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Mostar

WOMEN'S SECURITY IN LOCAL COMMUNITIES



CFLI/FCIL

Canada Fund for Local Initiatives
Fonds canadien d'initiatives locales

WOMEN'S SECURITY IN LOCAL COMMUNITIES

Lajla Leko
Sabahudin Harčević

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Abbreviations

AGE BiH – Agency for Gender Equality in BiH

BiH – Bosnia and Herzegovina

CFLI – Canada Fund for Local Initiatives

CSS – Centre for Security Studies

MoI CS – Ministry of Interior of Canton Sarajevo

MoI HNC – Ministry of Interior of Hercegovina-Neretva Canton

MoI RS – Ministry of Interior of Republika Srpska

Foreword of the Ambassador of Canada to Bosnia and Herzegovina



CHARETTE, Caroline
Ambassador of Canada
to Bosnia and Herzegovina

Dear readers,

Discrimination and ingrained gender biases continue to limit the advancement and participation of women, girls and gender-diverse people in economic, social and political spheres. Gender-based discrimination is often compounded by other forms of intersecting discrimination, including on the basis of race, ethnicity, religion, language, sexual orientation, age, ability, or migrant or refugee status, among other aspects of personal identity.

Gender equality, the empowerment of women and girls (in all their diversity), and the realization of their human rights are key Canadian priorities. Canada envisions a world where all women, girls and gender-diverse people are valued and empowered, have control over their own lives and bodies, live free from violence, fully participate as decision-makers, and equally and meaningfully contribute to and benefit from development and prosperity.

When all people are empowered to realize their human rights, take part in decisions that affect their lives and bodies, and access and control resources, they can reach their full potential, breaking the cycle of poverty for themselves, their family and their community.

To that end, Canada is proud to pursue a Feminist Foreign Policy that advances these values throughout our diplomatic, trade and international assistance initiatives. Adopting such a feminist approach means

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challenging the discrimination faced by women, girls, and gender-diverse people around the world and recognizing the intersecting dimensions of inequality.

This work is not only about ensuring access to services and opportunities, but also involves transforming social norms and traditional power dynamics, as well as tackling structural barriers to equality, including those that may prevent the full and meaningful participation of women and girls in the development and implementation of policy.

As a result of this vision, Canada now ranks as the top Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) bilateral donor for the share of our overall Official Development Assistance supporting gender equality, and we are among the top donors for investments supporting women's rights organizations and countering violence against women and girls. Canada is also a top donor in comprehensive sexual and reproductive health and rights services (with the aim of reaching \$700 million CAD per year by 2023), as well as in addressing inequalities in paid and unpaid care work with a \$100 million CAD investment over 5 years.

Canada believes that local civil society and women's rights organizations play a vital role in challenging harmful and discriminatory social practices and beliefs, and mobilizing changes to policies, legislation and services. By working together, we can translate our collective commitment into actions and lasting change that benefit everyone.

In the context of Bosnia and Herzegovina, we have made partnerships with organizations championing gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls a priority, including through the Canada Fund for Local Initiatives. I am very pleased that our successful cooperation with the Centre for Security Studies will facilitate efforts aimed at strengthening the visibility and inclusion of gender perspectives in the field of security. The candid and sincere observations shared by participants in the AWAREBiH project are an important contribution to the ongoing dialogue about the persistent barriers that women face, which may prevent them from contributing to the creation and implementation of security policy. This project is also an important contribution to

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continuing work in Bosnia and Herzegovina aimed at making its security policy more inclusive, and subsequently more effective.

As the Ambassador of Canada to Bosnia and Herzegovina, I am honoured to make a personal contribution to this valuable project, which I hope will shine a much-needed light on the need to enhance women's sense of security to promote their participation in policy creation.

Best regards,

Caroline Charette

Ambassador of Canada to Bosnia and Herzegovina

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Preface

The Centre for Security Studies (CSS) has the honor to present a publication „Security of women in local communities“ which unifies findings and the results of research conducted within the six-month project "Improvement of Women's Safety and Security in Local Communities - AwareBiH". This project is financially supported by the Government of Canada through the Canada Fund for Local Initiatives (CFLI).

The aim of this project is to sensitize society, especially representatives of the security sector, as well as the legislative and executive authorities on the perception of security from a woman's perspective. This would contribute to greater visibility and the introduction of a gender perspective in security, especially when it comes to policy creation and the process of its implementation.

The project included three key activities. The first project activity was related to research, precisely, surveying a representative sample of women from Sarajevo, Banja Luka and Mostar. The questionnaire was focused on factors influencing the respondents' feeling of safety in their local communities. In addition, the research included women's perceptions of police officers and other relevant security issues. As part of the first activity, online interviews of women in BiH have been conducted, through which we asked them to make a recommendations on how they consider their fellow citizens can contribute to a better feeling of safety in their local communities/places of residence. The second activity included writing a report on the findings of the conducted research. The third activity included a public campaign aimed at presenting the findings of the conducted research.

In summary, the project seeks to contribute to the improvement of women's safety in local communities, pointing out issues that affect women's safety based on their experiences and presenting the results of the analysis to the key actors and the general public.

We would like to thank the Government of Canada for the financial support of the realization of this project through the CFLI.

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Introduction

With the project "Improvement of Women's Safety and Security in Local Communities - AwareBiH", CSS aims to point out the state of security from the point of view of women, therefore it is necessary that some of the biggest cities, namely Mostar, Sarajevo and Banja Luka, are bearers of positive changes in the implementation of the project's results. In addition, the project aims to show the ability of women in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) to influence changes that would make their environment safer. This topic is not discussed in BiH as much as it should be, while the security sector is still perceived as a sector dominated by men. Therefore, this project will help society and decision-makers to better understand the needs and feelings of women in BiH about their own security.

It is important to emphasize the contribution that institutional frameworks can have in improving safety of women. These frameworks should provide a structure for addressing and preventing violence against women by creating laws, policies and procedures that, above all, provide support and protection to victims. Also, they should contribute to raising awareness and changing attitudes and behaviors that can endanger women's safety in any way. Ultimately, effective institutional frameworks play a key role in creating a safer environment for women and improving their security. In this regard, several international institutional frameworks stand out, as they address issues of women's security, more precisely, women's empowerment, elimination of discrimination against women, prevention of violence, introduction of a gender perspective for the creation of security policies, etc.

Some of those frameworks are United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325¹, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action², the

¹United Nations Resolution 1325 „Women, peace and security“. Available at: <https://www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/wps/>

²The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. Available at: <https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2015/01/beijing-declaration>

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Istanbul Convention³ and Convention of United Nations on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women⁴.

When it comes to the state context, several crucial actors that work on contributing to equality and security can be mentioned. Among those is the BiH Agency for Gender Equality (AGE BiH) of the Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees of BiH, as well as adequate committees working on gender equality on state and entity level. For example, AGE BiH in 2021 started a project to establish Crisis Centers for Victims of Rape or Sexual Violence, intending to provide support and counseling to victims. This activity is also one of the standards of the Istanbul Convention, which Bosnia and Herzegovina ratified in 2013.⁵

Although the Board for Monitoring and Reporting on Implementation of the Istanbul Convention and Femicide in BIH was established, with the task of, among other things, reporting to the Council of Ministers on the state of violence against women and domestic violence, reporting violence against women is still quite stigmatized. Reason for this is namely sensationalist media reporting on such cases or cases of femicide.⁶ This type of reporting and public reactions certainly contribute to women choosing not to report any type of assault they experience.

In addition to the previously mentioned efforts to improve the safety of women, the CSS strives to contribute to the awareness of the wider public and key institutions with the aim of improving the position and safety of women in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

³Istanbul Convention. Available at: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/istanbul-convention/text-of-the-convention>

⁴Convention of United Nations on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women. Available at: <https://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/cedaw.htm>

⁵The official website of the Agency for Gender Equality of Bosnia and Herzegovina. „Signed agreements for the opening of crisis centers for victims of rape and sexual violence“. Available at: <https://arsbih.gov.ba/potpisani-sporazumi-za-otvarana-kriznih-centara-za-zrtve-silovanja-i-seksualnog-nasilja/>

⁶The official website of the Agency for Gender Equality. „Announcement regarding the campaign 16 days of activism against violence against women“. Available at: <https://arsbih.gov.ba/saopstenje-povodom-kampanje-16-dana-aktivizma-protiv-nasilja-nad-zenama/>

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Failure to understand the differences between men's and women's security needs has resulted in the exclusion of women from decision-making processes and the neglect of their needs and priorities in peace-building efforts. Security issues affecting women in local communities are rarely considered when formulating local security approaches and programs. In this regard, greater awareness and understanding of the importance of women's security, ranging from security institutions to the local community, should contribute to the improvement of the position and security of women in BiH and enable the improvement of their participation in peace-building processes.

The subject research was based on three central research questions:

- Do women in BiH feel safe in their local community?
- Do women in BiH trust the police?
- How do women in BiH perceive male and female police officers?

In order to obtain answers to the above-mentioned questions, as well as to bring them into a wider socio-professional context, the research proceeded through two main stages. In the first stage, data was obtained primarily by the interview method and the survey technique. For the purposes of conducting interviews, an online questionnaire was created and answers were received from 24 women. Regarding the survey technique (author's comment: individual and anonymous), a survey questionnaire was created with a total of 12 closed and open questions. The direct survey included a representative sample of women over the age of 18 from Sarajevo, Mostar and Banja Luka - a total of 206 women: from Sarajevo (69), Banja Luka (69) and Mostar (68). Processing, coding and assistance in analyzing the data obtained in this way was done using the SPSS program.⁷ The second stage referred to the analysis of all the data obtained during the research process. Given that it was mostly about quantitative, but also qualitative data, descriptive analysis and content analysis were used. Taking into account all the above, the conducted research is basically theoretical-empirical and qualitative-quantitative.

⁷ Statistical Package for the Social Sciences

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Research findings

Demographic data of the respondents

The largest percentage of surveyed women is in the 18-27 age category (59%). When asked about the level of education, 50% of respondents answered that they have secondary education, and 46% of them have higher education. Out of the total percentage of surveyed respondents, 39% of them are employed, while 30% indicated that they are students.⁸

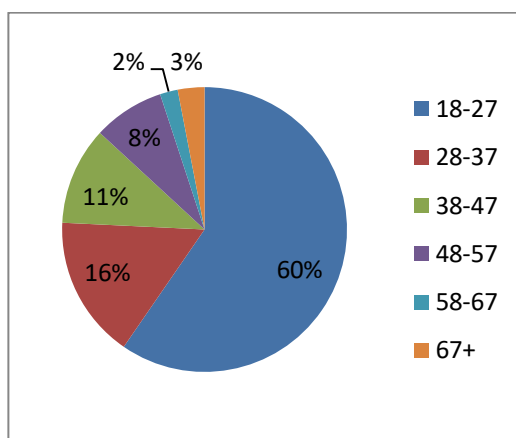


Chart 1 - Age groups of surveyed women (n=206⁹)

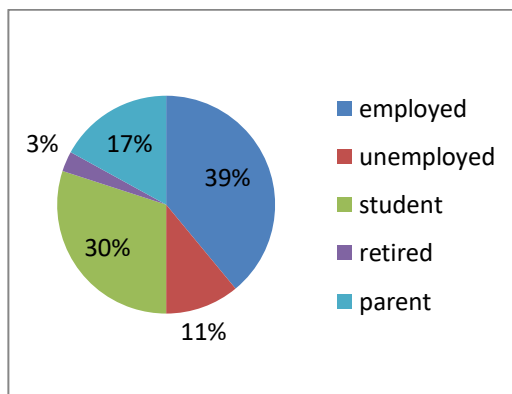


Chart 2 - Employment and legal status of surveyed women (n=199)

⁸ It was possible to choose multiple answers to this question, while the results are shown for individual answers

⁹ Total number of answers to the question.

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1: How would you rate your sense of personal safety in your place of residence?

The first survey question offered the option of choosing an answer between: *very safe*, *safe*, *unsafe*, *very unsafe*, *I don't want to answer*, *I don't know*. Out of the total percentage of surveyed women, 60% of them declared that they feel safe in their place of residence, while 24% of them answered that they feel unsafe. It stands out that respondents feel the *least safe*¹⁰ in Sarajevo (59%), compared to Mostar (75%) and Banja Luka (80%). In this regard, the same order applies to respondents who answered that they feel *unsafe*¹¹ in their place of residence, more specifically Sarajevo (39%), Mostar (20%) and Banja Luka (19%).

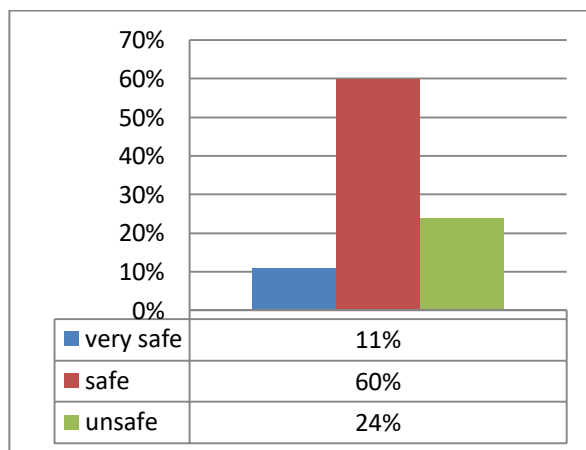


Chart 3 - Evaluation of respondents' feeling of safety (n=206)

If we grouped the answers to the first question into generally "safe", generally "unsafe" and "doesn't know/doesn't want to answer", the gradation is clearly visible: Banja Luka - Mostar - Sarajevo, as locations where the respondents feel most safe/most unsafe.

¹⁰ The percentage includes answers *very safe* and *safe*.

¹¹ The percentage includes answers *unsafe* and *very unsafe*.

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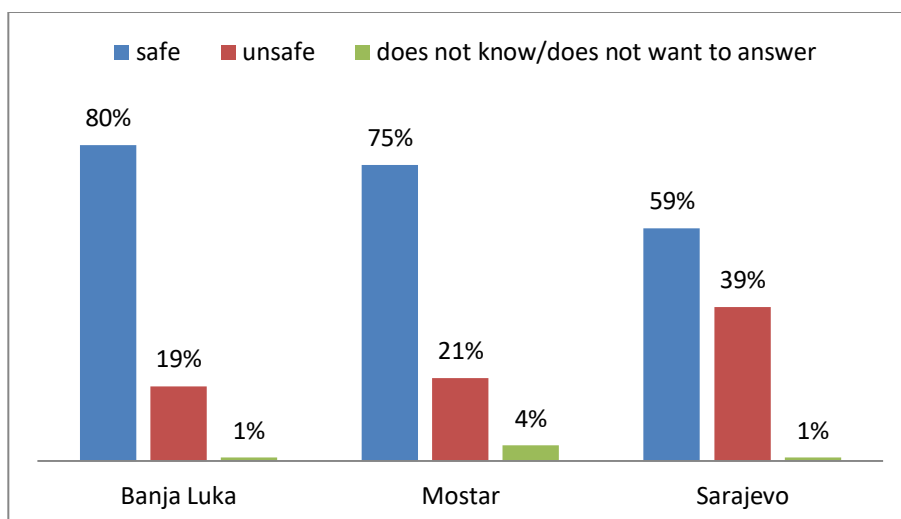


Chart 4 - Presentation of respondents' answers on feeling of safety in the place of residence according to the location (n=206)

2: What do you think has a positive effect on your sense of safety?

On the second survey question, respondents could choose one or more of the answers offered: *friendly and peaceful neighborhood, the religiosity of neighbors, wealthy neighborhood, professional police work*, or they could *add something else*. Keeping in mind the possibility of choosing multiple answers, the two most common answers are a *friendly and peaceful neighborhood* (63%) and *professional police work* (26%) as something that positively affects their sense of safety. Given that 2% of respondents offered their own answer, among these are the following: *family, friends, and individuals in the neighborhood; amiable and educated people; the presence of a school nearby; society; love between people; the safety of the household members*.

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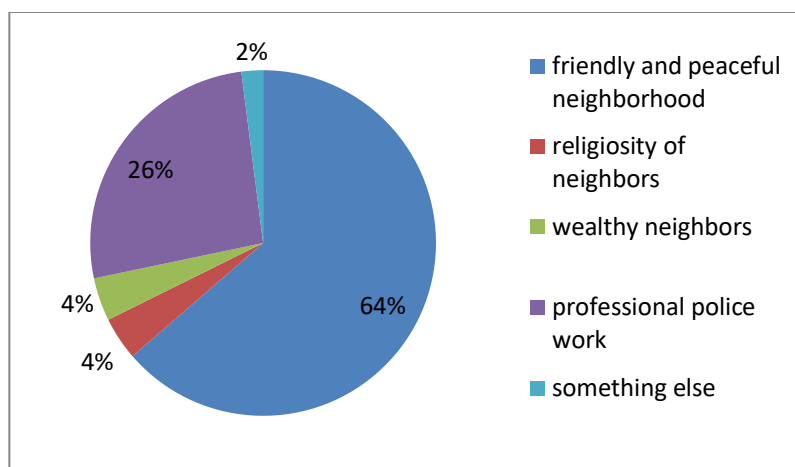


Chart 5 - Factors that have a positive effect on the safety of respondents (n=204)

3: Is there anything in your place of residence that makes you physically unsafe?

The respondents had the possibility to offer their answers to this question. Out of the total percentage of respondents that answered this question, 57% stated something that makes them physically unsafe in their place of residence. A significant number of women stated that *men under the influence of alcohol or narcotics, homeless people, aggressive individuals, hooligans, and non-hospitalized individuals with mental health problems* contribute to feeling unsafe in local communities.¹²

In addition, characteristically for the answers to this question, according to location, is that only respondents from Mostar, a few of them, mentioned *sports fan groups* as something that makes them physically unsafe in their place of residence.

The remaining responses to this survey question are diverse. Some of them are: *poor infrastructure, political situation, economic situation, and off-leash pets on the streets or in parks*. These responses mount to 14% of respondents who mentioned something that affects their safety.

¹² It is important to note that this is an open-ended question, so the respondents had the possibility to name several factors that affect their safety

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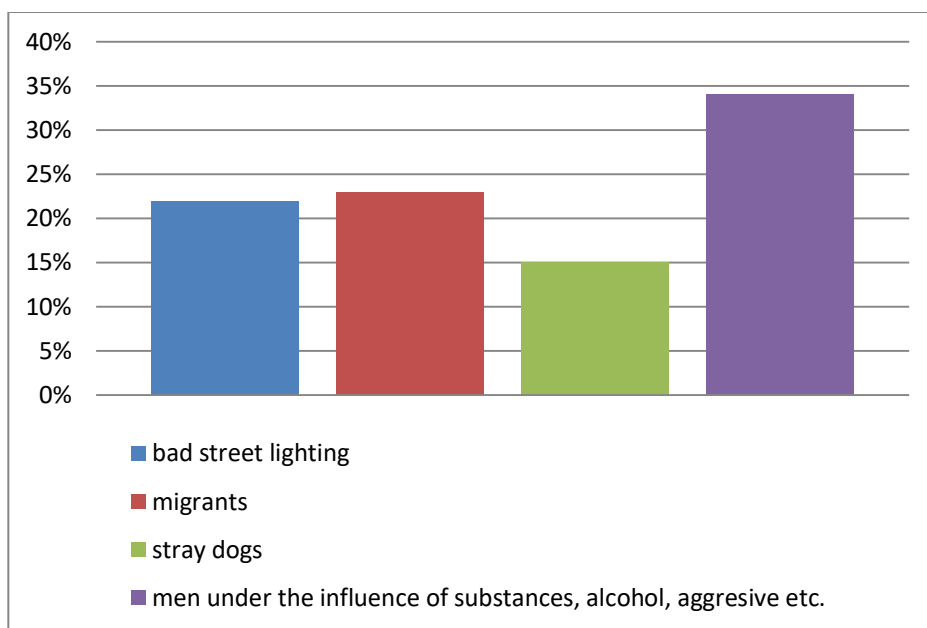


Chart 6 - The most common responses of respondents to the question of what makes them physically unsafe in their place of residence (n=99)

4: Have you ever experienced any of the following forms of harassment in your place of residence: inappropriate comments/catcalling, stalking, physical attack or something else?

- 4a: Did you report the type of harassment and to whom?
- 4aa: If you reported, do you think you received adequate help?
- 4ab: If you did not report, what are the main reasons for not doing it?

On this survey question, the respondents could mark "Yes" or "No" individually for *inappropriate comments/catcalling, stalking, physical attack*, or to write something else. Out of the total percentage of respondents who answered this question, 65% have experienced inappropriate comments/catcalling, 24% stalking, and 11% physical assault. In addition to the above, among the answers in the "something else" section, 3 respondents offered their answers. It stands out, apart from the fact that all three respondents are from Sarajevo, 2 out of 3 answers refer to pickpocketing.

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Out of the total number of respondents who answered the question regarding the reporting of harassment and to whom, 71% answered that they did not report. The highest percentage of respondents reported harassment to the police (62%).

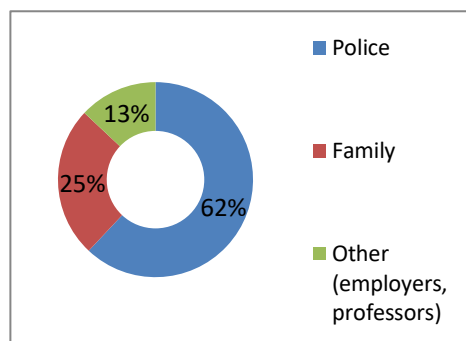


Chart 7 – To whom did the respondents report harassment (n=24¹³)

When asked whether they received adequate help, most of the respondents that answered, mentioned they did not receive adequate help. On the other hand, out of the percentage of respondents who said that they did not report harassment, 79% stated the reason why they did not report it. Among these answers, the most represented answers refer to *distrust in the police/institutions*. The percentage of respondents (42%) who believe that there was no need to report harassment for various reasons, such as: "*it's normal; it's not that scary; I'm used to it*", is not insignificant.

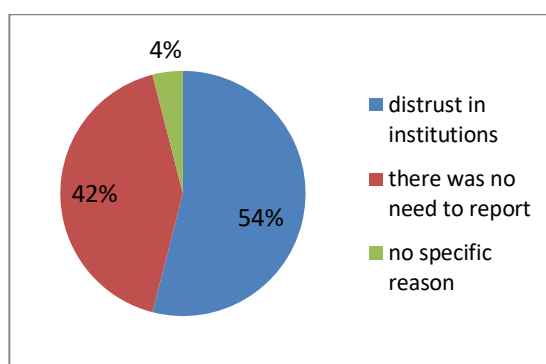


Chart 8 - Reasons for not reporting harassment

¹³ Out of a total of 27 respondents who said that they reported, 24 of them also indicated to whom.

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5: How much trust do you have in the police?

When it comes to the trust that female citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina have in the police, it is noted that the answers are almost equal. More precisely, 50% of respondents generally trust the police, while 47% generally do not trust the police.

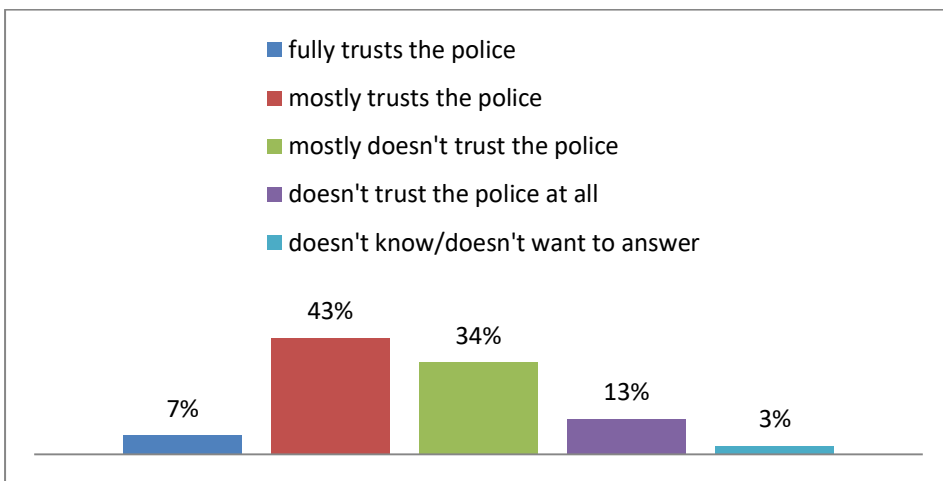


Chart 9 - Trust of the respondents in the police (n=206)

When comparing the respondents' answers to the questions whether they *reported harassment* and to whom, and *how much trust they have in the police*, it is noted that the number of respondents who do not trust the police, but have reported harassment, is greater than the number of respondents who trust the police and have reported harassment.

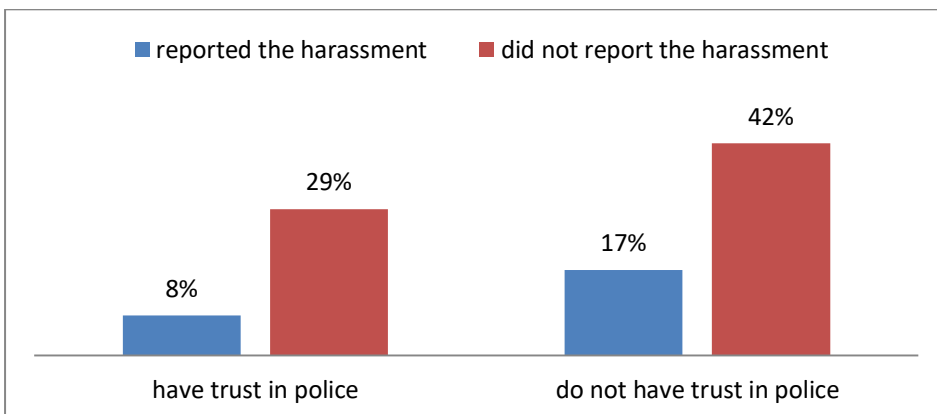


Chart 10 - Cross-section of respondents' answers to question 4a and question 5 (n=105)

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It is emphasized that the respondents' trust in the police can also be categorized by location. Thus, the most respondents who have confidence in the police are from Banja Luka (58% of the total percentage of respondents from Banja Luka). Most respondents who do not trust the police are from Sarajevo (55% of the total percentage of respondents from Sarajevo).

6: How would you describe the female police officer you see in direct contact with citizens?

Considering that this is an open-ended survey question, collected answers were grouped into three categories: positive, negative and neutral opinion. The majority of respondents (63%) have a positive opinion of female police officers they meet on the street/in contact with citizens. Out of that, the most common responses were the following: kind (50%), professional (45%), and approachable (28%).

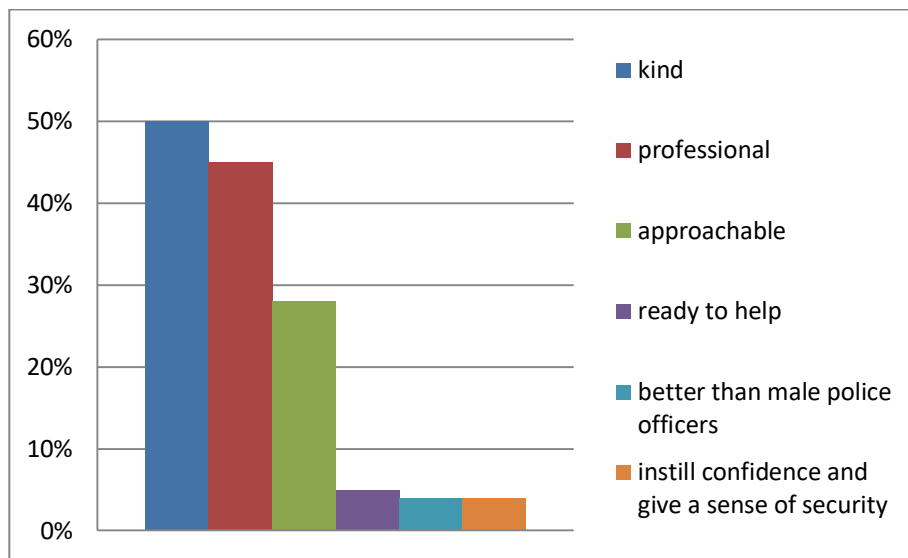


Chart 11 - Positive opinions of respondents about female police officers (n=129)

On the other hand, among the negative opinions (23%), the following answers stand out: unkind (42%), unapproachable (40%), unprofessional (27%) and corrupt (8%).

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A neutral opinion (12%) includes answers from respondents who stated that they were not in contact with female police officers/did not see them in contact with citizens.

7: How would you describe the male police officer you see in direct contact with citizens?

The collected answers to this question are grouped in the same way as for the previous question, i.e. in three categories: positive, negative and neutral opinion. Out of total percentage of respondents, 55% have a positive opinion about male police officers. Among the answers of this category, the following stand out: professional (48%), kind (40%) and approachable (26%).

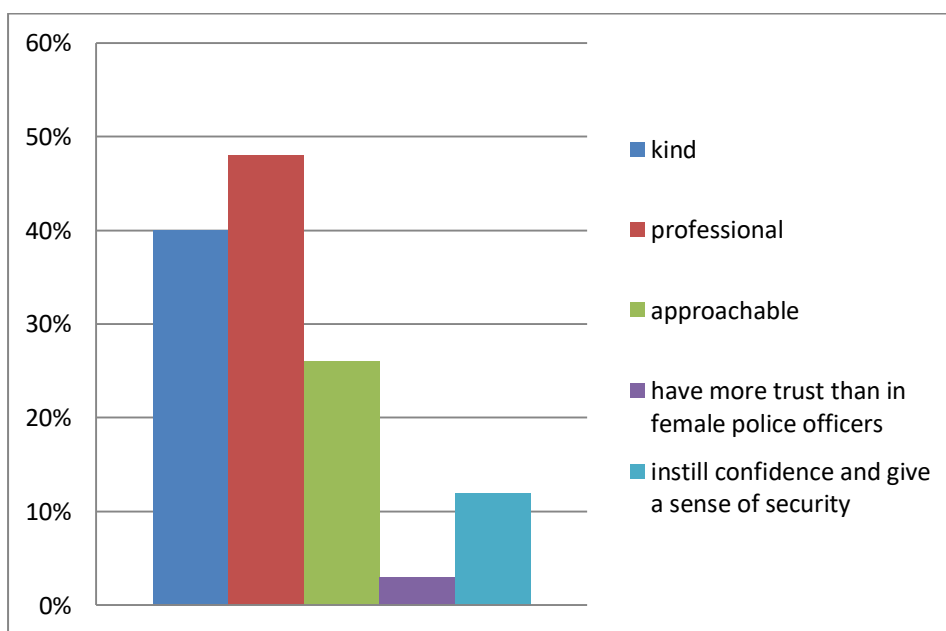


Chart 12 - Positive opinions of respondents about male police officers (n=114)

More respondents (34%) have a negative opinion about male police officers than female police officers. The most common answers in this category are: unprofessional (40%), unkind (37%) and unapproachable (34%).

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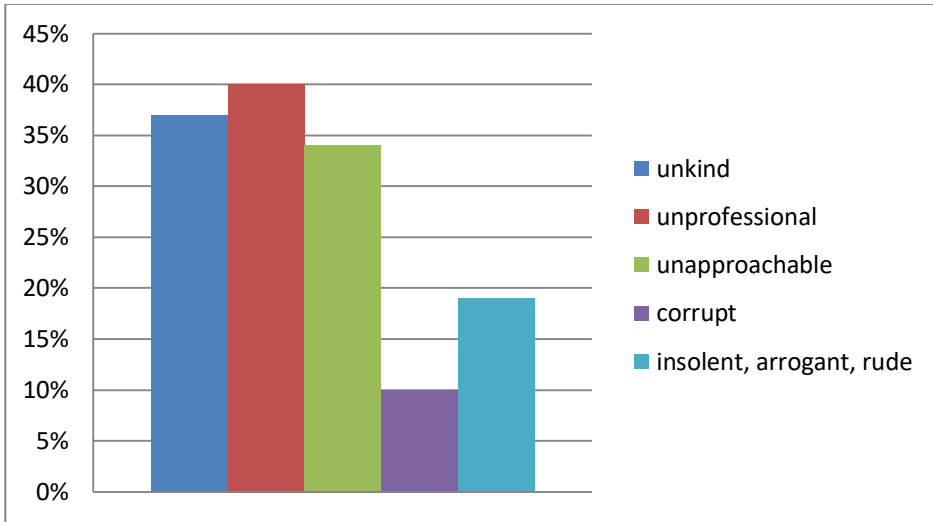


Chart 13 - Negative opinions of respondents about male police officers (n=70)

Neutral opinion of male police officers is noted with 8% of respondents and these answers are categorized in the same way as with previous question.

What stands out from the previous data is the opinion of the respondents about male police officers. More precisely, almost 20% of respondents that expressed a negative opinion about them, consider them insolent, arrogant and rude.

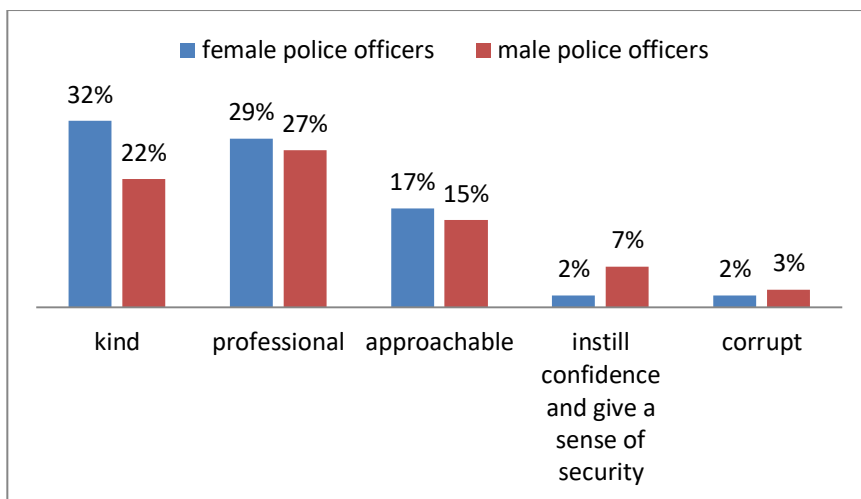


Chart 14 - Comparison of respondents' opinions about male and female police officers (n=206)

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The previous chart presents the comparative data of the respondents, more precisely the most prominent answers related to the opinion on male and female police officers. From what is shown, it is clear that the positive opinion on female police officers prevails in comparison to the opinion on male police officers. However, respondents state that they have more trust and a sense of security in male police officers.

In addition, if the respondents' answers to the question about trust in the police and the opinion of female and male officers they see in the streets were to be compared, it should be noted that almost half (46%) of the respondents who answered that they *do not trust* the police, still have a *positive opinion* about female police officers.

What also stands out when it comes to the respondents' opinions about male and female police officers, is that these answers can be categorized by location, in the same way as for the question about the feeling of safety and trust in the police. Most respondents who have a positive opinion about police officers are from Banja Luka (65% for male police officers and 68% for female police officers), while most respondents who have a negative opinion about them are from Sarajevo (46% for male police officers and 36% for female police officers).¹⁴

8: Do you own any means of self-defense?

Out of the total percentage of respondents, 83% answered that they do not own any means of self-defense. On the other hand, 15% of respondents answered they do possess some means.

Out of the total number of respondents who stated that they own some means of self-defense, almost half of them (48%) indicated in the first survey question that they felt generally safe.

¹⁴ These data are taken of the sample by locations – Banja Luka (69) and Sarajevo (69).

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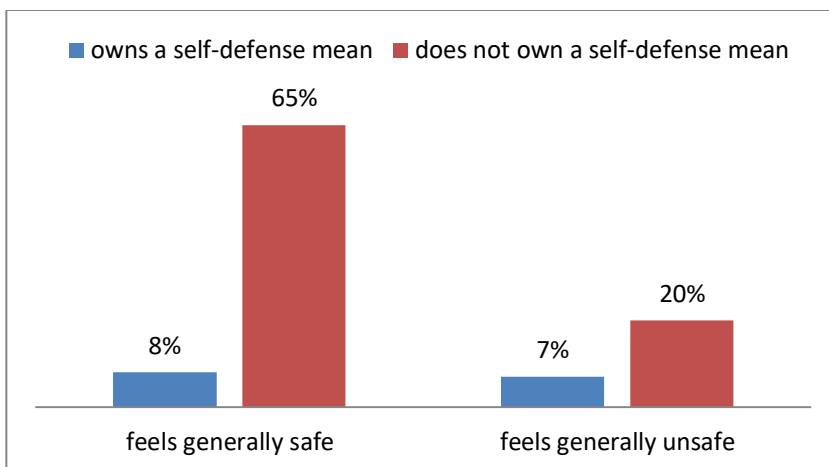


Chart 15 - Cross-section of respondents' answers in the first and eighth questions (n=196¹⁵)

9: Have you ever taken self-defense classes?

Similar findings to the previous question were also noted in the collected data for the question about attending self-defense classes. More precisely, 82% of respondents did not attend classes, while 18% did. Also, in the cross-section of the respondent's answers to the first question (assessment of the feeling of security) and the ninth question (attending self-defense classes), similar results are noticeable as with the previous cross-section. More precisely, of the total number of respondents who attended self-defense classes, 58% feel generally safe.

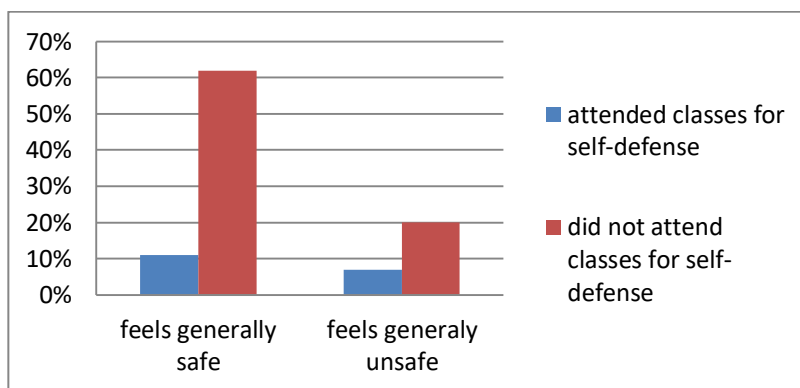


Chart 16 - Cross-section of respondents' answers to the first and ninth questions (n=200¹⁶)

¹⁵ The remaining 5 answers are from the I don't know/don't want to answer category in both survey questions and amount to 3% of the answers in the presented section

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10: What could make you feel safer in your place of residence?

On the final survey question, the respondents had the opportunity to offer their answers. Out of the total percentage of respondents, 90% offered their answer - a suggestion, what could make them feel safer in their place of residence.

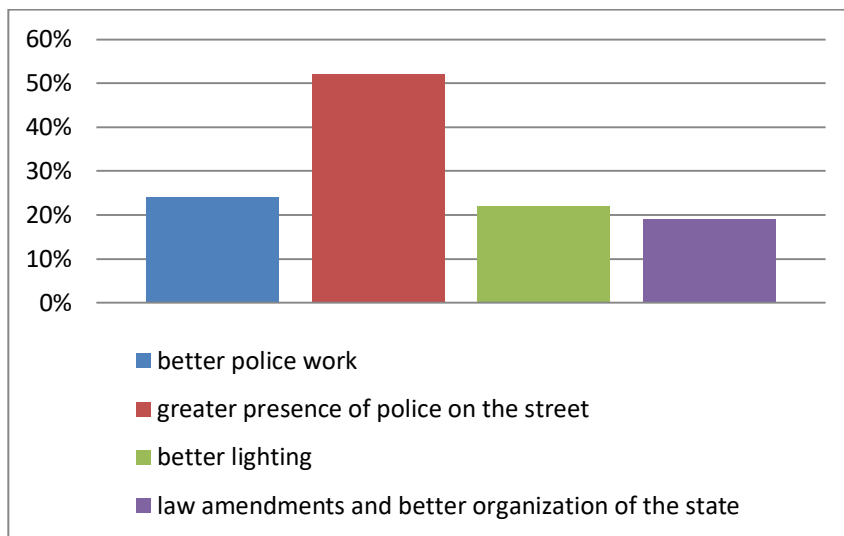


Chart 17 - The most common responses of respondents to the question of what can influence them to feel safer in their place of residence (n=185)

A greater presence of male and female police officers in the streets (and improvement of their work) is undoubtedly the most common answer of the respondents. More precisely, 76% of them believe that *improving the work and the greater presence of female and male police officers in the streets* can contribute to their feeling of safety in their place of residence. *Better street lighting*, especially in less populated areas, is in second place in terms of responses. The category of answers "*law amendments and improved organization of the state*" primarily includes answers in which respondents emphasize that stricter, adequate punishments are needed for committed crimes or misdemeanors, especially those related to the violation of their physical safety or the violation of public order and peace. In addition, this category also includes answers related to the greater transparency of the work of institutions, as well as the

¹⁶ Ibid.

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improvement of their work. On the other hand, among the least represented answers, but not less relevant, there are answers related to following: resolving the issues of *migrants, homeless people, individuals under the influence who are often seen on the street*, as well as issues of *stray dogs, education* in local communities on importance of helping others, prevention of violence and the role an individual has in their local community, the need for more *video surveillance* on the streets and near residential buildings, *improvement of traffic signals* and following the traffic rules, and organization of more *self-defense classes*.

Discussion

Majority of the respondents feels safe in their place of residence. It was noticed how the sequence of the cities where the survey was conducted was the same, when it comes to the location where women feel the most safe, i.e. the least unsafe: Banja Luka – Mostar – Sarajevo. The same sequence was noticed in the findings of the third survey question (is there something that makes the respondents feel unsafe), where the fewest respondents mentioned something that makes them physically insecure in Banja Luka, Mostar and, finally, the most in Sarajevo.

In summary, if the cities were to be evaluated as safe or unsafe according to these findings, Banja Luka can be evaluated as the most safe, Mostar in second place, and Sarajevo as the least safe city, from the perspective of the respondents' sense of personal safety.

The previously mentioned sequence of Banja Luka - Mostar - Sarajevo was also noted with the answers about the respondents' trust in the police. Thus, respondents from Banja Luka have the most trust in the police, and most respondents who do not trust the police are from Sarajevo.

This is supported by the opinion of the respondents about police officers grouped by location. The following order applies to the most recorded positive opinions of respondents about male and female police officers: Banja Luka - Mostar - Sarajevo. On the other hand, most respondents who have a negative opinion of male and female police officers are from Sarajevo. For female police officers, the least number of respondents

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with a negative opinion is from Mostar, while for male police officers this is the case with respondents from Banja Luka.

It is interesting that, despite the fact that women are much less represented in police agencies in Bosnia and Herzegovina (in 2020, only 9%¹⁷ of the total number of police officers were women), respondents still have a more positive opinion of female police officers than male police officers.

There is a noticeable intertwining between (dis)trust in the police and positive and negative opinions about male and female police officers. Nevertheless, a positive opinion about female police officers prevails, even among respondents who do not have trust in the police. Based on the aforementioned findings, the increased number of women in police agencies can contribute to the respondents' sense of safety in their local communities. In addition, the respondents expressed the need for more frequent patrols in their local communities. What would certainly contribute to the improvement not only of security, but also of police work, is the inclusion of female police officers in teams, i.e. patrols. The need for greater participation of women in the police, especially when it comes to community policing and the prevention of violence against women, is also indicated by other research.¹⁸ Therefore, police structures should be inclusive and representative, in order to contribute to a sense of safety and to build the trust of individuals or groups from the community. Summarizing the positive opinions of the respondents about (underrepresented) women in the police, there is a noticeable potential for improving the feeling of security through increased participation of women in the police.

Also, other research shows that trust in the police has been moving in relatively similar percentages for the last few years (2015 - 54%, 2016 -

¹⁷ Plevljak, B., Kržalić, A. (2021). „Position of women in police agencies in BiH“. Available at: <http://css.ba/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/Centre-for-Security-Studies-The-Position-of-Women-in-Police-Agencies-in-BiH.pdf>

¹⁸ Fernandez, M., Townsley, J. (2021). Handbook on gender-responsive policing for women and girls exposed to violence. Available at: <https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Headquarters/Attachments/Sections/Library/Publications/2021/Handbook-on-gender-responsive-police-services-en.pdf>

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60%, 2017 - 47%). However, the fact that, during previous research and this last one, almost half of the respondents express distrust in the police, is not insignificant. This clearly shows dissatisfaction with the work of the police, which has obviously been present for many years, without any specific indications of possible changes of opinion, i.e. trust for the better, if the work of the police is not improved.¹⁹

Although the reasons for mistrust in the police were not directly researched during this research, it is possible to point out potential reasons for mistrust from the respondents' answers to other questions. The reasons for not reporting harassment are highlighted there (unprofessionalism of the police, lack of interest in solving those cases, considering the victim to be at fault, etc.), and a generally negative opinion of police officers (unprofessional, corrupt, etc.).

What also stands out is that the types of harassment mentioned in this research (indecent comments and catcalling, stalking and physical assault) have also been noted in other research as the most common forms of harassment experienced by women.²⁰

Among the findings of the conducted research, it is worth noting that almost 20% of respondents who stated a negative opinion about male police officers consider them insolent, arrogant and uncultured. On the other hand, such answers cannot be found in the category of negative opinions about female police officers. This opinion is supported by previous research, such as the PointPulse report, where it is stated that the general opinion of respondents is more positive about female police officers than male police officers. Another of the similarities with the aforementioned research refers to the respondents' opinion of police officers as more corrupt, uncultured, and arrogant, aggressive. It is

¹⁹ Kržalić, A. (2017). *The Citizens' Opinion of the Police: Results of the Public Opinion Research in Bosnia and Herzegovina*. PointPulse Report. <http://css.ba/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/BIH-Survey-2017-ENG.pdf>

²⁰ Kearn, H. (2018). *A National Study on Sexual Harassment and Assault*. Available at: <https://stopstreetharassment.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/Full-Report-2018-National-Study-on-Sexual-Harassment-and-Assault.pdf> i „THAT GUY“ website (2022). What do women (and men) really think about harassment? Dostupno na: <https://that-guy.co.uk/mean-streets-what-women-and-men-really-think-about-harassment/>

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interesting that this report also points out that such descriptions are not found in the responses to the opinion on female police officers in BiH. Therefore, the opinion of the public about male and female police officers has not changed significantly since 2017, when the aforementioned research was conducted.²¹

A higher percentage of respondents state that they trust in the police, than those who do not (50% : 47%). Responses related to (not) reporting harassment can also be associated with expressed mistrust of the police. More precisely, only 26% of respondents who experienced some form of harassment reported it. For the remaining majority of respondents who experienced harassment but did not report it, the most common reason for not reporting it is lack of trust in the police. Specifically, it includes answers related to non-reporting due to the unprofessionalism of the police, the respondents believing that they will not be taken seriously, the lack of interest of the police in dealing with "minor" cases, etc. Similar findings are also noticeable in the report of the research on the well-being and safety of women in BiH, led by Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE). In the aforementioned report, it is pointed out that almost half of the respondents experienced some form of harassment or abuse, but that a very small percentage of women reported harassment/violence. In addition, in this case, the most common reasons for non-reporting are the respondents' lack of information about the entire process of reporting.²²

The second-ranked reason for not reporting harassment found in the conducted research is alarming. Out of the percentage of respondents who stated a reason for not reporting, 42% of them stated that the reason for not reporting harassment was that it was something they were used to, that it was normal or that there was no need to report it. Such reasons for non-reporting have also been observed in other research, which clearly

²¹ Kržalić, A. (2017). *The Citizens' Opinion of the Police: Results of the Public Opinion Research in Bosnia and Herzegovina*. PointPulse Report. <http://css.ba/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/BIH-Survey-2017-ENG.pdf>

²² OSCE (2019). *Well-being and safety of women, Bosnia and Herzegovina*, report on research results. Available at: https://www-osce-org.translate.goog/files/f/documents/3/5/423470_1.pdf? x_tr sl=bs& x_tr tl=en& x_tr hl=hr& x_tr pto=wapp

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emphasizes the need for better education not only of individuals but also of representatives of institutions, overall with the aim of providing support to victims of harassment and abuse.²³

Finally, it is pointed out that only the respondents from Sarajevo mentioned *pickpocketing* as a form of harassment or attack that they experienced. In an attempt to compare the annual reports on the work of the Ministry of the Interior of the Sarajevo Canton (MoI CS), the Ministry of the Interior of the Herzegovina-Neretva Canton (MoI HNC) and the Ministry of the Interior of the Republika Srpska (MoI RS), with the aim of comparing the crimes of theft (the crime of pickpocketing in the Criminal Code of FBiH is defined within the criminal offense of Theft²⁴) in Sarajevo, Mostar and Banja Luka, the following was noticed:

- MoI HNC does not have annual reports available on the official website
- In the report of the MoI RS²⁵, there is no explanation for the criminal acts of theft, as is noticeable in the report of the MoI CS²⁶

Therefore, it is not possible to compare data that would clarify whether criminal acts of theft (with a focus on pickpocketing) are more present in Sarajevo than in Mostar and Banja Luka. In addition, it is important to point out that the MoI CS report does not clearly indicate the area of the canton where the aforementioned crimes were committed. Also, none of the reports contain gender-differentiated data, so it cannot be clearly concluded who are the victims of these crimes. This can indicate the need for better and more thorough reporting on the work of the mentioned institutions, with the aim of presenting complete data on the state of security in the mentioned regions.

²³ Gordon, S. (2020) *How Common Is Female Sexual Harassment?* Available at: <https://www.verywellmind.com/how-common-is-female-to-female-sexual-harassment-4134990>

²⁴ Criminal Code of Federation of BiH, article 286. Theft. Available at: <https://www.paragraf.ba/propisi/fbih/krivichni-zakon-federacije-bosne-i-hercegovine.html>

²⁵ Information on state of security in Republika Srpska for 2021. Available at : <https://mup.vladars.net/lat/index.php?vijest=64&vrsta=statistike&stat=1>

²⁶ Annual report on work of MoI CS Police Administration for 2021. Available at: <https://mup.ks.gov.ba/organizacija/izvjestajoradu/izvjestaj-o-radu-uprave-policije-mup-ks-za-2021-godinu>

Conclusion and recommendations

Based on the collected data, it can be concluded that women in Bosnia and Herzegovina feel generally safe. According to the location, women feel the least safe in Sarajevo, and the most in Banja Luka. 63% of respondents believe that a friendly and peaceful neighborhood can positively affect their sense of security. On the other hand, 76% of them state that more professional work and a greater presence of the police on the street can contribute to a sense of security, along with improved street lighting.

Of the total percentage of respondents, 65% experienced inappropriate comments and catcalling, 24% were followed and 11% were physically assaulted.

The majority (71%) of respondents did not report harassment, and the most common reason in the responses was distrust in institutions, i.e. the police. In this regard, only half of the respondents (50%) trust the police. Most respondents who do not trust the police are from Sarajevo. More respondents (63%) have a positive opinion of female police officers than of male police officers (55%). In addition, the majority of respondents who have a positive opinion of police officers are from Banja Luka, while the fewest are from Sarajevo.

The first step and the basis of the fight against violence against women should be: more education on the prevention of violence, better information for women about the mechanisms through which they can report harassment and attacks, and ultimately encouraging women to report the violence they experience. In this regard, the support of the (local) community is indispensable. The lack of such support can significantly affect the willingness of women who experience any type of attack or harassment to report it. If the environment does not take them seriously, subjects them to ridicule and contributes to discrimination, it also contributes to the increase in the frequency of such attacks. The provision of this support can be realized primarily through education, through which a friendly and peaceful environment would ultimately be created, not only for women but for all members of the community.

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Women may consider certain forms of harassment to be "normal" or not serious enough to report, and this may be due to a variety of factors. One of the possible, more significant factors are the specifics of the environment in which they live, where various forms of harassment are not recognized as unacceptable behavior. Also, the harassment experienced in the past can influence the extent to which women will tolerate or normalize such behavior in the future, if it were to be described as something they are "used to", as stated by the respondents in the conducted research. Therefore, education plays an important role in the prevention of violence. More precisely, women who have limited (or even denied) access to education are more susceptible to being victims of violence, given that they have fewer opportunities to be informed, learn more about their rights and how to protect themselves.

Ultimately, the improved work of state authorities and greater involvement of the local community includes all the key steps needed to achieve improved security (not only) of women. It is important to emphasize that education is not only necessary for the local community, i.e. citizens, but it is necessary to include this topic through upbringing and education from early childhood, but also through additional education of representatives of institutions.

It is clear that any form of harassment and ultimately assault has a negative impact on the daily life of not only women, but all those who are victims of harassment. It is necessary to work in all social and political fields with the aim of improving women's safety, especially in local communities. This report can certainly serve policy makers, by gaining insight into the state of women's security, to create policies that will go towards improving the security and position of women in BiH. Certainly, the complete prevention of any violence is the ideal, but work and commitment to it can certainly contribute to a significant reduction in the presence of such cases.

This research does not cover the issues of the impact of harassment and abuse of women in BiH on their everyday life, but there is no doubt that it is an aspect of women's safety that needs to be researched and ultimately provide an adequate answer/solution.

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The answers to the three central research questions can be summarized as follows:

1. Do women in BiH feel safe in their local community?

- Women in BiH generally feel safe in their local community. More precisely, the majority of respondents state in their answers that they feel safe, which certainly does not diminish the importance of the remaining percentage of respondents who do not feel safe.

2. Do women in BiH trust the police?

- Women in BiH partially trust the police. More precisely, 50% of respondents have confidence in the police, while 47% do not.

3. How do women in BiH perceive police officers?

- Women in BiH have a more positive opinion of female police officers than male police officers. Mostly, they consider them to be kind, approachable, and professional, while more respondents consider male police officers to be corrupt, arrogant and insolent.

With the aim of contributing to the prevention of violence against women, education and promotion of peace and respect for human rights, the following recommendations are offered:

- It is necessary to improve communication and cooperation between key actors, in this case the police and civil society. This can be achieved through established cooperation with external interest groups such as women's associations or civil society organizations, etc. In this way, the police can recommend to whom victims of violence/harassment can turn to for help.
- Increased police presence on the street. Improving local community policing through more frequent patrols, especially in areas with a higher number of assaults.
- Improving video surveillance in public places and populated areas with the aim of reducing crime and improving the sense of security not only of women, but of the entire local community.
- Stricter laws regarding sanctions and punishments for all forms of harassment and assault with the aim of reducing their presence.

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- More adequate reporting to the public about the work of police agencies, with an emphasis on much-needed gender-differentiated data in the aforementioned reports.
- Greater presence of women in the police, especially female police officers who work in direct contact with citizens, with the aim of contributing to a sense of security and, ultimately, more successful work of police agencies in general.
- Organizing self-defense courses more often, so that they are available to as many women as possible. It would be possible for these courses to be organized by civil society organizations with the support of police structures and local government bodies.
- Additional education for all: representatives of institutions and civil society, through upbringing and formal education. Education should go in the direction of work on the prevention of violence, the promotion of respect for human rights, the provision of support and understanding to women, but also to others who experience any form of harassment.

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