunization coverage.

Data on infant and child mortality indicate trends of decreasing mortality in early childhood among infants and children under the age of five in the general population in Serbia, as well as among those living in the Roma settlements. However, mortality rates are still relatively high among infants and children under five living in the Roma settlements (over 20 deaths per thousand live births), but these data should be taken with caution due to the small number of cases.

Overall malnutrition (presence of underweight, stunting or wasting) is more frequent among children living in the Roma settlements than among those from the general population, and within each of these populations, it is more frequent among boys than among girls. Longitudinal data for 2010 and 2014 indicate that gender gap in malnutrition has been growing and that it is wider in the population of children living in the Roma settlements than among children in the general population. Overweight is more frequent among children in the general population than among those living in the Roma settlements, and is more prevalent among boys (16 percent) than girls (12 percent).

On an aggregate level for the general population, there is no significant difference in immunization coverage between boys and girls. Gender gap appears only in some specific categories: girls are more often fully covered by immunization in the Sumadija and West Serbia regions, in non-urban areas, and with mothers who completed only primary school.[1] Gender gap in immunization is more prominent among children living in the Roma settlements, with a 9 percentage-point difference in favour of boys. The gender gap is larger among children with low-educated mothers and in non-urban areas.

Another aspect in which the gender gap is evident is breastfeeding. While doctors recommend breastfeeding over bottle feeding during the first six months of life, in Serbia, only 4 percent of girls and 22 percent of boys in the general population are exclusively breastfed. Gender gap in exclusive breastfeeding is smaller among children living in the Roma settlements (12 percent of girls and 14 percent of boys are exclusively breastfed). These data indicate inappropriate and gender segregated nutritional practices during the first six months of life.

MICS 2014 data indicate a big difference in the prevalence of the minimum acceptable diet between children in the general population and those living in the Roma settlements. Gender gap is present only among children living in the Roma settlements, and it is in favour of boys, with girls being less frequently adequately fed during the day preceding the survey.

[1] Data should be taken with caution as they are based on a relatively small number of unweighted cases (25-49).

Care and protection

In order to explore the situation of children from the aspect of the household environment, several household characteristics are placed in the focus of the analysis: area and region of the household, household wealth, type of household according to its structure (which is a proxy variable for type of family[2]), gender and education of the head of the household (which are associated with vulnerability) and living arrangements — presence or absence of biological parents — which are also associated with child wellbeing and development support.

MICS data indicate a big difference between children in the general population and those living in the Roma settlements according to the wealth level of the households in which they live[3]. Around half the children in the general population live in the poorest 60 percent of households, whereas, in the Roma settlements, almost 70 percent of children live in such households[4]. A relatively low and almost equal proportion of girls and boys in the general population and Roma settlements live in the female-headed households. A higher proportion of children from the Roma settlements live in households whose head has primary education or none at all.

Care and protection in this study are observed through several indicators available within the MICS framework: birth registration, possession of the health insurance card (necessary for free access to healthcare), inadequate care arrangements and use of violent disciplining methods by parents and other adults in the household. Prevalence of inadequate care[5] is low (even marginal in the general population), and not gendered, while violent discipline is more frequent among children from both samples. Children from the Roma settlements are more exposed to violent disciplining methods than children from the general population. There are no significant gender gaps in disciplining methods for children under the age of five years. The trend of overall decrease of prevalence of violent disciplining methods indicated by data from three MICS surveys in Serbia is encouraging. The decreasing trend is observable in both samples and among children of both sexes. However, the presence of violent disciplining methods is still high.

Early development

MICS data for 2010 and 2014 indicate a higher percentage of children on track in early development in the general population than in the Roma settlements. The gender gap does not exist among children from the general population but it is present among children living in the Roma settlements, in favour of girls (86 percent of girls vs. 81 percent of boys are developmentally on track).

Data on early childhood education indicate, once more, a huge gap between children from the general population and those from the Roma settlements. Although gender gaps are not present within the two populations of

2 While household is a social unit defined mostly by sharing a living space and at least part of consumption, family is a social unit defined in terms of kinship. Household is defined mainly according to the number of its members, while family is defined according to the structure and roles (i.e. single-parent families, nuclear families which include a couple with children, extended families which include nuclear families and additional members based on intergenerational or horizontal kinship lines, etc.).

3 Household wealth is observed throughout the analysis using two original MICS classifications. One is the wealth index divided into five quintiles (poorest, second, middle, fourth, richest), while in the other, these categories are merged to only two (poorest 60 percent and richest 40 percent).

4 The wealth indexes for the general population and for Roma settlements are constructed differently (for more details, see UNICEF, 2014, p12 and p22).

5 Percentage of children under the age of 5 left alone or in the care of another child younger than 10 years of age for more than one hour at least once in the last week.

children, longitudinal data indicate an interesting trend of sharp increase of boys' early education attendance in the general population. Girls' early education attendance also shows a steady, but less sharp increase, as they were already more enrolled in the previous years. In 2014, gender gap reversed to a small advantage for boys. In the population from the Roma settlements, there is a slight downward trend among both boys and girls.

Prominent gendered patterns in learning support are evident among parents, with fathers being much less involved in activities with children than mothers, and more involved in activities with boys than girls in both populations.

Growing up as a girl or a boy (aged 5-14 years)

MICS framework for this age category of children does not include individual data and, therefore, the analysis is limited to three areas: household environment and presence of violent disciplining practices, access and movement through formal education, broader participation in economic activities and household chores and identification of child labour which is defined by the MICS methodology as involvement in economic activities and household chores above age-specific thresholds, as well as involvement in hazardous work.[6]

Household environment and disciplining methods

Slightly more children of this age live in poorer households than children in the younger age category. The vulnerability has increased in this age category of children not only in wealth aspects but also along other vulnerability-relevant features — higher share of children living in female-headed households and higher share of children living in the households with only one adult person.

Data indicate that, in the general population, overall use of violence against children in disciplining practices decreases with the increase in age of children. Non-violent disciplining methods become dominant at least in disciplining girls in the general population. In the population from the Roma settlements, use of violent methods increases with the children's age. Longitudinal data show an overall decrease of violent disciplining methods between 2005 and 2014 (in the general population, the drop was 30 percentage points for both boys and girls, while among children living in the Roma settlements the drop was 14 percentage points for boys and 13 percentage points for girls). However, this decrease should not overshadow the fact that the prevalence of violent disciplining methods is still very high, particularly in the population from the Roma settlements (around 40 percent in the general and over 60 percent in the population living in the Roma settlements).

6 Economic engagement of children in this study is not observed only through MICS indicators on child labour, defined as involvement of children in economic activities and household chores at or above the age-specific threshold and involvement in hazardous work, but also more broadly, as participation in economic activities and household chores below threshold in order to identify if there are some early gendered practices that are roots of later labour market segregation and division of household work.

Education

Gender differences in formal education are very important as they lay the foundation for later differences in employment and working career. School readiness indicator[7] shows a much lower school readiness among children living in the Roma settlements than among children from the general population. There is no gender gap in school readiness either in the general population or in the population living in the Roma settlements.

Net intake rate[8] of children from the Roma settlements is much lower than of children from the general population. In the general population, gender gap was 6 percentage points in favour of boys in 2014. Among Roma children, net intake rate was higher among girls (13 percentage points). Primary school completion rate[9] is higher among children in the general population than in children living in the Roma settlements. The gender gap in this aspect is bigger in the general population and it is in favour of girls, while in the Roma settlements the difference is to the boys' advantage.

Child labour

Child labour[10] is more prevalent among children from the general population than among children living in the Roma settlements. Within both survey populations (general and from the Roma settlements) child labour is more prevalent among boys than girls. Child labour was recorded in 3 percent of boys aged 12-14 years from the general population and in 1 percent of girls of the same age and form the same population. The main area of their economic activity is work in agriculture, followed by engagement in a family business. Girls are more likely to participate in household chores. The most common activity children perform for the household is shopping, followed by cooking, cleaning and washing performed mostly by girls in the older age group (12-14 years), and care for other children, old or sick in the household. However, these activities are mostly performed for less than the age-specific number of hours that classifies them as child labour.

Being a male or female adolescent (age 15-17 years)

Adolescence is a stage in the life course that is basically transitional towards adulthood. This is the stage in which multiple transitions are prepared or take place. Within the MICS framework these transitions are analyzed from the aspects of the household's background characteristics, education, and child labour, reproductive health and subjective wellbeing of girls.

7 Percentage of children who attended first grade of primary school during survey and who participated in the Preparatory Preschool Programme (PPP) during the previous year.

8 Percentage of children who entered first grade on time

9 The ratio of the total number of students, regardless of age, entering the last grade of primary school for the first time, to the number of children of primary graduation age at the beginning of the current (or most recent) school year (UNICEF, 2014: 183).

10 Performing economic activities and/or household chores at or above age specific thresholds, as well as hazardous work (UNICEF, 2014: 201).

Household background

Within this age category, there are no significant differences in the household background characteristics for female and male adolescents from the general population. Vulnerability in terms of share living in poorer, female headed, single adult households is not different from younger age categories. However, important differences can be found among girls from Roma settlements who already experience marriage[11], cohabitation and some even motherhood to a larger extent. Among them, almost 30% live without any biological parents already at this age.

Education

Transition from primary to secondary education level is an important one in the life of adolescents as it lays foundations for later socio-economic wellbeing. MICS data on effective transition to secondary school indicate high transit of children from the general population to secondary school and no gender differences. At the same time, they indicate a significantly lower transit of Roma children, with small gender difference in favour of boys[12]. In the general population of Serbia, a higher percentage of girls than boys have been attending secondary school, while in the Roma settlements a higher percentage of boys than girls have been attending secondary school. Among children of secondary school age who drop out of school before getting a degree, boys prevail in the general population, while girls prevail in the Roma settlements. One of the consequences of dropping out of school early is a lower literacy rate of Roma girls (88 percent compared to 100 percent for girls in the general population).

Child Labour

Participation of this age group in **economic activities** above the age-specific threshold is low. The highest level of economic activity (but below the age specific threshold) is recorded among boys from the national sample, with agriculture as the principal economic activity, although engagement in family business increases.

Contrary to the expectations based on various surveys that showed a higher participation in household chores among women in adult population, MICS findings indicate a lower participation of adolescent girls than boys in household chores in the general population. There is a reverse picture among Roma adolescents, with girls performing more household tasks than boys. When focus is on the structure of household chores, we can see an increased engagement of girls in key reproductive household activities: cooking, washing and cleaning. Boys and girls living in the Roma settlements are more engaged in caring activities than their peers in the general population, with girls engaged in caregiving activities more often than boys. This is not surprising since many

[11] Confidence intervals for marriage before 18 in general population indicator are 0.057-0.079, while in the population living in the Roma settlements they are 0.530-0.610 (UNICEF, 2014: 275, 284).

[12] Data are based on a relatively small number of unweighted cases (25-49).

girls in the Roma settlements are already married and taking care of children of their own, as it will be revealed in the following sections.

When **child labour is measured in total**[13], we notice that it mostly concerns boys in general as well as in the Roma settlements populations. The worrying fact is that prevalence of work in hazardous conditions equals child work among boys (11 percent among boys from the general population, 12 percent among boys living in the Roma settlements), which indicates that the work they perform could be harmful for their health and development. On the other hand, having in mind sociological standpoints on the importance of adolescents' economic engagement as an experience that helps boost the skills, competences and self-confidence of these young people who will soon fully enter the labour market, the lower prevalence of economic participation of girls can partly be understood as a disadvantage. This is something that particularly deprives girls living in the Roma settlements.

Partnering, reproductive health and behaviour

Some transitions early in life may also have life trajectory implications by shaping later events, experiences and future transitions. Early marriage is considered as a severe obstacle to human development, even as a violation of human rights of girls, which results in their social exclusion. Among girls living in the Roma settlements aged 15-17, 15 percent were already married before the age of 15. In the total population of women aged 15-49 living in the Roma settlements, 17 percent were married before the age of 15. There are differences in the justification of a husbands' violence against his wife among girls aged 15-17 in the general population and those living in the Roma settlements, with the latter more likely to justify it. Girls from non-urban areas are more likely to agree with attitudes justifying wife-beating, as well as girls from the poorer households.

Overall knowledge about various contraception methods among girls aged 15-17 in the general population is on par with that among the whole population of women aged 15-49. The same applies to specific knowledge about modern methods, but regarding traditional methods of contraception their knowledge lags behind the overall sample of women, particularly in non-urban areas. The knowledge about contraception methods among girls living in the Roma settlements lags behind the average for overall population of women (15-49 years), which indicates low transfer of knowledge from older to younger generations.

Subjective wellbeing

Indicators of life satisfaction and happiness recently became very important as a subjective measure of development. In these approaches, happiness is considered to be part of the human wellbeing which expands an individual's capability to function (Todaro, Smith, 2006: 19).

According to MICS data, girls aged 15-17 from the general population are more satisfied with overall life and with various specific life aspects: treatment by people, living place, friendships and family life. Girls living in the Roma settlements are more often satisfied with the way they look and with schools than girls from the general

[13] Which takes into account involvement in economic activities and household chores at or above age-specific thresholds, as well as involvement in hazardous work.

population. There is a small difference in happiness between girls from the general population and those living in the Roma settlements, as among the former 96 percent claimed that they were very or somewhat happy, and among the latter 92 percent girls gave such a statement.

Womanhood seen through MICS data (women aged 18-49 years)

Womanhood is not a single model of being an adult woman, but a diversity of identities and experiences that can be found among adult women. Womanhood can never be limited to biological aspects, and when exploring diverse gender identities, we can find that for some women biological aspects of self, identity and the life course have higher importance while for others they can be of lower or even marginal importance[14]. However, womanhood seen through the MICS lens is inevitably reductionist due to the limited scope of available indicators which are strongly focused on biological aspects: reproductive health, fertility, childbearing, antenatal and post-natal care. In addition to these aspects, indicators are available (at least for basic dimensions) for education and literacy, partnership and household arrangements. It is important to note that subjective wellbeing indicators are not available for women older than 24.

Household environment

In the general population, distribution of women between the poorest and the richest households varies between regions, types of living areas and composition of households. Majority of women from Belgrade live in the richer households (wealth index category of 40 percent richest households), while in women in the other regions majority live in poorer households (wealth index category of 60 percent poorest households). Differences are present among areas with a different degree of urbanization. In more urbanized areas (densely populated) the majority of women live in the richer households, while in very rural areas (thinly populated), a vast majority of women live in poorer households. Data on the household structure and wealth prove once more that single-member households (mostly elderly persons) and households with one adult person with child or children[15] live in worse-off households (category of 60 percent poorest households). Increase in the number of children in the household decreases chances of households to be well-off, whereas a combination of two adults with one child is linked with the highest share of richest households in the 2014 Serbia MICS.

Majority of women living in the Roma settlements live in poorer households regardless of the degree of urbanization of the living area. Single-member households represent the category with the best chances to achieve a better wealth status, while households of single adults with children are extremely pushed towards the category of poorest households.

[14] For decades, feminist debates evolved around the issues of gender identity, women's identity, womanhood, and the role of biology in the construction of these identities. For some of the key points in these debates, see Alcoff, 1988.

[15] More about hardships of single-parent families in Tomanovic, Stanojevic, Ljubicic, 2014.

Education

Educational attainment is closely related to the potential of women to acquire a good position on the labour market and achieve appropriate levels of economic wealth necessary for the satisfaction of a diversity of needs and enabling life choices. Data on ongoing education (school attendance during the survey) indicate that men and women living in the Roma settlements remain far behind their peers from the general population and that young men from the general population lag behind young women. Women living in the Roma settlements almost disappear from the education system after the age of 18 and their male peers from Roma settlements after the age of 21.

Data on literacy indicate a big gap between young women from the general population and those living in the Roma settlements. In total, there is a difference of 22 percentage points between these two groups, in favour of women from the general population.

Half of young women from Serbia attended higher-level education. There is a big difference between middle-aged women and young women and we can assume that the higher education reform and gender equality policies including raising awareness on the importance of education as a means to improvement of socio-economic position of women have contributed to this intergenerational change. Unfortunately, this trend has not reached young women living in the Roma settlements. Data on their education attainment indicate that the majority of women living in the Roma settlements attended only primary school.

There is also the effect of early marriage and childbearing on school attendance. Women who have never been married and who have no children have higher chances to attend higher education levels.

The analysis of education basically indicate that institutional pathways of formal education are much harder to pass for young women living in poorer, more remote households and particularly for those who already experienced the transition to marriage and parenthood. The formal educational system, it seems, does not offer effective side-pathways to these young women. This is true for all levels of education, including higher. Higher education reform evolves along with trends of increasing the share of women who attend higher education, but it seems that it does not provide effective alternative pathways to young mothers. As it does not recognize the possibility o simultaneous employment and studying, it does not offer opportunities to young women to combine studying and childcare. This can indicate relatively rigid institutional pathways and all who leave them at one point have low opportunity to catch up again.

Partnering, reproductive health and behavior

According to MICS data, except in the case of young women (18-24), among all other age groups of women from the general sample or those living in the Roma settlements, the majority of women are married or in union. Women enter their first marriage or cohabitation relatively early, though differences between general population and those living in the Roma settlements are big. Among women who were ever married or in union, the first marriage/cohabitation occurred before the age of 18 for almost 17 percent of women from the general population and over 73 percent of women living in the Roma settlements. More than half of women

from the general population enter their first marriage/cohabitation between the ages of 18 and 24, and almost one third after that age.

A relatively high percentage of women who married very early (before the age of 15) can be found among women living in the Roma settlements. Data on early marriage disaggregated by age groups indicate no significant changes between older and younger generations of women living in the Roma settlements. Again we can see that early marriage is associated with low educational achievements, as one quarter of women who married before the age of 15 have not finished any school. Among women living in the Roma settlements there is no prominent difference between women living in the poorest and the richest households in terms of child marriage prevalence.

Indicators on attitudes towards intimate partner violence show that women living in the Roma settlements justify a husband's violence against his wife much more often than women from the general population. While in the general population slightly more women who justify violence are in the oldest age group, among women from the Roma settlements, the highest share of those who justify violence is among youngest women.

Contraception and family planning data are important because they provide various indications on control women have over their reproductive function which is at the core of control over their entire life course. Pregnancy and motherhood demand plenty of women's resources — biological, economic, knowledge, skills, time and energy, and commitment. When childbearing is planned, women can better manage different resources so their transition to motherhood does not limit their life opportunities.

Among women from the general population, knowledge about modern and traditional contraception methods is high across all age groups. Women from the Roma settlements are generally less informed about various contraception methods, but on average, in all age groups, women are familiar with at least one modern or traditional contraception method in over 90 percent of cases. The difference between women from the general population and those living in the Roma settlements is more evident when the attention focuses on the mean numbers of contraception methods known by women. While women from the general population know on average more than 10 contraceptive methods across all age groups, women living Roma settlements know on average around 6 contraceptive methods.

Percentage of women with an unmet need[16] in the general population was highest among the youngest women, while in sample from the Roma settlements it was highest among women aged 25-30. Among women from the general population, in all age groups, the highest share of women with an unmet need can be found in Belgrade.

Prevalence of induced abortions is much higher among women living in the Roma settlements than among women from the general population. The share of women with at least one induced abortion during their lifetime increases with age. Among young women in the general population the prevalence of abortion is 1 percent, and it reaches 29 percent in the oldest category of women (41-49 years). Among women living in the Roma settlements, the prevalence rate in the youngest group is 11 percent and more than half the women in the oldest group had at least one induced abortion during their life course. Data show not only that the share of women with at least one abortion increases with age, but that the mean number of abortions increases as well. Again, the mean number of abortions is higher among women living in the Roma settlements.

[16] Fecund women who are married or in union and are not using any method of contraception, but who wish to postpone their next birth or to stop childbearing.

Total fertility rate (for women aged 15-49 years) was 1.6 for national, and 3.1 for the sample of population living in the Roma settlements. The general fertility rate (number of live births per 1,000 women) counted 45.7 for the national and 102 for the sample living in the Roma settlements. Early childbearing (live birth before the age of 18) occurs on a small scale in the general population of women (1 percent of women aged 20-24) and is much more prevalent among women living in the Roma settlements (38 percent in the same age group). Among women from the general population, prevalence is higher in the category of women with primary education and in the poorest wealth quintile. The majority of women living in the Roma settlements experience their first live birth before the age of 20, while for the majority of women from Serbia this happens in the between the ages of 20 and 34.

Data on the desirability of pregnancy show that, generally, a vast majority of actual or past pregnancies (that ended in a live birth in the previous two years) were desired. Desirability is higher among women from the general population than among women from the Roma settlements.

Data indicate a high coverage of at least basic antenatal care in both populations. In the general population, only a small percent of women remain completely out of antenatal care coverage during pregnancy and these are largely women aged 31-40. What is worrying is that, among women living in the Roma settlements, more than one fifth of women in their thirties did not have any access to antenatal care during pregnancy that ended in a live birth during the previous two years. Participation in the preparation programme was very low among women who underwent childbirth during the previous two years, and rather marginal among women living in the Roma settlements.

Subjective wellbeing among young women

Like in the younger age group, women in the 18-24 age group in the general population are generally more satisfied with all aspects of life than their peers living in the Roma settlements, with the exception of satisfaction with school. Young women in the general population are mostly satisfied with health and the way they look, friendships and family. They expressed somewhat less satisfaction with their living place, treatment by people, while job and income are the sources of lowest satisfaction.

Women from Serbia are also generally happier than women from Roma settlements. What is surprising is that women from rural areas are happier than women from urban areas in case of general population. Again, married women are happier than those who have never been married or in union in the general population, while among Roma women those who have not experienced marriage or cohabitation are again happier than those who have.

Introduction

The main objective of this study is to provide additional insights into gender aspects of the situation of children and women in Serbia explored through the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) data. The focus of the analysis is on gender disparities among children, and differences between groups of women defined by various aspects of wellbeing. Grounding such analysis in MICS data brings both advantages and limitations. The advantages of such a framework include high gender sensitivity of data (this is one of the most gender-relevant and sensitive large scale international surveys), possibility to provide a more detailed analysis due to the large samples which enable disaggregation in many aspects, availability of data on trends due to the three survey cycles in Serbia (2005, 2010 and 2014), life-course appropriate approach which enables monitoring of age-relevant indicators across the samples of children and women and availability of data for the most marginalized population — Roma living in the Roma settlements — who usually remain outside standard statistical surveys[17].

Key limitations that were taken into account when the analytical approach in this study was designed included:

- availability of sex-disaggregated data only for children — in 2014 MICS there are no data on men above the age of 17 and gender analysis cannot be applied;
- partial comparability of data over time — some aspects of the situation of children and women are not included in all three surveys, definitions and measurement has changed for some indicators not allowing for comparisons;
- limited opportunities to compare different age-based categories of women, as some indicators were not available for women older than 24 (this is particularly the case with subjective wellbeing);
- relatively strong focus on fertility and reproductive health when adult women are concerned, which predefines scope of the analysis excluding some dimensions important for women's wellbeing that are not covered by the MICS survey in Serbia (often due to the fact that these aspects, such as employment, social inclusion, access to information and other resources are already well-covered by official statistics).

Based on presented opportunities and limitations, the approach in this study was shaped as a life-course approach to situation of children and women in five big areas of key importance for the development of their human potentials and wellbeing:

- health (including reproductive health of women and antenatal care),
- education,
- household environment,
- social interactions that should support a child's growth, development and wellbeing of both children and women, and
- subjective wellbeing of young women.

[17] Regular statistical surveys usually do not include Roma settlements in their samples. MICS is specific in this respect as it targets population living in these settlements. According to MICS data, 93 percent of heads of households, who participated in the survey in the Roma settlements, declared their ethnicity as Roma. Due to the fact that a small percentage of the Roma population is included also in the national MICS sample for Serbia in order to differentiate two samples, the following labels will be used hereinafter in the study — "Serbia" for general sample and "Roma settlements" for Roma living in these settlements.

What is a life course approach and why is it used in the analysis?

The life course as a theoretical approach evolved from the desire to understand social pathways of individuals and groups, their developmental effects and their relation to personal and social-historical conditions. These pathways are shaped by historical forces and are structured by social institutions (Mortimer, Shanahan, 2002). Individuals generally work out their own life course in relation to institutionalized pathways and normative patterns. Therefore, exploring how children and women of the same age access certain resources over time, or how different age cohorts of women and children access important resources during the same period based on their background, and (depending on that) move through life course stages is key to understanding how their life pathways are shaped and if wellbeing is achieved along these pathways. With this approach, it is possible to analyze how their personal or group features shape life paths within the same constraints and influences imposed by institutions, laws, or dominant norms, including those that are related to 'appropriate' or 'desirable' age and gender roles and transitions.

In the life course approach, concepts of trajectories and transitions are considered as central descriptors of the life course (Elder, 1985, quoted from Macmillan and Eliason, 2002). Trajectories refer to long-term involvement in or connection to social institutions and corresponding roles. They can be charted by linking institutionally defined roles or 'states' over time and are often characterized by specific events with definable sequence, duration and order (schooling, career, parenthood, etc.). The concept of transition refers to specific events that move an individual into or out of various institutional contexts and corresponding role configurations (getting married, dropping out of school, etc.) (Macmillan and Eliason, 2002: 531). Each of these indicates movement from one set of roles to another or a change in an individual's socially and institutionally defined roles.

Basically, the analysis in this study is grounded in the assumption that gender specific situations, problems, needs, as well as gender gaps and inequalities are age-related and influenced by the differences in access to resources specific for different stages in the life course. In life-course theoretical approaches, age is a social construction that differentiates the life course. The social meanings of age can structure the life course through age expectations, informal sanctions, social timetables, and generalized age grades (such as childhood or adolescence). A normative concept of social time specifies an appropriate age for transitions such as entry into school, marriage, and retirement, leading to relatively 'early' and 'late' transitions (Elder, 1974, 1999, quoted from Elder et al, 2002). Laws and policies structure rights, responsibilities and entitlements on the basis of age, whether through explicit age-related rules or implicit judgments about the nature of particular life periods (Settersten, Jr. R.A, 2002). In this manner, contemporary social policies are shaped by these normative approaches to age and life course. Socially defined age, rather than need, becomes a criterion for benefits and services. This can be noticed as some programs, measures, institutions or sanctions are linked to a certain age, such as first-grade entry age, preschool age, age threshold for labour engagement, etc. (Ibid).

In such a 'synchronized' and 'institutionalized context'[18], individuals are guided through the life-course and various trajectories are imposed as desirable or 'normalized' while transitions[19] are timed according to the normative frame. Individuals use age-related ideas to organize their lives, the lives of others and their general expectations about the life course. The majority of individuals adopt these norms about trajectories[20], about proper time for transitions during socialization (i.e. time to finish school, to leave parental home, to marry, to have children, to employ) and the inability to meet these norms can create frustration (Settersten, 2002). The analysis in this study cannot devote attention to these aspects as they are out of focus of the survey. However, these theoretical underpinnings, supported by many empirical researches conducted during decades, offer important guidance for the analysis presented in this study.

Based on these theoretical and research foundation, the analytical framework applied in this study starts from the assumption about relative importance of various resources in different phases of life-course. For instance, the accesses to immunization, proper nutrition or learning support are 'resources' of key importance for early life and development of children. Unequal access to these 'resources' for boys and girls can present them with unequal life opportunities in other areas in their lives later on, and can open gender gaps that will grow in complexity as they move further through the life-course. For older children some of these resources can be of less importance, replaced by some other that are more crucial, such as formal education. For adolescents or young women, contraception and support to reproductive health can become more important, and so on. Assuming that besides some universal resources, development and wellbeing require life-stage specific resources, analytical framework in this study has been structured around sets of age cohorts that were in same life-course phase during the survey.

A cohort is a group, or set of persons, who have experienced the same event-origin within a given interval of time: birth, first marriage, reaching the age-of consent. If the distinguishing event is birth, this is a birth cohort. The cohort is closed against new entries because such entries are, by definition, impossible (Ruspini, Dale, 2002: xi). Members of a birth cohort share social history, historical events and opportunities and constraints posed by society at a given time. They share the experience of the life cycle at the same time — experiencing childhood, reaching adolescence, growing into early adulthood at the same time. But also, members of the cohort share the experience of the cohort itself, that is, the distinctive aspects of the cohort, such as its size, or level of education, or something else that is unique to the cohort (Alwin, McCammon, 2002).

Locating children and women in cohorts by birth year not only provides a more focused perception of important resources for a particular life-course stage, which explain how chances in later stages are shaped by earlier experiences, but also provides a more precise historical placement of people. Cohorts, in effect, link age and historical time, and when a historical change differentiates the lives of successive birth cohorts, it generates a cohort effect. For instance, introduction of the institution of preparatory preschool programme has

[18] Various authors indicate that modern life course, at least in the Western civilization, is relatively firmly structured. Some authors speak about 'chronologization', the process in which age and time become salient dimensions of life, as well as about institutionalization, which refers to the ways in which the life course is structured by organizations, institutions and the state. European scholars particularly emphasize the ways in which modern nation-states shape the life course via structural arrangements and the allocation of resources. Standardization refers to the regularity of life patterns and is a direct result of chronologization and institutionalization. At the same time, there is evidence that lives have become de-chronologized, de-institutionalized and de-standardized as new opportunities exist for individuals to move between or simultaneously pursue educational, work and leisure experiences throughout life, rather than restrict them to specific stages (Settersten, 2002).

[19] Transition is a change in the state or roles (Elder et al, 2002).

[20] Trajectories are sequences of roles and experiences, made up of transition (Elder et al, 2002).

changed the educational pathways of age cohorts of children who reached the PPP age after the introduction of this institution and influenced later educational pathways and achievements in their life course. Due to this, the educational pathways and likely achievements have changed for these cohorts in comparison to previous cohorts which were at the same stage of the life course before the introduction of the PPP institution.

Starting from the presented conceptual background and key assumptions, the analysis in this study is structured around four phases in the life-course, each of them including specific age cohort sets:

- early childhood that includes children aged 0-4 years,
- middle childhood and early adolescence that includes children aged 5-14 years,
- late adolescence that includes children aged 15-17 years,
- adulthood that includes adult women aged 18-49 years, but with sub-stages that include
  - young women (18-24 years)
  - prolonged youth (25-30 years), as it is recognized by the relevant national policies (National Strategy for Youth, different support measures targeting young population)
  - younger middle-aged women (31-40 years), and
  - older middle-aged women (41-49 years).

Why these age groups? Each of these stages in the life course is defined starting from the assumptions on crucial trajectories and transitions in the Serbian society. The stage between birth and completing the age of five years is one marked by support children receive to increase the chances to survive and to develop. Life course stage of mid-childhood and early adolescence (5-14) starts with a transition to the formal educational system, access to education system and it finishes with the transition to the secondary school and complex stage of adolescence. Late adolescence is a phase marked by multiplying transitional pathways — schooling, labour, partnership and for some, parenthood. Even if most of these pathways (except schooling) are still at the level of seedlings or predispositions (school achievements, partnership experiences, contraception and family planning ideas and first experiences), they are important for shaping the foundations for later transitions and trajectories. For some, this is already the stage in the life course in which they move to the next phase, particularly in case of marriage and motherhood among Roma girls, which determines their later life course pathways. Although adolescence does not finish with completion of secondary school, this is used as a marker for the next transition — to adulthood. The institutional pathways change around this stage, opening doors for some to enter higher education, for others to work and yet for others to focus on family roles and enter early the roles related to motherhood. Therefore the age of 18, set as a legal start of adulthood, is taken as a marker for transition to adult roles and pathways. Within the adult life, stages are defined based on the combination of background expectations (when transitions on the age-line can occur for a larger number of women) and administrative definitions (in national youth, employment and other relevant policies, up to age of 30 people are considered to be young). However, it is important to emphasize that insights are much more limited in this part of the analysis due to the limited focus of indicators.

Each stage in the life course is analysed through the available sets of indicators which are considered as important for gender specific aspects of wellbeing. Scholarly works have already provided important findings on the life course aspects and transitions of children and young people (see more Tomanovic, 2012, Tomanovic et al, 2012). However, this is the first attempt to provide gender life-course analysis based on MICS data.

It is expected that this kind of approach can bring several benefits, aside from the systematic gender analysis:

- It can shed more light on gender gaps that are specific for particular stages in the life course,
- It can enable insights into trends over time indicating which gender gaps have been emerging, widening, and which ones have been narrowing, closing.
- It can enable comparative insights between different categories of children and women, aside from gender, defined in terms of various aspects of their social background, such as income, education, area of living, etc.
- It can enable systematic and consistent comparison between the general and the Roma population, and indicate where the largest gaps are and if there is a convergence in certain dimensions between the Roma population and the general population.

It is important to emphasize that, in 2014 MICS, which was the main data source, sex-disaggregated data are available up to the age of 17. In the group of late adolescents (15-17 years), sex-disaggregated data are available only for schooling and child labour domains, while data on partnership, reproductive practices and subjective wellbeing which is in the main focus of the analysis are available only for girls. From age 18 years onwards, data are available only for women, and indicators are mostly focused on childbearing and reproductive health.

Methodological remarks

It is important to emphasize that analytical framework had to be built after the survey. The life course approach was chosen as it was possible to apply such an approach thanks to the age-relative and age-sensitive indicators included in the MICS framework. Essentially, the main conceptual logic of the MICS framework is life-course related, as indicators are very much differentiated between various age groups. However, due to the fact that MICS has been designed with objectives other than the systematic gendered life course approach, it was possible to apply this approach only in 'skeletal' form. More sophisticated forms of analysis that are bridging longitudinal and cross-section data, macro and micro levels, behaviours and attitudes, subjective and objective aspects of wellbeing are not possible within the scope of this analysis due to the already mentioned limitations of available data.

The analysis is mostly cross-sectional using data from 2014 MICS but with longitudinal insights into trends for aspects that are estimated as significant and when comparable data were available. The analysis is in the form of descriptive statistics. Other sources of data were not used, except in the case of mortality rates. All data are based on author's calculations, unless different sources are indicated (primarily the Final Reports from previous MICS rounds).

The analysis in this study is comparative as data from two separate surveys (national sample and sample of population living in the Roma settlements) are systematically compared using original MICS indicators which are sometimes defined differently for the two samples (which is the case of the wealth index).

For the purpose of this analysis, a new classification of living areas was developed by the Statistical Office of Serbia, which defines three types of living areas: densely populated (areas with population density of 1,500 people per square kilometre, including settlements with at least 50,000 inhabitants), intermediate (urban clusters with at least 300 inhabitants per square kilometre including settlements with at least

5,000 inhabitants) and thinly populated areas (rural clusters remaining out of the first two categories). This classification has replaced the classification regularly used by the official statistics in Serbia, according to which two types of living areas are recognized: urban and other. In this classification, administrative-legal criteria are applied and settlements that are defined as urban by an act of the local self-government are recognized as urban settlements, while all other settlements fall in the category 'other' (they are often referred to as non-urban settlements).

Confidence intervals are used as statistical significance measures in line with the MICS methodology.

Structure of the study

The study is structured around life course phases. The first chapter is dedicated to gender differences among children under the age of five years. The analysis focuses on their health and nutritional status and practices, household environment, care, protection, learning support and early childhood development. The second chapter is dedicated to children aged 5-14 years. Their wellbeing is described through the household environment and upbringing practices, access to education and educational attainment, and child labour. The third chapter is focused on adolescents with insights into their household background and living arrangements, education, child labour (sex-disaggregated), and reproductive health and subjective wellbeing (only for girls). The fourth chapter is dedicated to adult women with the analysis offering comparison between subcategories made of sets of age cohorts representing different life course stages of women. Their wellbeing is described through household characteristics, education, partnership and reproductive health, and subjective wellbeing among young women. The study includes an annex with tables that provide more detailed data along with many indicators.

1

Coming to the World as a Girl or a Boy: Gender Differences in Early Childhood (Age 0-4 Years)

Early childhood is defined here as a period of life from birth until the age of four (before the fifth birthday). MICS indicators allow for a very detailed analysis of certain developmental aspects of children in this initial life stage. The attention will focus here on some key aspects of survival, physical development and learning support children get for their overall development.

1.1 Health and early physical development

Health and early physical development of children under the age of 5 years is observed here through several aspects: infant and child mortality, nutritional status, nutritional practices, and immunization coverage.

1.1.1 Infant and child mortality

Infant and child mortality is usually taken as an indicator of the quality of life. Infant mortality is particularly viewed as 'a synoptic indicator of the health and social condition of a population' (Gortmaker and Wise, 1997, quoted from Carr, 2009). Reduction of infant and under-five mortality is one of the overarching Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

Due to the small number of cases and reduced availability of good quality vital registration statistics, data for infant and under-five mortality in the general population are taken from official vital statistics, while for population in the Roma settlements mortality rates[21] are calculated from MICS data. Gender differences in chances for early survival were decreasing during the observed decade (200-2012) in the general population. Although presented data are not sufficient to support a firm conclusion, we can assume that trends indicate the impact of development and improvement of health care services on gender gaps in early age survival. At the beginning of the observed period, the effects of troublesome 1990s were still visible in higher mortality rates. It seems that boys are more vulnerable and gender gaps become wider in a deteriorating socio-economic situation. When conditions improve, the effects of biological predispositions are marginalized and gender gaps narrow down.

Table 1

Infant and under-five mortality rates[22], Serbia, 2002, 2007, 2012

	2002		2007		2012	
	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male
Infant mortality rates	8.5	11.7	6.0	8.2	6.0	6.4
Under-five mortality rates	9.8	13.2	6.9	9.5	6.7	7.3

Source: Statistical Office of Serbia, vital statistics

Figures for mortality rates for children living in the Roma settlements are based on a small number of cases and need to be interpreted with caution. It seems that they support a previous assumption on the impact of development on closing gaps in children's mortality rates, as gender gaps are much higher than in the general population. Female infants and children living in the Roma settlements have much higher chances of survival than male ones.

Table 2

Infant and under-five mortality rates[23], Roma settlements, 2005, 2010, 2014

	MICS 2005 (reference year 2002)		MICS 2010 (reference year 2007)		MICS 2014 (reference year 2012)	
	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male
Infant mortality rates	20	32	9	18	(2)	(24)
Under-five mortality rates	23	36	10	19	(2)	(26)

() Figures that are based on 25-49 unweighted cases

Due to the small number of cases, data by background characteristics are not presented. We can, however, assume that presence of many risk factors identified in various empirical researches in developing and developed

[21] The infant mortality rate is the probability of dying before the first birthday, while under-five mortality rate is the probability of dying before the fifth birthday.

[22] Number of deaths per thousand live births.

[23] Number of deaths per thousand live births.

countries are present in the Roma settlements. Researchers (Hummer et al, 1999, Wang, 2003, quoted from Carr, 2009) identified various maternal, family and community level risk factors that are associated with higher risks of infant and child mortality. As important maternal factors they found: very young or old maternal age, low education, disadvantaged minority status, lack of adequate prenatal care, short birth spacing, risky behaviours and morbidity. Family risk factors include low income and wealth, rural residence, large number of siblings, while among the community risk factors they identified poor sanitation levels, lack of availability of health care and absence of health promotion programs (Ibid).

Decrease of infant and under-five mortality rate indicates positive trends, though in the absence of background analysis it is not possible to explain what contributes to this trend.

1.1.2 Health and nutritional status

Children's nutritional status is an indicator of their overall health. Adequate access to food supplies and proper nutritional practices are necessary for good health conditions and development. Many studies show that inadequate nutrition increases the likelihood of chronic diseases and mortality in adulthood (Barker, 1992, Whalbeck, et al, 2001, Joseph and Kramer, 1996, quoted from McLeod and Almazan, 2002).

The composite indicator for malnutrition presented in the following graphs for children in the general population and in the Roma settlements is a combined measure of three malnutrition indicators: underweight, stunting and wasting[24]. Malnutrition composite indicator classifies children who have more than two standard deviations below the median of reference population on either of three indicators as malnourished. Values are calculated only for 2014 and 2010 as data for 2005 are not comparable[25].

Overall malnutrition is more frequent among boys than among girls. Longitudinal data for 2010 and 2014 indicate that gender gap in malnutrition is larger in the population of children from Roma settlements than in the general population and that it is increasing.

Besides malnutrition, another inadequate nutritional status indicator was measured — overweight[26]. Overweight places children at risk of a wide range of physical problems that influence also psychological and interpersonal problems in later stages of their childhood and adolescence, and further in their adult life (Carr, 2009: 323). Overweight is mostly a result of bad nutritional practices (low intake of proteins, fruit and vegetables, high intake of saturated fats and sugar) and it is a risk factor for some of the chronic diseases in future life, like cardiovascular diseases and diabetes (UNICEF, 2014).

MICS data indicate the highest prevalence of overweight among boys in the general population. Although overweight rate has been decreasing since 2010 among both boys and girls in the general population as well as those living in the Roma settlements, it can be noticed that the decrease is the lowest among boys in the general population.

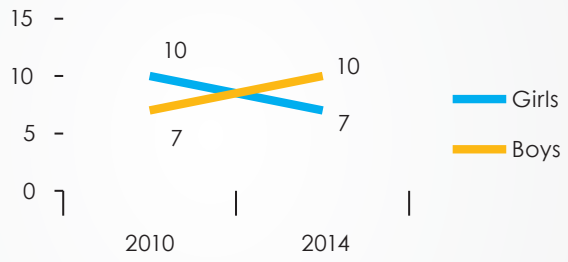
[24] Nutritional status indicators are expressed in standard deviation units (z-scores) from the median of the reference population. Weight for age is a measure of both acute and chronic malnutrition. Children whose weight-for-age is more than two standard deviations below the median of the reference population are considered moderately or severely underweight. Height-for-age is a measure of linear growth. Children whose height for age is more than two standard deviations below the median of the reference population are considered moderately or severely stunted (short for their age). Children whose weight-for-height is more than two standard deviations below the median of the reference population are classified as moderately or severely wasted. Wasting is usually the result of a recent nutritional deficiency.

[25] Data for 2005 are not presented because they are calculated with different methodology. Since 2006, nutritional status indicators used in previous MICS surveys (since 1978) were calculated based on new WHO growth standards.

[26] In MICS surveys, overweight status is calculated as weight-for-height measure whose value is two or more standard deviations above the median of the reference population.

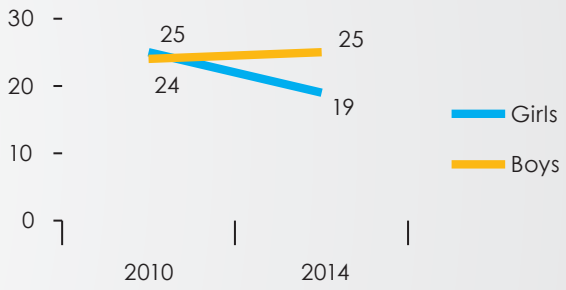
Graph 1a

Percentage of children who are underweight, stunted or wasted, Serbia, 2010, 2014



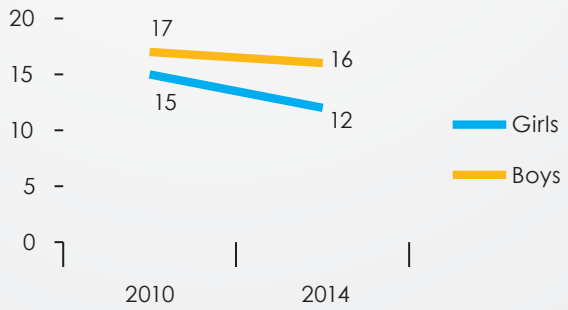
Graph 1b

Percentage of children who are underweight, stunted or wasted, Roma settlements, 2010, 2014



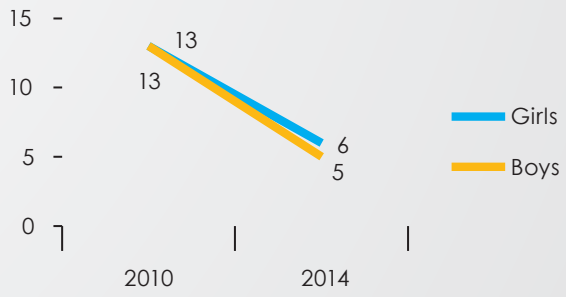
Graph 1c

Percentage of overweight children in Serbia, 2010, 2014



Graph 1d

Percentage of overweight children, Roma settlements, 2010, 2014



In addition to nutritional status, MICS uses immunization coverage[27] as an important health indicator in early childhood. On the aggregate level of the general population, there is no significant difference in immunization coverage between boys and girls (81 percent of girls and 80 percent of boys aged 24-35 months were fully covered). Gender gap appears only in some specific categories: girls are more often fully covered by immunization

[27] According to UNICEF and WHO guidelines, a child should receive a BCG vaccine against tuberculosis, three doses of the DPT containing vaccine to against diphtheria, pertussis and tetanus, three doses of the polio vaccine, three doses of the Hepatitis B vaccine, three doses of the Haemophilus influenza type b vaccine and the first dose of the measles vaccine before a child's first birthday. The immunization schedule followed by the Serbia National Immunization Programme provides all the above-mentioned vaccinations. All vaccinations should be received during the first year of life except measles which is administered at 15 months. Taking into consideration this immunization schedule, the estimates for full immunization coverage from the Serbia MICS are based on children aged 24-35 months.

than boys in the Sumadija and West Serbia regions, in non-urban areas, and with mothers who attended only primary school[28] (Table 1a, Annex).

Gender gap in immunization is more prominent among children living in the Roma settlements, with a total percentage difference of 9 percentage points in favour of boys. Gender gap is larger among children with mothers who attended only primary school and in non-urban areas (Table 1b, Annex).

1.1.3 Nutritional practices

Proper feeding of infants and young children increases their chances of survival, promotes optimal growth and development and enables children to better fulfil their potentials in their later life. Access to food and adequate feeding practices are one of the key preconditions for proper development (UNICEF, 2014).

While contemporary medical recommendations unanimously endorse breastfeeding over bottle feeding, social researchers and feminist authors consider breastfeeding as much more complex socio-cultural practice which impacts not only infants and young children, but also mothers in various ways. Medical approach emphasizes that breastfeeding for the first few years of life protects children from infection, provides an ideal source of nutrients and is economical and safe. Contemporary recommended practice is to exclusively breastfeed infants up to 6 months[29], but many mothers don't start to breastfeed early enough, do not breastfeed exclusively for the recommended 6 months, or stop breastfeeding too soon (UNICEF, 2014).

Authors that approach the issue from socio-cultural and feminist perspective claim that much of medical research is biased because it favours gendered division of caregiving (Law, 2000), or that it is 'riddled' with conflicting findings without firm proof that formula feeding in developed countries is the cause for any known disease and that, therefore it should not be interpreted as a danger to children (Wolf, 2007). According to their arguments, the medical approach creates unnecessary guilt on the part of bottle-feeding mothers for the implied lack of care for their children (Dykes, 2007) and obligation to follow experts' advice is profoundly moral, heightened by the maternal imperative to place children's interests first, stigmatizing bottle-feeding mothers (Murphy, 1999). Researchers of this orientation largely agree that most obstacles to breastfeeding are social (employment and work-place policies, lack of support to mothers and families, their wellbeing) and that such obstacles should be removed instead of placing guilt and blame on individual mothers (Carr, 2009: 66).

The fact is that prevalence of exclusive breastfeeding in Serbia is low and gender differences in breastfeeding are present. Boys are more frequently exclusively and predominantly breastfed than girls in both general and population living in the Roma settlements. The biggest gender gap is in exclusive breastfeeding in the general population (Table 4).

[28] Data should be taken with caution as they are based on a relatively small number of unweighted cases (25-49).

[29] UNICEF and WHO recommend that infants be breastfed within one hour of birth, breastfed exclusively for the first six months of life and continue to be breastfed up to 2 years of age and beyond.

Table 3

Prevalence of exclusive and predominant breastfeeding of children under 6 months, by gender general population and population living in the Roma settlements, 2014

	Serbia		Roma settlements	
	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys
Percent exclusively breastfed	3.9	22.2	11.6	13.9
Percent predominantly breastfed	44.3	50.1	56.7	63.2
No. of children	164	157	60	86

There are no important gender differences in median duration of breastfeeding, as median duration for girls and boys is 10 in the general population, and 16 in Roma population (Table 2, Annex).

After the age of 6 months, adequate nutrition practices, according to UNICEF and WHO recommendations include consumption of appropriate, adequate and safe solid, semi-solid and soft foods in addition to continued breastfeeding. This leads to better health and growth outcomes, with potential to reduce stunting during the first two years of life (UNICEF, 2014: 37). The adequacy of nutrition after the first six months is measured by minimum acceptable diet[30].

MICS 2014 data indicate a big difference in the prevalence of minimum acceptable diet between children in the general population and those from Roma settlements. Gender gap is present only among children from the Roma settlements, and it is in favour of boys, with girls being less frequently adequately fed during the day preceding the survey.

Table 4

Minimum acceptable diet by gender, general sample and Roma settlements, 2014

	Minimum acceptable diet		Number of children 6-23 months		Gender gap (percentage points)
	Percentage of girls	Percentage of boys	Girls	Boys	
Serbia	72.4	71.1	351	383	1.3
Roma settlements	23.9	36.9	205	243	-13.0

More detailed data, disaggregated by region, living area, mother's education level and wealth are presented in the Annex (Tables 3a and b). Data indicate the existence of some regionally specific gender gaps. In the region of Vojvodina minimum acceptable diet is less frequent among boys than among girls, while opposite is the case in Sumadija and West Serbia. Among Roma children, gender differences are consistent, in all groups they are in favour of boys.

[30] To have a minimum acceptable diet in the previous day, a child must have received the appropriate number of meals (feeding frequency is used as a proxy for energy intake, requiring children to receive a minimum number of meals for their age), food items for at least 4 food groups (diet diversity is used to ascertain the adequacy of the nutrient content of the food consumed) and breast milk or at least 2 milk feeds (UNICEF, 2014: 37).

1.2 Household environment, care and protection

Household environment is important for understanding the wellbeing of children. Household and family are primary settings in which children are provided with care, security and resources (material and non-material) which are important for development and wellbeing. In sociology, family is traditionally understood as an institution formed on the ground of kinship, marriage or adoption, which links individuals into primary social groups and networks. According to more traditional approaches, family is the place where primary socialization of children occurs (adoption of norms and values that lead to social integration), the place which regulates sexual activities (with the aim of maintaining kinship and inheritance patterns), reproduces social position and brings economic and emotional security (Abbott et al, 2005:145). More recent approaches understand family more as set of practices (as opposed to an institution), and instead of thinking of a family as something we are 'in', it is more appropriate to think of it as something that we 'do' (Morgan, 1999, quoted from Abbott et al, 2005:145). An important difference can also be found in traditional approaches associating family more with formal marriage and childbirth, while today more diverse forms of families are recognized.[31]

Household is a unit defined primarily on the grounds of a shared residential unit and, at least partly, consumption. Therefore, household and family can and usually do overlap, but they should not be considered as the same. In MICS survey, the basic unit is a household, not a family, and therefore household features will be in the focus of our analysis. A household is defined as *a community of persons whose members live together, prepare food and spend earned income jointly, or a single person living, preparing food and spending income on his/her own* (SORS, 2014:9).

Different surveys found that household economic status and economic resources available to children are strongly linked to developmental outcomes. Children in more affluent households receive better nutrition, better quality of health care and have greater access to educational resources both in and out of their home (books, computers, classes). But economic factors do not matter only for the material goods and services. Children are more successful when their parents relate to them in a warm and responsive way (Uhlenberg, Mueller, 2002: 127). Researchers found that low income, as well as significant drops in income, tend to create stress on parents and children that undermines effective socialization. Parents who experience financial stress are more likely to adopt harsh and coercive parenting styles, using anger, violence, and other behaviours that undermine socially integrative parent-child relationships and interactions (Conger et al, 1992, Elder, Caspi and Downey, 1986, quoted from Uhlenberg, Mueller, 2002).

1.2.1 Household background and living arrangements

In order to explore the situation of children in these aspects, several characteristics of household are placed in the focus of our analysis: household wealth, type of household according to the structure (which is a proxy variable for type of family[32]), gender and education of the head of household (which are associated with

31 See more about forms of partnership and marriage and trends in contemporary developed countries in Bobic, M, 2003.

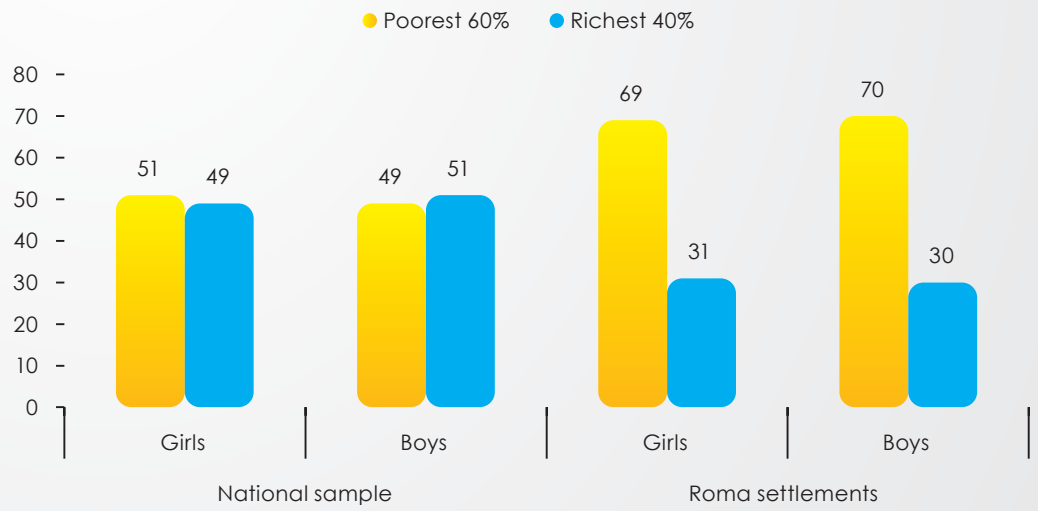
32 While household is a social unit defined mostly by sharing a living space and at least part of consumption, family is a social unit defined in terms of kinship. Household is defined mainly according to number of members, while family is defined according to the structure and roles (i.e. single parent families, nuclear families which include couples with children, extended families which include nuclear families and additional members based on intergenerational or horizontal kinship lines, etc.).

vulnerability) and living arrangements — presence or absence of biological parents — which are also associated with child wellbeing and development support.

MICS data indicate a big difference between children in the general population and in the Roma settlements according to the wealth level of the households in which they live. Around half of children in the general population live in households with lower wealth level (poorest 60 percent), while in the Roma settlements, almost 70 percent of children live in such households[33]. But within these two populations of children, there are no significant gender differences, meaning that both boys and girls are distributed between poorest and richest households in the same proportion.

Graph 2

Children under five by gender and household wealth, Serbia and Roma settlements, 2014



There is important regional difference in this aspect, as in Belgrade boys and girls live more often in better-off households than in poorest 60 percent, but there is no significant gender difference (more disaggregated data are presented in Tables 4a and b in the Annex).

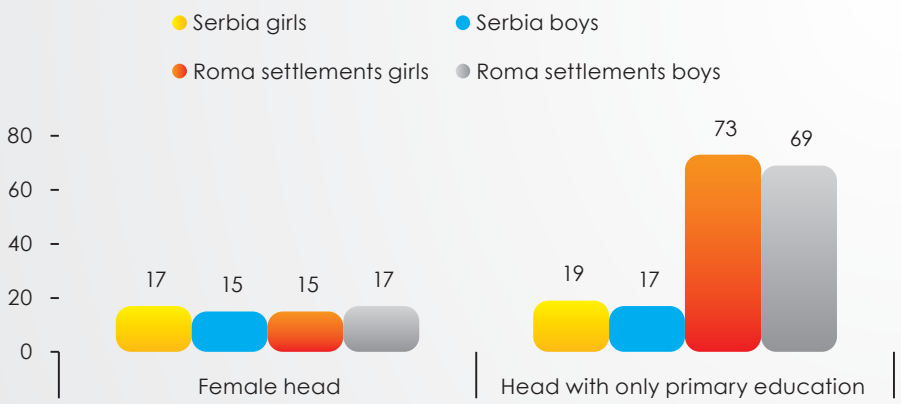
Certain forms of households and families are more vulnerable due to their characteristics associated with size, structure of family, gender and education of the head of household. Female-led households and single mother households are more vulnerable to risks of poverty due to the generally weaker position of women on the labour market and consequently lower living standard. Besides, vulnerability of single parent households stems from difficulties of combining employment and childcare in an unshared parental arrangement. Different surveys have found that vulnerability of single-parent households is associated with problems in children's behaviour and emotional development during childhood and adolescence (Carr, 2009: 166).

[33] The wealth indexes for the general population and for Roma settlements are constructed differently (for more details see UNICEF, 2014, p12 and p22).

According to MICS data, relatively low and approximately equal proportion of girls and boys in Serbia and Roma settlements live in the female-headed households. Differences between children from general and Roma population are prominent when their household background is described in terms of education level of the head of household.

Graph 3

Percentage of children living in female-headed households and households whose head has primary education only



The share of children living with only one adult person (mostly single-parent households), is very low in this age group. Since there were less than 25 unweighted cases of girls and boys in this category, data are not presented in line with MICS methodological rules. Among children living in the Roma settlements, 3 percent of girls and 5 percent of boys live with only one adult person[34] (see more in Table 4 c, Annex).

Very low percentage of children live with neither biological parent — less than 1 percent among boys and girls from both samples — and gender differences are not significant in this aspect (Tables 4d and e, Annex).

1.2.2 Care and protection

Care and protection in this study are observed through several indicators available within the MICS framework: birth registration, possession of a health insurance card (necessary for free access to healthcare), inadequate care arrangements and use of violent disciplining methods by parents and other adults in the household.

Birth registration is one of the basic rights defined by the Convention of the Rights of the Child, and it is essential for access to health care, welfare benefits, system of early education. Differences in birth registration are not prominent between general and population from Roma settlements — they are at the level of several percentage points. Within the two populations, gender differences are small (Graphs 5a and b, Annex).

[34] Data should be taken with caution as they are based on a relatively small number of unweighted cases (25-49).

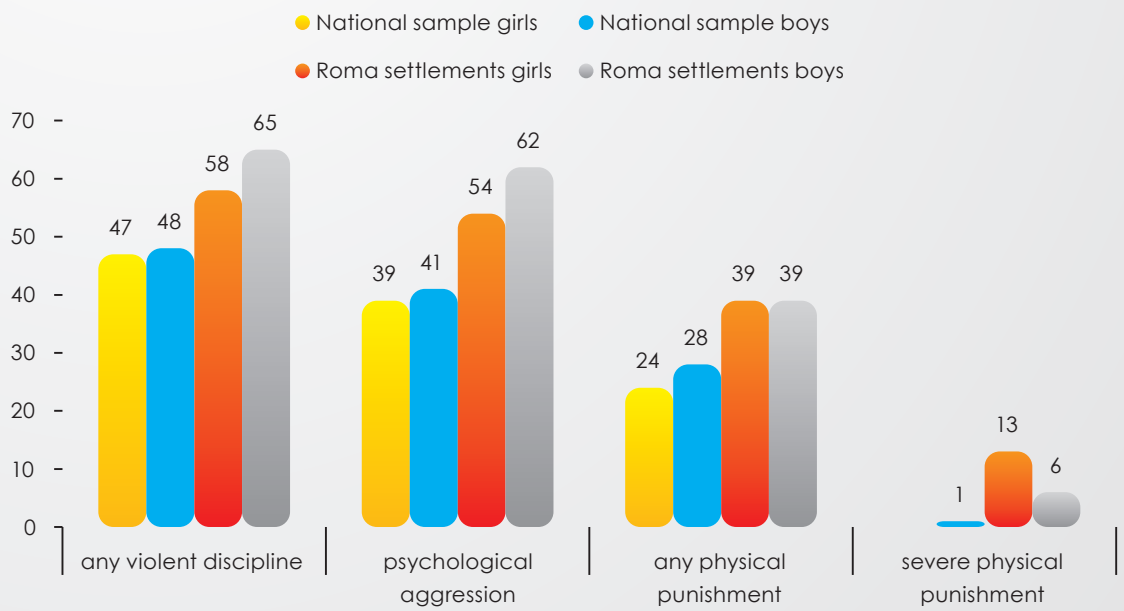
A health insurance card provides free access to health care. According to Serbian legislation, all children under age of 18 years are entitled to health insurance and protection. Complicated administrative procedures still present obstacles for vulnerable groups of children, particularly those whose birth has not been registered (UNICEF, 2014: 65). According to MICS data, among children living in the Roma settlements, girls and boys without health insurance card are more frequent (7 percent of girls and 8 percent of boys) than in the general population (2 percent of girls and 3 percent of boys), while gender differences are not prominent within the two samples.

In addition to these two aspects of protection that are important for enabling access to resources significant for development, two sets of practices that are harmful for child development are further analyzed. The first set of practices represents inadequate care, and includes situations in which an infant or child is left alone or in the care of another child. Second set of practices includes violent disciplining methods.

While prevalence of inadequate care is low in both populations (it is found among 1 percent of girls and 2 percent of boys in the general population and among 2 percent of girls and 3 percent of boys living in the Roma settlements)[35] (more in Tables 6a and b, Annex), violent discipline is more frequently found among children from both samples.

Graph 4

Prevalence of violent discipline methods among children aged 1-4 years, Serbia and Roma settlements, 2014



[35] More in Tables 6c and 6d in the Annex.

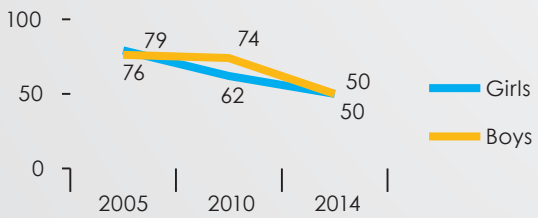
According to MICS definitions, violent discipline methods include physical punishment and psychological aggression. Data on violent disciplining methods are striking. Almost half of children in the general population and more than 60 percent of children from Roma settlements are exposed to some form of violent disciplining methods. According to confidence intervals, the differences between boys and girls within two samples are not statistically significant in this age group (1-4 years) on aggregate level.

Detailed data, disaggregated by region, area of living, mother's education and household background, as well as gender gaps (calculated as percent difference) are presented in the Annex (Tables 7 a, b, c, d). According to these data, major gender gaps in Serbia appear in the category of children living in female-headed households (boys are more exposed to all forms of violence than girls in this category, with an 11 percentage point difference) and in thinly populated areas where girls are more exposed to violent disciplining methods (a 12 percentage point difference). Among children living in the Roma settlements gender gaps are inconsistent, with boys being more exposed to violent 'disciplining methods' in urban areas, in female headed households, in households with household head who is without education, and in better-off households (40 percent richest households), while girls are exposed more to violence in intermediate and thinly populated areas, households whose head has secondary or higher education and with mothers who have secondary or higher education. It is important to emphasize that girls living in the Roma settlements are more consistently severely physically disciplined across these different groups (Table 7d, Annex).

The trend of overall decrease of prevalence of violent disciplining methods is encouraging, as indicated by data from three MICS surveys in Serbia. The decreasing trend is observable in both samples and among children of both sexes. However, the most modest decrease is recorded among boys in the general population (longitudinal data for each type of violence are presented in Table 7e, Annex).

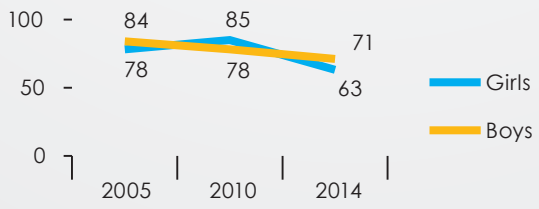
Graph 5a

Percentage of children aged 2-4 years exposed to any violent discipline during last month, Serbia 2005, 2010, 2014



Graph 5b

Percentage of children aged 2-4 years exposed to any violent discipline during last month, Roma settlements 2005, 2010, 2014



Regardless of the positive trends, violent disciplining is still highly present in upbringing practices. This is a worrying fact, because with such experience, boys and girls adopt the perception of violence as a legitimate form of communication early in life as it unfolds in the family environment and in everyday life. Later in their lives this increases the likelihood of victimization or perpetration due of violence in intimate relationships and in domestic environment.

1.3 Learning support and development

Early development of children is crucial for their present wellbeing but it is also the foundation of their life-long human development. Within this section, the analysis will focus on gender aspects of the developmental status of children and learning support they receive.

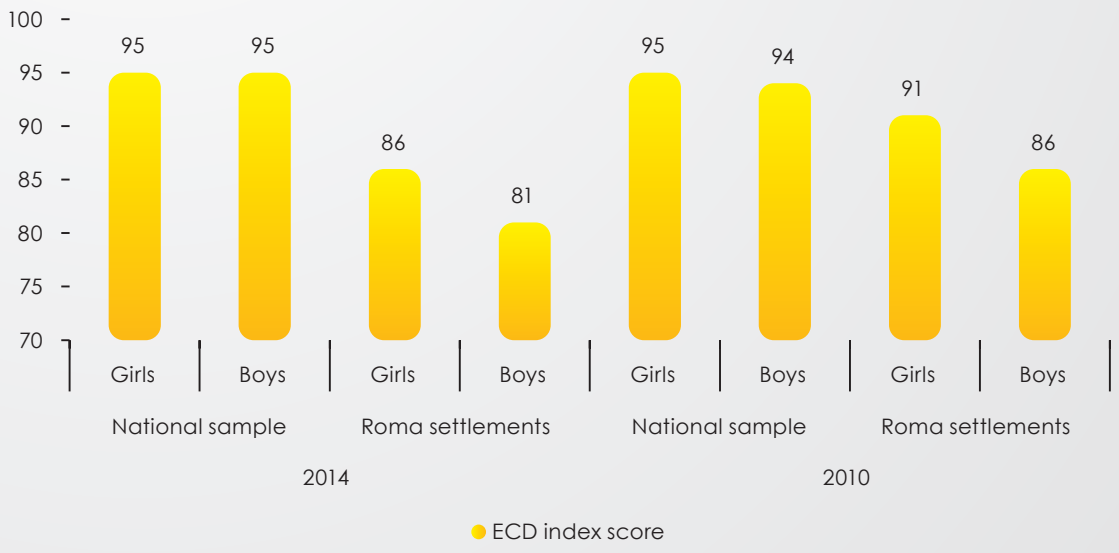
1.3.1 Developmental status of children

Developmental status of children is monitored in the MICS framework through the Early Child Development Index (ECDI)[36] which combines indicators of development in four domains that are considered as milestones of child development: literacy-numeracy, physical, social-emotional and learning.

MICS data for 2010 and 2014 indicate higher percentage of children from the general population than children from Roma settlements who are on track in early development. Gender gap does not exist among children from the national sample and it is present among children living in the Roma settlements, in favour of girls. However, the worrying fact is that a deteriorating trend is recorded among children from the Roma settlements, with a decrease of the values on early child development index score between 2010 and 2014.

Graph 6

Early child development index score for children aged 36-59 months, by gender, Serbia and Roma settlements, 2010, 2014



[36] ECDI is composed of 10 items within four domains of development. It is calculated as the percentage of children who are developmentally on track in at least three of four domains.

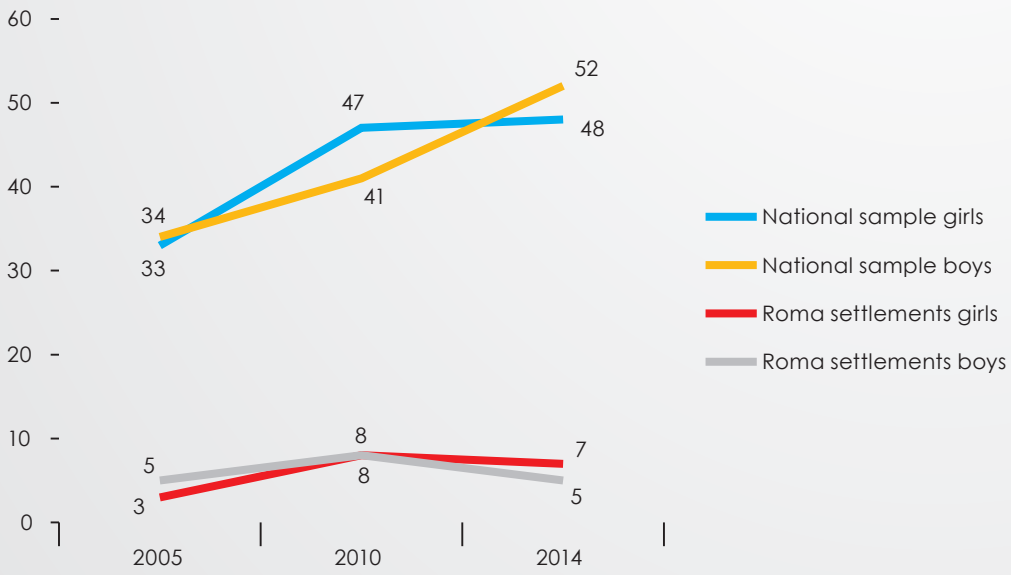
The largest gender gap among Roma children appears in the category of 40 percent richest households, where the difference is 13 percentage points in favour of girls. Interestingly, there are no gender differences in the specific domains of child development (see more in Graph 8a and Tables 8b and c, Annex).

1.3.2 Support for learning

Although in the early stage of the life course (0-4 years) support for learning comes primarily from the family and caregivers in the household, many researchers indicate that early education programs are important as they can provide promising avenues for preparing children for formal schooling and for deflecting negative educational and behavioural trajectories. The positive effects of early care and education appear to be particularly strong for children from less advantaged backgrounds (Carr et al, 2009: 80). Having this in mind, gender aspects of learning support are explored through attendance of early childhood education, parental support for learning, and availability of children's books.

Graph 7

Early child development index score for children aged 36-59 months, by gender, Serbia and Roma in the Roma settlements, 2010, 2014



Data on early childhood education indicate once more a huge gap between children from the general population and from Roma settlements. Although gender gaps are not present within the two populations of children, longitudinal data indicate an interesting trend of sharp increase of boys' early education attendance in the general population. Girls' early education attendance also shows a steady but a less sharp increase, as they were already more enrolled in previous years. In 2014, the gender gap reversed in the direction of a small

advantage for boys. In the population from the Roma settlements, the enrolment trend shows a slight decrease among both boys and girls.

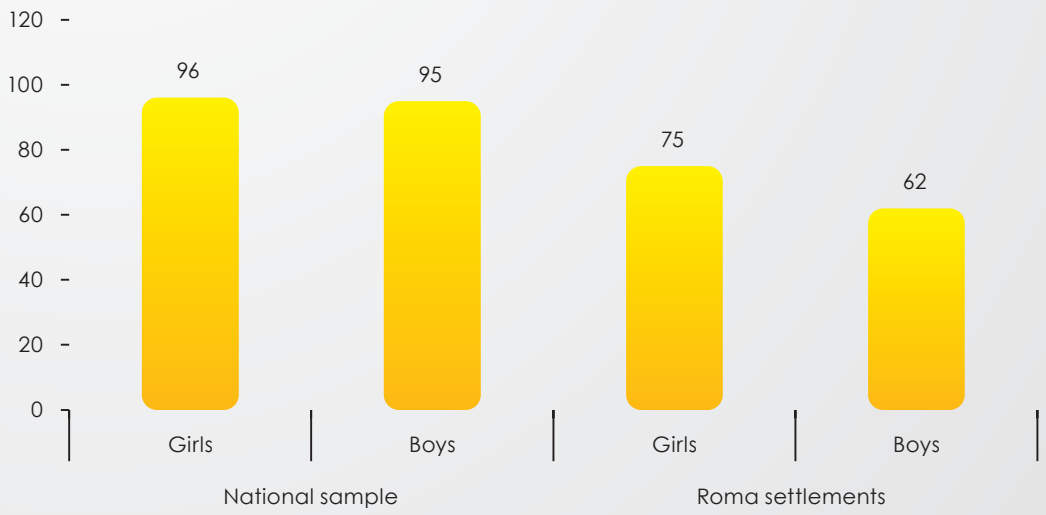
Gender gaps are bigger in certain categories of children than on an aggregate level (see Tables 9a and b in the Annex). In the Belgrade region, the gap is in favour of girls, while in the Vojvodina region the gap is in favour of boys. Among children whose mothers attended only primary school, girls are more often enrolled in early education, while in the category of children whose mothers attended secondary education, the difference is in favour of boys. Among children living in the Roma settlements, the biggest gender difference is in the poorest households, where boys are almost completely out of early education.

The important issue in monitoring early childhood development is learning support provided by parents and other adults in the household. The main question in this aspect is if there are some gendered patterns of child learning support provided by these adults and, above all, how the mother and father are engaged in learning activities[37] with children.

Generally speaking, girls and boys from the general population receive more learning support by adults in the households. Gender gap does not exist among them, but it is prominent among Roma children, with boys being the least supported by adults in the household.

Graph 8

Percentage of children aged 36-59 months with whom adult household members engaged in at least one activity that promotes learning during the last 3 days, Serbia and Roma settlements, 2014



Prominent gendered patterns of learning support are evident on the side of parents, with fathers being much less involved in activities with children than mothers. It is worth mentioning here that the role of the father

[37] These activities include: reading books or looking at picture books, telling stories, singing songs, taking children outside the home, compound or yard, playing with children, and spending time with children naming, counting, or drawing things (UNICEF, 2014: 150).

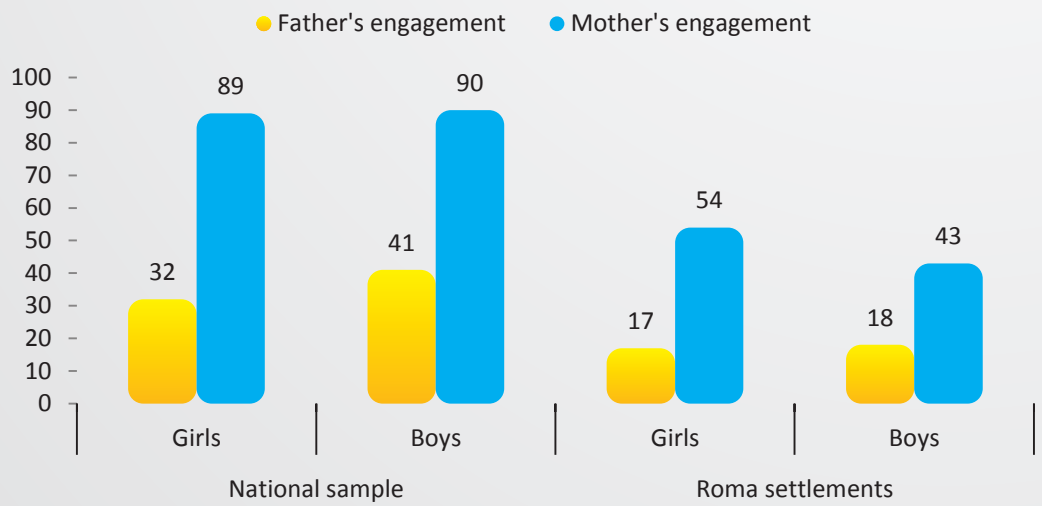
in child development gained in importance in the scholarly research during the past decades. In addition to important contribution that fathers make through economic support to the family, other aspects have been recognized relatively recently. One of them is the finding that children had fewer behaviour problems and were more responsive when their fathers were involved with them and helped supervise them. Positive outcomes are associated with such paternal behaviours as spending time with children, supervising and disciplining children's behaviour and providing emotional support (Parke and Buriel, 1998 quoted from Uhlenberg and Mueller, 2002).

MICS data show that parental care is not shared equally between the mother and the father and it is not distributed equally to boys and girls. In the general population, mothers 'discriminate' between their children based on gender less than fathers do (more in Tables 10a and b, and 11a and b, Annex). They are equally engaged in learning support to boys and girls, while fathers are engaged in activities more with boys than with girls, but the difference is not statistically significant. In population from the Roma settlements, fathers also engage in activities slightly more with sons than with daughters, but the difference is insignificant and their engagement is very low overall.

It is important to note that fathers engage less with girls than with boys systematically across the cases with different background. The most prominent gender gaps in fathers' support appear in Belgrade (16 percentage points in favour of boys), among children with mothers and fathers who attended higher education, and among better-off households (richest 40 percent). Among children living in the Roma settlements, the gender gaps are insignificant.

Graph 9

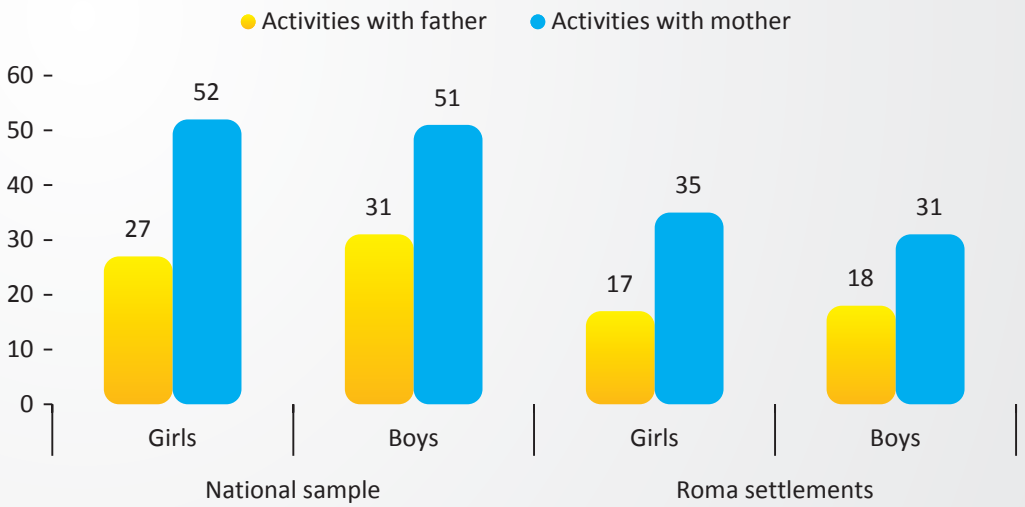
Percentage of children aged 36-59 months with whom biological father and mother engaged in at least one activity that promotes learning during the last 3 days by gender, Serbia and Roma settlements, 2014



The differences in father's and mother's support can be observed through the mean number of activities they are involved in with children. From the following graph we can see that fathers not only engage less with children in general and less with girls than with boys, but also that they engage in a smaller number of activities.

Graph 10

Mean number of activities with biological father and mother over the last 3 days, by gender of children, Serbia and Roma settlements, 2014



Summary

Early survival. Survival chances are gendered as girls have higher chances of survival during infancy or age under five years. Development and improved wellbeing seem to eliminate these biological predispositions and in the general population the gender gap has disappeared in mortality rates of infants and children under five. Unfortunately it is still present among children living in the Roma settlements with higher mortality rates of boys.

Nutritional status. Malnutrition is more frequent among children living in the Roma settlements. Malnutrition is also gendered, as boys in both populations are more frequently malnourished. Boys in the general population are also the ones most frequently overweight.

Nutritional practices. Prevalence of exclusive breastfeeding of children up to age of 6 months is low in Serbia. Gendered patterns are noticeable — boys are more frequently exclusively and predominantly breastfed than girls in both general and population living in the Roma settlements. Gender gap in the minimum acceptable diet during the day preceding the survey was discovered only among children living in the Roma settlements and is in favour of boys.

Immunization. Full immunization coverage is higher among children in the general population than those living in the Roma settlements. The gender gap is present only among the latter and is in favour of boys.

Violent disciplining methods. The decreasing trend is encouraging, but prevalence is still at a high level (around half of children in the general population and over 60 percent of children living in the Roma settlements were disciplined by some violent method). Violent disciplining of children age 0-4 years shows no prominent gender differences.

Early education. Gap in attendance of early education is huge between children from the general population and those living in the Roma settlements. Gender gaps appear only in some specific categories, such as poorest households in the Roma settlements where boys are almost completely out of early education. Girls and boys from the general population receive more learning support by adults.

Early development. There are more children from the general population than children from Roma settlements who are on track in early development. The gender gap does not exist among children from the national sample and it is present among children living in the Roma settlements, in favour of girls.

Learning support. Girls and boys from the general population receive more learning support by adults in the households. Gender gap does not exist among them, but it is prominent among children living in the Roma settlements, with boys being the least supported by adults in the household. Parental care is not shared equally between the mother and the father and it is not distributed equally to boys and girls. Fathers engage in activities with children much less than mothers and more with sons than daughters.

2

Growing Up as a Girl or a Boy (Age 5-14)

The life course phase between early childhood and adolescence can be seen also through different stages in which children's needs and potentials are driven in different ways. However, MICS framework for this age category of children does not contain individual data and the analysis is, therefore, relatively limited to aspects covered by the household module. Three areas of gender pathways in this stage of life can be assessed through MICS data: family/household environment and presence of violent disciplining practices, access and movement through formal education and participation in economic activities and household chores with identification of child labour prevalence.

2.1 Family environment and upbringing practices

2.1.1 Household background and living arrangements

Distribution according to wealth of the household looks slightly different among children aged 5-14 years than among younger children. In the general population, a higher share of boys and girls live in the poorest 60 percent households. This opens the issue of the relation between children and poverty of the household or family, but this issue is not at the centre of our analysis.

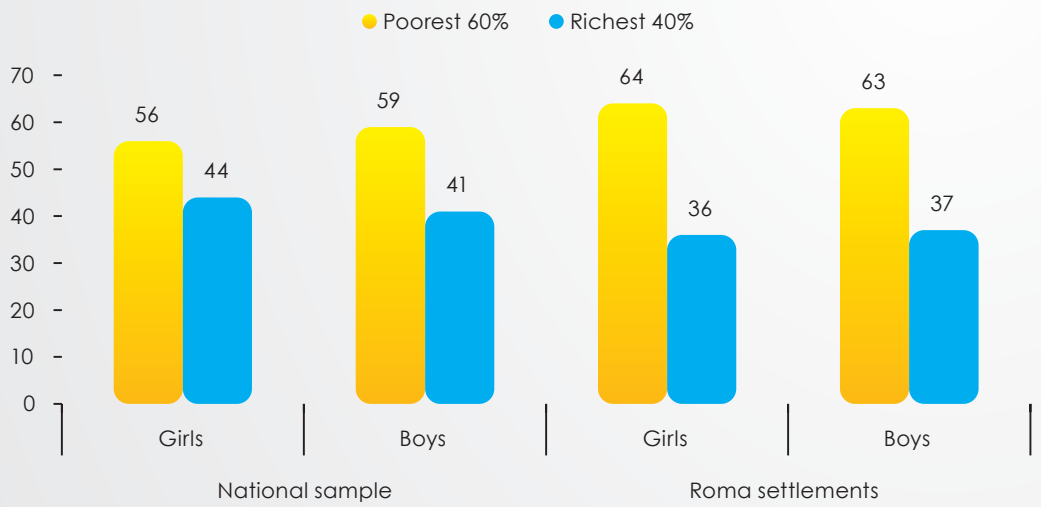
Girls and boys more often live in the richest 40 percent of households than in the poorest 60 percent households in Belgrade, urban areas and when mother attended higher education. In case of children from the Roma settlements, children live more in the richest than in the poorest households only if the mother has secondary or higher education. Gender differences, however, are not noticeable (Tables 13a and b, Annex). The share of children living in female-headed households is somewhat higher than in the case of younger children (1-4 percentage points in different groups), as well as the share of children living in the households with only one adult person[38] (Tables 13c and d, Annex).

[38] Data for children living with only one adult person are based on a relatively small number of unweighted cases (25-49).

A very small number of children live with neither biological parent (less than one percent of girls and boys from the general population and 2 percent of girls and 3 percent of boys from the Roma settlements). Gender differences could be noted among children from the Roma settlements in the poorest wealth quintile households where less than one percent of girls and 7 percent of boys live without biological parents (more in Tables 13e and f, Annex).

Graph 11

Children 5-14 according to wealth of the household and gender, Serbia and Roma settlements, 2014



2.1.2 Child discipline

Data on disciplining methods of children from different age cohorts show different practices in the general population and population living in the Roma settlements. In the general population, overall use of violence against children in disciplining practices decreases with the increase of age of children, and non-violent disciplining methods become dominant at least in disciplining girls aged 5-14 years. Usage of violent methods increases with children's age in the population living in the Roma settlements.

Data further indicate that gender gaps have different tendencies in the general and the population living in the Roma settlements. Although the overall violent disciplining of children from the general population is decreasing with age, the gender gap is increasing. While gender gap is absent among children aged 1-4, it reaches 3.2 percentage points among children aged 5-14 years. However measures of statistical significance indicate that the only significant gender difference is in severe physical punishing of girls in comparison to boys in the general population, but the percentages of such cases are small (2 percent of girls and less than one percent of boys) and therefore the difference should be taken with caution (tables 14a, b, Annex).

Gender gaps are more present in certain groups defined by region, household wealth and education of mother or the household head. Some differences are indicated in the following table, while full data are available in Table 14 a, b, Annex.

Graph 12

Prevalence of non-violent disciplining methods among two age groups of children, Serbia and Roma settlements, 2014

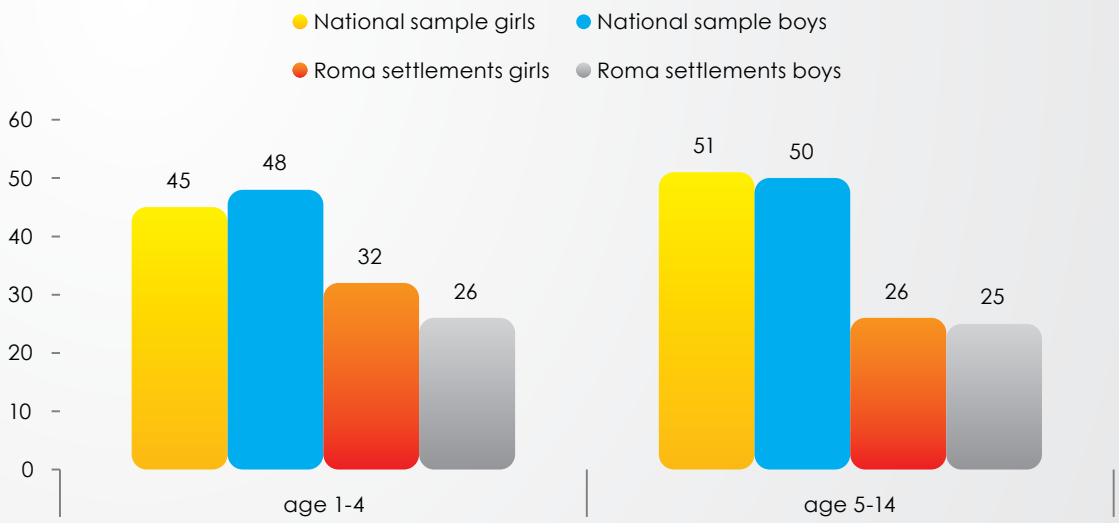


Table 5

Gender gaps (GG) by children's background, Serbia, 2014

Violent discipline is more prevalent among girls	GG value (percentage points)	Violent discipline is more prevalent among boys	GG value (percentage points)
Belgrade	5.5	East and South Serbia	7.8
Mother with higher education	6.4	Rural areas	9.1
In households from the richest wealth quintile	13.1	Household head with higher education	6.2
		Mother with secondary education	7.9
		In households from the poorest wealth quintile	19.5

Among children living in the Roma settlements, gender gaps are smaller across the categories defined by different background characteristics. The major gaps are in households with different wealth level, where household head has no education and in urban areas (full data in Table 14 c, d, Annex).

Table 6

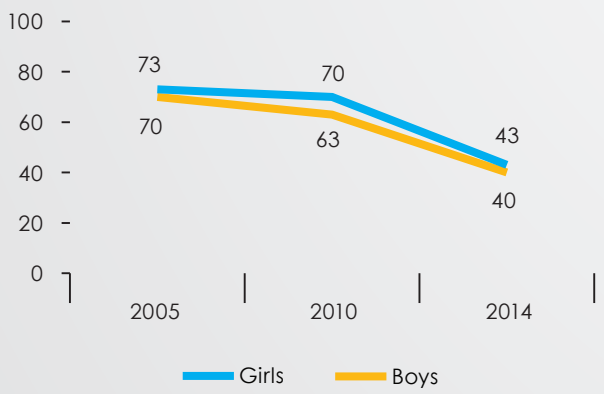
Gender gaps by children's background, Roma settlements, 2014

Violent discipline is more prevalent among girls	GG value (percent difference)	Violent discipline is more prevalent among boys	GG value (percent difference)
Households from the poorest wealth quintile	11.3	Urban areas	6.0
		Household head has no education	10.5
		Second wealth quintile	15.9

Finally, as it was the case with younger age cohorts, longitudinal data show an overall decrease of violent disciplining methods. Between 2005 and 2014, this drop was 29.9 percentage points (or a 69.4 percent change) for boys and 30.3 of percentage points (or a 76 percent change) for girls in the general population. Decrease is smaller among children from Roma settlements — in case of boys it is 14.4 percentage points (a 21 percent change) while in the case of girls it is 12.7 percentage points (or a 19 percent change) (more details in Table 14e, Annex).

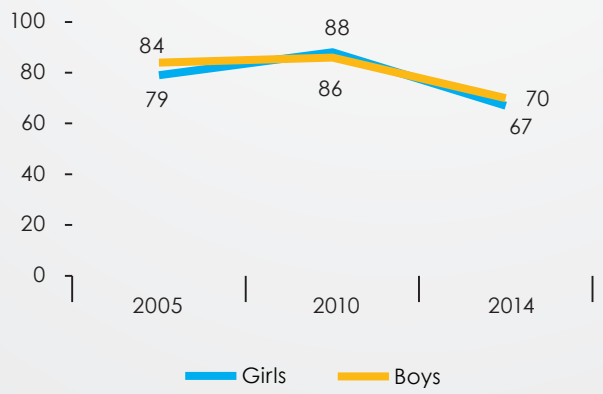
Graph 13a

Percentage of children aged 5-14 years exposed to any violent discipline during last month, Serbia 2005, 2010, 2014



Graph 13b

Percentage of children aged 5-14 years exposed to any violent discipline during last month, Roma settlements 2005, 2010, 2014



However, this decrease should not overshadow the fact that prevalence of violent disciplining methods is still very high, particularly in the population from Roma settlements.

2.2 Education

Gender differences in formal education are very important as they lay the foundation for later differences in employment and working career. The aim of this section is to explore if there are gender differences in educational trajectories of boys and girls. For that purpose several indicators are used: school readiness, net intake rate in primary education, primary school completion and gender parity index for primary school.

The school readiness indicator shows percentage of children who attended the first grade of primary school during survey and who participated in the Preparatory Preschool Programme (PPP) during the previous year. PPP was introduced in Serbia as mandatory programme in 2006/2007. Data from 2014 survey show much lower school readiness among children from Roma settlements than among children from the general population. Besides, there is no gender gap in school readiness on the aggregate level of two surveys (Table 15a, Annex).

The net intake rate[39] of children from the Roma settlements is much lower than of children from the general population. In the general population, gender gap at the entry to the first grade of primary school was 6 percentage points in favour of boys, but longitudinal data show no consistent gap (Table 15b, Annex). Among Roma children, the net intake rate was higher among girls (13 percentage points), but longitudinal data are also not consistent, showing shifts as in 2005 and 2010 net intake rates were higher among boys (Table 15c, Annex).

Values of the gender parity index[40] for general population indicate that there is no difference in the attendance of girls and boys at the primary school level in 2014. Gender parity index for children in the Roma settlements shows prominent differences in the category of the second wealth quintile, also in favour of girls (Table 15d, Annex).

A big difference between children from general and population living in the Roma settlements appears also in relation to the primary school completion[41]. The gender gap is wider in the general population, where completion rate among girls is higher than among boys by 8 percentage points, while among children living in the Roma settlements, the difference is to the advantage of boys.

Table 7

Primary school completion by gender, Serbia and Roma settlements, 2014

	Serbia			Roma settlements		
	Girls	Boys	Gender gap	Girls	Boys	Gender gap
Primary school completion rate	97.9	90.5	8.2	62.8	65.1	-3.5
No. of children	59	93		76	80	

Only one percent of children of primary school age from the general population were completely out of school during the 2014 survey and due to the small number of cases their distribution according to gender will not be

39 Net intake rate represents percentage of children of primary school entry age who entered grade 1 at a proper time.

40 The gender parity index represents the ratio of girls to boys attending primary school (UNICEF, 2014: 185).

41 Primary school completion rate is the ratio of the total number of students, regardless of age, entering the last grade of primary school for the first time, to the number of children of primary graduation age at the beginning of the current (or most recent) school year (UNICEF, 2014: 183).

presented. In the Roma settlements, 15 percent of children of primary school age were out of school and among them 52 percent were girls.

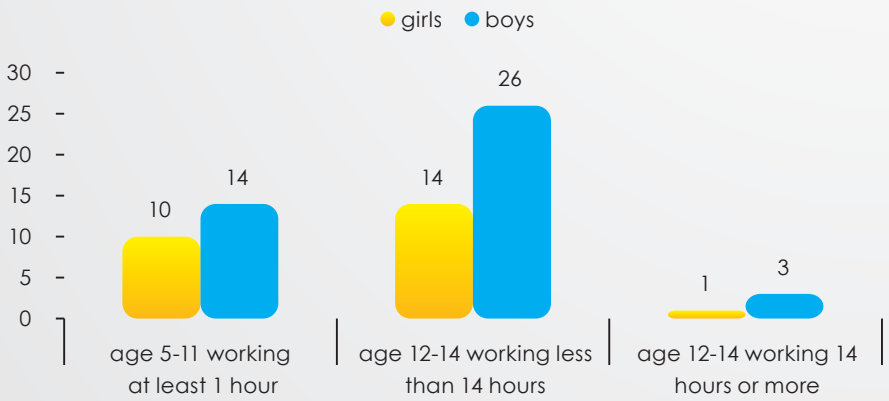
2.3 Child labour

According to the Serbian Labour Law, the age of 15 years is set as the threshold for employment[42]. The MICS methodology defines child labour as participation in economic activities and household chores at or above age-specific thresholds[43] as well as involvement in hazardous work. Since the objective of this analysis is not only to get insights into the prevalence of child labour and gender differences in regard to this, but also to get broader insights into the economic participation of children, data are first presented for overall economic activity, regardless the age-specific thresholds through which child labour is identified. After this broader analysis, attention will be paid specifically to child labour as defined by the MICS methodology.

Data on children's **participation in economic activities** indicate the highest participation of boys aged 12-14 years. Overall participation in economic activities of children living in the Roma settlements is much lower than of children in the general population, and participation of girls is lower than participation of boys.

Graph 14a

Children's involvement in economic activities by sex and age groups Serbia, 2014

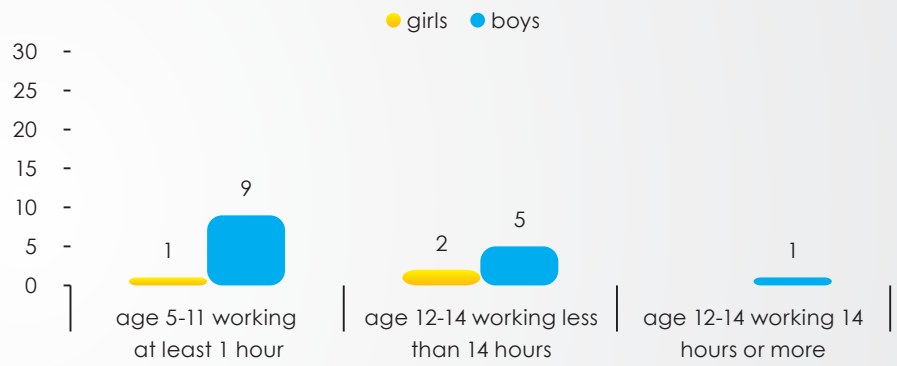


42 Minors can be employed only with the consent of their parents or guardians but only if the job does not include hard physical work, work under the ground, under water, at heights or in jobs that could negatively impact their health and life. Minors can be employed only with the approval of a health institution which verifies that the work is not dangerous to the life and health of the child.

43 These thresholds are: for ages 5-11 — one hour or more per week, for ages 12-14: 14 hours or more for participation in economic activity, and 28 hours or more for household chores, for both age groups (UNICEF, 2014: 201).

Graph 14b

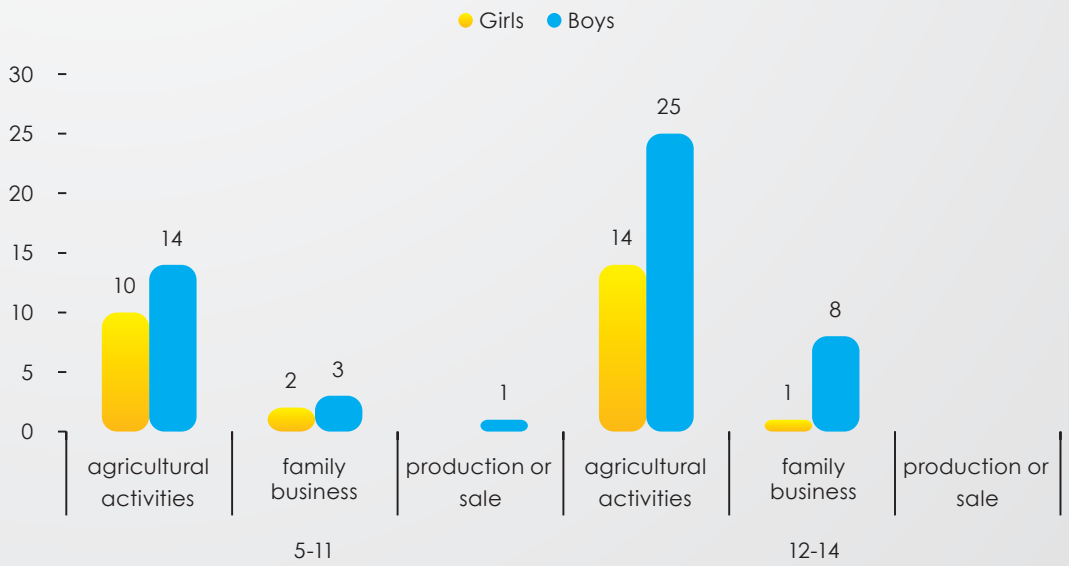
Children's involvement in economic activities by sex and age groups, Roma settlements, 2014



Data on the structure of economic activities of children from the general population indicate basically a major engagement in agricultural activities[44]. Boys participate in agricultural activities more than girls and gender gap increases with age.

Graph 15a

Structure of child engagement in economic activities by sex and age groups, Serbia, 2014

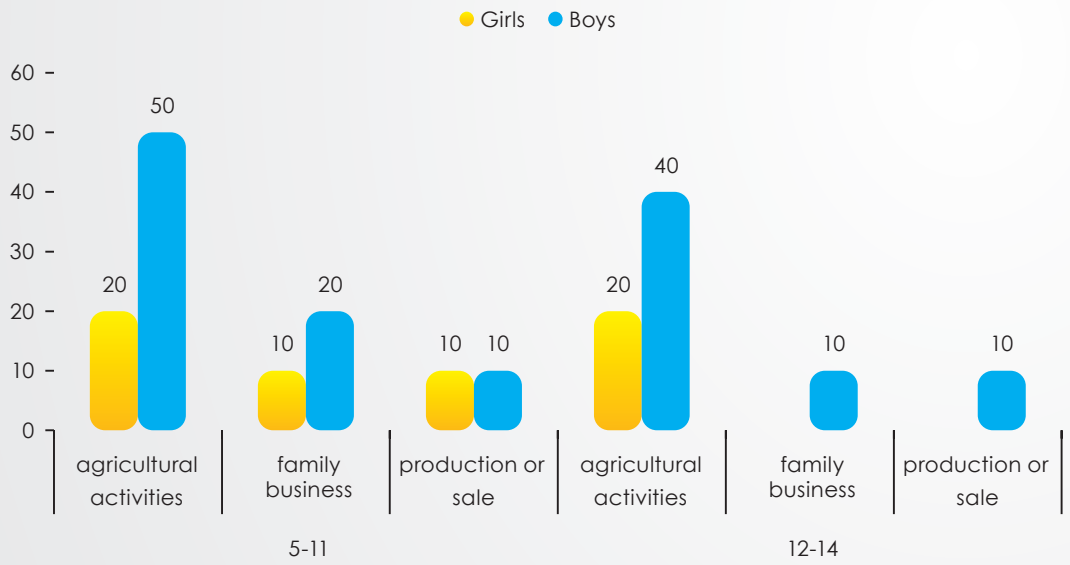


[44] Data are calculated only for children who were involved in economic activities or household chores at least one hour during the week preceding the survey.

The structure of activities is similar in the population of children from the Roma settlements, with the highest participation in agriculture, but the level of activity (share of engaged children) is lower.

Graph 15b

Structure of child engagement in economic activities by sex and age groups, Roma settlements, 2014



The second type of children's labour engagement is in unpaid, **household chores**, which is labelled as 'reproductive work' as opposed to the paid, market 'productive' economic activity. From the following table we can clearly see that girls are more likely to be involved in household chores than boys, but that almost all engagement is below the threshold that classifies the activity as child labour.

Table 8

Participation of children aged 5-11 and 12-14 in household chores, 2014

	Serbia		Roma settlements	
	Girls	boys	girls	boys
Children 5-11 performing household chores less than 28 hours	59.9	53.6	56.1	47.3
Children 5-11 performing household chores 28 hours or more	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0
Number of children aged 5-11 years	1123	1060	906	590
Children 12-14 performing household chores less than 28 hours	90.9	80.4	83.0	80.7
Children 12-14 performing household chores 28 hours or more	0	0	1.5	1.4
Number of children aged 12-14 years	481	485	218	334

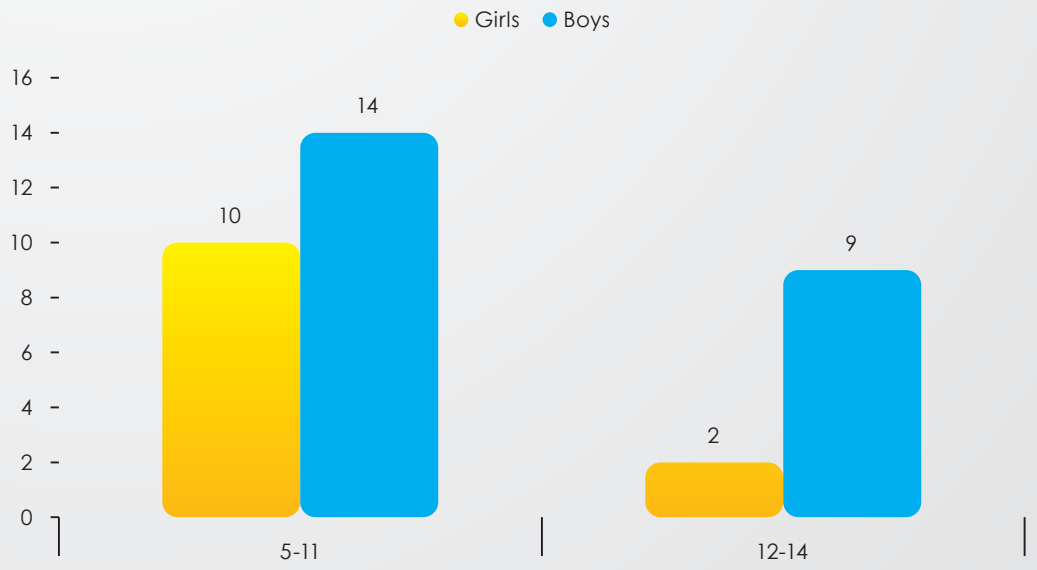
When we observe the type of activities in which children participated at least one or more hours during the week preceding the survey, it becomes clear that their engagement is mostly focused on shopping for the household, followed by the high engagement of girls in cooking, cleaning and washing (disaggregated data in Tables 16c and d, Annex). Judging by the data presented in the following graph, these activities are the main area of gender segregation. At this age, caring for other household members — children, the elderly or the sick is slightly more frequently the responsibility of boys than girls (Graph 16a, Annex). Gender differences in performing household chores show slightly different patterns in the population from Roma settlements. Shopping is more the activity of boys, with the gap narrowing in the older age category (age 12-14), but girls are much more engaged in cooking, cleaning, washing (tasks typically defined as 'a woman's job'), and in care activities (Graph 16b, Annex).

Besides, children in the general population on average spend more hours in economic activities than in household chores (Table 16c, Annex).

Child labour is more prevalent among younger children in both surveys (Serbia and Serbia Roma settlements). According to the 2014 MICS data, children living in the Roma settlements are less engaged in child labour than children from the general population. However, this finding should be taken with caution because various studies in the region indicate high involvement of Roma children in various forms of work,[45] and a recent study on the worst forms of child labour in Serbia[46] raised concerns with the slow progress in eliminating these forms of child labour among Roma children particularly. However, it should be kept in mind that differences may originate in different methodologies applied in these studies and MICS surveys.

Graph 16a

Child labour — total by sex and age groups, Serbia 2014



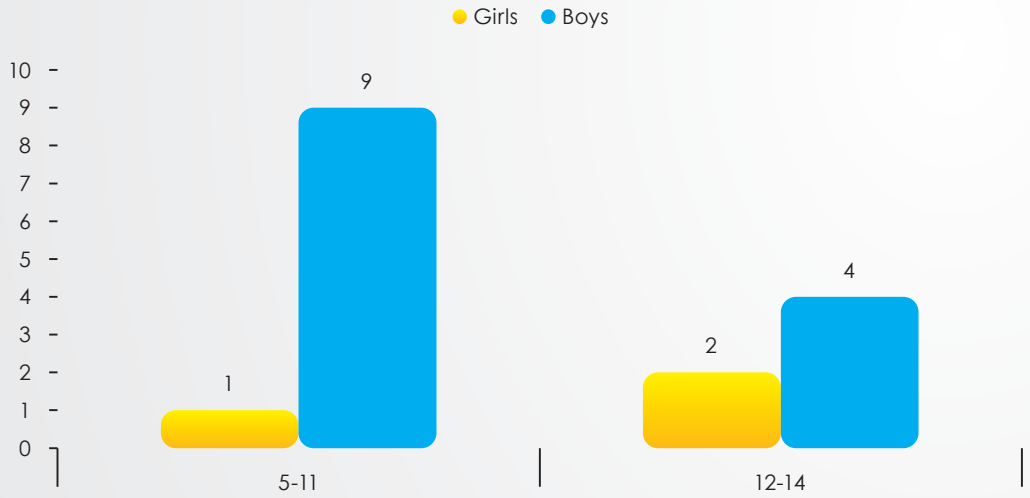
[45] For example, see, Maria-Carmen Pantea, *Challenges Regarding the Combating of Roma Child Labour via Education in Romania and the Need for Child-centred Roma Policies*, Central European University, Open Society Institute, 2006/2007, or UNICEF, *Breaking the Cycle of Exclusion: Roma Children in South-East Europe*, Belgrade, 2007.

[46] http://www.dol.gov/ilab/reports/child-labor/findings/2012TDA/serbia.pdf

The gender gap in child labour increases with age in the general population — from 4 percentage points difference in the 5-11 years age group to 7 percentage points in the 12-14 years age group, indicating higher engagement of boys.

Graph 16b

Child labour — total by sex and age groups, Roma settlements, 2014



Prevalence of child labour among children from the general population is higher in rural areas, and among the poorest 60 percent of households (Table 16d, Annex). The share of children working under hazardous conditions is highest among boys aged 12-14 from the general population (8 percent), and among boys aged 5-11 years (7 percent) from Roma settlements, (Tables 16f and g, Annex).

Summary

Household background. Children aged 5-14 years live slightly more often in poorer households than younger children which points to the need to further research the links between having children and household wealth and wellbeing. Their vulnerability is also slightly higher as the share of children living in single parent households increases, but the number of cases is small and requires caution.

Disciplining methods. Violent disciplining methods have been decreasing since 2005 for children of age 5-14 years as well. Data indicate that violence as a disciplining method also decreases with the increased age of children, at least in the general population, where around half the girls and boys are disciplined by non-violent methods only. Among the population living in the Roma settlements there is the opposite tendency — to increase violent disciplining with increased age of children, and therefore only around one quarter of children are disciplined by non-violent methods. Gender differences are not statistically significant on the aggregate level, but some 'niches' of gender inequalities in being exposed to violent disciplining methods appear in some groups. Violent discipline is used more frequently for girls than boys in Belgrade, among children with mothers who attended higher education and in the households from the richest wealth quintile. More frequent violent disciplining of boys than girls is recorded in East and South Serbia, in rural areas, among children with fathers who attended higher education and mothers who attended secondary education, and in households from the poorest wealth quintile.

Education. In this area there are still prominent differences between children from the general population and those living in the Roma settlements. They appear in school readiness, net intake, primary school attendance and completion. Gender gaps are most prominent in the primary school completion with the difference in favour of girls in the general population, and in favour of boys in population living in the Roma settlements.

Child labour is more prevalent among children in the general population than among children living in the Roma settlements. Interestingly, child labour is more frequently recorded among children aged 5-11 years than children aged 12-14 years. Gender gaps are present and they indicate higher labour involvement of boys, particularly in the general population and in agriculture. Gender segregation in household chores emerges around this age, as girls are more frequently engaged in cooking, cleaning and washing (when total engagement in household chores is taken into account, not only one activity at or above the age related thresholds). Boys in both populations are more exposed to hazardous forms of work.

3

Being a Male or Female Adolescent (Age 15-17)

Adolescence is a stage in the life course that is basically transitional towards adulthood. This is the stage that involves multiple transitions in human capital development domains (education, health, physical, cognitive and emotional capabilities), work, family and others which are not in the focus of our analysis (political participation, citizenship, etc). The complex combination of events and decisions one makes during the transition to adulthood, have the potential to determine much of the subsequent course of one's life. For example, early marriage or childbearing is linked with lower educational attainment, limited employment prospects, and lower incomes in adulthood (Uhlenberg and Mueller, 2002).

Having in mind these multiple transitions and availability of data within the MICS framework, this section analysis will be focused on household background, education and child labour of boys and girls, and then reproductive health and subjective wellbeing of girls.

3.1 Household background and living arrangements

There is no difference between adolescents and younger children in distribution according to the wealth of the household. In this age group, among both boys and girls, children living in poorer households prevail (Graph 17a, Annex). As in the case of children aged 5-14 years, in the general population of Serbia, more boys and girls live in the richest than in the poorest households in Belgrade, urban areas and with a mother who has higher education. As for the children from Roma settlements, similar tendencies were not found in this age group (Tables 17b, c, Annex).

A minority of children live in female-headed households. About one fifth of households of children in Serbia and over 70 percent of households from Roma settlements are headed by persons who completed only primary education and a very small proportion of children live in households with one adult person (Graph 17d, Annex).

Distinctive household background of girls living in the Roma settlements is visible in the aspects of living arrangements, as 28 percent of girls live with neither biological parent. This is much higher than the proportion of children with such a living arrangement in other groups — 1 percent among girls and less than one percent among boys in the general population, and 3 percent of boys from Roma settlements (Tables 17e and f, Annex).

This is related to the relatively high share of girls who enter marriage early at this stage. Namely, among girls married or in union, over 90 percent live with neither biological parent, while among girls not living in a union, only one percent live in such an arrangement.

3.2 Education

Transition from the primary to the secondary education level is an important one in the life of adolescents and sets foundations for later socio-economic wellbeing. MICS data on effective transition to secondary school indicate a high transit rate of children from the general population to secondary school and no gender differences. At the same time, they indicate a lower transit of Roma children, with a small gender difference in favour of boys[47] (Table 18a, Annex).

Gender parity index for secondary school indicates prominent gender differences, particularly among children from Roma settlements. Gender gaps are consistent, as in the general population of Serbia girls have been attending secondary school more often than boys, while in the Roma settlements boys have been attending secondary school much more often than girls across different categories.

Table 9

Gender parity index for secondary school (national), Serbia and Roma settlements, 2014

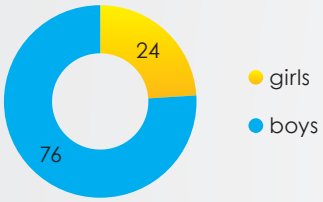
	2014	
	General	Roma settlements
	Secondary school	Secondary school
Total	1.08	0.53
Mother's education level		
No school	0	0.3
Primary school	1.18	0.72
Secondary	0.98	0
Higher	1.02	
Wealth index		
Poorest 60 percent	1.14	0.57
Richest 40 percent	1.02	0.5

The gender gap in secondary education is evident from the statistics on children of secondary school age who are completely out of school. In the general population, boys constitute the majority of children excluded from secondary education, while in the population from Roma settlements, the majority of out of school children is made of girls.

47 Data for children living in the Roma settlements are based on 25-49 unweighted cases and should be taken with caution.

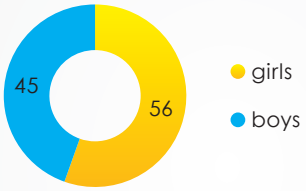
Graph 17a

Children out of secondary school by gender, Serbia, 2014



Graph 17b

Children out of secondary school by gender, Roma settlements, 2014



One of the consequences of early school leaving of Roma girls is lower literacy rate than it is for girls in the general population[48]. Literacy rate of Roma girls is lower in non-urban areas and in poorer households.

Table 10

Literacy rate of girls aged 15-17, Serbia and Roma settlements, 2014

	2014			
	general		Roma	
	Percentage of literate	No. of girls	Percentage of literate	No. of girls
Total	99.7	224	87.5	217
Area				
Urban	99.8	126	88.9	154
Other	99.6	98	83.4	63
Wealth index				
Poorest 60 percent	99.5	134	84.1	145
Richest 40 percent	100	90	94.9	72

3.3 Child labour

Opinions about the role and impact of work in adolescence on adolescent development are divided. Some of the prominent developmental psychologists hold that work experience in adolescence poses major opportunity costs, distracting young people from school and other beneficial activities. In their view, adolescent employment should be discouraged (Greenberger and Steinberg, 1986, Steinberg and Cauffman, 1995, quoted from Jeylan et al, 2002). According to other standpoints, early jobs can constitute a mechanism through which young people acquire knowledge about labour force, form occupational values, learn how

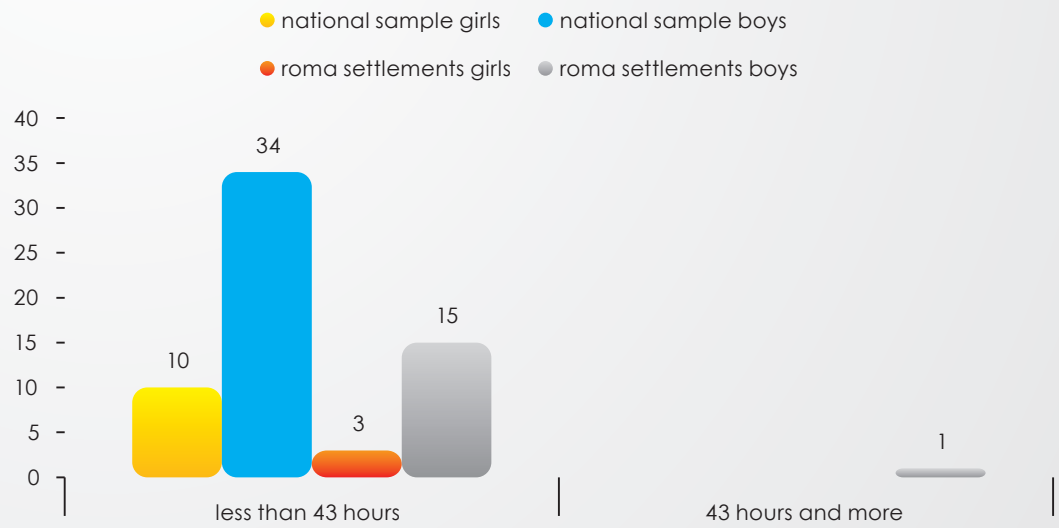
[48] Data for boys were not collected in the 2014 Serbia MICS and 2014 Serbia Roma settlements MICS.

to behave appropriately in the workplace and acquire skills that will facilitate their adaptation to work and enhance the likelihood of later success on the labour market. Some researchers have evidenced that even menial fast-food work, or work on farms can have highly positive effects on later career pathways (Jeylan et al, 2002). As it was already mentioned, according to Labour law in Serbia, adolescents are eligible to be employed after reaching age of 15. For this age group, MICS classifies working experience as child labour in case that work is performed for 43 hours or more during the week preceding the survey. The same threshold is valid for household chores.

Participation in **economic activities** above the age-specific threshold (for age 15-17 years set on the level of 43 hours per week or more) is low. As we can see from the following graph, the highest engagement in economic activity (but below the age specific threshold) is recorded among boys from the general population of Serbia.

Graph 18

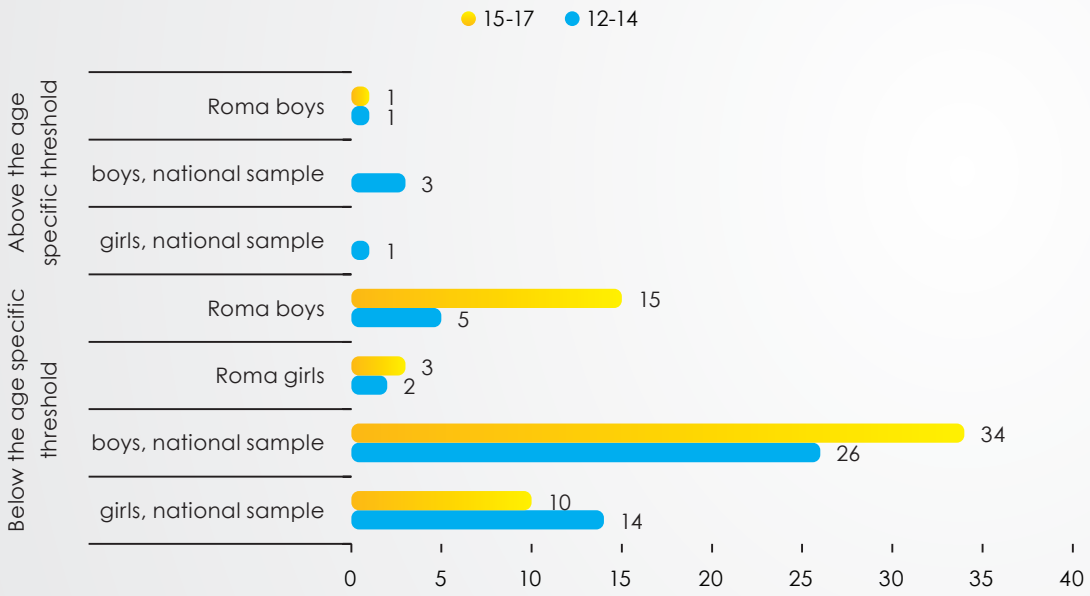
Participation of children in economic activities, 2014



When data are compared with data for younger children, we can see that patterns of economic participation change. Basically, girls living in the Roma settlements have the lowest economic participation. Based on MICS data it is not possible to know why that is so and we can guess that the reason for this lies partly in discrimination in employment and partly in early marriage and childbearing. Among girls from the general population, economic participation decreases with age. Namely, among girls aged 15-17 years, the recorded economic engagement is lower than for girls aged 12-14 by four percentage points. Among boys from the general population, overall economic participation increases, but the part that is at or above age-specific threshold disappears. Among boys from Roma settlements, economic engagement below threshold increases with age, while engagement above the threshold remains more or less the same.

Graph 19

Participation in economic activity, comparative data for adolescents 12-14 and 15-17, Serbia and Roma settlements, 2014[49]

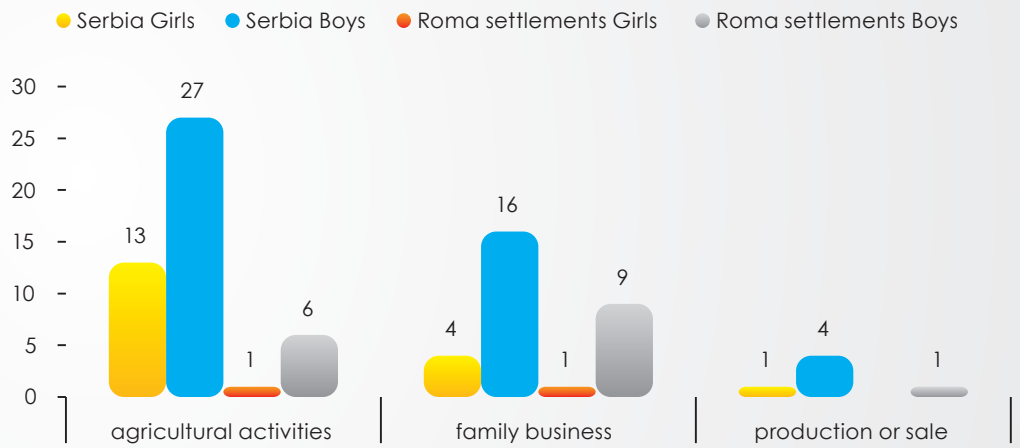


Further insights into the structure of economic activities (regardless of the number of hours spent) indicate that agriculture is again, as in the case of younger children, the most frequent activity, but the participation of boys from the general population in family business doubles among adolescents. Boys from Roma settlements participate more in the family business than in agriculture, and girls from Roma settlements are almost absent from any type of economic activity.

[49] Roma girls are excluded from the presentation of data above threshold, due to 0 cases.

Graph 20

Structure of child engagement in economic activities by sex, adolescents 15-17, Serbia and Roma settlements, 2014



According to MICS data, participation of girls in household chores below 43 hours is somewhat less frequent than among boys. The picture is reversed among Roma adolescents, as girls perform more household tasks than boys. Some of the causes (although not the only ones) are probably linked to the higher share of girls who are married or have children, but this should be the subject of further research if reasons should be reliably revealed.

Table 11

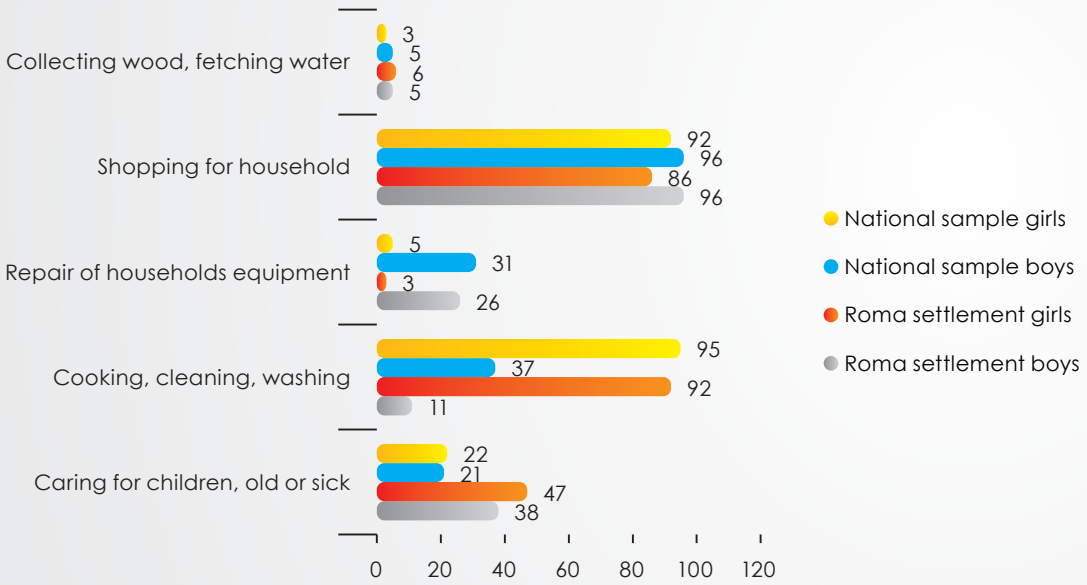
Participation of adolescents aged 15-17 in household chores, 2014

	Serbia		Roma settlements	
	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys
Less than 43 hours	80	84.2	89.8	78.4
43 hours or more	1	0	2.4	0

When structure of household chores is in the focus, we can see an increased engagement of girls in key activities related to the reproduction of the household: cooking, washing, cleaning. Their participation in these activities is extremely disproportional. Shopping as most frequent activity is much more gender balanced, at least in the general population. Boys and girls from Roma settlements are more engaged in caring activities than their peers in the general population, with girls living in the Roma settlements more likely to be involved in care giving activities than boys. This is not surprising since many girls in the Roma settlements are already married and taking care of children of their own, as it will be presented in the following sections.

Graph 21

Structure of child engagement in household chores by sex, Serbia and Roma settlements 2014

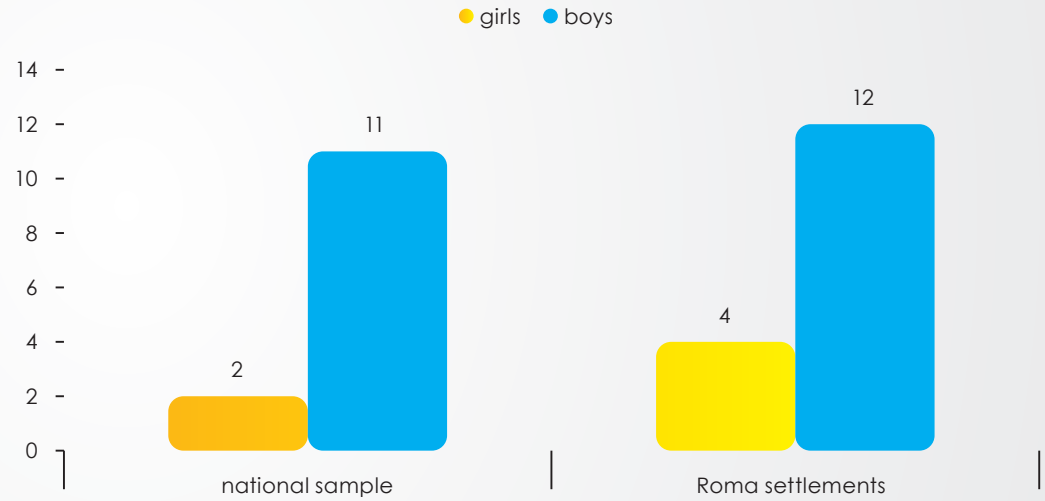


When **child labour is measured in total**, taking into account economic activities and household chores at or above age-specific threshold as well as participation in hazardous work, we can notice that child labour is mostly the issue that concerns boys in the general population as well as in the Roma settlements population. The worrying fact is that the prevalence of work in hazardous conditions equals that for child labour among boys (11 percent among boys from the general population, 12 percent among boys living in the Roma settlements), which indicates that work they perform could be harmful for their health and development.

It is important to note that prevalence of child labour among adolescents in the general population is higher than among children aged 12-14, but lower than among children aged 5-11.

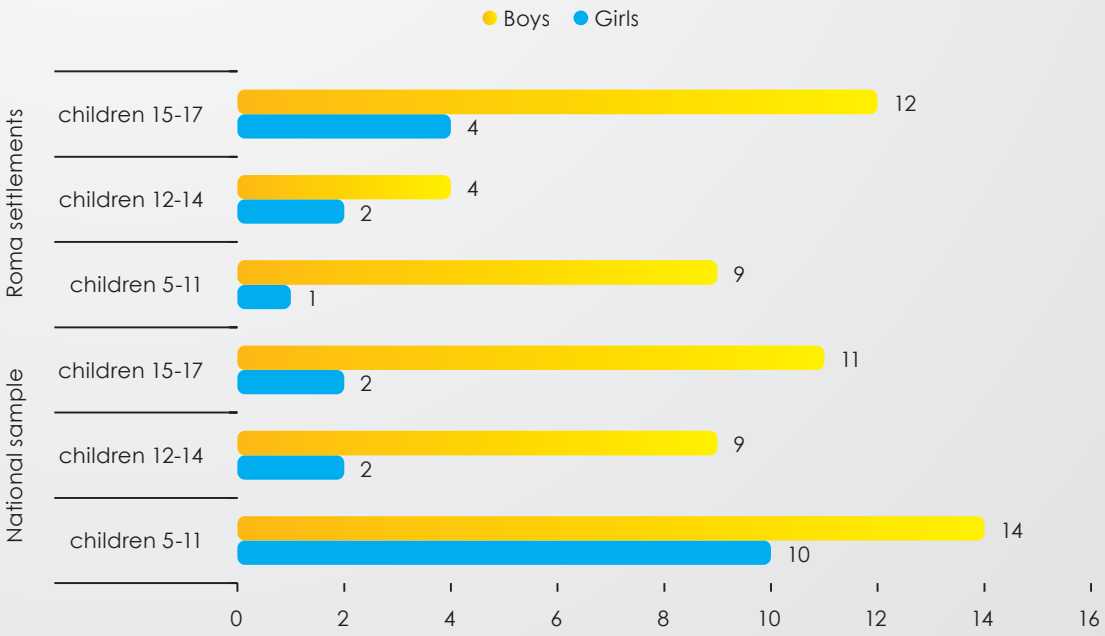
Graph 22

Prevalence of child labour, Serbia and Roma settlements, adolescents aged 15-17, 2014



Graph 23

Child labour — total by sex and age groups, Serbia and Roma settlements, 2014



These results should indicate several conclusions. Firstly, the major burden of labour is on the youngest category of children. They are, in relative terms, the group that is the most burdened by child labour in Serbia. Gender gaps appear in the higher involvement of boys in economic activities and patterns of gender segregation in performing household chores. Higher involvement of boys in hazardous work is an important disadvantage. However, lower economic participation of girls can also partly be understood as a disadvantage, in view of the sociological standpoints on the importance of economic engagement of adolescents as an experience that boosts skills, competences and self-confidence of young persons that will soon fully enter the labour market. Of course, this is true conditionally, if children do not abandon or neglect schooling at this stage. The lack of economic participation is something that particularly deprives Roma girls, particularly if it is combined with early school leaving.

3.4 Partnering, reproductive health and behavior

Some transitions early in life may also have lifelong implications for trajectories by shaping later events, experiences and future transitions. Adolescents' child-bearing is a well documented example of transition experiences with lifetime consequences (Furstenberg, Brooks-Gunn and Morgan, 1987, quoted from Elder et al, 2002: 8). Various researches in the context of developed countries show that early childbearing is linked to lower educational attainment, limited employment prospects, and lower incomes in adulthood (Uhlenberg and Mueller, 2002).

This section focuses on early marriage, contraception and family planning.

Within the MICS framework, there are two thresholds against which early marriage is monitored: before the age of 15 and before the age of 18. Early marriage is considered as a severe obstacle to human development, even as a violation of the girls' human rights which results in their social exclusion. According to the Family Law in Serbia, formal marriage is forbidden before age of 18, but under special circumstances it is allowed at age of 16. However, the law cannot effectively control the domains of informality and informal marriage can occur even at an earlier age than 16. Informal marriages are particularly common in the Roma communities and the bonds and limitations they pose on the girls' life chances are equally harmful as if they were formal.

MICS indicator for early marriage counts the percentage of women married before the age of 15 within the population of women aged 15-49. For the purpose of the analysis of adolescent girls, early marriage rate is presented also for age 15-17. The following table shows that the early marriage practice is something that affects mainly girls from the Roma settlements while it is marginal in the general population. The small number of girls in the sample does not allow for a more detailed analysis, but some linkages between early marriage and other characteristics of women will be analyzed more among adult women.

Table 12

Marriage before the age of 15, Serbia and Roma settlements, 2014

	Serbia	Roma settlements
Percentage of women 15-49 married before 15	0.8	16.9
Percentage of girls 15-17 married before 15	0.2	15.2
Number of women 15-49	4713	2081
Number of girls 15-17	292	211

There are differences among girls from the general population and girls living in the Roma settlements in the proportion of those who justify a husband's violence against his wife, with the latter more likely to justify such violence. Girls from the general population living in rural areas show a bit more tolerant attitudes towards intimate partner violence than girls in intermediate and urban areas. Same can be noticed in relation to the poorer households where justification of violence is more prevalent, particularly among girls living in the Roma settlements.

Table 13

Percentage of girls aged 15-17 who justify at least one form of violence, Serbia and Roma settlements, 2014

	Serbia		Roma settlements	
	% of women justifying physical violence by husband	No. of women	% of women justifying physical violence by husband	No. of women
Total	3.2	292	29.1	211
Type of settlement				
Densely populated	1.3	91	39.1	76
Intermediate	1.8	81	15.5	85
Thinly populated	5.6	119	37.2	49
Wealth index				
Poorest 60 percent	4.8	164	32.7	144
Richest 40 percent	1.0	128	21.5	67

Overall knowledge about various contraception methods among girls aged 15-17 in the general population is on the level of the whole population of women aged 15-49. The same applies to the specific knowledge of modern methods, but when it comes to the traditional methods of contraception their knowledge lags behind the whole sample of women, particularly in non-urban areas.

Girls from the Roma settlements are less familiar with contraception methods than the overall sample of women from the Roma settlements. They know less about contraception overall, about both modern and traditional methods, which indicates low transfer of knowledge about contraception from mothers to daughters, or, more generally, from older to younger women in the community.

Girls from poorer households are less informed about contraception methods than girls from richer households in both populations of girls (Table 19c and d, Annex).

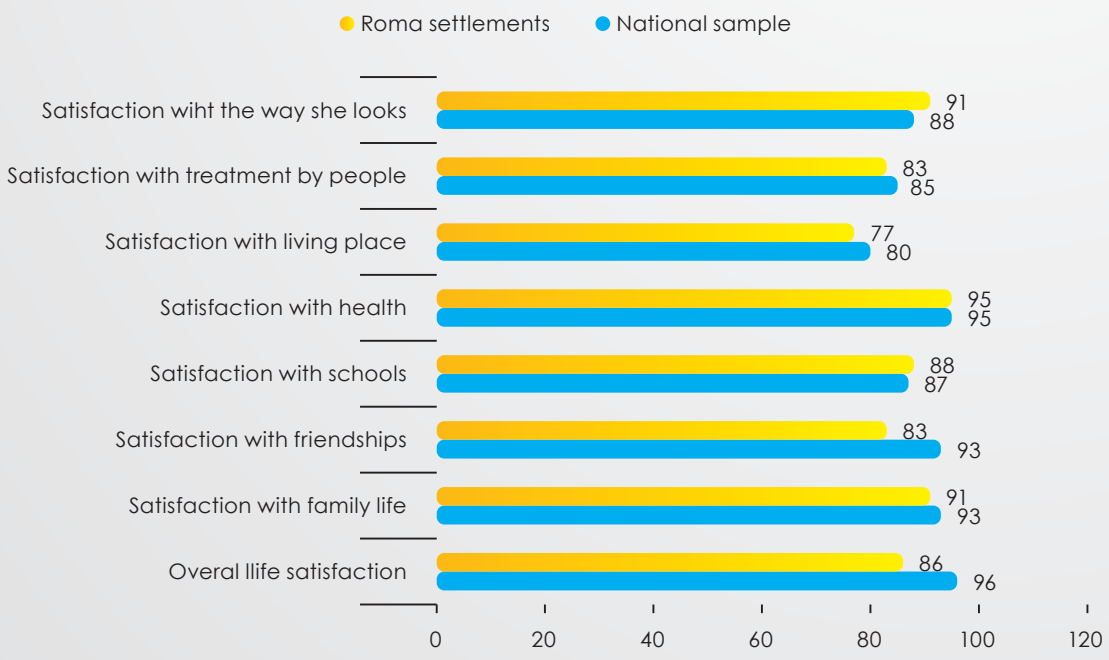
Among girls from the general population, 91 percent never used contraception. A vast majority of them (97 percent) did not use contraception simply because they had no sexual intercourse, and 1 percent said the reason was the lack of knowledge about contraception methods. Among Roma girls, 89 percent had never used contraception, and, among them, 69 percent because they did not need (no sexual intercourse), for 26 percent the reason was the desire to get pregnant, for 2 percent it was forbidden by the partner, and less than one percent reported the lack of knowledge while others quoted some other reasons.

3.5 Subjective wellbeing

Life satisfaction and happiness indicators have recently become very important as a subjective measure of development. In these approaches, happiness is considered as part of human wellbeing which expands an individual's capability to function (Todaro, Smith, 2006: 19). Studies show that financial security is only one of the factors that affect happiness. Richard Layard (2005) identified seven: family relationships, financial situation, work, community and friends, health, personal freedom and personal values. MICS includes indicators on overall life satisfaction and on nine other dimensions plus the indicator of happiness and expectation of a better future (UNICEF, 2014: 311).

Graph 24

Percentage of girls somewhat or very satisfied with various aspects of life, Serbia and Roma settlements, 2014



According to MICS data, girls from the general population are more satisfied with overall life and with various specific life aspects: treatment by people, living place, friendships and family life. Girls living in the Roma settlements are more often satisfied with the way they look and with schools than girls from the general population. Both samples of girls are equally satisfied with their health. Due to the relatively small number of girls in this age group, a more detailed analysis of the relationship between their socio-economic background and satisfaction with various life aspects is not possible.

There is a small difference in happiness between girls from the general population and the Roma settlements, as, among the former, 96 percent claimed that they were very or somewhat happy, while, among the latter, 92 percent of girls gave such a statement. As we will be able to compare towards the end of this study, adolescent girls are a bit more satisfied with overall life than young women. It seems that for some of them transition to the next stage — adulthood — brings a less favourable situation at least at the initial stages.

Summary

Household background and living arrangements. The situation of girls aged 15-17 years in relation to the household background is not different from the younger age group (5-14 years). The only big difference is present among girls living in the Roma settlements, as 28 percent of these girls live with neither biological parent (in comparison to one percent of girls and boys in the general population and 3 percent of boys living in the Roma settlements) due to a relatively high share of girls who enter early marriage at this stage.

Education. In the general population, girls have been attending secondary school more often than boys, while in the Roma settlements boys have been attending secondary school much more often than girls. One of the consequences of early school leaving of Roma girls is lower literacy rate than it is for girls in the general population.

Child labour. MICS results on child labour conclusions. Adolescents are less frequently burdened by child labour than younger children (5-11 years). Gender gaps appear in the higher involvement of boys in economic activities and patterns of gender segregation in performing household chores. Higher involvement of boys in hazardous work is an important disadvantage. However, lower economic participation of girls can be also understood partly as disadvantage, having in mind the importance of economic engagement provided that they do not abandon or neglect schooling. The lack of economic participation is something that particularly deprives Roma girls, particularly if it is combined with early school leaving.

Early marriages. From the next table we can notice that early marriage practice is something that affects girls from Roma settlements much more and it is marginal in the general population.

Attitudes towards partner violence. There are differences among girls from the general population and girls living in the Roma settlements in the proportion of those who justify a husband's violence against his wife, with the latter more frequently justifying such violence. Girls from the general population living in rural areas show a bit more tolerant attitudes towards intimate partner violence than girls in intermediate and urban areas. The same can be noticed in relation to the poorer households where justification of violence is more prevalent, particularly among girls living in the Roma settlements.

Contraception. The overall knowledge about various contraception methods among girls aged 15-17 years in the general population is on the level of the whole population of women aged 15-49. The same applies to specific knowledge about modern methods, but in the traditional methods of contraception their knowledge lags behind the whole sample of women, particularly in non-urban areas. Girls from the Roma settlements are less familiar with contraception methods than the overall sample of women from Roma settlements, which indicates a low transfer of knowledge about contraception from mothers to daughters, or from older to younger women. In both populations of adolescent girls (15-17 years) the majority never used contraception. The difference between girls from the two populations appears in the form of reasons for not using contraception, as 26 percent of girls in the Roma settlements indicated they did not use it because they wanted to get pregnant, whereas there are no such cases among girls in the general population.

Subjective wellbeing. Girls from the general population are more satisfied with the overall life and with various specific life aspects: treatment by people, living place, friendships and family life. Girls living in the Roma settlements are more often satisfied with the way they look and with schools than girls from the general population.

4

Womanhood Seen through MICS Data (Women 18-49)

The concept of adulthood is quite vague. The legal definition of adulthood in this part of the world takes the age of 18 as its entrance point. However, adulthood is the life stage which encompasses not only legal aspects but also biological and social ones. If adulthood means 'maturity', than on average biological transition occurs much before the age of 18 (around 13, when girls and boys reach puberty). But in its social meaning, transition to adulthood is far less clear-cut, and is usually related to the transitions to different roles that are related to the adult life course — on the labour market, in marriage and in parenthood (Carr, 2009b). However, this is a somewhat prescriptive definition as it relates 'maturity' to some normative roles that are perceived as 'common', even prescribed in our societies.

It is even harder and to some extent more 'dangerous' to define womanhood, because it can lock many ways of being (subjectively) adult woman into a single or a few constructed categories. In the case of this analysis, the danger is even bigger due to the fact that data available for the analysis of adult women are strongly focused on biological aspects of womanhood creating biological reductionist bias in view on women. To clarify before the analysis, the position in this section is that womanhood is not a single model of being an adult woman, but a diversity of identities and experiences that can be found among adult women. Secondly, womanhood, in our understanding, can never be limited to biological aspects, and when exploring diverse gender identities, we can find that for some women biological aspects of self, identity and the life course have higher importance while for others they can be of lower or even marginal importance[50]. However, our view of womanhood through the MICS lens is inevitably reductionist, mostly not due to the conceptual bias, but due to the limited scope of available indicators.

As it was already mentioned, MICS data available to study adult women are strongly focused on biological aspects: reproductive health, fertility, childbearing, antenatal and post-natal care. Besides these aspects, indicators are available (at least for basic dimensions) for education and literacy, partnership and household

[50] Feminist debates evolved for decades around the issues of gender identity, women's identity, womanhood, and the role of biology in the construction of these identities. For some of the key points in these debates see Alcoff, 1988.

arrangements. It is important to note that subjective wellbeing indicators are not available for women older than 24, and therefore, the analysis of these life aspects will not be available for three adult categories of women.

Within the adult life course, there are some distinctive stages usually labelled as 'early adulthood' 'midlife' and similar (Carr, 2009b). These stages are defined by different criteria among authors approaching them from different perspectives. Some are defined in terms of biological markers (reproductive stage and decline in reproductive capacity), or psychological markers (coping with different life-stage challenges), or developmental markers (successful accomplishment of age-defined tasks) (see more in Carr, 2009b: VXII-XIII). In our approach, transition markers are pragmatic and eclectic, driven by available indicators and some administrative definitions. Early young adulthood includes women aged 18-24, as this category is still significantly related to active education. The second category includes women aged 25-30 as the definition of young people in domestic policies includes people up to the age of 30. The third category includes women aged 31-40, who are engaged in intensive activities related to MICS indicators — intensive reproductive period. The fourth category includes women aged 41-49 who are in the life course stage in which biological decline unfolds for many women and, due to the types of indicators, much of this group is lost due to the inactivity in the observed dimensions.

4.1 Household environment

Women's wellbeing is defined by many parameters, not only by wealth, health, or a good position on the labour market, but also by the good relations with their partner, family, social networks. It also depends on the satisfaction of diverse needs that include, in addition to existential needs, various needs related to fulfilment of their potentials. It is assumed that higher levels of economic capital will provide better chances for women to avoid deprivation and to achieve wellbeing that is related to their full development. However, these kinds of measures neglect important issues of internal wealth distributions in the households marked by patriarchal power relations and distribution of intra-household resources, which prevent many women from accessing the financial resources in the household on an equal basis. Therefore, by applying a rationale grounded in findings from previous surveys, (see more in Babovic, Ginic, Vukovic, 2010) we can assume that while it is certain that in deprived households women are also deprived, we cannot be sure that even in better-off households women are free of deprivation.

Nevertheless, household wealth status is related to many aspects of women's wellbeing and the following graph shows that, in the total population of women aged 18-49 from the Serbia population, 55 percent live in poorer households, while among women from Roma settlements 58 percent live in poorer households[51].

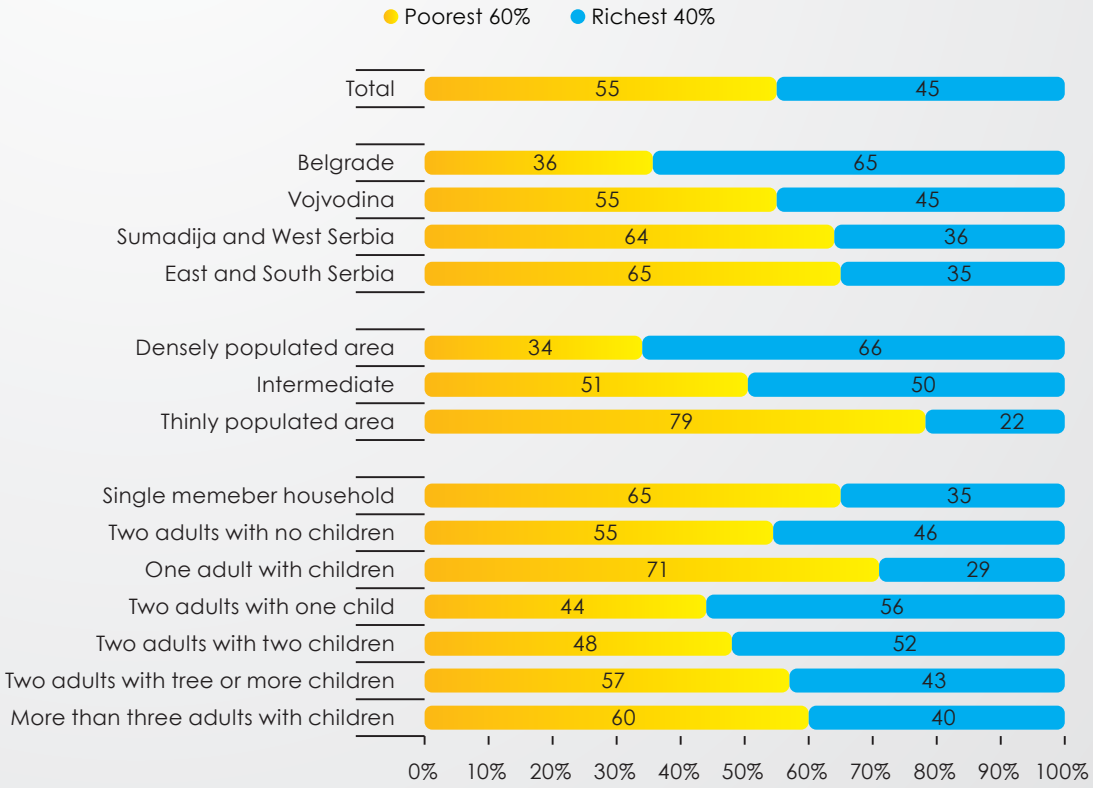
Distribution of women between poorest and richest households varies between regions, types of living areas and composition of households. The majority of women from Belgrade live in the richest 40 percent of households, while in other regions in Serbia the majority of women live in the poorest 60 percent of households.

[51] The wealth indexes for the general population and for Roma settlements are constructed differently (for more details see UNICEF, 2014, p12 and p22).

Differences are present among areas with a different degree of urbanization. While in more urbanized areas (densely populated) the majority of women live in the richer households, in very rural areas (thinly populated), a vast majority of women live in poorer households. Data on household structure and wealth once more prove that single member households (mostly older persons) and households with one adult person with a child or children[52] live in worse-off households (category of the poorest 60 percent of households). Increase in the number of children in a household decreases the chances of households to be well-off, while a combination of two adults with one child is linked with the highest share of richest households in 2014 Serbia MICS. Differences between women of different age are not prominent (Table 21a, Annex). Women aged 31-40 years are slightly more likely to live in the richest households than others, particularly young women (18-24 years). This can be the effect of the 'most work productive' age for 'younger middle-age women', but it cannot be verified based on MICS data (lack of employment data for women and other household members).

Graph 25

Women by wealth of household, Serbia, 2014

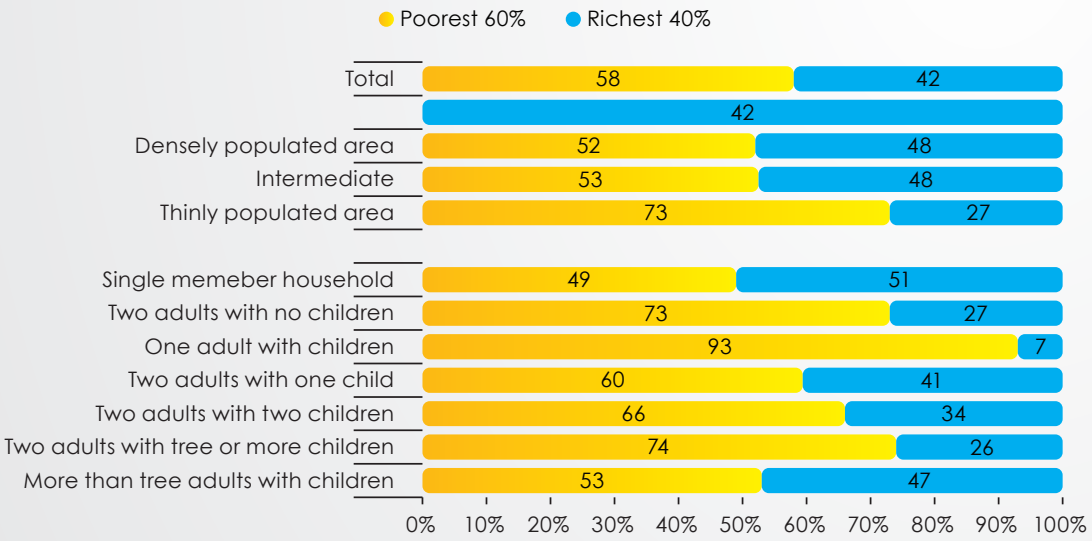


52 More about hardships of single-parent families in Tomanovic, Stanojevic, Ljubicic, 2014.

Similar tendencies can be observed among households in which women from Roma settlements live, with several differences. Firstly, majority of women living in the Roma settlements live in the poorest 60 percent of households regardless of the degree of urbanization of the living area. Secondly, single person households represent the category with the best chances to achieve better wealth status, while households of single adults with children are extremely pushed towards the category of poorest households. Again, age differences are not prominent (Table 20b, Annex).

Graph 26

Women by wealth of household, Roma settlements, 2014



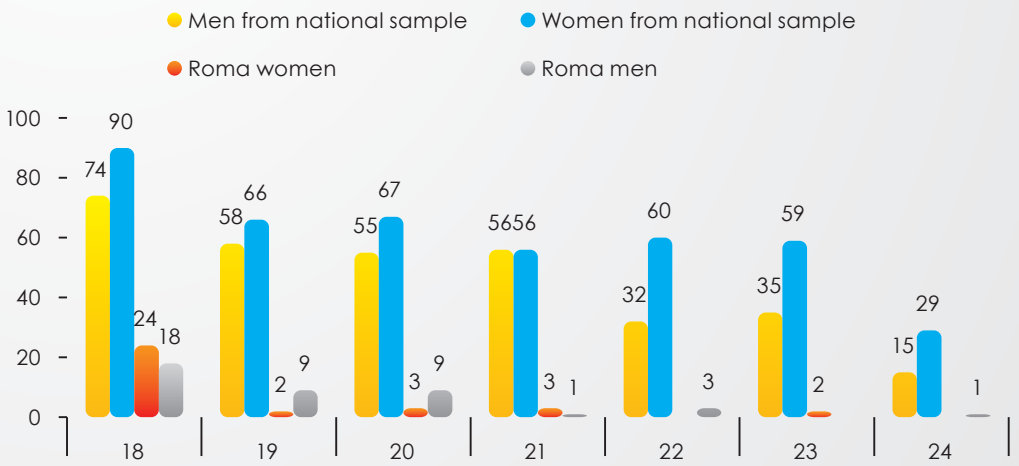
The majority of women live in the male-headed households. The share of female-headed households increases slightly in older age groups, but still remains sporadic. Women from Roma settlements live in very small proportions in households with no children, and more frequently in extended families than women from the general population in Serbia (Tables 21c and d, Annex). However, some of the presented data should be taken with caution due to the small number of cases. The number of single-parent households is small thus preventing further analysis of this most vulnerable group. However, some other sources (Tomanovic, Stanojevic, Ljubicic, 2014, Blagojevic, 2012) indicate many difficulties these families encounter in their pursuit of achieving appropriate living conditions.

4.2 Education

Educational attainment is closely related to the potential of women to acquire good position on the labour market and achieve appropriate levels of economic wealth necessary for the satisfaction of a diversity of needs and enabling life choices. Data on ongoing education (school attendance during the survey) are available for young men as well, so we used the opportunity to briefly reintroduce the gender perspective. The following graph shows comparative data for young men and women in the general population and the population living in the Roma settlements. From this graph we can see that Roma men and women remain far behind their peers from the general population, and young men from the general population lag behind young women. Roma women almost disappear from schooling after the age of 18, and Roma men after the age of 21.

Graph 27

Percentage of young men and women (18-24) attending school at the time of survey, by school adjusted age[53], Serbia and Roma settlements, 2014



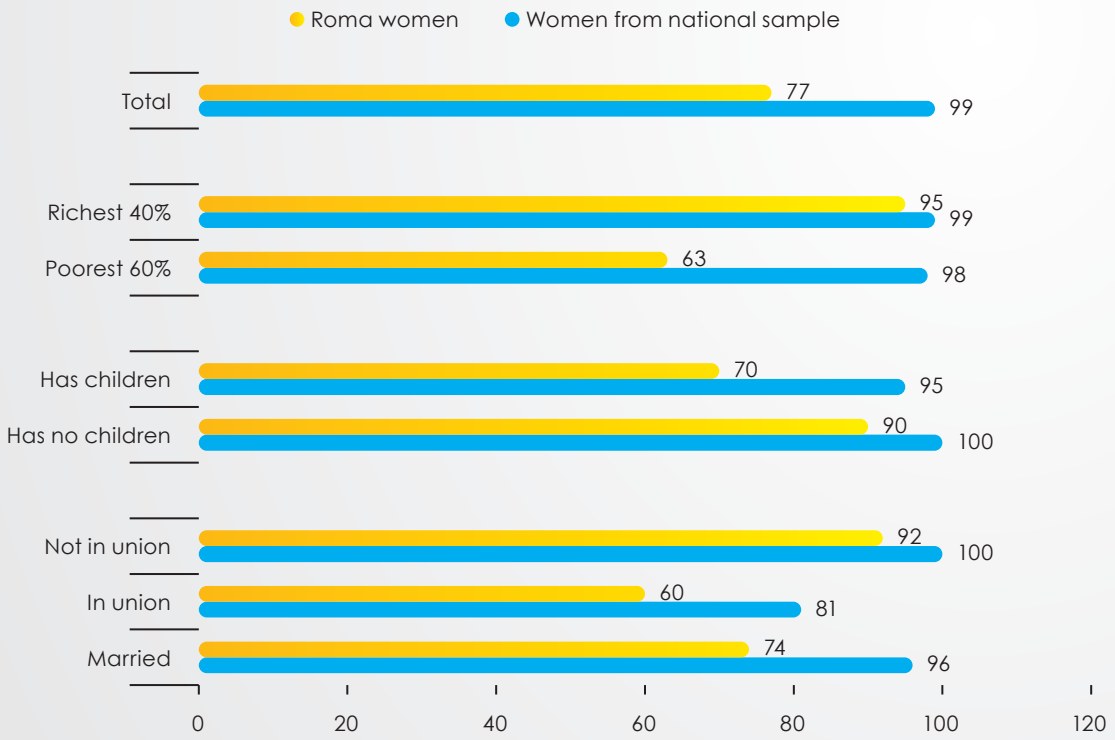
Data on literacy indicate a big gap between young women from the general population and those living in the Roma settlements. In total, there is a 22 percentage point difference between these two groups, in favour of women from the general population. However, gaps are different between groups of women of certain background. For example, the gap is much narrower among women in the general population and in the Roma settlements from the richest households (5 percentage points). At the same time, the gap is much wider among women from poorest households (35 percentage points), indicating that for women in the general population poverty is not so strongly related to literacy as in the case of women living in the Roma settlements. Similarly to this, gap is narrower between women from two populations without children (9 percentage points), and much

[53] Age calculated as full year of life before March 2013 in accordance with legal regulations which define school enrolment appropriate age.

wider in the category of young mothers (24 percentage points), indicating again that childbearing is more related to the literacy among women living in the Roma settlements than among their peers from the general population. The lowest literacy rate is recorded among women living in union in both populations.

Graph 28

Young women (18-24) literacy rate, general population and Roma settlements, 2014

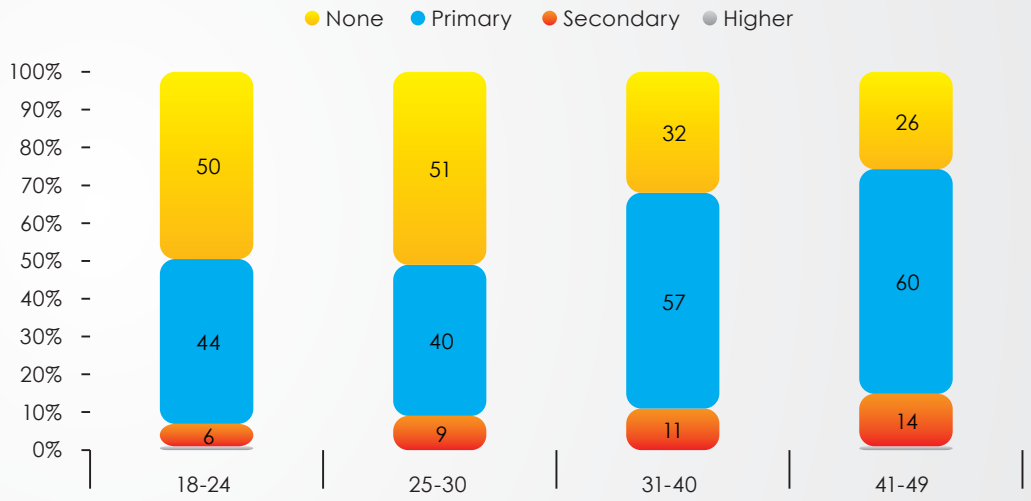


Half of young women from the general population attended[54] higher level of education. There is a big difference between middle-age women and young women and we can assume that reform of higher education, as well as gender equality policies raising awareness on the importance of education as a means to improvement of socio-economic position of women have contributed to this intergenerational change.

54 It is important to emphasize that MICS methodology takes into account the highest level of school attended, but not necessarily completed, unlike the official statistics which focuses on the highest level completed. Therefore, differences between MICS and official statistics can be considerable.

Graph 29a

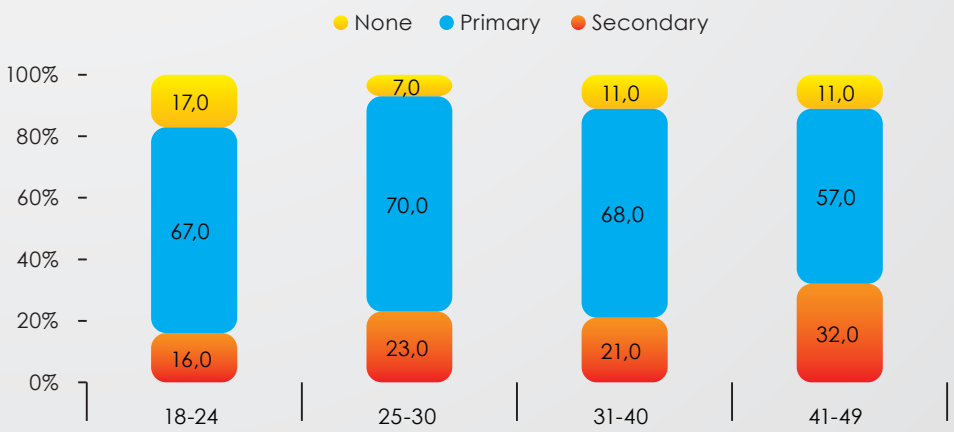
Women 18-49 according to education level attended, Serbia, 2014



Unfortunately, trends observed among young women from the general population did not reach women living in the Roma settlements. Data indicate that the majority of women from the Roma settlements attended only primary school. We can observe only a slight change in the youngest age group, with the decrease in the number of women with no school and increase in the number of women who attended primary and secondary school. However, the gap between young women living in the Roma settlements and young women in the general population remains large with no clear indication of a closing trend.

Graph 29b

Women 18-49 according to education level attended, Roma settlements, 2014

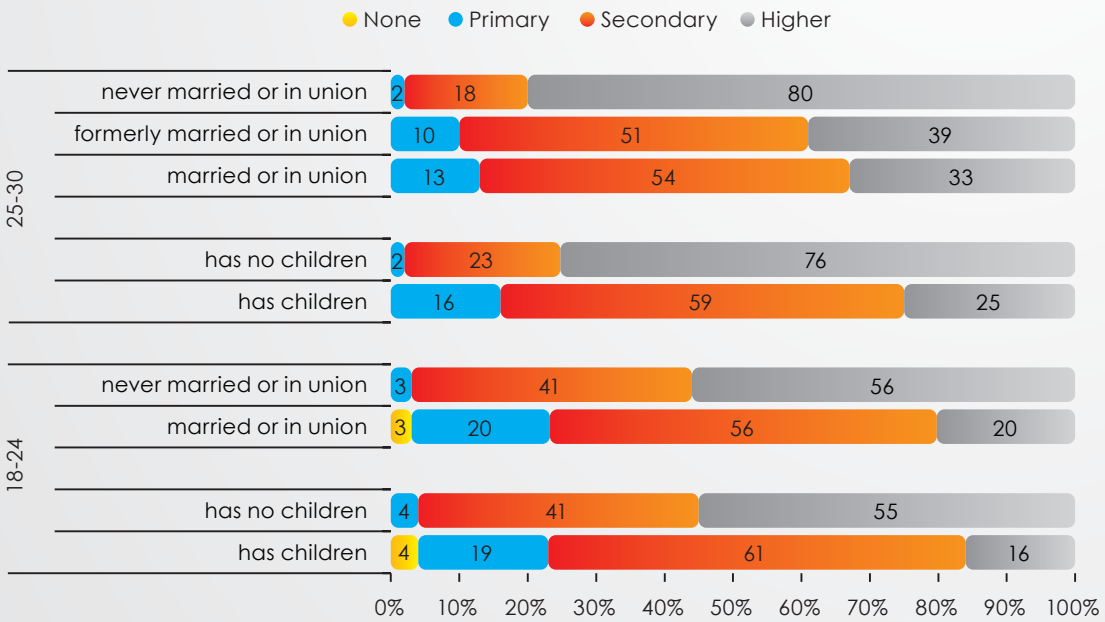


Differences in highest level of education attended are notable in areas with different level of urbanization. While in more urbanized areas half the women from the general population attended higher education, in rural areas (thinly populated) less than quarter of women attained same level of education (Graph 22a, Annex). Among women from the Roma settlements differences are not prominent and the effect of the degree of urbanization in the living area seems rather irrelevant (Graph 22b, Annex). This can be understandable, as accessibility of educational institutions is not the primary cause of their exclusion from the higher education system.

There is also the effect of early marriage and childbearing on school attendance. For this purpose we focused only on two younger age groups (18-24 and 25-30). Women who were never married and who have no children, have higher chances of attending a higher education level.

Graph 30a

Women by educational attainment, marital status and childbearing, general population, 2014[55]

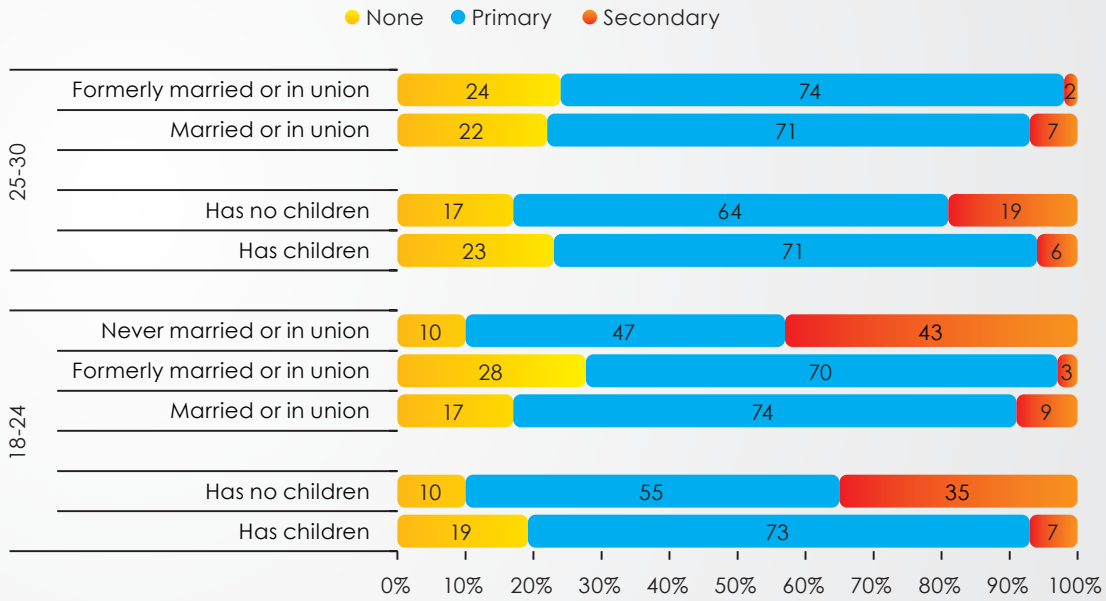


Tendencies are similar among women from the Roma settlements — early marriage and child bearing prevents women from higher educational attainments. The only difference is that this occurs at lower levels of education. Namely, marriage and childbearing increase the chances for women not to get any degree, even that of primary school. On the other hand, lack of marital or childbearing experience increases the chances of women to attend secondary or higher education.

[55] Due to the small number of cases (less than 25), data for the 'formerly married or in union' category for the 18-24 age group are not presented.

Graph 30b

Women by educational attainment, marital status and childbearing, Roma settlements, 2014[56]



From the presented data, we can conclude that institutional pathways of formal education are much harder to pass for young women who are in poorer, more remote households and particularly those who already experienced transition to marriage and parenthood. Formal educational system, it seems, does not offer effective side-pathways for these young women. This is true for all levels of education, including higher. We saw that higher education reform comes with the trends of increasing the share of women who attend higher education. But it seems it does not provide effective alternative pathways to young mothers. As it does not recognize the possibility for simultaneous employment and studying, it does not offer opportunities for young women to combine studying and childcare. This can indicate relatively rigid institutional pathways and all that leave them at one point have low opportunity to catch up again.

In the case of women living in the Roma settlements, the problem revolves around an even more basic ground, as early marriage and childbearing are related to early school leaving, for the majority of them after completion of primary school. Although early marriage and school leaving are both best seen as part of a more complex syndrome of social exclusion and specific cultural patterns of life cycles and life styles, there is certainly, at least partly, the effect of rigid borders of the education system with no possibilities of entry and exit points that will lead to alternative education pathways for these categories of women.

[56] Due to a small number of cases (less than 25), data are not presented for the 'never married or in union' category for the 25-30 age group.

4.3 Partnering, reproductive health and behavior

Although education has already imposed the question of partnership and reproductive behaviours through early marriage and child bearing, in this section, full attention will be paid to these aspects of the life course.

The MICS survey makes a difference between marriage (formal) and cohabitation (labelled as 'in union'). Marriage is a legal contract or socially recognized agreement between two individuals to form a union (productive and reproductive) (Carr, 2009b: 256). Cohabitation is a form of union which represents living together in an intimate, but a non-marital relationship. Scholars found differences between marriage and cohabitation along various dimensions: stability of relationship and commitment, quality of relationship, economic security, fertility and cooperation. Various researchers found that most cohabiters expect to marry their partner, but despite high levels of commitment, cohabiting unions are unstable in developed countries (Carr, 2009b). Generally, cohabitation is more common among couples with a lower socioeconomic status, and indeed some surveys show that, for cohabiting couples, economic insecurity is a key factor blocking marriage (e.g. Smock, Manning and Porter, 2005). Cohabiters are also less satisfied with their relationships than married couples. However, in some countries cohabitation is viewed more as an alternative form of marriage, than alternative to marriage (Sweden) with fewer differences between married and cohabiting couples (including a high level of fertility). In Serbia, there is a slowly increasing trend of cohabitation, 'living apart together' forms of partnership and these forms alternative to formal marriage are more common among younger, urban and highly educated women and men (see more in Bobic, 2006). With different content and for different reasons, cohabitation is a frequent form of partnership among younger Roma women as well.

4.3.1 Partnership status and early marriages

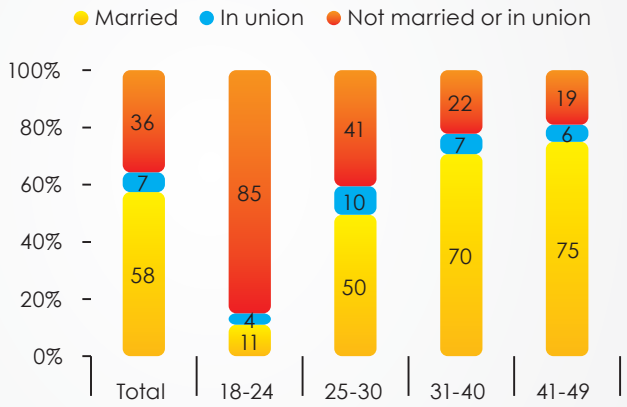
According to MICS data, except in the case of young women (18-24), among all other age groups of women in Serbia or Roma settlements, the majority are married or in union.

Among women living in the Roma settlements, cohabitation is a much more frequent form of union than among women from the general population and formal marriage prevails after the age of 30.

Women enter their first marriage or cohabitation relatively early, though differences between women from the general population and women living in the Roma settlements are big. Among women aged 18-49 who were ever married or in union, the first marriage/cohabitation occurred before the age of 18 for almost 17 percent of women from the general population and over 73 percent of women living in the Roma settlements. More than half the women from the general population enter their first marriage/cohabitation between the ages of 18 and 24 years, and almost a third after that age.

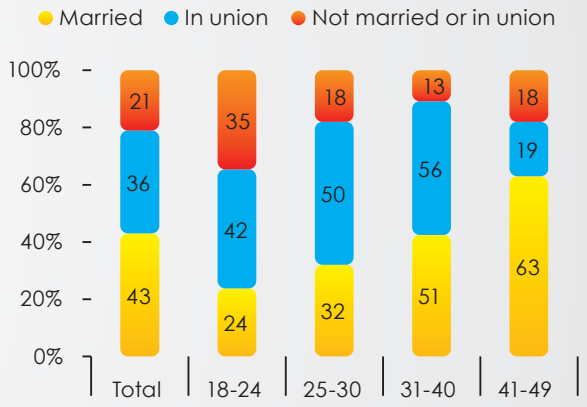
Graph 31a

Percentage distribution of women aged 18-49 by partnership status, Serbia, 2014



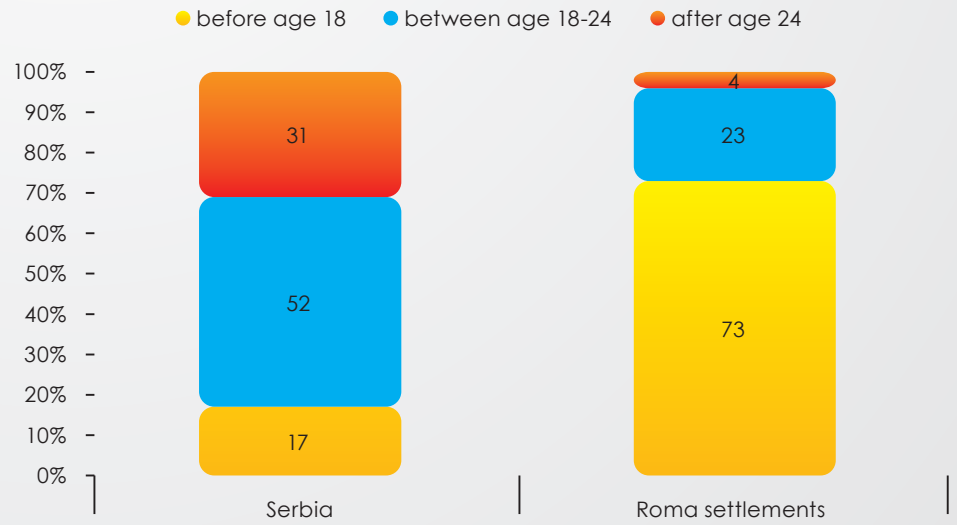
Graph 31b

Percentage distribution of women aged 18-49 by partnership status, Roma settlements, 2014



Graph 32

Percentage distribution of ever-married women aged 18-49 by age at first marriage or cohabitation, Serbia, and Roma settlements, 2014



A relatively high percentage of women who married very early (before the age of 15 years) can be found among women living in the Roma settlements and differences between older and younger generations are not notable as well as differences between women from the poorest and the richest households in child marriage

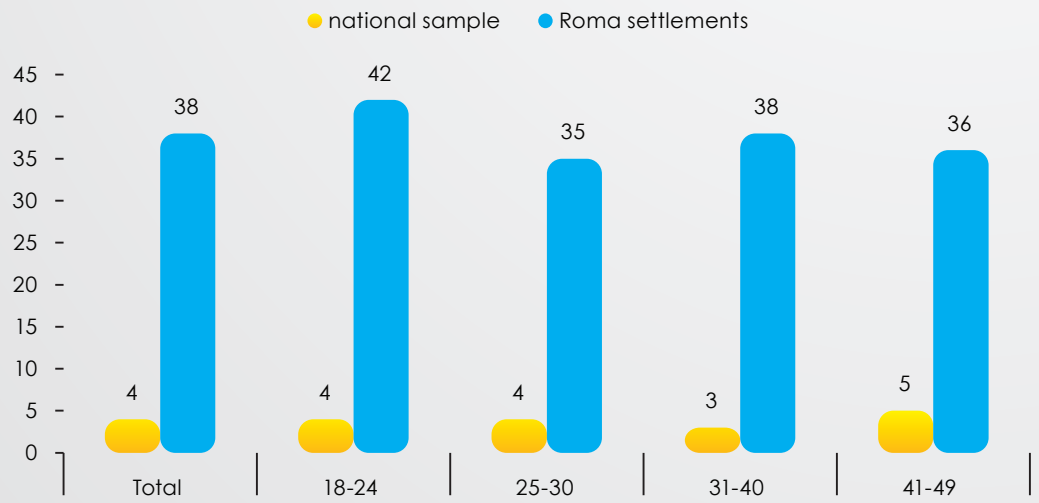
prevalence. Early marriage is associated with low educational achievements, as a quarter of women who married before the age of 15 have education.

Low educational attainment is linked with early marriage in both populations of women. Among women married before the age of 18 in the general population, a high share of women with no education or with only primary education is recorded. Among women living in the Roma settlements with secondary or higher education, only 23 percent was married before the age of 18, while in groups with lower education attainment, over half of women are married before that age. Women living in the poorest 60 percent of households in the general population marry more often before the age 18 than women from the richest 40 percent households (10 percent versus 3 percent). Among women from the Roma settlements in each wealth category, more than half the women are already married before reaching the age of 18 (for more details, see Table 23a, Annex).

MICS collects data on women's attitudes on physical violence committed by husband/intimate partner. Violence is presented through a set of attitudes, with different situations in which women think it is justifiable for a husband to hit or beat his wife[57]. As justification of violence is considered to be agreement with any of these attitudes, the following graph presents the share of women who justify and tolerate violence. As we can see, women from the Roma settlements are likely to justify violence more often than women from the general population across all age groups. While in the general population there are slightly more women in the oldest category who justify violence, among women from Roma settlements, the highest share of those who justify violence is among the youngest women. It is important to bear in mind that data only show attitudes, not real experiences and that violence can occur even if women's tolerance to violence is not high.

Graph 33

Percentage of women aged 18-49 who justify violence for any of the five reasons, by age groups, Serbia and Roma settlements, 2014



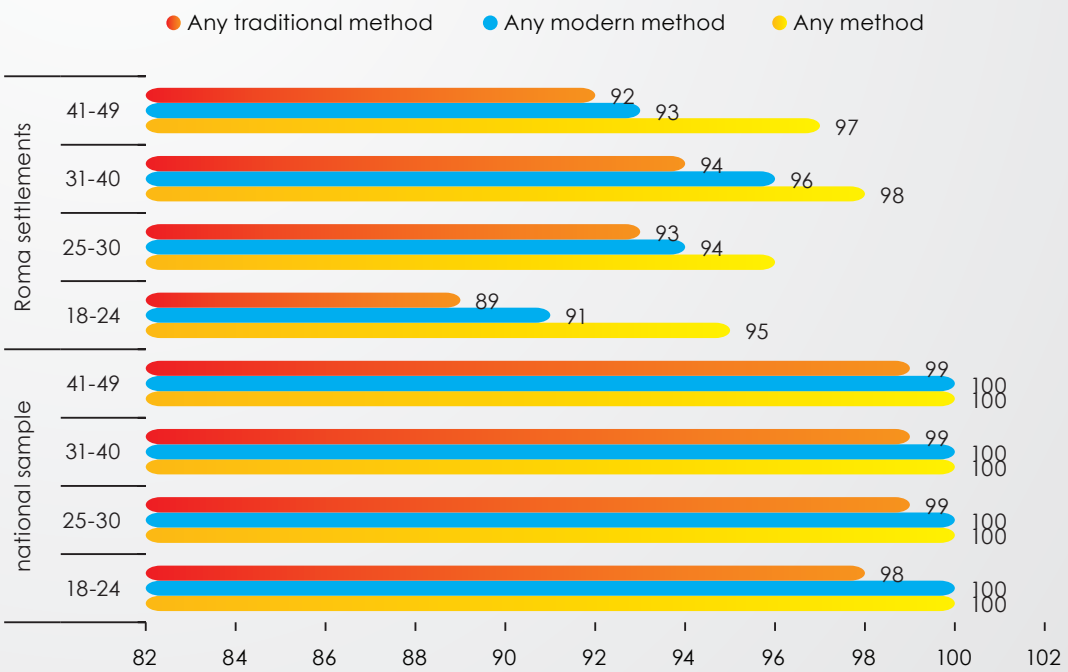
[57] The situations include the following: if she goes out without telling him; if she neglects children; if she argues with him; if she refuses sex with him; if she burns the food (UNICEF, 2014: vii).

4.3.2 Contraception and family planning

Contraception and family planning data are important because they provide various indications on control women have over their reproductive function which is at the core of control over their entire life course. Pregnancy and motherhood demand plenty of women's resources — biological, economic, as well as knowledge, skills, time, energy, and commitment. When childbearing is planned, women can better manage different resources so that their transition to motherhood does not limit their life opportunities (more on the feminist approach to motherhood and, from that perspective, unsupportive contemporary population policies in Serbia in Sekulic, 2014). From the child perspective, it enables better quality care and, therefore, better prospects for child development. In order to understand processes related to reproductive activities and transition to motherhood, we will focus here on knowledge and use of contraception and birth control.

Graph 34

Women according to age and knowledge about contraception, Serbia and Roma settlements, 2014



Among women from the general population, knowledge about modern and traditional contraception methods is high across all age groups. Women from Roma settlements are generally less informed about various contraception methods, but, on average, in all age groups, women are familiar with at least one modern or traditional contraception method in over 90% of cases. Familiarity with the modern methods, which are more secure, is also present among 90% of women from Roma settlements of all ages. However, women from youngest

category (18-24 years), who are mainly already in the transition to marriage, lag behind older age groups in knowledge about contraception. We will not enter here into a more detailed presentation about the knowledge on various specific methods (for more data on this, see Tables 23a-d in the Annex). Here we will point only to the finding that there are no prominent differences between women from urban and rural areas, only small differences between women with different wealth status, with richest women being slightly more informed about various contraception methods overall.

The difference between women from the general population and those living in the Roma settlements is more evident when mean numbers of contraception methods known by women are presented. While women from the general population know on average more than 10 contraceptive methods across all age groups, women from Roma settlements know on average around 6 contraceptive methods (Graph 23a, Annex).

Women from the general population, in all age categories, report less frequently having used any contraception method ever, than women from the Roma settlements. However, the latter use traditional methods of contraception more frequently (Table 23b, Annex).

The unmet need indicator is used to identify fecund women who are married or in union and are not using any method of contraception, but who wish to postpone the next birth or who wish to stop childbearing altogether (UNICEF, 2014: 114). This indicator is also known as 'unmet need for family planning', which is an indicator used to track progress toward MDG goal 5 — improving maternal health. The limit of this indicator, however, is that it does not take into account the unmet need of women who are not married or in union, but have partners (living apart together — LAT) or just have occasional sexual intercourses. This should be borne in mind when analyzing data on unmet need.

Percentage of women with unmet need in Serbia was highest among the youngest women (18-24 years), while in the sample from the Roma settlements it was highest among women aged 25-30 years. Among women from the general population, in all age groups, the highest share of women with an unmet need can be found in Belgrade (Tables 22c and d, Annex).

Table 14

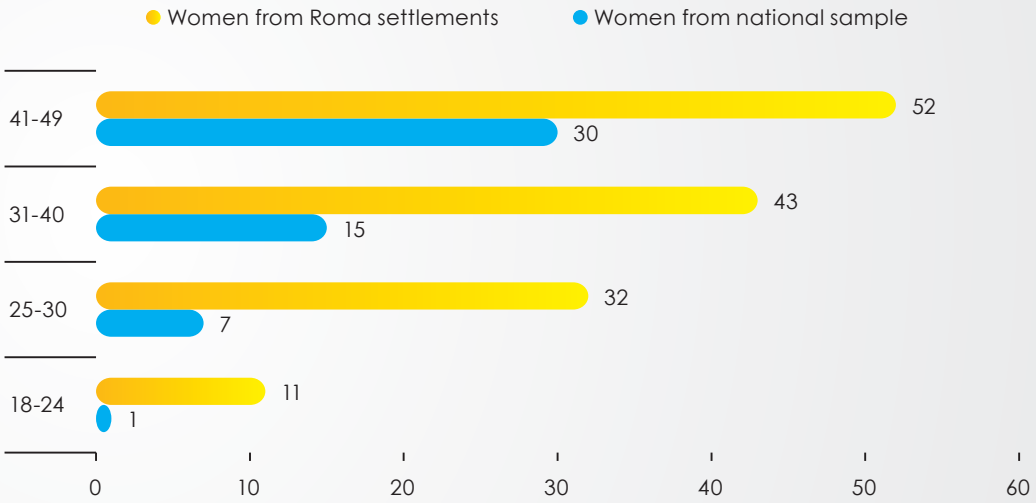
Percentage of women with unmet need by age, general population and Roma settlements, 2014

	Serbia				Roma settlements			
	18-24	25-30	31-40	41-49	18-24	25-30	31-40	41-49
Percent of women with unmet need	19.3	11.8	14.6	16.2	16.2	19.7	12.2	9.8
Number of women	81	311	900	795	236	225	396	276

The indicator on abortion is perhaps the best indicator of ineffectiveness of family planning. Prevalence of induced abortions is much higher among women from Roma settlements than among women from the general population. Share of women with at least one induced abortion during lifetime increases with age. Among young women (18-24 years) in the general population the prevalence of abortion is one percent, reaching as high as 30 percent in the oldest category of women (41-49 years). In the sample from the Roma settlements, the prevalence rate in the youngest group (18-24 years) is 11 percent and in the oldest group (41-49 years) more than half the women had at least one induced abortion during their life course.

Graph 35

Women with at least one induced abortion, Serbia and Roma settlements, 2014

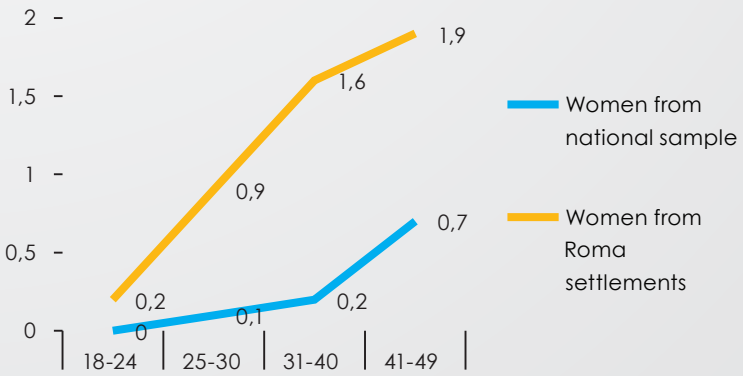


Prevalence of abortion among women from the general population is highest in East and South Serbia and then Vojvodina, and it is higher in rural than urban areas, among women with low education and women from poorer households. Among women from the Roma settlements, it is lowest in areas with intermediate population density, among women with secondary school and among women from poorer households (Tables 23e and f, Annex).

Data show not only that the share of women with at least one abortion increases with age, but that the mean number of abortions increases as well. Again, the mean number of abortions, as well as the increase rate is higher among women from Roma settlements.

Graph 36

Mean number of abortions, women aged 18-49 in Serbia and Roma settlements, 2014



4.3.3 Fertility and childbearing

Various fertility measures are presented in the MICS 2014 report (UNICEF, 2014: 97, 101) and they will not be repeated here. To illustrate just the principal idea, the total fertility rate (for women aged 15-49) was 1.6 for national, and 3.1 for the Roma sample. The general fertility rate (number of live births per 1,000 women) counted 45.7 for national and 102.0 for the Roma sample.

Here we will focus more on the age of the first childbirth in order to estimate when the transition to motherhood occurs for various women and on the desirability of pregnancy in order to capture the measure of control women have over their childbearing and motherhood aspects of the life course.

Early childbearing is an indicator that measures the percentage of women who had a live birth before the age of 18. According to the MICS data, early childbearing occurs in the general population of women on a small scale and is much more prevalent among women from the Roma settlements. Among women from the general population, the prevalence is higher among women with primary education and those living in the poorest wealth index quintile. Among Roma women, prevalence is lowest among women with secondary/higher education and those living in the middle wealth index quintile.

Table 15

Early childbearing — women aged 20-24 years who have had a live birth before age 18, Serbia and Roma settlements, 2014

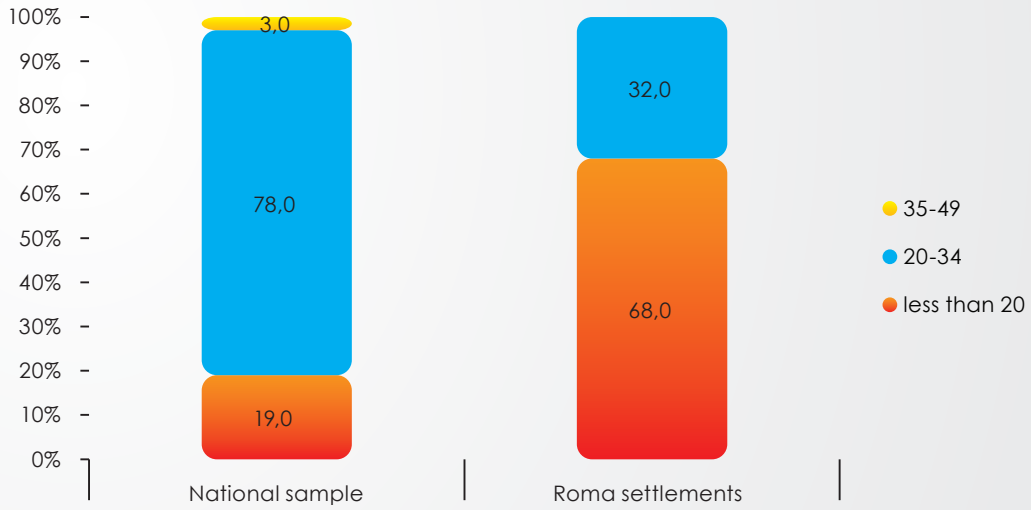
	Serbia		Roma settlements	
	%	No. of women	%	No. of women
Total	1.4	562	38.3	377
Area				
Densely populated	1.4	218	41.4	137
Intermediate	0.6	133	37.9	147
Thinly populated	1.8	210	34.3	92
Education				
None	(*)	9	46.8	72
Primary	5.7	49	42.1	253
Secondary*	1.6	179	8.0	52
Higher	0	345		
Wealth index quintiles				
Poorest	6.0	79	57.3	78
Secondary	1.3	107	35.5	76
Middle	0.8	146	27.3	70
Fourth	0.3	120	35.1	79
Richest	0	110	35.0	74
Wealth index				
Poorest 60 percent	2.2	332	40.6	224
Richest 40 percent	0.1	230	35.0	153

* This category in case of Roma women includes secondary or higher level of education.
() Figures that are based on 25-49 unweighted cases
(*) Figures that are based on less than 25 unweighted cases

The majority of women from the Roma settlements experience their first live birth before the age of 20, while for majority of women in the general population this happens between 20-34 years of age.

Graph 37

Age at first delivery, women aged18-49, Serbia, 2014



The data on the desirability of pregnancy show that, generally, a vast majority of actual or past pregnancies (that ended in a live birth in the previous two years) were desired. A desired pregnancy is more frequent among women from the general population than among women from the Roma settlements. Certain differences emerged between women who were pregnant during the survey and those who had had a live birth during the previous two years. In the subsample of women from the general population who were pregnant during the survey, almost 94 percent claimed that they wanted to get pregnant, while among women who had had a childbirth during the previous two years but were not pregnant during the survey, 88 percent of women gave a positive answer. The tendency is reversed among women from Roma settlements. A lower share of women who were pregnant during the survey claimed that their pregnancy was desired (77 percent) than was the case among women with a childbirth during the previous two years (87 percent) (Table 24a, b, Annex).

Possibly with time distance women speak more openly about the desirability of pregnancy, at least in the general population, as the share of women who claim that desire to get pregnant is lower, as it was already mentioned. The share of women who wish to get pregnant is the lowest among the oldest (41-49 years) and youngest (18-24 years) groups of women. The desired pregnancy is particularly low among the oldest category of Roma women (Table 24b, Annex).

4.3.4 Antenatal care

Antenatal care is an indicator of adequacy of institutional support to pregnancy and childbearing. Rough figures indicate high coverage with at least basic antenatal care in both populations. In the general population, only small percent of women remain completely out of antenatal care during pregnancy, and these are predominantly women aged 31-40. What is worrying is that, among women from the Roma settlements, more than one fifth of women in their thirties did not have any access to antenatal care during pregnancy that ended in a live birth during the previous two years.

Table 16

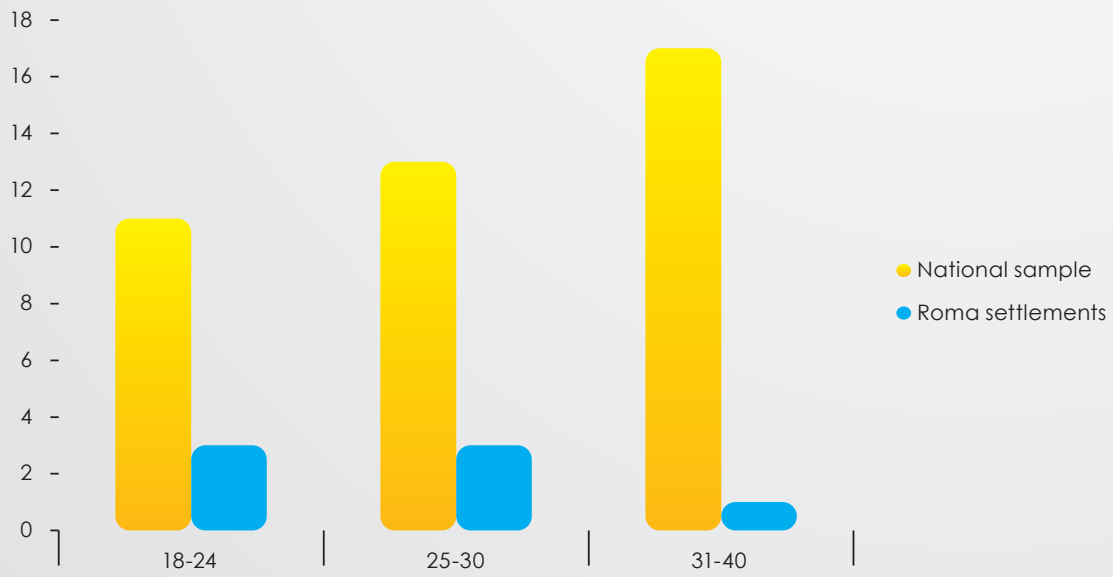
Antenatal care coverage (at least a visit to a skilled provider) during pregnancy, by age, | Serbia and Roma settlements, 2014

	Serbia					Roma settlements				
	Total	18-24	25-30	31-40	41-49	Total	18-24	25-30	31-40	41-49
Any skilled provider	98.3	98.8	99.9	96.6	100.0	95.4	98.3	97.6	77.8	(*)
Medical doctor	98.3	98.8	99.9	96.6	100.0	94.4	97.3	97.0	75.7	(*)
No antenatal care	1.6	0.8	0.1	3.4	0	4.6	1.7	2.4	22.2	(*)
No. of women with a live birth in the last 2 years	383	63	152	159	9	379	229	96	48	5

() Figures based on 25-49 unweighted cases
(*) Figures based on less than 25 unweighted cases

Graph 38

Percentage of women with a live birth in the last two years who participated in a childbirth preparation programme by age, Serbia and Roma settlements, 2014



Participation in the preparation programme was very low among women who had a child birth during the previous two years, while it remained rather marginal among Roma women.

Again due to the small number of cases, a more detailed analysis is not possible, but from the data on the content of the preparation programme we can conclude that capacity building of parenting skills is the weakest link in the programmes. Other skills such as newborn care, breastfeeding and women's health are more in the focus of the preparation programmes' contents. Finally, both Roma women and women from Serbia's general population were assisted at delivery by a skilled attendant (99 percent of cases in both samples).

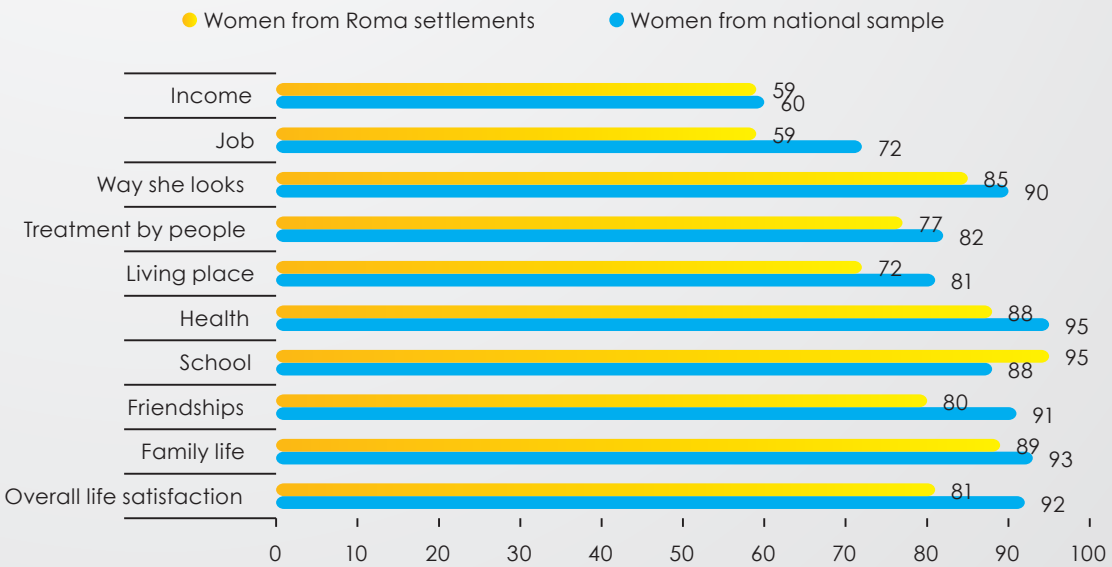
4.4 Subjective wellbeing among young women

Indicators on subjective wellbeing are available only for young women (18-24) and, regrettably, because of that we cannot follow how life satisfaction changes along the life course and how those potential changes are related to various aspects of their lives, their access to social resources, positions in key spheres and successful planning of family and overall life.

From the following graph we can notice that women in the general population are generally more satisfied with all aspects of life than women living in the Roma settlements, except with school. Young women are mostly satisfied with health and the way they look, friendships and family. They expressed somewhat less satisfaction with living place, treatment by people, while job and income were the sources of lowest satisfaction.

Graph 39

Percentage of women aged 18-24 somewhat or very much satisfied with various aspects of life, Serbia and Roma settlements, 2014

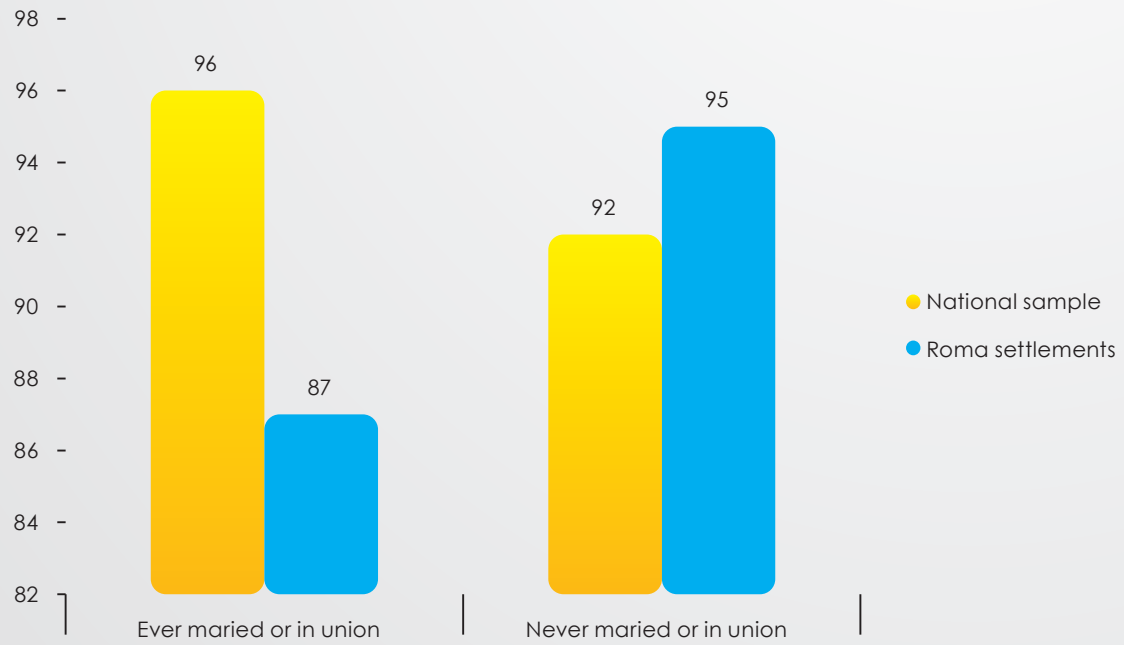


Disaggregated data indicate interesting tendencies. In Serbia, higher education is associated with a somewhat smaller share of satisfied women than secondary education. Women who are or were married were more often satisfied than women who never married, and women from urban areas are less often satisfied with their overall life than women from rural areas. Similarly, women from Belgrade are less satisfied than women from East and South Serbia (Graph 26a, Annex). It is hard to understand why this is so based on available data, but it could be that less satisfied groups develop higher aspirations and they judge outcomes with more demanding criteria. However, it could be also that pressure on their lives is higher in cities and the quality of life is lower despite broader opportunities.

Among women from the Roma settlements, overall life satisfaction is more frequent in the richest 40 percent category, with secondary/higher education, in rural areas, and what is particularly interesting, among women who never married (Graph 26b, Annex). Based on the data in the following graph we can be sure that lower satisfaction with overall life among women living in the Roma settlements comes at least partly from the evaluation of family life. While in the general population, married or cohabitating women are more satisfied with family than unmarried women (which are mostly still living with parents), among women from Roma settlements, the situation is opposite — married women are much less satisfied with family life than those who were never married.

Graph 40

Percentage of women aged 18-24 somewhat or very much satisfied with family life, by marital status, Serbia and Roma settlements, 2014



Satisfaction with family life is positively associated with higher levels of education and higher living standard (Graphs 26c, d, Annex).

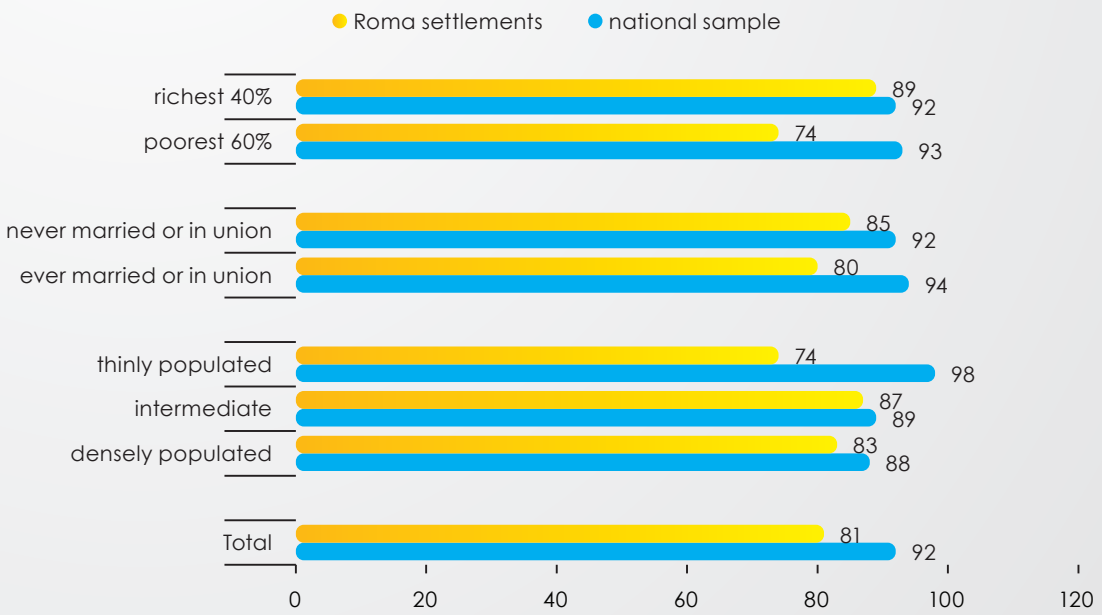
Interestingly, there is no prominent difference in satisfaction by living place among women from more urban and more rural areas. The difference is found among women from different regions, with women from East and South Serbia being the least satisfied with their living place (Graph 26e, Annex).

As expected, women with higher wealth status are more often satisfied with the income than women from poorer households (Graph 26g, Annex).

Finally, women from Serbia's general population are by and large happier than Roma women. What is surprising is that women from rural areas are happier than women from urban areas in case of general population. Again, married women are happier than those who were never married or in union in the general population, while among women living in the Roma settlements once more women who did not experience marriage or cohabitation are happier than those who did.

Graph 41

Percentage of women aged 18-24 years who are somewhat or very happy by socio-demographic background, Serbia and Roma settlements, 2014



In both populations, around 29 percent of women perceive improvement in their lives and expect that in the future life will be even better (Tables 26k and l, Annex).

Summary

Household background. Women from the general population living in Belgrade, other urban regions, in households with two adult persons and only one child, predominantly live in the richest 40 percent of households than in the poorest 60 percent of households. Contrary to this, women from other regions, rural areas and those living in households with more than two children, predominantly live in the poorest 60 percent of households than in the richest 40 percent of households. The majority of women living in the Roma settlements live in the poorest 60 percent of households regardless of the degree of urbanization of the living area.

Education. Institutional pathways of formal education are much harder to pass for young women who are in poorer, more remote households and particularly those who already experienced transition to marriage and parenthood. Women from Roma settlements almost disappear from schooling after the age of 18, and men from Roma settlements after the age of 21. Literacy rate of young women from Roma settlements (18-24 years) is lower than of their female peers in the general population by 22 percentage points.

Partnership status and early marriages. The majority of women are married or in union. Women from Roma settlements on average enter marriage earlier than women from the general population. Among women from the general population, 17 percent entered their first marriage/cohabitation before the age of 18, while 73 percent of women living in the Roma settlements experienced the same. There are no big differences between older and younger generations of women in the Roma settlements, which indicates that this is a deeply rooted practice with not sign of change. Early marriage and child bearing prevent women from achieving higher educational attainments.

Contraception and family planning. Knowledge about at least one modern or traditional contraception method is high across all age groups in both populations. The percentage of women with an unmet need in the general population was highest (19 percent) among youngest women (18-24 years), while among women living in the Roma settlements it was highest in the age group of 25-30 years (20 percent). Among young women (18-24 years) in the general population, the prevalence of abortion is one percent, and it reaches 30 percent in the oldest category of women (41-49 years). In the sample from the Roma settlements, the prevalence rate in the youngest group (18-24 years) is 11 percent and in the oldest group (41-49 years) more than half the women had at least one induced abortion during their life course.

Early childbearing. Early childbearing occurs in the general population of women on a small scale (one percent) and is much more prevalent among women from the Roma settlements (38 percent).

Antenatal care. In the general population, only a small percent of women remain completely out of antenatal care during pregnancy, and these are mostly women aged 31-40. Among women from the Roma settlements, more than one fifth of women in their thirties did not have any access to antenatal care during pregnancy that ended in a live birth during the previous two years. Both Roma and women from the general population were assisted at delivery by a skilled attendant in 99 percent of cases.

Subjective wellbeing. Women in the general population are generally more satisfied with all aspects of life than women living in the Roma settlements, except with school, and slightly more of them are somewhat or very happy.

5

Concluding Discussion

The analysis was divided into two parts related to two broad phases in the life course — childhood and adulthood. While for the childhood stage the analysis was focused on gender aspects, due to the fact that data on adults were available for women only, the second part was fully dedicated to women and womanhood. In both cases, childhood and womanhood are not seen as one homogenous stage in the life course, but as a variety of experiences of being a child or a woman in Serbia depending on personal, structural and contextual features.

Childhood

Gender aspects of the life course seen through the MICS data provide good insights into the differentiated access to resources important for the wellbeing and development along broad life stages. This access is differentiated along gender and ethnicity lines. In approaches which study inequalities (see more Babovic, 2010), these differences in access to resources (from food through care to social positions) are sometimes seen as queues into which individuals and groups are placed based on their gender, ethnicity, race, class or some other socio-demographic feature. Those who are ahead in queues have better access, while those who are at the end have to overcome more obstacles in order to reach a resource and due to that they lag behind in their development and wellbeing.

The picture of gender and ethnicity queues among children in Serbia in 2014, painted using MICS data is useful but restricted to key areas of human development (health, family and institutional support to development through very basic data on care and education, and potential harm by child labour). According to these data, both gender and ethnicity queues are present. In order to grasp the picture of these queues more transparently, three matrices are presented in the following tables. In these matrices, relative advantages or disadvantages of four groups of children along the key MICS indicators are presented, as children are ranked from the best (first) to the worst (fourth) position in the 'queue'. The first position is reserved for those who have the best score on a particular indicator, while the worst position is reserved for those who have the lowest score on same indicator.

Among children aged 0-4 years we can notice a sharp segregation between children from the general population and those living in the Roma settlements, as the two best-ranking positions are occupied by children

from the general population along almost all indicators. The only dimension in which children from Roma settlements have an advantage is the lower share of overweight children (0-4 years), and, in case of Roma boys, in the *exclusively breastfed until 6 months* category they are ahead of girls from both populations.

We can also observe that among children from the general population, girls and boys often share the two first-ranking positions, meaning that gender gaps are not recorded in these dimensions, while more prominent gender gaps are present among boys and girls from Roma settlements.

We can also easily identify the domains in which girls or boys are at an advantage, meaning future policies should be focused on and new actions initiated in these domains. In the case of girls from the general population, the most prominent deprivation according to the analyzed data comes in the form of breastfeeding and overweight, and perhaps more importantly — fathers' discrimination. Namely, data indicate that fathers provide less support to girls than to boys (engage in fewer activities with girls). Maybe this looks as a relatively less important form of 'relative deprivation' in comparison to malnutrition, neglect in health care, or violent disciplining, but it can be the seedling of very complex gendered patterns of social relations and inequalities in later life course stages.

Boys from the general population are relatively deprived in relation to their female peers in several dimensions: malnutrition and overweight and feeding practices between 6-23 months of age.

Inequality queues, children from Serbia and Roma settlements, age 0-4, 2014

Dimension	Best rank	Second rank	Third rank	Fourth rank
Malnutrition	GN	BN	GR	BR
Overweight	GR	BR	GN	BN
Immunization coverage	GN / BN	GN / BN	BR	GR
Exclusive breastfeeding up to 6 months	BN	BR	GN	GR
Minimum acceptable diet (6-23 months)	GN	BN	BR	GR
Any violent discipline	GN / BN	GN / BN	GR	BR
On track in early development	GN / BN	GN / BN	GR	BR
Learning support by adults in the household	GN / BN	GN / BN	GR	BR
Learning support by father	BN	GN	BR	GR
Learning support by mother	GN / BN	GN / BN	GR / BR	GR / BR

Girls — Serbia	(GN)
Boys — Serbia	(BN)
Girls — Roma settlements	(GR)
Boys — Roma settlements	(BR)

In this life phase, boys and girls from the Roma settlements mostly take turns at the two last-ranking positions in inequality queues. Girls are more deprived in immunization coverage, feeding practices, and lower support to their development provided by fathers. On the other hand, boys from Roma settlements are relatively more deprived than girls in malnutrition, higher exposure to any form of violence, and less learning support provided by any adult in the household. It should be borne in mind that this pattern of gender segregated learning support to children in Roma settlements according to which fathers engage in relatively more activities with boys than

girls, while mothers do the opposite, does not mean that they are engaged in the child care on equal basis. The overall fathers' engagement is much lower than mothers' and we should observe patterns of segregation within this basic imbalance of care.

The next stage in the life course (5-14 years), that can be described on the whole as mid-childhood, is marked by a less systematic mosaic of inequalities. This mosaic indicates that some domains are driven by specific factors and within these factors gender segregation and gender norms and biases have their specific role. The position of girls living in the Roma settlements in education at this stage already shows fragility as they are included in pre-school education less than other three groups of peers, and their deprived position at the end of primary schools is reflected in worse performance in school completion. Boys and girls from the Roma settlements are more exposed to violent disciplining methods, with boys slightly more so than girls. Girls from the general population are more exposed to severe physical punishment at this age, but again, data should be taken with caution due to small percentages. Child labour is more frequent among boys from the general population, and boys from both populations are more exposed to hazardous working conditions.

Inequality queues, children from Serbia and Roma settlements, age 5-14, 2014

Dimension	Best rank	Second rank	Third rank	Fourth rank
Any violent discipline	GN	BN	GR	BR
Severe physical punishment	BN	GN	GR / BR	GR / BR
School readiness	GN	BN	BR	GR
Primary school completion	GN	BN	BR	GR
Child labour age 5-11	GR	BR	GN	BN
Child labour age 12-14	GR	GN	BR	BN
Working under hazardous conditions	BN	BR	GR	GN

Girls — Serbia	(GN)	
Boys — Serbia	(BN)	
Girls — Roma settlements	(GR)	
Boys — Roma settlements	(BR)	

Among adolescents, gender inequalities continue and grow in education. While boys and girls from the general population enter transition to secondary school on an equal footing, boys soon start to lag behind the girls. Girls living in the Roma settlements are lagging behind all other groups being at this stage prominently excluded from education and pushed towards early marriage and early childbearing.

Boys are more engaged in child labour and work in hazardous conditions (these two categories are almost the same as almost all child labour that boys perform is classified as hazardous). At the same time, much lower labour experience among girls can also be viewed not only as better protection of girls at this age, but also as the roots of their life-long deprivation on the labour market.

Inequality queues, children from Serbia and Roma settlements, age 15-17, 2014

Dimension	Best rank		Second rank		Third rank	Fourth rank
Effective transition to secondary school	GN	BN	GN	BN	BR	GR
Secondary school attendance	GN		BN		BR	GR
Child labour	GN		GR		BN	BR
Working under hazardous conditions	GR		GN		BN	BR

Girls — Serbia	(GN)
Boys — Serbia	(BN)
Girls — Roma settlements	(GR)
Boys — Roma settlements	(BR)

The general impression is that in adolescence, there is an already established pattern of gender segregation which in the general population appears as path bifurcation leading girls more through education paths and boys through labour paths, at least in some areas and groups. In Roma population this bifurcation leads boys more towards work and girls towards marriage and childbearing.

Womanhood

The analysis of a variety of experiences of being woman in Serbia in 2014 was limited by the definition of MICS indicators. Summing up the full picture at the end of the analysis, we can say that available indicators are more relevant for describing the situation of Roma women whose wellbeing is more dependent on factors relevant to developing countries. For women in Serbia, these indicators provide a relatively good picture on monitored wellbeing aspects and some more critical concerns (access to resources within the households, position on the labour market, impact of divorce, single-parenting, motherhood and fatherhood practices, performing parental roles in the context of reconciliation of work and family, etc.) remain out of focus.

Here we will summarize the most prominent patterns on the life-course of women seen through MICS indicators. Transit from adolescence to adulthood for some women means primarily transit to higher education, for others transit to marriage and parenthood, and yet for others a combination of both with limited success as many do not succeed in attending higher education after becoming mothers. For women from the Roma settlements transition starts on average much earlier than for women from the general population, and many of them enter legal adulthood as already married women or mothers. This undermines their development potential as they never succeed in attaining secondary or higher level of education and, consequently, their economic position remains marked by deprivation.

Among women from Serbia, younger middle-age women (31-40), women living in Belgrade or other urban areas and in households with two adults and one child, more often live in better-off households. On the other extreme, women from Sumadija and West Serbia, as well as those from East and South Serbia, from rural areas and in single-mothers households have highest chances to live in the poorest households.

The majority of women from the Roma settlements live in the poorest households regardless of the area or type of household. Only those who live alone have slightly better chances to live in richer households. On the other hand, single mothers are almost all in the poorest households.

New generations of women from the general population show significant changes in educational attainments. Half the young women attended higher level of education. Probably important drivers of this change were higher education reform and gender equality (particularly women's empowerment) policies. Unfortunately, these policies do not reach all women equally. While in more urbanized areas half the women have higher education, in rural areas less than a quarter of women manage to attend the same level of education. These policies target women living in the Roma settlements even less. The majority of them succeed only in attending primary education. We can observe only a slight change in the youngest age group, with a decrease in the number of women with no education and an increase of women with primary and secondary education. However, the gap between girls from the Roma settlements and Serbia remains huge and these small changes do not indicate that it will be narrowing down soon.

Young women (18-24 and 25-30) who experience early transition to marriage and parenthood have fewer chances of attending higher education. The formal education system does not provide effective alternative pathways to young mothers. As it does not recognize the possibility for simultaneous employment and studying, it does not offer opportunities to young women to combine studying and childcare. This can indicate relatively rigid institutional pathways and all who leave them at one point have little opportunity to catch up again.

Women enter their first marriage or cohabitation relatively early, though differences between the general population and women from the Roma settlements are big. Among women who were ever married or in union, the first marriage/cohabitation occurred before the age of 18 years for almost 17 percent of women from Serbia and over 73 percent of women from the Roma settlements. More than half the women from Serbia enter their first marriage/cohabitation between the ages of 18 and 24, and almost a third after that age.

For many women, control over their reproductive function and transition to motherhood is still weak. Data indicate that, despite relatively broad knowledge about various contraception methods, a significant percentage of women (particularly younger) have an unmet need, meaning they have unprotected intercourses when they do not want to remain pregnant. Almost one fifth of women aged 18-24 from the general population and one fifth of women aged 25-30 living in the Roma settlements have an unmet need. Interestingly, in all age groups, the highest share of women with an unmet need can be found in Belgrade where information and contraception should be most readily available.

Chances of unwanted pregnancy and induced abortion increase further along the life course. Moving up to the older age groups, there is not only a higher share of women with at least one abortion, but also a higher mean number of abortions.

Basic antenatal care is available to the majority of women and delivery is mostly conducted in the institutional framework and with professional support of medical staff. However, participation in the preparation programme is still very low, particularly among Roma women, and parenting skills are underrepresented in these programs.

Finally, subjective wellbeing shows interesting trends. As it was mentioned, overall life satisfaction is slightly lower among young women than among adolescent girls. Women from Serbia are generally more satisfied with all aspects of life than Roma women. Young women are satisfied the most with health and way they look,

friendships and family. They expressed somewhat less satisfaction with their living place, treatment by people, while job and income are the sources of lowest satisfaction.

Women from the general population are generally happier than Roma women. What is surprising is that women from the rural areas are somewhat happier than women from urban areas in case of general population. Married women are slightly happier than those who were never married or in union in the general population, while among women from Roma settlements those who did not experience marriage or cohabitation are happier. The last finding can indicate that early marriage among Roma women can be a strong norm, rooted and internalized by socialization, but it still imposes limits to life satisfaction and happiness.

Recommendations

The picture of wellbeing of children and women presented in this study is not new. However, some aspects of analysis bring new insights or provide evidence for some already existing knowledge that was not sufficiently supported by empirical facts. Recommendations are related to these two types of insights, without an ambition to offer fully comprehensive sets of proposals for policies and measures that can improve wellbeing of women and children in all analysed dimensions.

Two basic types of recommendations are presented here: the first is related to the MICS methodology and ways to improve the survey for the specific context in Serbia, while the second is related to policy initiatives that could improve some recognized gaps in wellbeing of children and women.

Survey methodology related recommendations

The MICS survey aims at filling the data gaps on maternal and child health and providing information for reporting on the country's progress towards international goals (i.e. generating data on MDG indicators that can be measured through household surveys). As such, MICS provides valuable data that are needed for quality policies that should improve children's and women's wellbeing, particularly by providing quality and systematic findings on children and women living in the Roma settlements. However, the gender perspective is limited by a strong focus on health and reproductive life, and by the absence of the male sample in MICS 2014. Here we indicated some areas that could be included in the future MICS cycles, in order to provide more insight into the aspects of wellbeing that are specifically needed in Serbia:

- Access to resources within the households (incomes, decision-making)
- Impact of separation and divorce on women's wellbeing, which is of particular significance in Serbia with the increase of the divorce rate and the low protection of divorced mothers
- Single parenting
- Position of women on the labour market and reconciliation problems (in basic aspects)
- Gendered parental roles and parenting practices

It would be important to collect data on subjective wellbeing among all age categories of women, because trends in overall and area-specific life satisfaction can be an important indicator of opportunities and obstacles which women are facing in different life course stages.

It would be important also to improve indicators on household background and to enable better insights into the types of families, not only on households (particularly single-parent families within the extended families).

For better insights into the children's wellbeing, more attention should be paid to upbringing practices and gender role models adopted within these practices.

Policy recommendations

From the childhood gender gaps perspective, the most important set of recommendations is related to the improvement of wellbeing of children and women from the Roma settlements. The analysis revealed how problems and challenges are interrelated and indicated that integrative, systematic approach to the improvement

of their wellbeing is required. It would not be possible to list here all recommendations that are needed for such a policy approach. However, this analysis pointed once more to the crucial link in the vicious circle of deprivation and exclusion — early exclusion of girls from the Roma settlements from education, and early marriage and childbearing, which are later followed by exclusion from the labour market and life in deprivation for them and their children. Therefore, the major policy focus, and intensive action should be directed to keep them in schools and postpone marriage and transition to motherhood, but also to bring them back to schools after the break due to childbearing. This is the policy action that can be implemented only through cross-sectoral education, gender equality and social inclusion policies. However, in addition to the multi-sectoral approach, what is needed is also an all-level approach (including central and local policies) and the use of various means (awareness raising campaigns, more effective social protection, more inclusive education system, etc.).

Regarding children from the general population, this analysis pointed to several important findings that should be addressed by relevant policies:

- a still high presence of violent disciplining methods
- gender segregated patterns of parental support
- gender segregation in economic activity and household chores in which children are engaged by households

All three issues are strongly related to the cultural systems, values and norms that are very hard to change. Yet, they strongly influence everyday practices and reproduce gender gaps and segregation in various areas. Different methods could be used in order to initiate or facilitate changes: education, promotion, awareness raising, as well as a more effective implementation of laws and social protection in cases of violent disciplining methods. Schools should have a more prominent role in stimulating changes, promoting gender equitable patterns, but also in the elimination of violence against children.

In relation to adult women, four main recommendations are proposed here, more general in nature:

- To review social policies from the life course perspective in order to adjust measures to diverse and changing needs of women in different life stages.
- To continue to promote education as one of the main pillars of wellbeing, but also to make the education system at higher levels (secondary and university) more flexible to diverse pathways that women can take in their life courses. This means again enabling girls and women from Roma settlements to stay on track with school, but also to come back again if they prematurely left school. This also means that higher education should be made more flexible in order to enable young women to re-enter or to be able to simultaneously attend university and work or take care of children.
- To continuously raise awareness on violence in intimate partner relations but also to devise much more effective instruments in fighting against violence through legal system, as only with an effective system of sanctioning violence will bring more changes in attitudes and practices.
- To equip women with knowledge, capacities and means to have more control over their reproductive health in order to better manage their life course transitions and synchronise various aspects of their lives more successfully.
- To provide programs for young women and men preparing them to become parents that will develop their knowledge and skills in gender equitable parenting. This should become part of the preparation programmes, at the same level as medical antenatal care.

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