

## PUBLIC ATTITUDES TOWARDS HATE SPEECH IN BULGARIA IN 2014

The present report summarizes the findings of a public opinion survey conducted by the Open Society Institute – Sofia in the period 16 June – 6 July 2014.

The survey was financed by the Complimentary actions Fund of the NGO Program in Bulgaria under the Financial Mechanism of the European Economic Area 2009-2014. The views and opinions expressed in this paper are solely the responsibility of the authors and should by no means be interpreted as reflecting the standpoint of the Open Society Institute – Sofia, the donor countries or the Financial Mechanism of the European Economic Area.

The survey was conducted by a team comprising:

- **Georgi Stoytchev,**  
*editor*
- **Ivanka Ivanova,**  
*project manager and author*
- **Associate Prof. Dr. Alexey Pamporov,**  
*head of data collection unit*
- **Petia Braynova and Dragomira Belcheva,**  
*data processing*
- **Ralitsa Dimitrova and Denita Vassileva,**  
*focus groups organization and moderation*

ISBN 978-954-2933-28-1

## CONTENTS

▶ <b>Executive Summary</b>	<b>2</b>	▶ <b>Use of hate speech promoting violence</b>	<b>17</b>
▶ <b>About the survey</b>	<b>3</b>	▶ <b>Use of hate speech perceived as insulting</b>	<b>18</b>
▶ <b>Context of the survey</b>	<b>3</b>	▶ <b>Attitudes towards hate speech criminalization and the introduction of hate crime provisions in criminal law</b>	<b>19</b>
▶ <b>Recognizing hate speech as a phenomenon</b>	<b>5</b>	▶ <b>Public attitude towards hate speech prevention policies</b>	<b>20</b>
▶ <b>Incidence of hate speech</b>	<b>6</b>	▶ <b>Conclusions and recommendations with regard to hate speech prevention policies</b>	<b>25</b>
▶ <b>Targets of hate speech</b>	<b>9</b>	▶ <b>Annex: Interview questionnaire</b>	<b>27</b>
▶ <b>Popularity of selected negative public perceptions about minorities</b>	<b>13</b>		
▶ <b>Media of hate speech</b>	<b>13</b>		
▶ <b>Users of hate speech</b>	<b>15</b>		
▶ <b>Use of hate speech in the private sphere</b>	<b>16</b>		

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**T**his report<sup>1</sup> contains data from two nationally representative public opinion surveys (conducted in 2013 and 2014), which seek to measure the proliferation of and the public attitude towards hate speech.

The phenomenon is widespread in Bulgaria. Over the last year almost half of Bulgarian citizens have heard statements expressing disapproval, hatred or aggression against minorities, while every fourth citizen has heard statements, which in their opinion could result in violence against minorities. In 2014, the number of social groups, which are perceived as targets of hate speech and possible victims of hate crimes, has increased. In 2013 there were three clearly established social groups that fell in this category: Roma, Turks and gay people. In 2014, Roma remained the main group targeted by hate speech but respondents identified a total of five, rather than three, potentially affected minorities: Roma, Turks, gay people, foreigners and Muslims.

In 2014, the incidence of hate speech against foreigners escalated: within one year the share of respondents who have encountered hate speech, targeted against foreigners increased from 5% in 2013 to 20%. There is no doubt that this is due to the wave of refugees and immigrants into the country as a result of the continuing military conflict in Syria, with the problem affecting most severely the areas around Sofia and in the South Central Planning Region. This region, as well as the capital city of Sofia, should be given a priority in the development and implementation of active public campaigns to curb hate speech against asylum seekers.

Although widely present in the public environment, hate speech is not recognized as a distinct problem by the citizens. They do not seem to differentiate hate speech from the general aggressive and spiteful political discourse.

Nevertheless, the overwhelming majority of Bulgarian citizens (85% of the respondents) do not approve the use of public statements expressing hatred, aggression or disapproval against minorities – 54% totally disapprove of the use of such statements, while 31% tend to rather disapprove. Disapproval of hate speech varies depending on the minority to which it is targeted but in any case more than 64% of the respondents do not approve the use of hate speech against any of the minorities mentioned. A considerable share of respondents (58%) believe that the authorities should protect minorities against hate speech and almost as many feel that the police and the prosecution service should launch criminal proceedings against people who use hate speech.

The support for criminal prosecution, however, remains to some extent abstract. The majority of the people would not notify the police, if they witnessed hate speech. This suggests that there is a pressing need for the prosecution service and the police to adopt special measures that would strengthen public trust in these institutions and would encourage both victims and witnesses of hate crimes to lodge complaints.

In 2014, there has been a clear improvement in the level of public awareness of the fact that hate speech and hate crimes are indeed criminal offenses, i.e. they constitute socially dangerous and illegal behavior. The share of respondents who are aware that it is a crime to propagate and incite hostility or hatred based on race and ethnicity, increased from 70% to 77%. Most probably this is the result of increased reaction against such phenomena demonstrated by human rights NGOs and active citizens. However, more than one fifth of the citizens do not know that propagating or instigating ethnic and religious hatred and discrimination is a crime.

The results of the survey clearly suggest that there is a need to develop and adopt national policies to curb hate speech and ensure the involvement of national institutions in the implementation of such policies.

<sup>1</sup> We would like to sincerely thank Associate Prof. Dr. Boriana Dimitrova who made important comments and recommendations to an earlier version of this report.

## ABOUT THE SURVEY

The present report summarizes the findings of a standardized representative public opinion survey of the adult population in the country, conducted in the framework of the regular<sup>2</sup> omnibus surveys of the Open Society Institute – Sofia. The data collection method was a face-to-face interview based on a standard questionnaire. A total of 1167 respondents, selected through a nationally representative cluster sampling, stratified by region and type of settlement (town/village), were interviewed in the period June 16 – July 6, 2014. The maximum standard error (for 50% relative share and 95% guaranteed probability) is 2.9% (without taking into account the intra-cluster correlation).

This is the second of a series of planned surveys on the proliferation of and the public attitudes towards hate speech in Bulgaria. The first survey was conducted with the same method in the period July 5-16, 2013, while the findings were published in the report “Public Attitudes Towards Hate Speech in Bulgaria”. In 2014, the survey included some additional possible answers to the closed questions, a new question, and some elements of quality research – three focus groups were conducted with Roma (on October, 4, 2014, in a regional city, with eight participants), young people, aged 21-29 years (on October 16, 2014, in a small town, with nine participants) and educators (on October 23, 2014, in Sofia, with eight participants – six teachers and two school psychologists).

<sup>2</sup> The Open Society Institute – Sofia has been conducting regular omnibus surveys since 2008, usually twice a year. The findings of the latest survey have been summarised in the report “Public Opinion and Social Trends in Bulgaria in July 2014”, available online at: [http://osi.bg/downloads/File/2014/Public\\_opinion\\_July2014\\_30.07%20F2.pdf](http://osi.bg/downloads/File/2014/Public_opinion_July2014_30.07%20F2.pdf) (in Bulgarian). The data from all previous surveys are also available online and can be accessed at: [www.opendata.bg](http://www.opendata.bg). Some aspects of the July 2014 survey have been discussed in analytical papers published in the electronic journal *Politiki*, issue 3/2014, available online at: [http://politiki.bg/?cy=285&lang=1&a0i=224111&a0m=readInternal&a0p\\_id=1109](http://politiki.bg/?cy=285&lang=1&a0i=224111&a0m=readInternal&a0p_id=1109) (in Bulgarian).

## CONTEXT OF THE SURVEY

Bulgaria remains the poorest EU member state with GDP per capita of population below half<sup>3</sup> of the EU average and approximately one third of the per capita GDP in some of the leading member states such as Austria and Sweden.

Between 2010 and 2013 Bulgaria’s GDP remained stagnant or increased slightly<sup>4</sup> but still did not recover from the consequences of the 2008-2009 economic crisis. According to an occasional paper<sup>5</sup> of the European Commission issued in the beginning of 2014, “Bulgaria continues to experience macroeconomic imbalances, which require monitoring and policy action. In particular, the protracted adjustment of the labor market warrants policy actions, while the correction of the external position and corporate deleveraging are progressing well”.

In the first two quarters of 2014 Bulgaria’s GDP has marked a slight increase of 1.4% in the first quarter and 2.1% in the second quarter of 2014.

In the period 2009 – 2013 the number of employed persons in the country declined by 230,000; unemployment increased from 9.1% to 11.8%, reaching nearly 12% in the first half of 2014. Job loss affected mostly uneducated people and younger workers. The average monthly salary in 2013 was 808 BGN, or about 400 Euro. The European Commission finds<sup>6</sup> that the labor market in Bulgaria is “weak and non-inclusive” and identifies it as one of three factors limiting the adjustment capacity of the economy and holding back potential growth. More specifically, the EC notes that “active labor market policies and the educational system have not been effective in facilitating the adjustment process so far and hamper a broad-based accumulation of human capital”. The other two challenges before Bulgaria, cited in the EC paper, are external indebtedness and “macroeconomic devel-

<sup>3</sup> According to Eurostat data for 2013.

<sup>4</sup> Data cited in this paragraph have been derived from the Macroeconomic Indicators Bulletin issued by the Bulgarian National Bank, Statistics Directorate, on October 1, 2014, available online at: [http://www.bnb.bg/bnbweb/groups/public/documents/bnb\\_download/s\\_macro\\_indicators\\_a1\\_pdf\\_en.pdf](http://www.bnb.bg/bnbweb/groups/public/documents/bnb_download/s_macro_indicators_a1_pdf_en.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> Macroeconomic Imbalances – Bulgaria 2014. Results of in-depth reviews under Regulation (EU) No 1176/2011 on the prevention and correction of macroeconomic imbalances, COM(2014) 150 final, 5.3.2014, Occasional paper of the Directorate General for Economic and Financial Affairs, available online at: [http://ec.europa.eu/economy\\_finance/publications/occasional\\_paper/2014/pdf/ocp173\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/economy_finance/publications/occasional_paper/2014/pdf/ocp173_en.pdf), p. 3.

<sup>6</sup> See: COM(2014) 150 final, p. 3.

opments in the area of corporate deleveraging”, which reflect long-standing problems with administration and judicial system efficiency and corruption that thwart competition among market players.

According to international observers<sup>7</sup> democracy in Bulgaria is “flawed”. The country ranks 54th among 167 countries in terms of state of democracy, Romania being the only EU member state ranking worse (59th). Judicial independence is also evaluated as unsatisfactory. On this indicator Bulgaria ranks 123rd among 148 countries worldwide; the only EU member state scoring worse is Slovakia (ranked 133rd).

The survey conducted between June 16 and July 6, 2014 coincided with a period of political instability and weak central government, which followed the protests that led to the resignation of the GERB government in February 2013. Between March 13 and May 29, 2013 Bulgaria was run by a caretaker government under Marin Raikov. Early parliamentary elections were held on May 12, 2013, resulting in the formation of a coalition government between the Bulgarian Socialist Party (Coalition for Bulgaria) and Movement for Rights and Freedoms (the second and third largest parliamentary parties, respectively) with Prime Minister Plamen Oresharski. The government, however, could not rally sufficient support within the 42nd Parliament. Between them the Coalition for Bulgaria and the MRF had 120 MPs, which is exactly half of all members of parliament. In order to secure the necessary quorum for parliamentary sessions, the coalition had to rely on the support of the nationalist party “Ataka”. On June 14, 2013, following a controversial appointment decision of the government, anti-government protests broke out in the capital, continuing with varying intensity almost throughout the next twelve months, which the CB-MRF coalition spent in government. On May 25, 2014 European Parliament Elections were held at which the parties of the governing coalition won 19% (CB) and 17% (MRF) of the votes, respectively, while the largest opposition party, GERB, got 30% and secured the most seats at the European Parliament. Two months later Plamen Oresharski’s government resigned and on August 6, 2014 the President of the Republic appointed the second caretaker government for the last 18 months, this time under Prof. Georgi Bliznashki. Early parliamentary elections were again held on October 5, 2014 but none

<sup>7</sup> The assessment of the state of democracy was taken from the 2012 Democracy Index of The Economist Intelligence Unit, while the assessment of judicial independence – from Global Competitiveness Report of the World Economic Forum 2013-2014.

of the large parties managed to win sufficient majority to form a government alone. A total of eight political parties made it to the Parliament, with GERB securing the largest number of seats. After a round of intensive negotiations, on November 7, 2014, GERB formed its second government under Boyko Borissov, which has the support of three smaller parliamentary parties – the Reform Bloc, the Patriotic Front and ABV.

The survey was conducted in the conditions of traditionally low public trust<sup>8</sup> in the key democratic institutions, which as of July 2014 plummeted to the lowest levels registered in the last 6 years (since the Open Society Institute – Sofia has been conducting omnibus public opinion surveys). The most trusted institutions are the Police and the President of the Republic, enjoying the confidence of 20% and 19% of the respondents, respectively); public trust in the courts and the prosecution stands at 11%, while only 8% of the respondents tend to trust the government. The least trusted institutions are the Parliament (at only 5%) and political parties (4%). European institutions traditionally enjoy greater public confidence than the national establishment. A significant majority of the citizens (62%) evaluate positively Bulgaria’s membership in the EU.

In the middle of June 2014, a banking crisis broke out in the country, which at the time of preparation of this report had not yet been resolved. Following statements by the prosecution that an investigation would be launched against banker Tsvetan Vassilev and the head of the Bank Supervision Department at the Bulgarian National Bank Tsvetan Gunev<sup>9</sup>, and rumors about an imminent banking crisis in the social media, thousands of depositors lined up to pull their money out of the banks, with the run affecting most severely two banks – the Corporate Commercial Bank (CCB) and the First Investment Bank (FIB). Between June 13 and June 20, 2014 more than 900 million BGN were pulled out of the CCB and nearly 800 million BGN out of the FIB.<sup>10</sup> On June 30, 2014, having secured

<sup>8</sup> For further details on the level of public trust in institutions see: “Public Opinion and Social Trends in Bulgaria in July 2014”, Open Society Institute – Sofia, July 2014, available online at: [http://osi.bg/downloads/File/2014/Public\\_opinion\\_July2014\\_30.07%20F2.pdf](http://osi.bg/downloads/File/2014/Public_opinion_July2014_30.07%20F2.pdf) (in Bulgarian).

<sup>9</sup> Prosecutor’s Office of the Republic of Bulgaria, Statement of the General Prosecutor, June 18, 2014, available online at: <http://www.prb.bg/main/bg/News/4575/> (in Bulgarian).

<sup>10</sup> Monthly bank supervision statistics of the Bulgarian National Bank. “Condition of the Banking System as of end-June 2014”, available online at: [http://bnb.bg/bnbweb/groups/public/documents/bnb\\_download/bs\\_201406\\_a6\\_en.pdf](http://bnb.bg/bnbweb/groups/public/documents/bnb_download/bs_201406_a6_en.pdf)

the consent of the European Commission<sup>11</sup> and the support of all political parties represented in Parliament, the Ministry of Finance provided the FIB with the necessary liquidity and the bank managed to overcome the crisis without suspending payout to depositors. After a written notice from the CCB management, on June 20, 2014 the bank was temporarily closed and placed under conservatorship<sup>12</sup> due to risk of becoming insolvent, while the appointed conservators were assigned with the task to secure a full analysis and assessment of CCB's assets and liabilities by an independent external auditor.

Between them, the two banks (CCB and FIB) have more than 16.7 billion BGN in assets, which accounts for approximately 20% of the assets of the entire banking system in Bulgaria. On November 6, 2014 the Bulgarian National Bank revoked CCB's license and on the next day (while the new government was voted in by the Parliament) submitted a motion to the court to declare the bank insolvent. The guaranteed deposits of the citizens will be released for payment as of December 4, but the bankruptcy of the bank will further exacerbate the difficult financial situation of some large state and municipal enterprises.

According to the annual report of the Bulgarian Helsinki Committee (BHC), the main human rights issues<sup>13</sup> in Bulgaria in 2013 are related with negative attitude towards the refugees coming to the country as a result of the Syria crisis. In the summer and fall of 2013 a considerable number of refugees sought asylum in Bulgaria, exceeding five times<sup>14</sup> the number of asylum seekers in 2012 and in previous years, as data of the State Agency for Refugees (SAR) suggest. In 2014, migration pressure remained strong. By the end of August 2014 the SAR had received 5556 applications for asylum, while by the end of the year the number of asylum seekers would very likely

<sup>11</sup> See: "State aid: Commission approves liquidity support scheme for Bulgarian banks". Press release of the European Commission, IP/14/754, 30/06/2014, available online at: [http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release\\_IP-14-754\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-14-754_en.htm)

<sup>12</sup> See: Press release of the Bulgarian National Bank on the decision to place CCB under conservatorship, June 20, 2014, available online at: [http://bnb.bg/PressOffice/POPpressReleases/POPRDate/PR\\_20140620\\_EN](http://bnb.bg/PressOffice/POPpressReleases/POPRDate/PR_20140620_EN)

<sup>13</sup> See: Human Rights in Bulgaria in 2013, Annual Report of the Bulgarian Helsinki Committee, available online at: [http://www.bghelsinki.org/media/uploads/documents/reports/annual\\_human\\_rights\\_report/2013\\_bhc\\_annual\\_report\\_en.pdf](http://www.bghelsinki.org/media/uploads/documents/reports/annual_human_rights_report/2013_bhc_annual_report_en.pdf)

<sup>14</sup> The total number of asylum seekers in 2012 was 1387, while in 2013 it reached 7144. See: "Information on asylum seekers and decisions taken in the period 01.01.1993 – 31.08.2014" of the State Agency for Refugees under the Council of Ministers, available online at: <http://www.aref.government.bg/docs/Applications-Decisions-1993-2014%20-%20english9.xls>

exceed the record levels, registered in 2013. The refugee wave of the summer of 2013 and even more so the highly inadequate state of preparedness of institutions to cope with it, caused serious social tensions, accompanied by racist and xenophobic statements in the media, which in some cases led to acts of violence.

Another problem related to fundamental rights protection is that Bulgarian governments systematically fail to comply with the decisions issued against Bulgaria by the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) in Strasbourg. BHC notes specifically that as of February 2014 a total of 372 ECtHR decisions against Bulgaria had not been implemented, some of them dating back 12 years. Most of them involve violations of the fair trial principles (Art. 6 of the ECHR).

## RECOGNIZING HATE SPEECH AS A PHENOMENON

The phrase "реч на омразата" used in the Bulgarian version of this report is a literal translation of the English phrase *hate speech*. According to the established definition<sup>15</sup> in international relations, the term *hate speech* is understood "as covering all forms of expression which spread, incite, promote or justify racial hatred, xenophobia, anti-Semitism or other forms of hatred based on intolerance, including: intolerance expressed by aggressive nationalism and ethnocentrism, discrimination and hostility against minorities, migrants and people of immigrant origin".

In the Bulgarian public environment there is no generally accepted translation of the term *hate speech*. Different phrases such as "враждебна реч", "враждебно говорене", "език на омразата" and "слово на омразата" are used interchangeably to denote one and the same phenomenon. In the internet environment and in informal settings loanwords derived from the English word "hater" are often used: "хейтъри" – for people using hate speech, and "хейтърство" – for the phenomenon itself. In its annual report "Human Rights in Bulgaria in 2013" BHC uses the phrase "слово на омразата", while the Oppor-

<sup>15</sup> Council of Europe. Committee of Ministers. Recommendation No. R (97) 20 of the Committee of Ministers to Member States on "Hate Speech", adopted on 30 October 1997 at the 607th meeting of the Ministers' Deputies, available online at: [http://www.coe.int/t/dghl/standardsetting/hrpolicy/other\\_committees/dh-lgbt\\_docs/CM\\_Rec\(97\)20\\_en.pdf](http://www.coe.int/t/dghl/standardsetting/hrpolicy/other_committees/dh-lgbt_docs/CM_Rec(97)20_en.pdf)

tunities without Boundaries Association uses the phrase “реч на омразата” on its website [www.ontolerance.eu](http://www.ontolerance.eu).

However, when each of these expressions were tested in separate focus groups with Roma, young people and teachers, it became clear that none of them was immediately recognizable. The focus group participants did not identify *hate speech* with a distinct phenomenon. When asked to define *hate speech*, respondents found it difficult to come up with an abstract definition. When the moderator provided specific examples, focus group participants were able to distinguish between utterances expressing hatred motivated by the different ethnic, national or religious identity of those affected, but found it hard to name the phenomenon itself and did not tell it apart from everyday manifestations of interpersonal hatred, envy or aggression. People were able to recognize *hate speech* as something criminal, dangerous, offensive, and hence, undesirable and socially unacceptable only when they were asked to assess specific situations, affecting specific minorities.

That is why, rather than using the term *hate speech*, the survey questionnaire made use of the descriptive definition “public statements, which express disapproval, hatred or aggression against minorities”.

## INCIDENCE OF HATE SPEECH

A comparison between the findings of the 2013 and 2014 survey suggests that hate speech is a firmly established phenomenon in Bulgarian public life. The share of respondents who reported that in the last 12 months they had heard public statements constituting hate speech, is equally high (approximately 46%) in both surveys.

The percentage of those who have encountered hate speech in the last 12 months is higher than the average among residents of Sofia, people with tertiary educa-

### **Female, 29 years old, from a small town:**

*“Hate speech is constantly around us. There is no way to escape it. Even if you do not want to hear it, once you switch the TV on at home, it’s there. It’s all around us. It’s part of our life now.”*

### **A teacher, 53 years old, from Sofia:**

*“What terrifies me most is that in Bulgaria, in the recent years, this has become something normal, something you are expected to do in order to be accepted, to feel that you have a good standing in the social hierarchy, and unfortunately, the most terrifying fact is that this is how children are brought up... Hate speech is already part of the virtues of our society. It is considered a virtue, which is quite alarming. ...Even at times, one feels that with all their status, education and so on, one is almost powerless to instill some norms of behavior or even convince people that this behavior, which is obviously wrong, is indeed wrong.”*

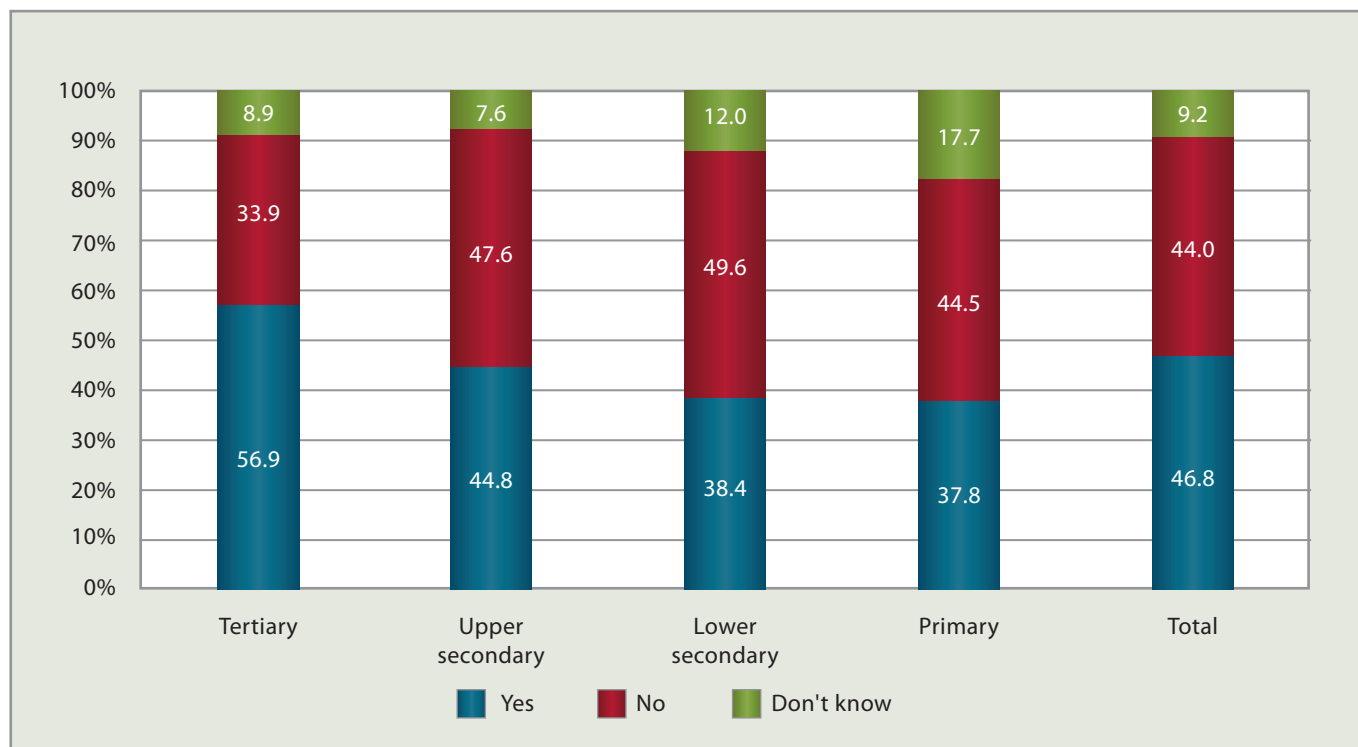
tion, and young respondents (up to 29 years of age). This should not be interpreted to suggest that these groups are most often exposed to hate speech but rather that they tend to recognize it as a phenomenon and are most sensitive to it.

However, in the 2014 survey, the share of Sofia residents who reported that they had come across hate speech in the last 12 months, is approximately 10% lower than in 2013. This variation is most likely due to the end of street protests against the government during which hate speech against different social groups was aggressively used.

Roma tend to report more often than Bulgarians and Turks that they had heard public statements expressing disapproval, hatred or aggression against minorities. The share of Turks who have come across such statements is around 37% and remains unchanged compared to the 2013 survey, being more than 10% lower than the nationwide average in both surveys. This could be explained to some extent with the language barrier – the members of the Turkish minority who do not speak Bulgarian quite obviously do not feel exposed to hate speech – but it is also indicative of the considerable isolation of the Turkish minority from Bulgarian public life.

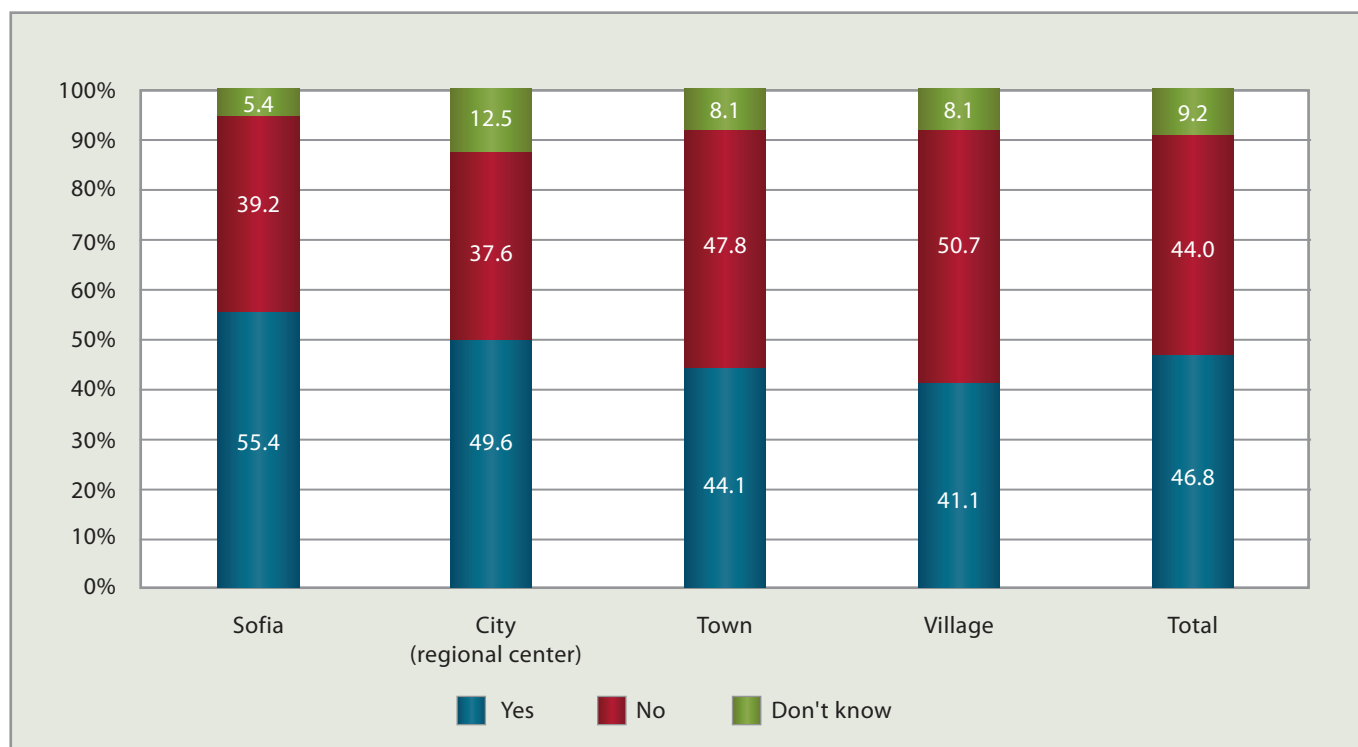
The focus groups revealed that participants perceive hate speech as a relatively new phenomenon, which came about as a result of the changes since 1989 and is part of the values that have become a norm of behavior in society along with democracy and free market economy. There is a dominant perception that before 1989 “there was no discrimination or hate speech”, “all Gypsies had jobs” and “there were strict laws”.

**Figure 1. Incidence of hate speech (responses by level of education)**



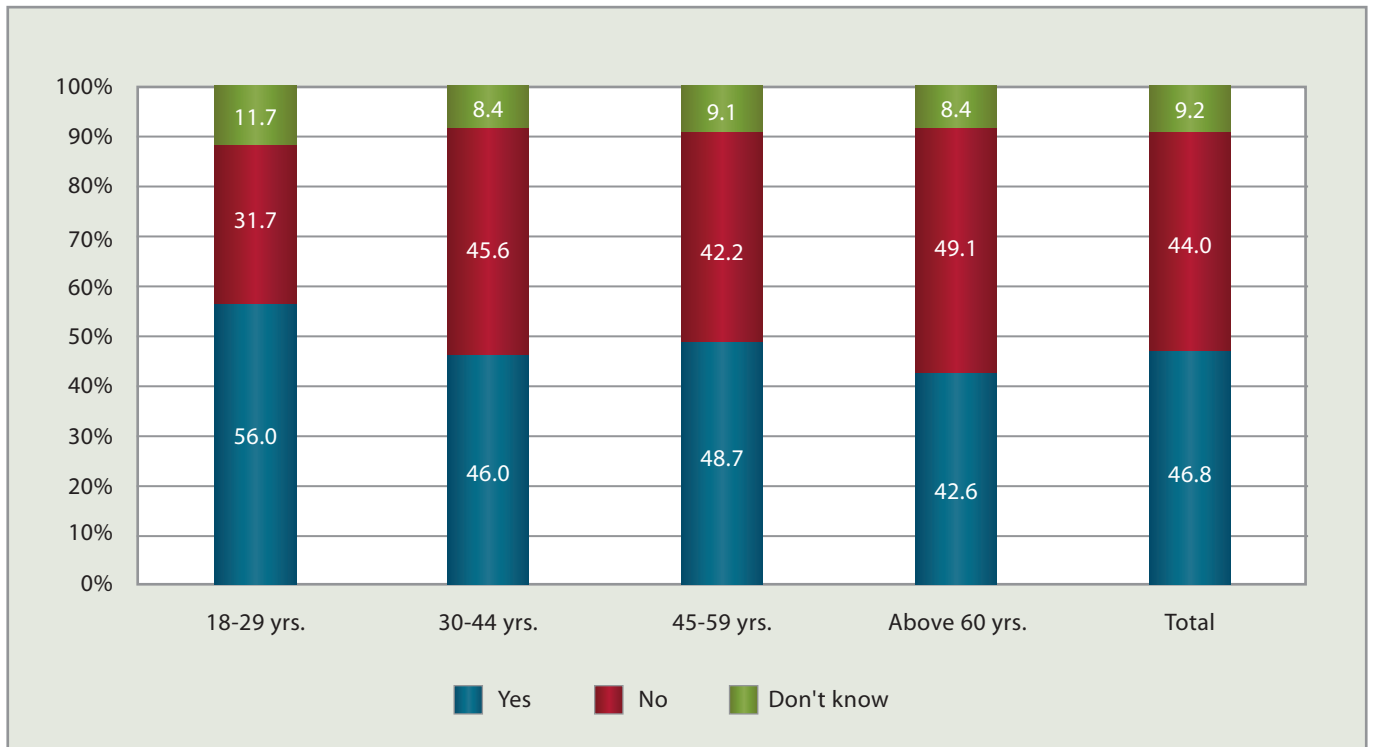
Question: *In the last 12 months, have you heard public statements expressing disapproval, hatred or aggression against ethnic, religious or sexual minorities?*

**Figure 2. Incidence of hate speech (responses by place of residence)**



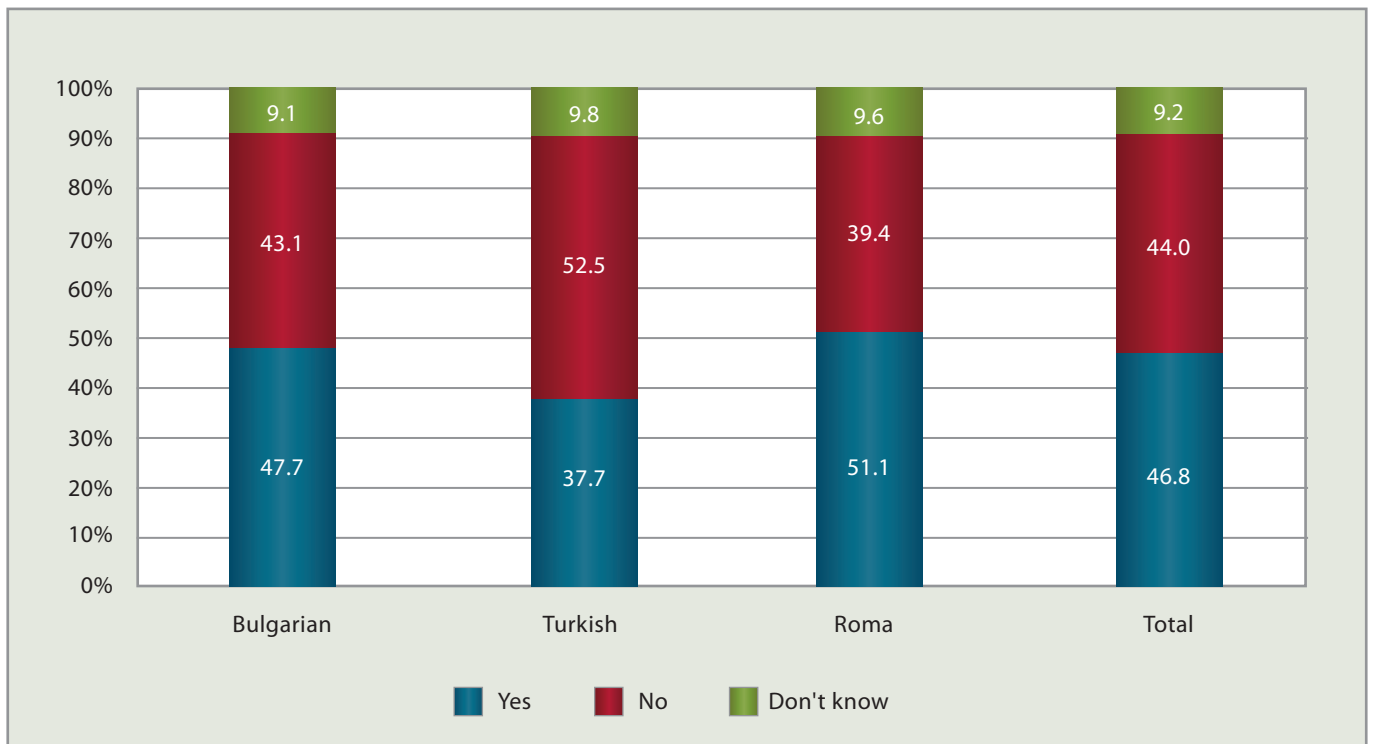
Question: *In the last 12 months, have you heard public statements expressing disapproval, hatred or aggression against ethnic, religious or sexual minorities?*

**Figure 3. Incidence of hate speech (reponses by age)**



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

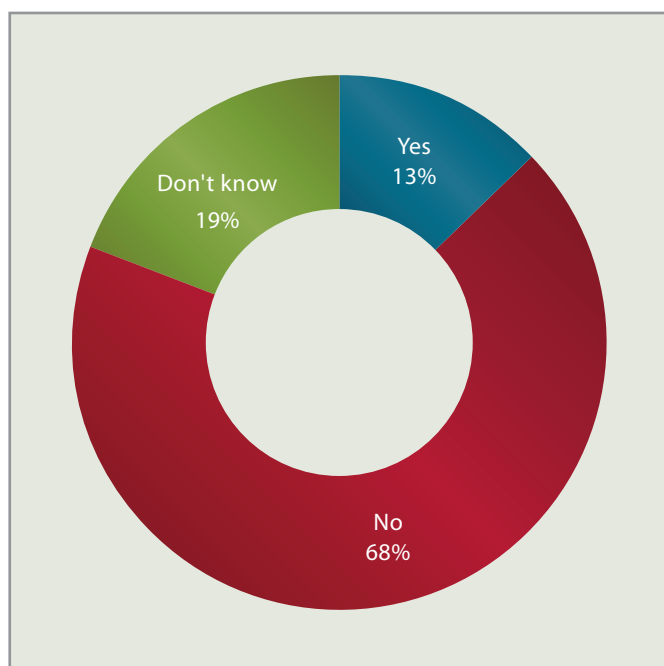
**Figure 4. Incidence of hate speech (responses by ethnicity)**



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



**Figure 5. Link between hate speech and hate crimes**



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

Hate speech is a prominent element of public discourse in Bulgaria. The greatest share of respondents who have come across statements constituting hate speech in the last 12 months, have heard them often (41%) or very often (24%). Those who report having heard such statements rarely or very rarely are 25% and 5.7%, respectively.

In 2014, the most extreme forms of hate speech were still present in the Bulgarian public environment. 13% of the respondents have heard statements by politicians or journalists, which not only imply that certain

**Roma male, 30 years old, from a district center:**

*“Bulgaria was presidential before (under communism). This is how I see it. Todor Zhivkov was the president and he was in charge... He allowed no difference to be made (between people). Not on paper, not in reality. Can the president now lead Bulgaria like that? No. The president takes his salary and goes home.”*

minorities are inferior, but create the impression that offenses against the person or the property of such minorities is less reproachable than if they were targeted against members of the majority. In 2013, almost 17% of the respondents have given a positive answer to this question.

## TARGETS OF HATE SPEECH

Roma are still perceived as the most frequent targets of hate speech. The overwhelming majority (88%) of those who have encountered hate speech in the last 12 months, report having heard statements directed against Roma. This remains unchanged since 2013 and indicates that negative stereotypes against Roma are firmly established in Bulgarians society. With regard to the other minorities, which also seem to fall victim to hate speech, the situation is slightly different compared to 2013.

First, in 2013 there were three clearly established minorities, which according to the dominant public opinion emerged as the most frequent targets of hate speech: Roma, Turks and gay people. In the public perception, the use of hate speech against all other minorities was rather marginal. In 2014, however, survey results revealed that the perceived common targets of hate speech have increased with two new minorities – “foreigners” and “Muslims”, thus bringing the total to five minorities, which are much more likely to fall victim to hate speech than other social groups.

Second, in 2014 the reported use of hate speech marked a slight decrease for all minorities, except for “foreigners”. The survey registered a considerable increase in the share of respondents who reported that they had heard statements constituting hate speech, targeted against foreigners – from 5% in 2013 to 20% in 2014. This increase probably reflects the Syrian refugee crisis, which is still a challenge for the Bulgarian authorities and generates racist statements in the media. In this context, it is understandable that out of all minorities included in the survey, reported incidence of hate speech has increased only with regard to foreigners.

Third, the 2014 survey results indicate a considerable decrease in the number of respondents who reported

that they had come across hate speech targeted against Turks. The reasons for this have yet to be identified. One possible explanation, albeit partial, could be sought in the very specifics of the survey. The 2013 questionnaire did not include Muslims as a separate minority that could be the target of statements expressing disapproval, hatred or aggression. In the 2014 questionnaire, Muslims were a separate category that the respondents could choose and were ranked fifth among the minorities that most often fall victim to hate speech. About 11% of the respondents who have encountered hate speech in the last 12 months, have heard statements targeted against Muslims. One could assume that the decrease in the reported use of hate speech against Turks is to some extent due to the fact that Muslims were included as a separate category in the questionnaire. However, the decrease is greater than the simple sum of respondents who have indicated that they had heard hate speech against Muslims and against Turks in 2014, so it is quite possible that the reasons for this development are more profound.

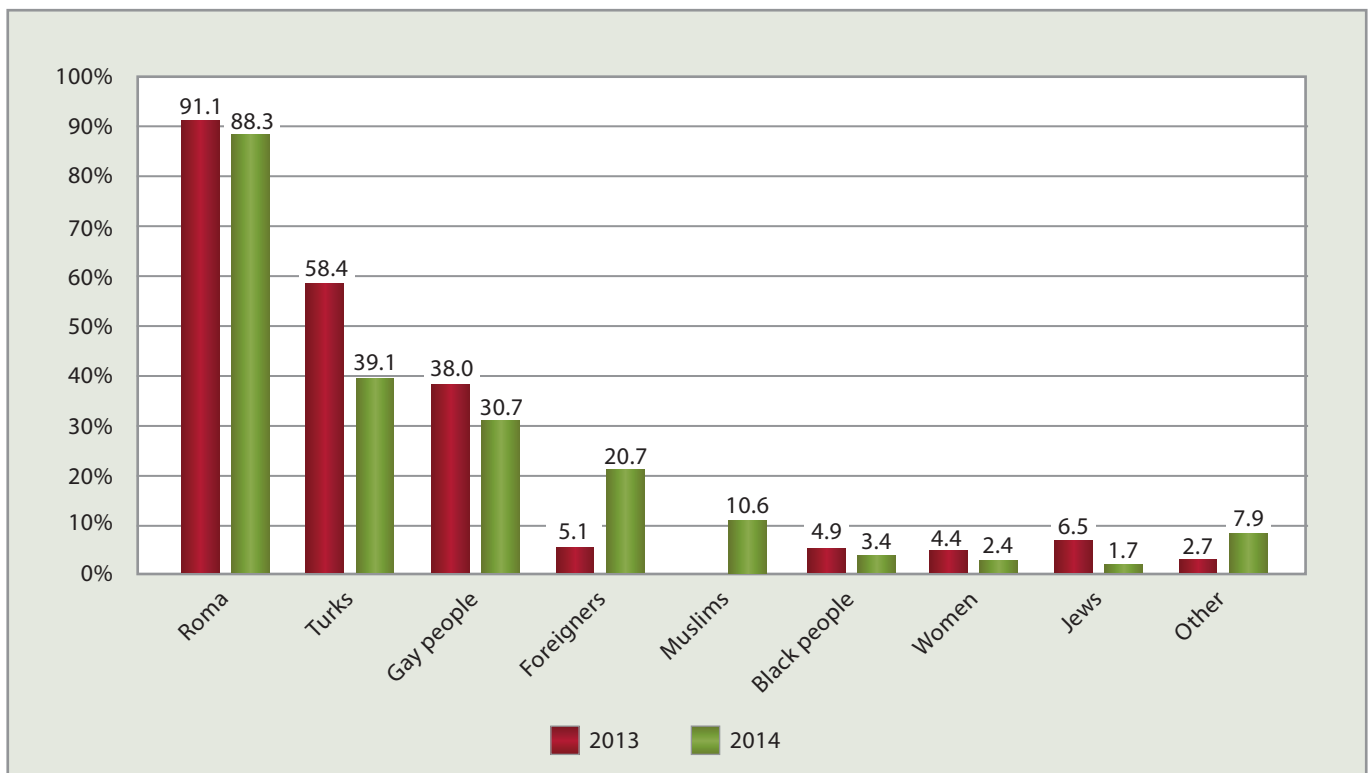
Respondents from the South Central Planning Region (Haskovo, Kurdjali, Smolyan) report having heard hate speech against foreigners much more often than the average citizen, while in the districts of the Northwestern Planning Region (Montana, Vratsa, Vidin) such reports

**Roma female, 20 years old, from a district center:**

*“I was in Poland recently. We went to the hospital with my son, to a nice ward. And the Poles there, when they saw that I’m darker than they are, you can’t imagine how excited they were. And if we were here, everyone would be shying away from us and frowning upon us.”*

are considerably less frequent. The greater proliferation of hate speech against foreigners in the perception of those living in the central areas of Southern Bulgaria is probably due to the fact that the channels for illegal entry into the country through the Bulgarian-Turkish border are concentrated in the area of Haskovo (South Central Planning Region). The regional divisions of the state institutions competent on migration issues are also located there. Two of the four regional structures of the State Agency for Refugees – the Registration and Immigration Center in Harmanli and the Transit Center in the village of Pastrogor, are in Haskovo District. The Temporary Accommodation Center for Foreign Nationals under the Migration Directorate of the MOI Border Police Directorate General is also located in Haskovo District (in the

**Figure 6. Targets of hate speech**



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

village of Lyubimets).

In the Northwestern Planning Region, the perceived incidence of hate speech against foreigners is considerably lower than the nationwide average (8.5% of the respondents from this region who have come across hate speech, have heard statements against foreigners, compared to an average of 20.7% for the country). In Sofia, the perceived incidence of hate speech against foreigners is also lower than the nationwide average (14.1% against 20.7%). These findings, however, can hardly be attributed to the lack of foreigners in these two locations. The factors that affect respondents' perception of the incidence of hate speech against foreigners may be related to the "visibility" of foreigners, the presence or absence of institutions specialized in migration management (no such institutions exist in the Northwestern Planning Region), as well as their relative weight among the other stakeholders from the institutional or business environment of the region.

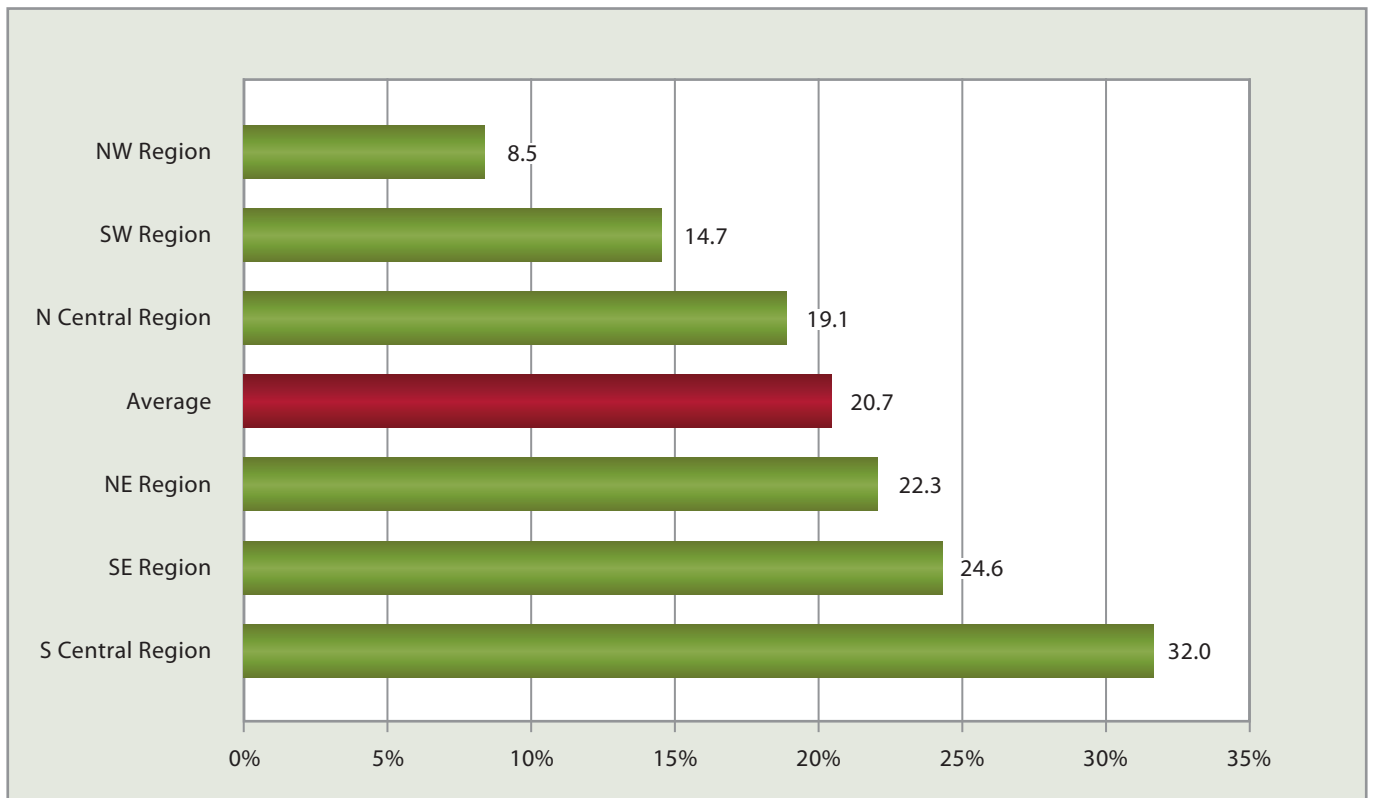
It is important to note that public perceptions about the minorities that most often become targets subject of hate speech do not necessarily reflect the

**Roma female, 30 years old, from a district center:**

*"They (Bulgarians, author's note) are brainwashed that gypsies are dirty, ugly, black, you know? If you do not teach your child like that... if you say, "they are gypsies, but they are good, they do nothing wrong", this is what the child will grow up with. The first years of a child are very important – up to the first grade, the first seven years. If you raise your child to think that these people are not good, this is how it's going to be."*

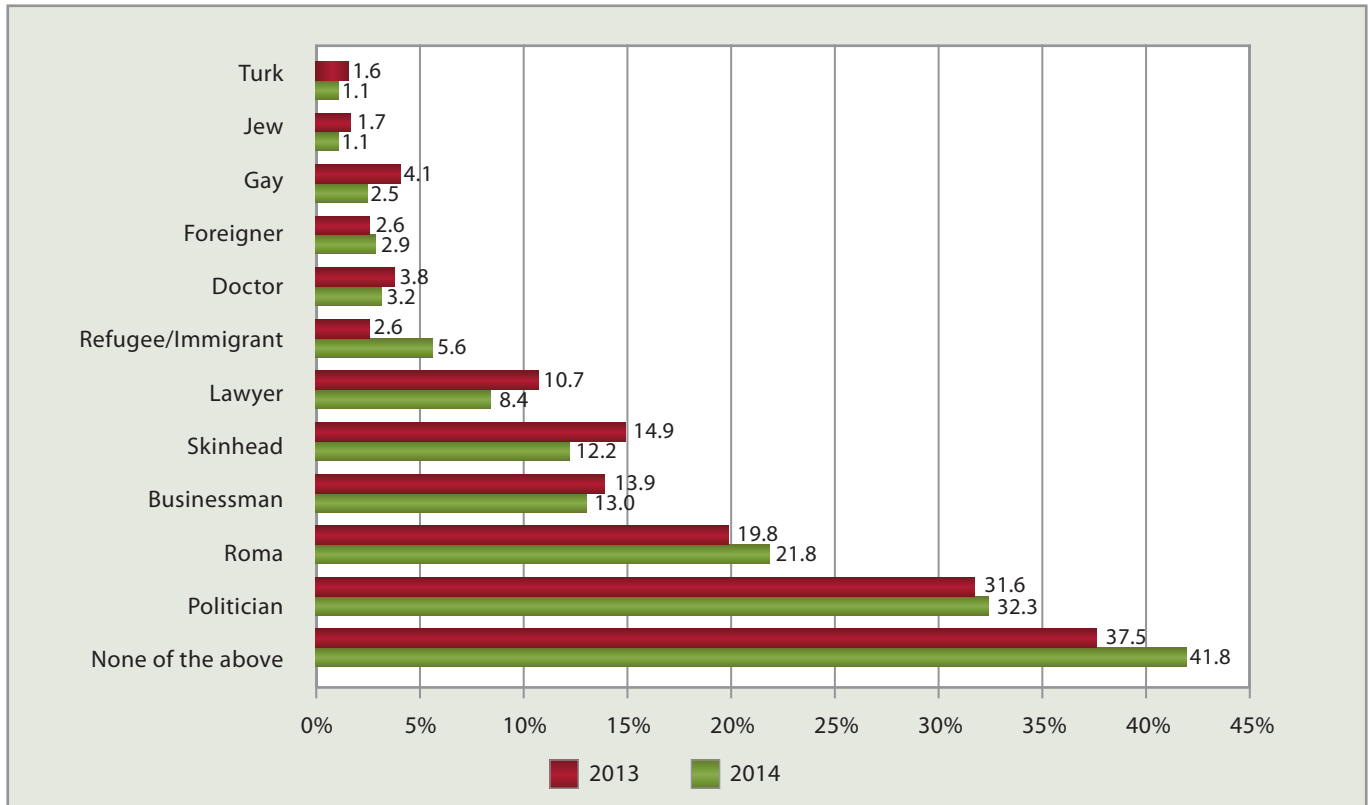
actual picture of hate speech victimization. There are minorities who are discriminated against and therefore can fall victims to hate speech, but they are not generally perceived as minorities or the negative stereotypes against them are so deeply rooted that hate speech against them is not recognized as such. This is the case with women, for example. Although a very small share of respondents in the quantitative survey reported that they had heard hate speech against women, the participants in the focus groups often

**Figure 7. Foreigners as targets of hate speech**



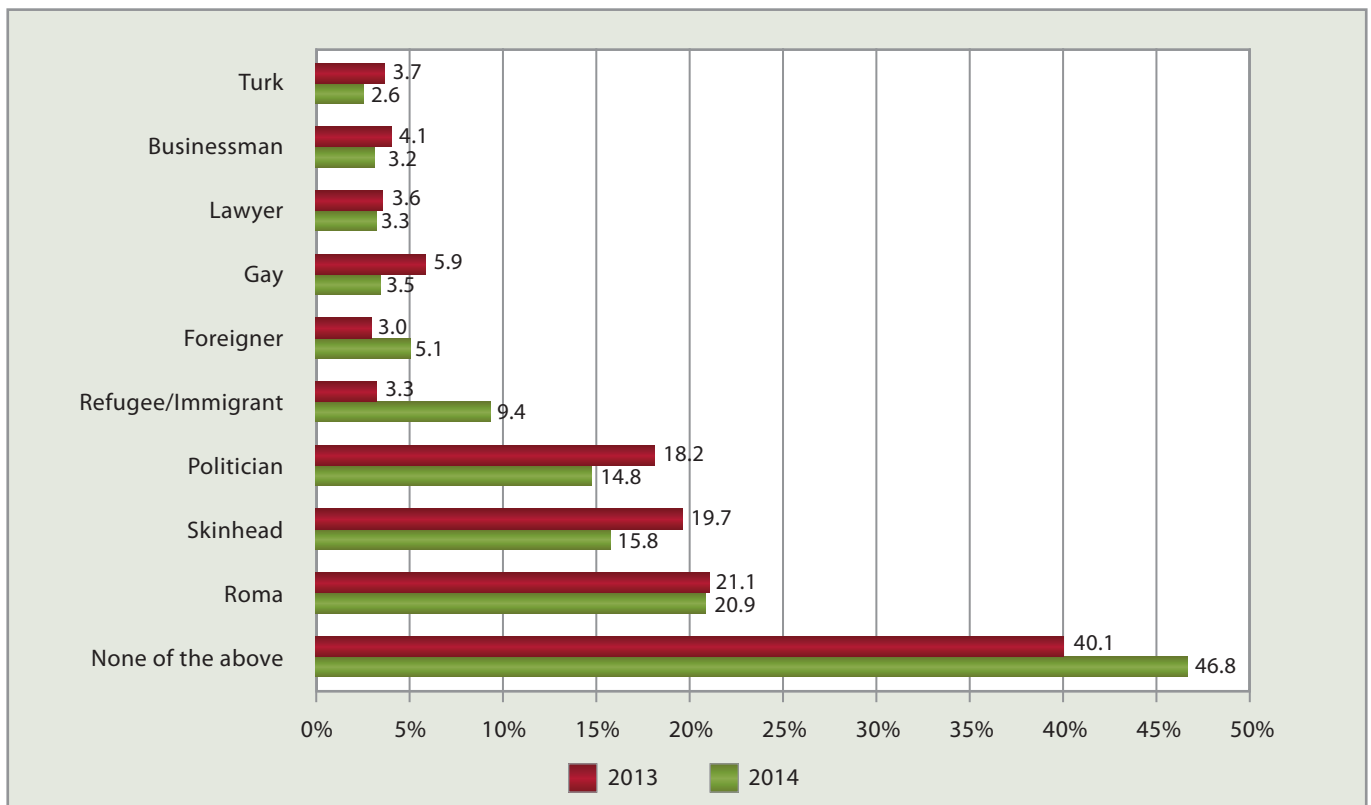
Question: *If you have answered "yes" to the first question, against whom you have most often heard public statements expressing disapproval, hatred or aggression? Percentage of those who have selected "foreigners" among all respondents who have indicated that they had come across hate speech.*

**Figure 8. Most widespread associations with “criminal”**



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

**Figure 9. Most widespread associations with “threat”**



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

cited examples precisely to the contrary (for instance, the comments that male drivers yell at female drivers on the road). Senior citizens and people with disabilities, especially those suffering from mental illness, were also cited in the focus groups as possible targets of hate speech.

## POPULARITY OF SELECTED NEGATIVE PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS ABOUT MINORITIES

In 2014, Roma remained the minority most often associated with negative perceptions. More than 20% of the respondents tend to associate the words “criminal” and “threat” with Roma. No such negative stereotypes exist against representatives of other ethnic minorities such as Turks or Jews. The share of respondents who associate Turks or Jews with criminals is approximately 1.5%. The findings of the 2013 and 2014 surveys on this matter are completely identical. As it was already stressed in the 2013 survey, different minorities fall victim to different negative stereotypes and this should certainly be taken into consideration when launching campaigns to limit the proliferation of hate speech.

Politicians are steadily associated with the word “criminal”, even more so than Roma. This raises serious leadership concerns when it comes to policies against the proliferation of hate speech and hate crimes, which cannot be initiated elsewhere than in the very political circles that are highly discredited in the perceptions of the general public.

## MEDIA OF HATE SPEECH

Television remains the most influential media with which people associate the propagation of hate speech. Almost 65% of the respondents who have come across statements expressing disapproval, hatred or aggression against minorities in the last 12 months,

have heard them on TV. This marks a decrease of approximately 10% compared to the 2013 findings. Since there are no objective studies of the actual incidence of hate speech in the media (including television), it is difficult to determine the reasons for this decline. One possible hypothesis is that in the summer of 2014 public attention shifted to other issues (the banking crisis, the efforts to form a government within the 43rd National Assembly), which naturally dominated mainstream media, as well.

In 2014, the relative weight of social meeting places has marked a slight increase – nearly 1/3 of the respondents who have encountered hate speech, reported that they had heard it in shops, cafeterias or restaurants.

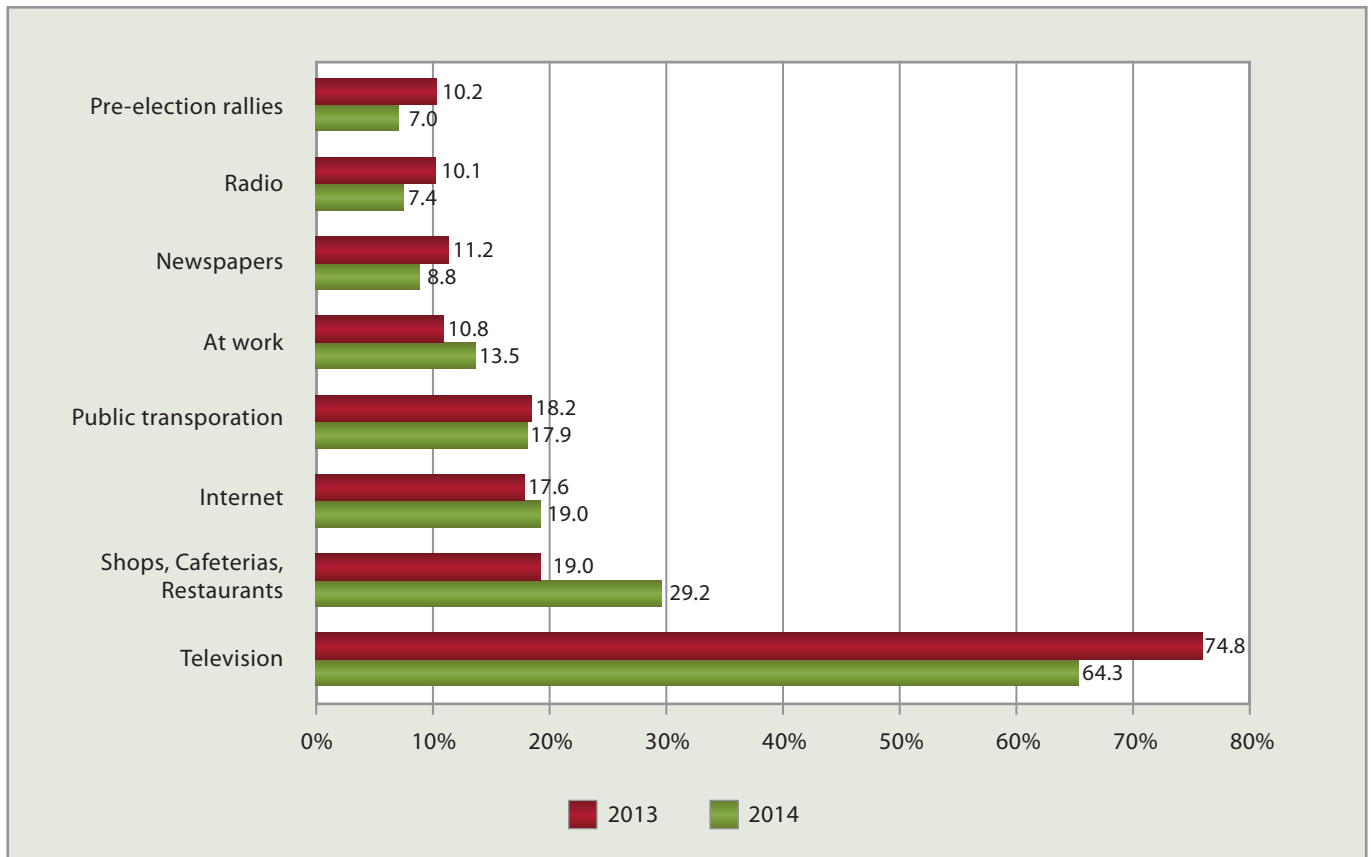
In 2014, internet is the third most important media of hate speech according to the respondents’ perception. Some 19% of those who have come across hate speech, have seen it on the internet. It is interesting to note that people who use the internet more actively (surf every day or several times a week) seem to encounter hate speech more often – a majority of 52% of them reported that in the last 12 months they have heard statements expressing disapproval, hatred or aggression against minorities, compared to an average of 47% for the country. Even among active internet users, however, television is still perceived as the most influential media for hate speech propagation. About 60% of the avid internet users reported that they had heard hate speech on TV. For this group, internet is the second most important media of hate speech – 33% of those who go online regularly, have come across hate speech on the internet, which is 14% higher than the nationwide average.

In 2014, public transportation is still perceived as the fourth most important media of hate speech, albeit almost as important as the internet. As in the 2013 survey, these findings are relevant mainly for the inhabitants of Sofia and the large cities.

The quantitative survey of public perceptions of hate speech did not include specific questions to assess the prevalence of hate speech in the education system; the survey itself was limited to the adult population. However, in the focus groups conducted in the fall of 2014, kindergartens and schools emerged as key places of hate speech proliferation.

The focus group participants (Roma and young people, respectively) cited several examples of hate speech in school and spoke of traumatic experiences

**Figure 10. Media of hate speech**



Question: *Where you would most often hear public statement expressing disapproval, hatred or aggression against minorities?*

as a result of such instances. In the focus group with Roma, hate speech was mentioned as one of the factors for school dropout among Roma children, while the segregation of kindergartens – as a factor for further marginalization of the Roma community. A Roma woman, for example, reported that initially her child was placed in a mixed class in the kindergarten (with other children of Bulgarian ethnic background) and used to speak Bulgarian to her; then the child was transferred to a segregated class for Roma children exclusively and began speaking only Romani at home.

The focus groups with educators revealed that teachers also have come across hate speech in school. Three important concerns emerged in the discussions with this focus group:

- Just like all other focus participants, educators do not recognize hate speech as a separate phenomenon and cannot distinguish it from other

types of violent, offensive or aggressive behavior among students;

- Teachers do not feel it is their responsibility to intervene if they come across hate speech among students. They tend to shift responsibility for such intervention to school psychologists who seem more qualified to them to handle such issues, or to parents;
- Teachers are by no means immune to racist stereotypes and discriminatory attitudes. A case in point is the way they divide themselves into those who “did well” (i.e. work in schools in relatively well-to-do neighborhoods without minorities) and those who were less fortunate.

At this stage, it is difficult to establish whether such attitudes prevail among teachers and teaching staff in general, but it must be stressed that a successful strategy to curb hate speech should certainly involve schools as institutions that promote equality and tolerance among students.

# USERS OF HATE SPEECH

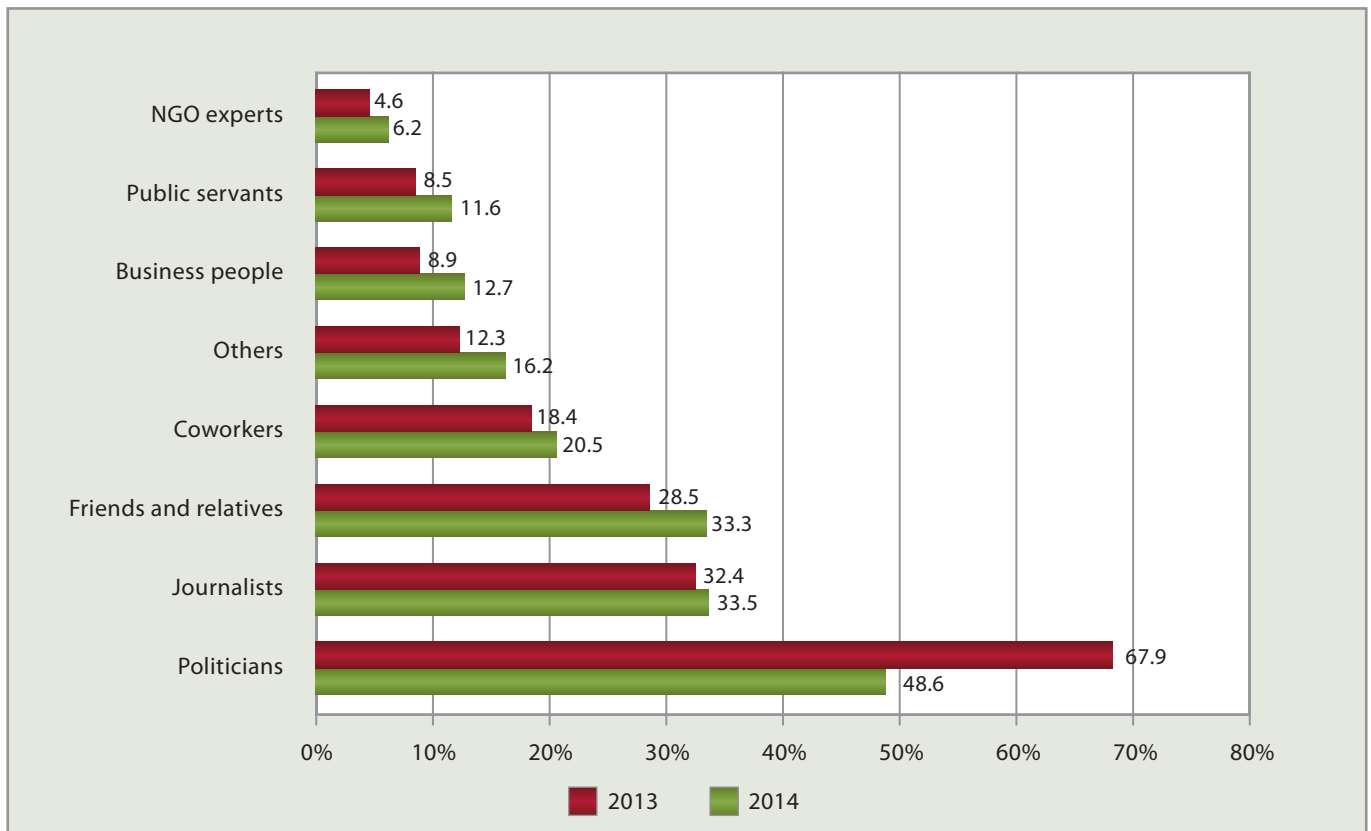
Politicians and journalists are the most frequent users of hate speech. In 2014, however, respondents reported that they had heard less hostile statements against minorities by politicians than in 2013. This could be explained, on one hand, with the temporary relief of political tension after street protests died out and following the resignation of the Oresharski government, on the other hand, with the fact that public attention at the time of the survey was focused on problems with the banking system and energy supply.

The weight, which the residents of Sofia assign to politicians as users of hate speech, is higher than the nationwide average (60% of the respondents living in the capital who have encountered hate speech, have heard it from politicians compared to an average of 49% for the country). The perception of unemployed respondents is the same (59% against 49%). People with tertiary

**A teacher, 34 years old, from Sofia:**  
*“This is politics. I think that politicians have mastered very well this method of manipulating society, dividing... and conquering. If we don’t have enemies, if we don’t see gypsies as dirty, nasty and horrible people who spoil our wonderful society, we’ll turn to politicians and speak up about the things that are happening in the corridors of power. So I think that this is a trick, which has existed since the beginning of time, and I do not agree with it. There are much more serious problems in our social organization as a whole.”*

education and respondents who live in households with monthly income above 532 BGN (i.e. are relatively well-to-do) also tend to attach greater importance to politicians as users of hate speech than the average citizen. Among young people (18-29 years of age), however, the importance of politicians as users of hate speech is lower than the nationwide average (37.4% of young respon-

Figure 11. Users of hate speech



Question: From whom you have most often heard statements expressing disapproval, hatred or aggression against minorities?

**A teacher, 53 years old, from Sofia:**

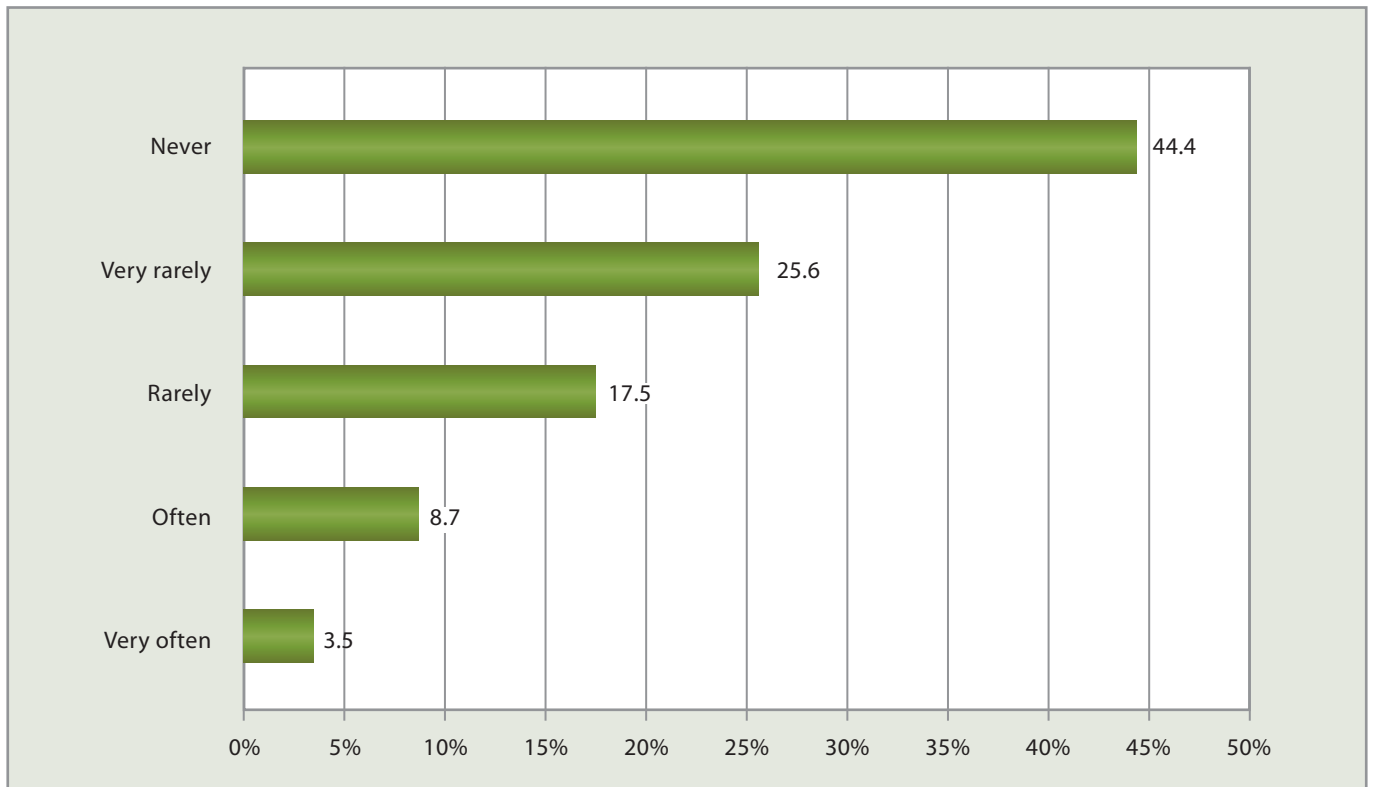
*“I was born and I have spent my childhood in a small town where my grandparents lived. There were many different minorities but such hate speech never existed. For me, this hatred has been instilled artificially and I don’t believe everything people say or write. I would even say that sometimes journalists are just manipulating us for their own benefit, for their own personal gains.”*

## USE OF HATE SPEECH IN THE PRIVATE SPHERE

The results of the 2014 survey with regard to the respondents’ self-assessment of whether they themselves use hate speech do not differ significantly from the 2013 findings. Most respondents (44%) reported that they themselves never made public statements expressing disapproval, hatred or aggression against minorities. Approximately 12% of the respondents admitted that they used hate speech often or very often. The share of those who claim that they never use hate speech is higher among older citizens above the age of 60 years (62%). Women are less likely to use hate speech than men. Roughly 50% of the women claim that they never use hate speech, while among men this share is 40%. The percentage of Turks and Roma who reported that they never used hate speech, is also higher than the nationwide average: 60% for Turks and 55% for Roma compared to an average of 44% for the country.

dents who have come across hate speech, have heard it from politicians compared to an average of 49% for the country). In the perception of young people, hate speech is most often used in the immediate social circle (friends and relatives): 45% of young respondents who have encountered hate speech, have heard it from friends and relatives compared to an average of 34% for the country. This peculiarity has already been established in the 2013 survey.

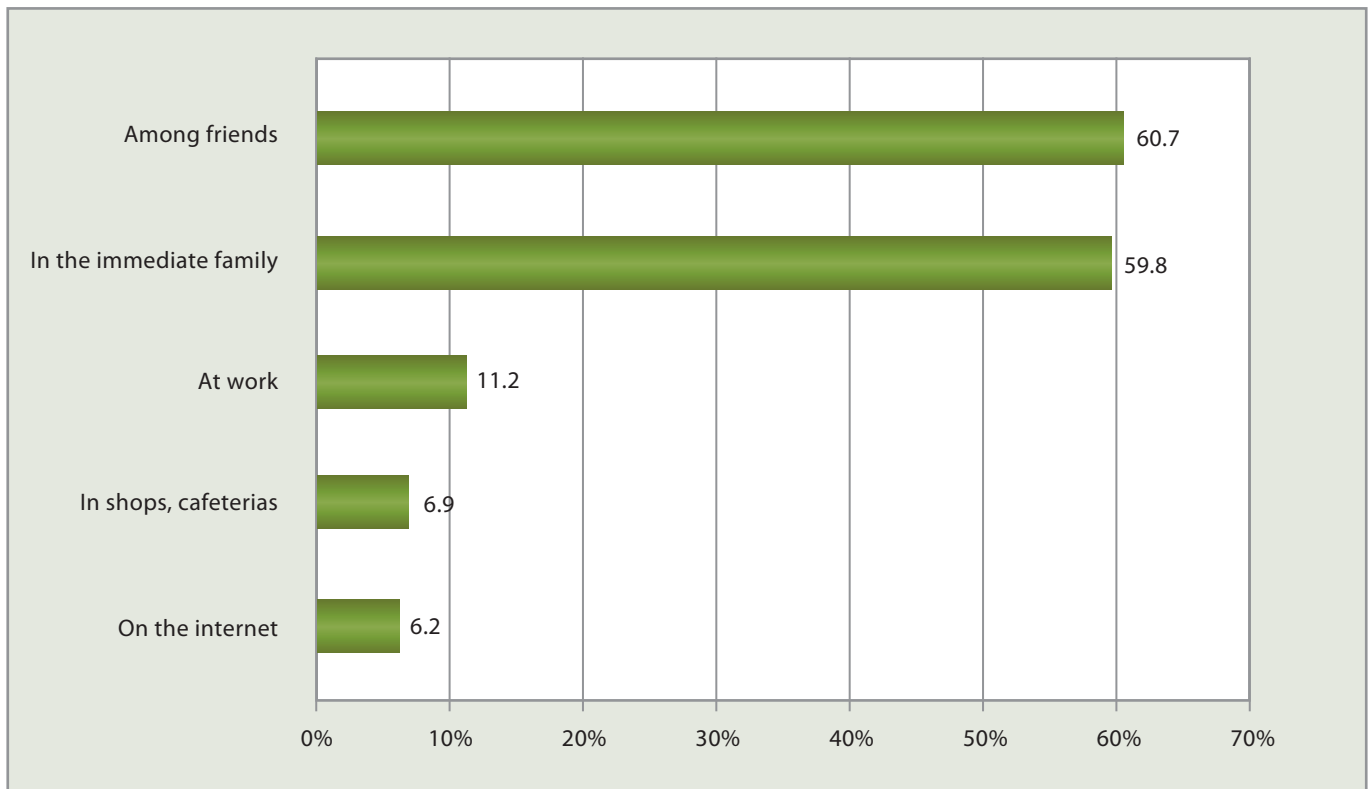
**Figure 12. Self-assessment – Frequency of hate speech use**



Question: *Have you personally happened to say things that express disapproval, hatred or aggression against minorities?*



**Figure 13. Self-assessment – Context of hate speech use**



Question: *In what context you would most often use hate speech?*

In the majority of cases hate speech is used in the immediate social environment. Approximately 60% of those who use hate speech, reported that they did so among friends or close family. It can be assumed that the wide propagation of hate speech in the private sphere is one of the major policy challenges to limiting this phenomenon.

About 6% of the respondents who use hate speech, reported that they did so on the internet.

## USE OF HATE SPEECH PROMOTING VIOLENCE

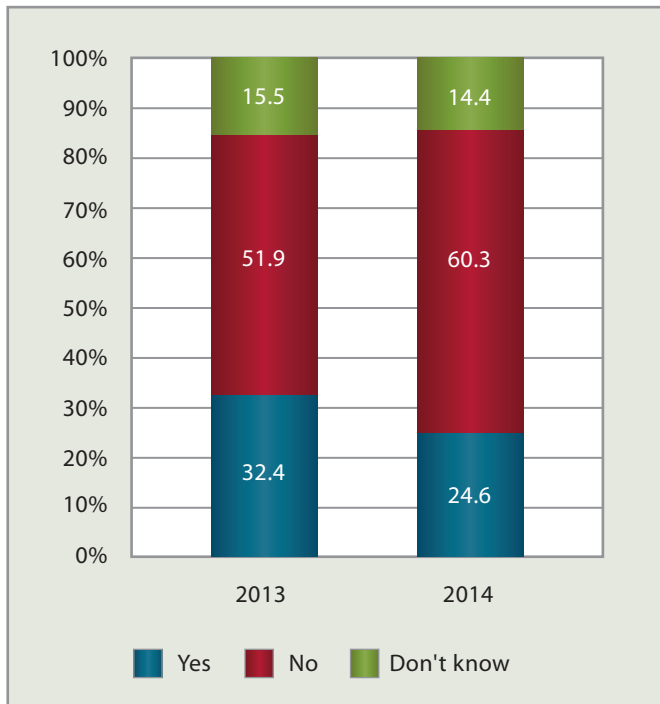
In 2014, there was a slight decrease in the share of respondents who have heard public statements which in their opinion could incite violence against representatives of different minorities. This share declined from 32% in 2013 to 25% in 2014. The decrease is most likely due to the fact that the 2013 survey was conducted amidst

high social tension at the outbursts of protests against the Oresharski government, which were accompanied with aggressive behavior on behalf of individual nationalist formations. The 2013 also coincided with an increase in the flow of refugees to the country.

However, even if we assume that the 25% registered in 2014 reflect more accurately the actual public sentiment, the occurrence of the most extreme forms of hate speech – those that could motivate violence – is still alarmingly high. Data suggest that in the last year every fourth citizen has heard public statements inciting violence against minorities.

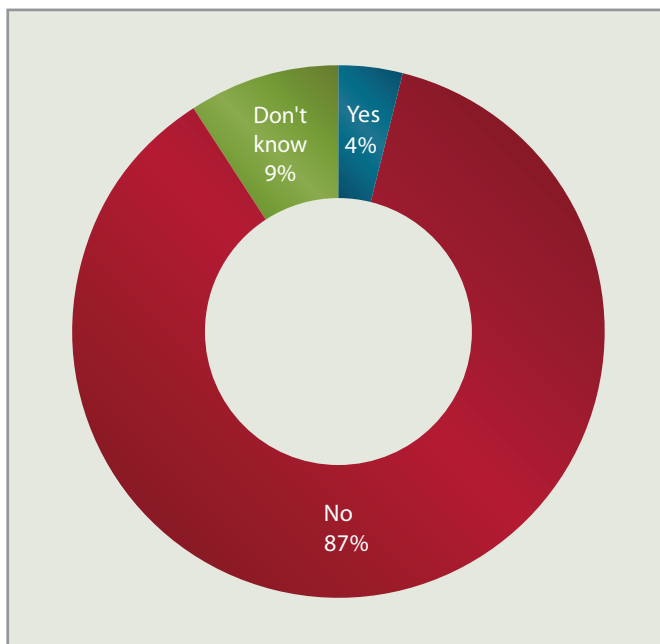
The reported incidence of the most extreme forms of hate speech is higher in the Southwestern Planning Region (comprising the districts of Sofia, Kyustendil, Blagoevgrad, Pernik) and in the Southeastern Planning Region (comprising the districts of Stara Zagora, Sliven, Yambol and Bourgas). About 33% and 30% of respondents from these areas, respectively, have heard public statements, which in their opinion could incite violence against minorities, compared to an average of 25% for the country. The residents of the Northwestern Planning Region report having heard such statements

**Figure 14. Use of hate speech promoting violence**



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

**Figure 15. Use of hate speech creating a sense of threat**



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

least often (approximately 18% against a nationwide average of 25%).

Young people (18-29 years), adults at the age of 30-44 years, university graduates, people with income above 532 BGN and Roma also tend to report more frequently than the average citizen that they had heard hate speech inciting violence. Conversely, Turks reported having heard such language much less often (18% against a nationwide average of 25%).

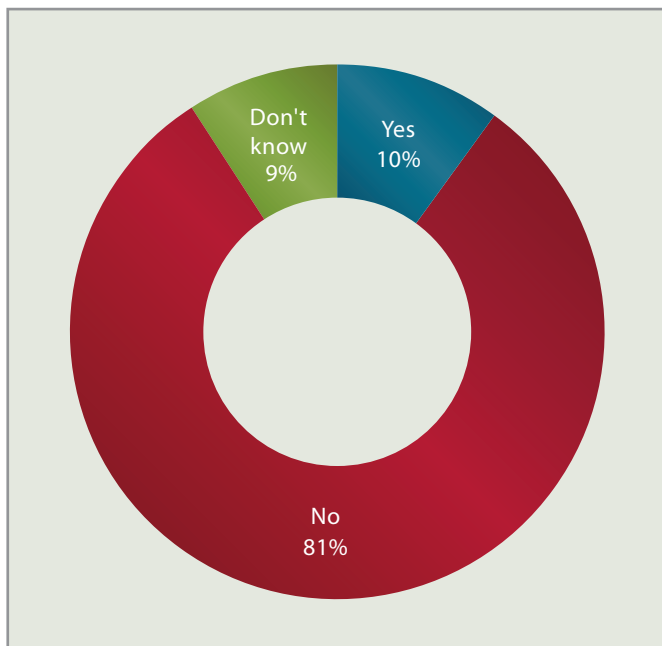
In 2014, the reported occurrence of hate speech, which left respondents with the impression that they themselves could fall victim to violence, remained unchanged. In the last 12 months approximately 4% of the respondents have heard statements by politicians or journalists, which made them feel personally threatened. This share is higher among the people who identify themselves as Turks of Roma (7% and 10%, respectively). Data replicate entirely the 2013 findings.

## USE OF HATE SPEECH PERCEIVED AS INSULTING

The incidence of public statements perceived as insulting remained the same as in 2013. Approximately 10% of the respondents reported that in the last 12 months they had heard statements by politicians or journalists, which made them feel personally and grossly insulted. This share is considerably higher among the residents of Sofia (17%) and among the respondents who identify themselves as Roma (again 17%).

About 1/4 of those who felt insulted by specific statements of politicians or journalists, refrained from specifying which was the statement that offended them. The rest mention spontaneously a number of statements that can be classified into two large groups: statements targeted to Roma and statements targeted to senior citizens. In 2013, these two groups also emerged as most often affected by public statements perceived as insulting. With regard to senior citizens, in particular, respondents still cite as insulting phrases such as “defective material”, “pensioners are privileged” and “Bulgaria works for the pensioners”, although it has been five years since these statements were made by a politician.

**Figure 16. Use of hate speech perceived as insulting**



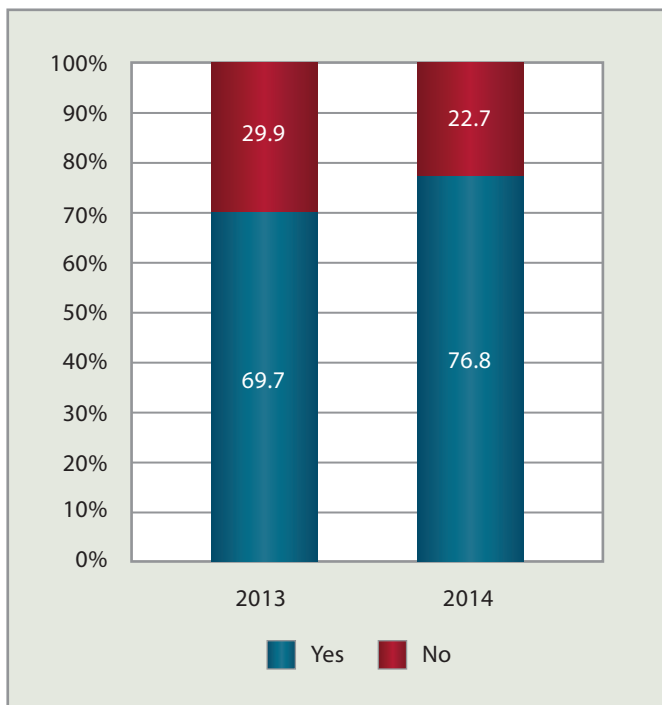
Question: *In the last 12 months, have you happened to hear specific statements by politicians or journalists, which you found grossly insulting?*

## ATTITUDES TOWARDS HATE SPEECH CRIMINALIZATION AND THE INTRODUCTION OF HATE CRIME PROVISIONS IN CRIMINAL LAW

The survey questionnaire included four questions that sought to establish to what extent citizens are aware that under the Bulgarian Penal Code it is a crime to propagate fascist or other non-democratic ideology, to propagate and incite hostility or hatred based on race and ethnicity, or to instigate racial discrimination and commit crimes motivated by the victims’ ethnicity, race, religion or political convictions.

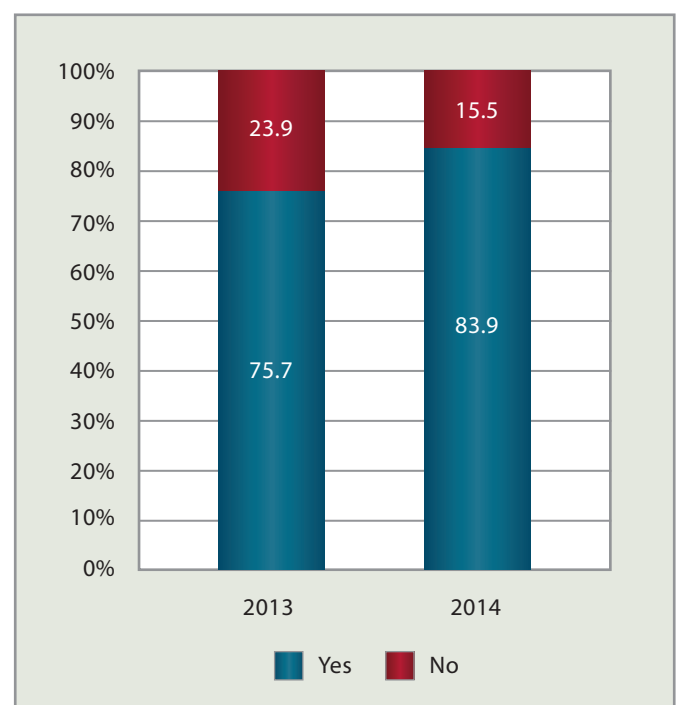
The findings of the 2014 survey indicate that there has been some improvement in the level of awareness compared to 2013. On each of the four crimes, the share of citizens who are aware that the acts mentioned are forbidden by law, has increased by 7% to 10%.

**Figure 17. Incitement to hatred is a crime**



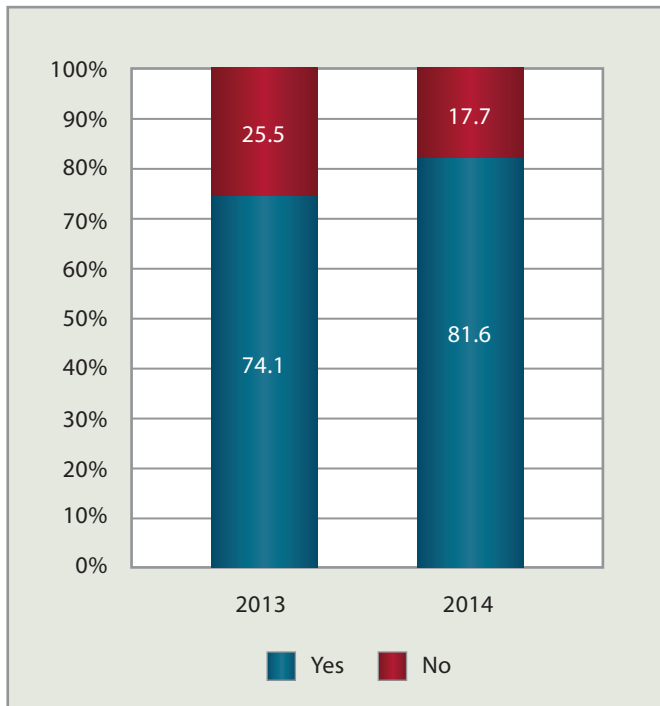
Question: *Do you know that it is a crime in Bulgaria to propagate and incite hostility or hatred based on race and ethnicity, or to instigate racial discrimination (Art.162 of the Penal Code)?*

**Figure 18. Hate crimes (Art.162, section 2 of the Penal Code)**



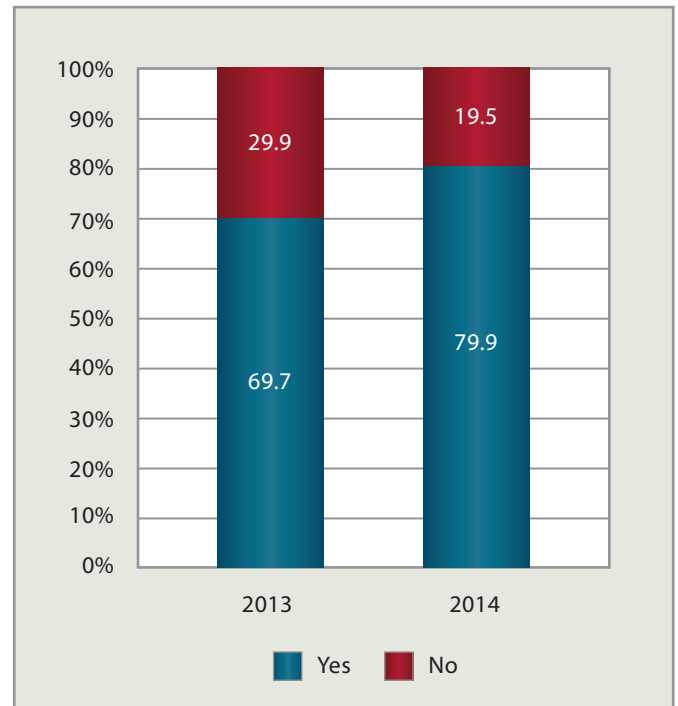
Question: *Do you know that it is a crime in Bulgaria to commit violence against someone or to destroy someone’s property on the grounds of their ethnicity, race, religion or political convictions (Art. 162, section 2 of the Penal Code)?*

**Figure 19. Hate crimes  
(Art.162, section 3 of the Penal Code)**



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

**Figure 20. Crimes against  
the Republic**



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

It can be assumed that this is the most visible effect of the efforts of Bulgarian human rights organizations and individual activists to counteract the propagation of hate speech and urge law enforcement institutions to fulfill their constitutional obligations in prosecuting hate crimes.

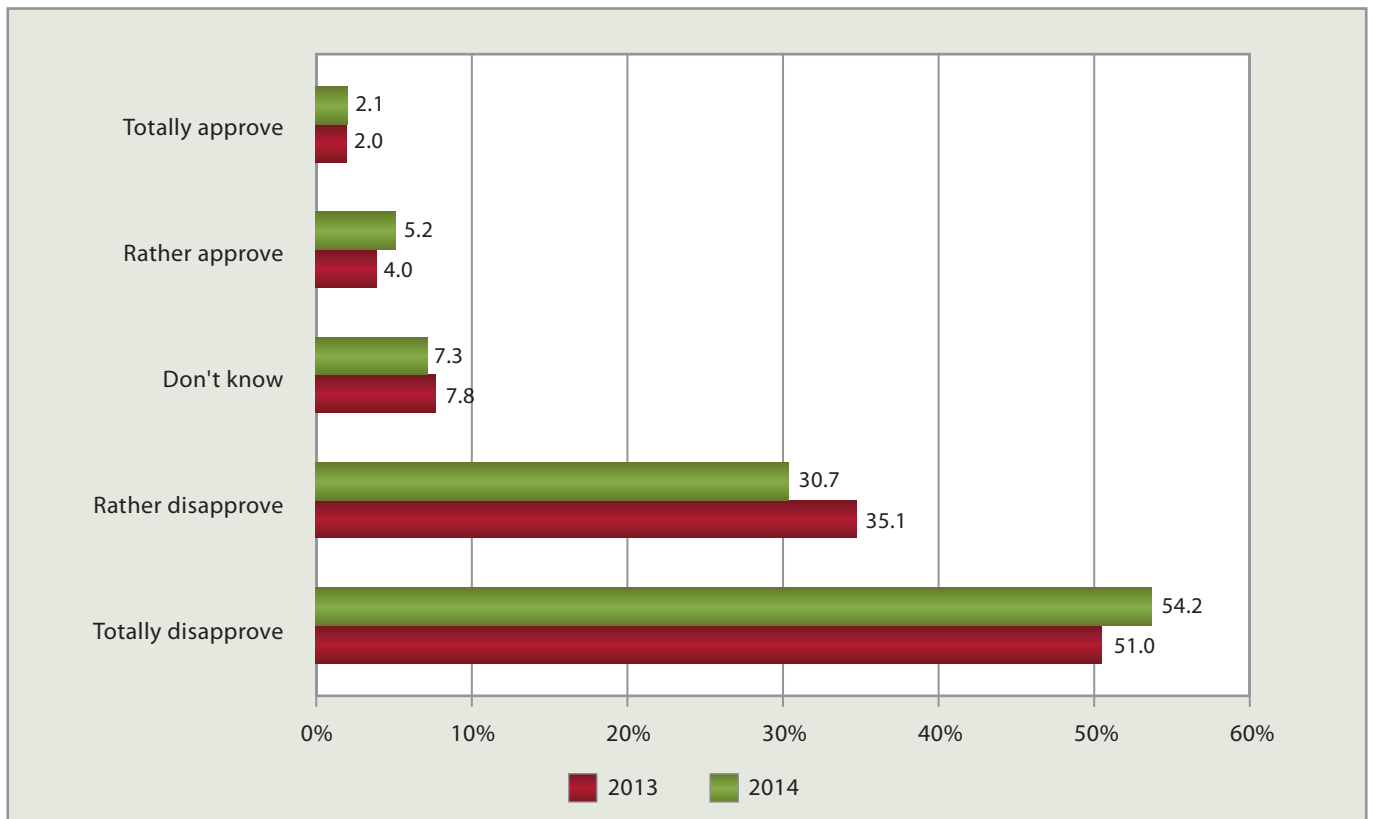
## PUBLIC ATTITUDE TOWARDS HATE SPEECH PREVENTION POLICIES

As in 2013, the majority of respondents (above 50%) totally disapprove the use of public statements expressing disapproval, hatred or aggression against minorities. The second largest group are those who express more moderate disapproval: 30% of the respondents rather disapprove the use hate speech in the public environment. The respondents who admitted that they rather approved or totally approved the use of hate speech amount to a total of approximately 7%.

The 2014 study included an additional set of questions designed to gauge whether the established strong social disapproval of the use of hate speech in the public environment is substantiated when people are asked to assess the use of concrete offensive or hostile qualifications targeted to specific minority groups. The survey tested seven statements, which are considered to constitute hate speech and have been actually used in a public context by different public figures. Most respondents (between 40% and 58%) claimed that they totally disapproved the use of each of these statements in the mainstream media. The second largest group (18% to 27%) are the respondents who express more moderate disapproval (they rather disapprove).

The total share of respondents who totally disapprove or rather disapprove the use of these specific statements in the mainstream media is slightly lower but entirely comparable with the share of those who disapprove the use of hate speech in the public environment in general. It should be noted that the level of disapproval of the different statements varies depending on the minority that each statement affects. Approximately 80% of the respondents totally disapprove or rather disapprove the

**Figure 21. (Dis)approval of hate speech (general)**



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

use in the mainstream media of statements such as “The Minister is Jewish scum”, “Red trash” (referring to the supporters of the Bulgarian Socialist Party) and “Those who defend refugees are hirelings”. Slightly lower (76%) is the level of disapproval of the statement against gay people, while the statement against Roma collects the lowest disapproval rate (65%).

Although a minority, the group of those who tend to approve hate speech in these specific cases is by no means insignificant and stands out in particular with regard to three of the tested statements.

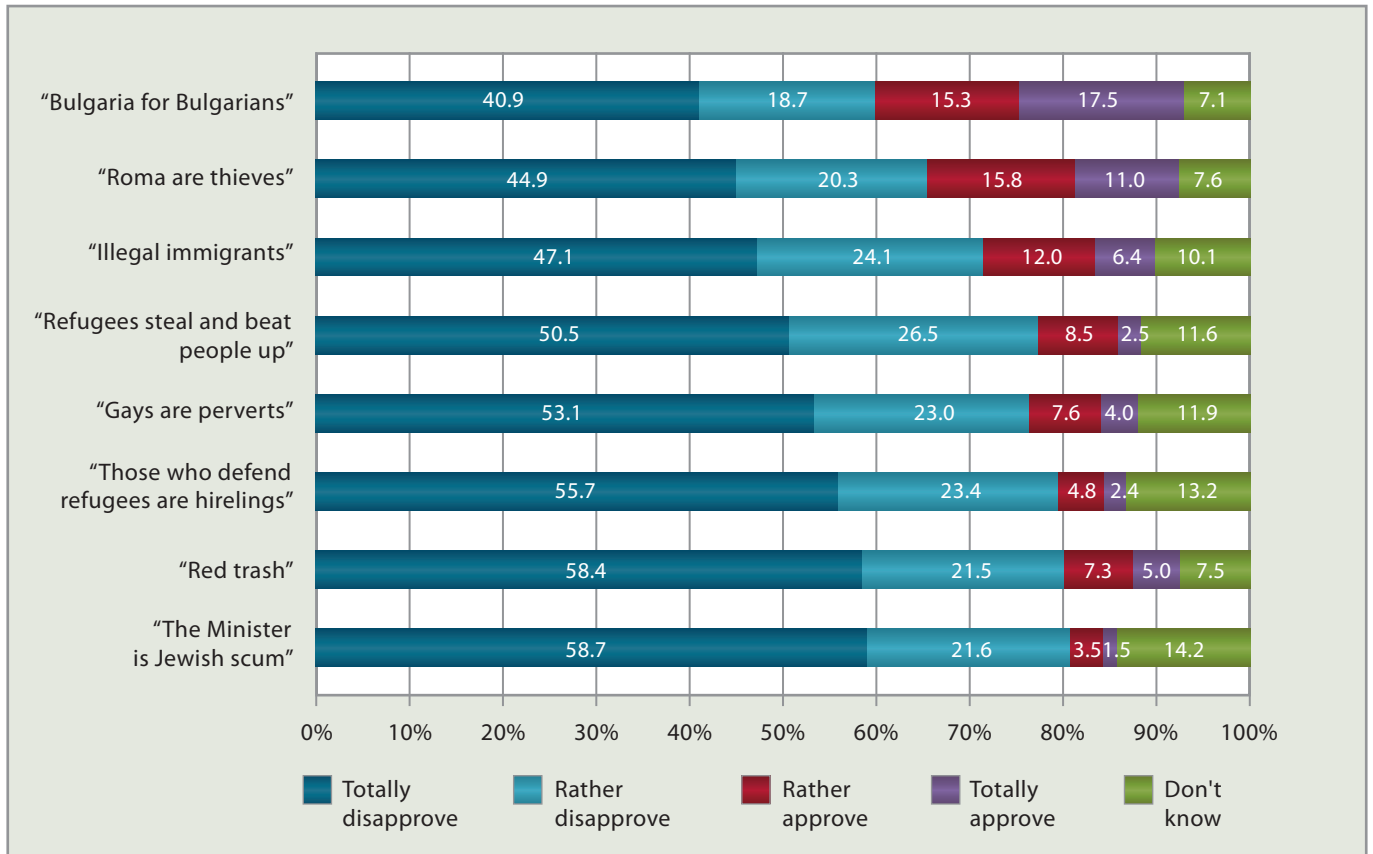
Nearly 33% of the respondents totally approve or rather approve the use of the phrase “Bulgaria for Bulgarians” in the mainstream media. This suggests that aggressive nationalism, which according to the Council of Europe definition is a form of intolerance and manifestation of hate speech, is not recognized as such by one third of the Bulgarian citizens.

Approximately 27% of the respondents totally approve or rather approve the use of the phrase “Roma are thieves” in the mainstream media, which is yet another evidence of the profound and deeply rooted negative stereotypes against Roma.

The approval rate of the use of the phrase “Illegal immigrants” in the mainstream media is around 18%. The statement “Refugees steal and beat people up” collects an approval rate of 11%, while the phrase “Gays are perverts” gathers the approval of 12% of the respondents. The approval rate is less than 10% only for two of the tested statements: “The Minister is Jewish scum” (5%) and “Those who defend refugees are hirelings” (7%).

The majority of respondents (58%) believe that the authorities should protect minorities from public statements expressing disapproval, hatred or aggression against them. Since the 2014 survey confirms the 2013 findings, it can be assumed that there are sustainable expectations for state protection against hate speech. In 2014, public support for such state protection was higher than the average among residents of Sofia (69% against a nationwide average of 58%), people living in villages (64%) and people with the lowest level of education. Nearly 70% of the respondents with primary and lower education and 65% of the people with basic education believe that the state should protect minorities against hate speech. The expectations for state protection are traditionally higher than the average among Roma and

**Figure 22. (Dis)approval of hate speech (specific)**



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

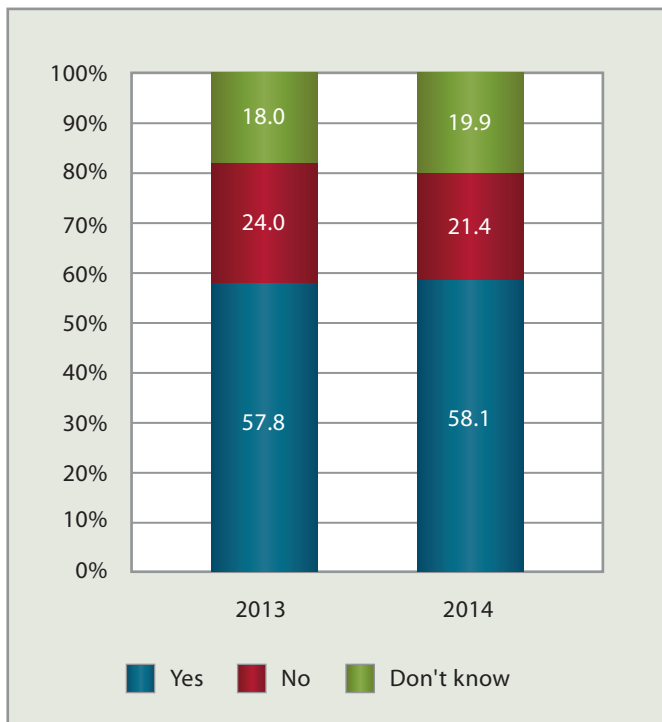
Turks, and since these two social groups are more represented among the rural population and the people with lower level education, one can assume that the higher expectations for state protection among the respondents who live in villages and those who have lower education result from the greater share of Roma and Turks among this population.

It is interesting to note the political affiliations of the people who believe that the state should ensure protection against hate speech. Almost 82% of those who vote for the MRF share this opinion, which is 24% higher than the average for the country (58%). Although GERB is branded as a "rightwing party", i.e. one would expect that its voters would want less state, while BSP promotes itself as "leftwing party", i.e. its voters should traditionally want more state, the ratio between GERB and BSP supporters on this issue suggest exactly the opposite. The expectations for state protection against hate speech among GERB supporters are higher than the average for the country (63% against a nationwide average of 58%), while among BSP supporters they are slightly lower (55%).

At the opposite end of the spectrum are respondents who live in small towns, young people (18-29 years) and those aged 30-44 years who are less likely to agree that the state should adopt special measures to protect minorities against hate speech.

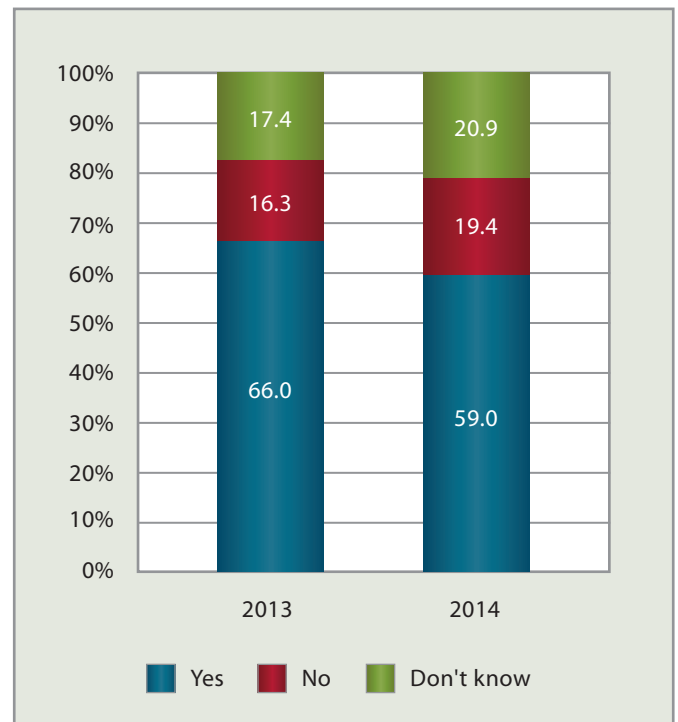
Public support for criminal prosecution of hate speech and hate crimes is also relatively high. Approximately 60% of the respondents believe that the prosecution should act against politicians and journalists who make public statements expressing disapproval, hatred or aggression against minorities, while 67% believe that acts of aggressive nationalism should be prosecuted. The results on both questions indicate a decline of approximately 7% in the support for criminal prosecution of hate speech and hate crimes, compared to the findings of the 2013 survey. Currently it is difficult to assess whether this suggests a downward trend in public support for penal policies against hate speech and aggressive nationalism, or the findings rather reflect the low public trust in the prosecution service (which as of the summer of 2014 rallied only 11% confidence) or the fact that so far there have been virtu-

**Figure 23. Public support for hate speech prevention policies**



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

**Figure 24. Public support for criminal policy against hate speech**

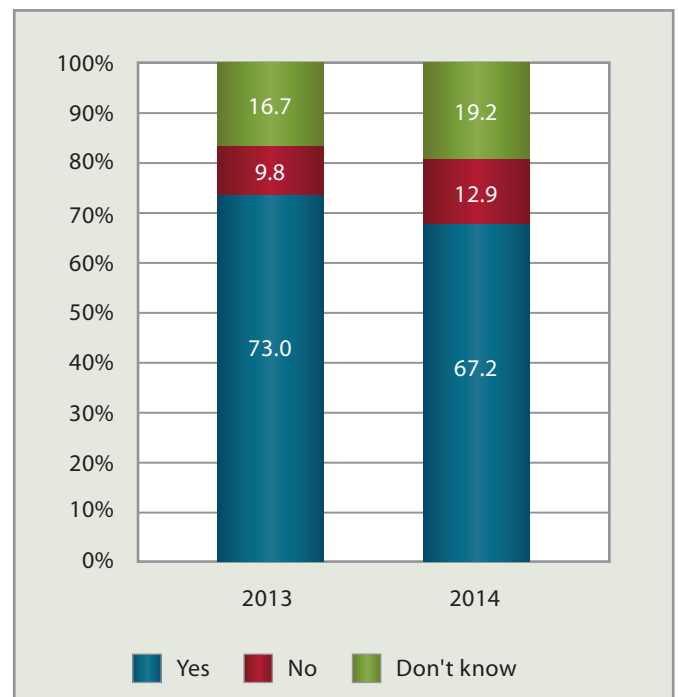


Question: *Do you believe that authorities should prosecute politicians and journalists who openly express disapproval, hatred or aggression against minorities?*

ally no cases of successful criminal prosecution against hate speech and hate crimes. The complaints lodged with the prosecution service by NGOs and individual human rights activists are generally met with refusal to initiate criminal proceedings<sup>16</sup> or when such proceedings are initiated, the aspects involving ethnic, racial or religious hatred are not investigated at all. Usually, offenses against the person or the property of foreigners or other minorities are treated by law enforcement institutions simply as acts of hooliganism. The logical consequence of this is that even when perpetrators are convicted, punishment cannot fulfill its preventive function with respect to other citizens because the elements of ethnic, racial or religious hatred have not been examined or proven in court. Thus, the very act of racial hatred remains unpunished.

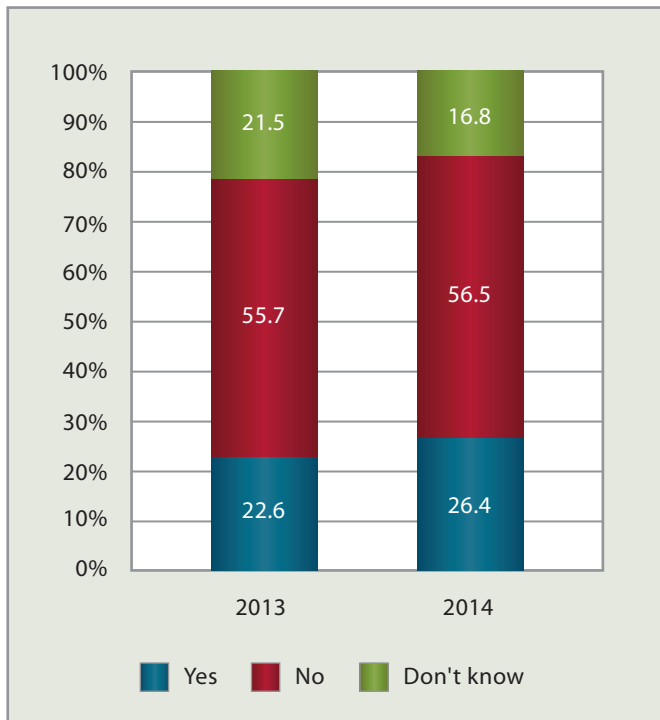
<sup>16</sup> In its annual report "Human Rights in Bulgaria in 2013" BHC specifically notes the refusal of the prosecution service to initiate criminal proceedings for public instigation of religious hatred, discrimination and violence (see p. 23 ff.). The report also cites a number of specific cases in which the prosecution service has refused to initiate pre-trial proceedings for hate crimes.

**Figure 25. Public support for criminal prosecution of aggressive nationalism**



Question: *Do you believe that authorities should prosecute politicians and journalists who propagate aggressive nationalism?*

**Figure 26. Likelihood of reporting hate speech**

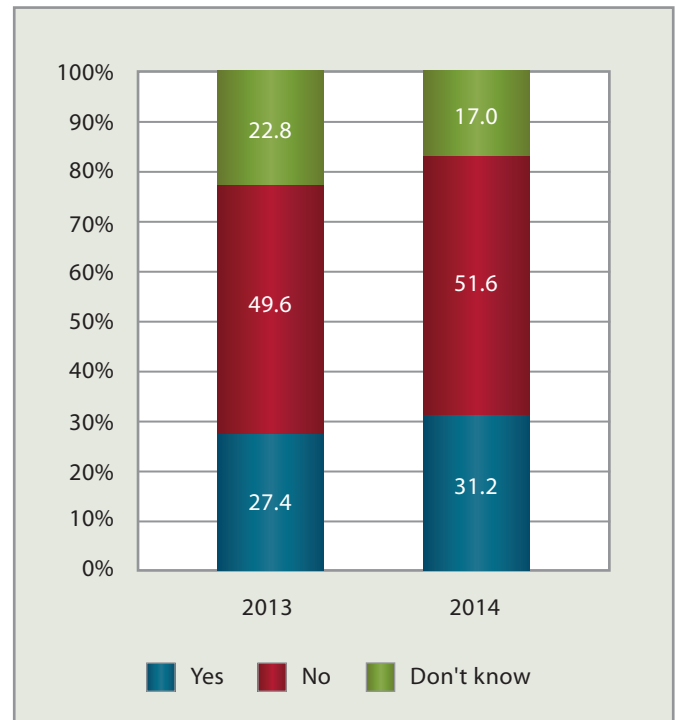


Question: *Would you notify the police, if you hear public statements, expressing disapproval, hatred or aggression against minorities?*

As in 2013, the findings of the 2014 survey indicated that public support for criminal prosecution of hate speech and aggressive nationalism is high but quite abstract. In principle, people feel that hate speech and aggressive nationalism should be prosecuted but are reluctant to take personal initiative or action in order to help law enforcement institutions. Asked whether they would notify the police if they witnessed some of these crimes, the majority of respondents answer negatively. As mentioned earlier, it is quite possible that the low share of people who would notify the authorities is related, at least to some extent, to the low public trust in institutions, including the police and the prosecution service.

Since people do not perceive hate speech as a distinct phenomenon with dangerous implications for society, there are no expectations for clear countermeasures on behalf of the authorities. Focus group participants unani-

**Figure 27. Likelihood of reporting aggressive nationalism**



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

mously agreed that there was no point to report individual cases of hate speech to the police or to other relevant institutions. With regard to the police, in particular, all focus group participants stated that there was “no use” to notify the authorities or lodge a complaint because they were not going “to initiate proceedings”, since “they do not initiate proceedings when the perpetrator is known, let alone when they have to find them”. What raises particular concerns is the fact that focus group participants reported that “quite often police officers themselves use such language”. One can hardly expect that the police and the prosecution service would effectively perform their function of prosecuting hate speech and hate crimes, if their own staff uses hate speech. In this regard, an effective strategy to combat hate speech should include specific measures to curb racism and discrimination among police and prosecution service staff.



## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS WITH REGARD TO HATE SPEECH PREVENTION POLICIES

---

- ▶ Hate speech is a firmly established phenomenon in Bulgarian public life. The two public opinion surveys conducted in 2013 and 2014 converge on the same main conclusions with regard to the proliferation of hate speech, the social groups which most often become targets of hate speech, the media of hate speech and the level of public disapproval of the use of hate speech. This suggests that there is continued need for development and adoption of national policies to curb hate speech and for greater involvement of national institutions with the implementation of such policies.
- ▶ Hate speech, however, is not recognized as a distinct type of public discourse that has specific characteristics and is undesirable and unacceptable. In the dominant public perceptions hate speech remains undifferentiated from the general political discourse. For this reason, the most important and most immediate goal of public policies to limit the proliferation of hate speech should be to increase public awareness of its very definition and to make hate speech more identifiable as an undesirable/unacceptable phenomenon.
- ▶ Over the last year almost half of Bulgarian citizens have heard statements expressing disapproval, hatred or aggression against minorities, while one in four respondents has heard statements, which in their opinion could lead to acts of violence. Both surveys (conducted in 2013 and 2014) suggest that there are three established groups that report having heard hate speech more often than the rest. These are young people (up to 29 years of age), residents of Sofia and people with tertiary education. These people do not actually encounter hate speech more often than others, but definitely tend to recognize it better as a distinct phenomenon. They can potentially provide the basis for organizing public campaigns against the proliferation of hate speech.
- ▶ The number of social groups that are often perceived as targets of hate speech and could potentially fall victim to hate crimes, is increasing. In 2013, there were three distinct social groups that were identified as the most common targets of hate speech: usually Roma but also Turks and gay people. In 2014, Roma remained the main group targeted by hate speech but respondents identified a total of five, rather than three, affected minorities: Roma, Turks, gay people, foreigners and Muslims.
- ▶ The incidence of hate speech against foreigners has escalated. Within one year, the share of those who have encountered hate speech against foreigners has increased from 5% to 20%. There is no doubt that this is due to the wave of refugees and immigrants into the country as a result of the continuing military conflict in Syria, with the problem affecting most severely the areas around Sofia and in the South Central Planning Region. This region, as well as the capital city of Sofia, should be given a priority in the development and implementation of active public campaigns to curb hate speech against asylum seekers.
- ▶ In 2014 there is clearly higher public awareness that hate speech and hate crimes are criminal offenses (between 7% and 10% increase for each individual crime compared to 2013), i.e. more people know that hate speech and hate crimes constitute socially dangerous and illegal behavior. Most probably this is the result of increased reaction against such phenomena demonstrated by individual human rights NGOs and active citizens. What raises concerns, however, is the fact that more than one fifth of the citizens still do not know that propagating or instigating ethnic and religious hatred and discrimination is a crime.
- ▶ In 2014 there was a slight decrease (by 8%) in the share of respondents who in the last year have heard

hate speech from politicians or who have come across public statements, which in their opinion could instigate violence against minorities. This is probably an indication that the serious public tensions of the summer of 2013 are subsiding but it is yet to suggest a positive tendency.

- ▶ A considerable share of respondents do not approve the use of hate speech in the public environment and support criminal prosecution of hate speech and aggressive nationalism. Almost 60% of the people believe that the police and the prosecution service should act against such phenomena but this support remains to some extent abstract. The majority of the

people would not notify the police, if they witnessed such crimes. This suggests that there is a pressing need for the prosecution service and the police to adopt special measures that would strengthen public trust in these institutions and would encourage both victims and witnesses of hate crimes to lodge complaints.

- ▶ The quantitative survey revealed that the education system (schools) is also a common place for hate speech proliferation. A successful strategy to curb hate speech should include active measures targeted to teachers, teaching staff and school psychologists.

## APPENDIX

### QUESTIONNAIRE: A SET OF TOPIC – SPECIFIC QUESTIONS INCLUDED IN AN OMNIBUS PUBLIC OPINION SURVEY OPEN SOCIETY INSTITUTE – SOFIA, JUNE 2014

#### 7. TOLERANCE

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

(Mark all YES answers that apply)

	Marries you or one of your children	Lives in your neighborhood	Lives in your town or village
1. Armenian	1	2	3
2. Arab	1	2	3
3. Bulgarian	1	2	3
4. Jewish	1	2	3
5. Chinese	1	2	3
6. Roma	1	2	3
7. Turkish	1	2	3

##### 7.2. Would you agree that a member of the following nationalities or ethnic groups living in Bulgaria works in your workplace as:

(Mark all YES answers that apply)

	Your peer	Your immediate superior	Member of the senior management
1. Armenian	1	2	3
2. Arab	1	2	3
3. Bulgarian	1	2	3
4. Jewish	1	2	3
5. Chinese	1	2	3
6. Roma	1	2	3
7. Turkish	1	2	3

##### 7.3. Would you agree that your child studies in a class where children from the following nationalities or ethnic groups are:

(Mark all YES answers that apply)

	Few	Half of the students	More than half of the students
1. Armenian	1	2	3
2. Arab	1	2	3
3. Bulgarian	1	2	3
4. Jewish	1	2	3
5. Chinese	1	2	3
6. Roma	1	2	3
7. Turkish	1	2	3

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

(Choose ONE answer)

1. Yes	1
2. No >>> <b>7.9.</b>	2
98. I don't know >>> <b>7.9.</b>	98

**7.5. If yes, how often?**

(Choose ONE answer)

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

**7.6. Against whom you have most often heard such statements?**

(Choose up to THREE answers)

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

**7.7. If YES, where you would most often hear or read such statements?**

(Choose up to THREE answers)

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

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

1. Businessmen	1
2. Public servants	2
3. Experts at non-governmental organizations	3
4. Journalists	4
5. Co-workers	5
6. Friends and relatives	6
7. Politicians	7
8. Other <i>(Please, specify)</i> ...	8

**7.9. How often you personally say things that express disapproval, hatred or aggression against minorities?***(Choose ONE answer)*

1. Very often	1
2. Often	2
3. Rarely	3
4. Very rarely	4
5. Never (DO NOT READ OUT) >>> 7.11.	5

**7.10. Where you would most often use such expressions?***(Choose up to THREE answers)*

1. In a close family circle	1
2. Among friends	2
3. On the internet	3
4. At the workplace	4
5. In the vehicles of public transportation	5
6. In shops, cafeterias, restaurants	6
7. During sports events (at the stadium or in the arena)	7
8. During pre-election rallies	8
9. During other public rallies and manifestations	9
10. Other <i>(Please, specify)</i> ...	10

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

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

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

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

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

*(Choose ONE answer)*

1. Yes	1
2. No >>> 7.15	2
98. I don't know >>> 7.15	98

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

.....

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

*(Choose ONE answer)*

1. Yes	1
2. No >>> 7.17	2
98. I don't know >>> 7.17	98

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

.....

**7.17. Which of the mentioned groups you would associate with the word "criminal"?**

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

*(Choose up to THREE answers)*

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

**7.18. Which of the mentioned groups you would associate with the word "threat"?**

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

*(Choose up to THREE answers)*

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

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

*(Choose ONE answer for each LINE)*

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

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

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

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

	Yes	No	I don't know
1. Authorities should protect minorities (Roma, gay people, foreigners, etc.) against public statements, expressing disapproval, hatred or aggression against them?	1	2	98
2. Authorities should prosecute politicians and journalists who openly express disapproval, hatred or aggression against minorities?	1	2	98
3. Authorities should prosecute politicians and journalists who propagate aggressive nationalism?	1	2	98

**7.22. Would you notify the police, if you hear public statements, expressing disapproval, hatred or aggression against minorities?***(Choose ONE answer)*

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

**7.23. Would you notify the police, if you hear public statements propagating aggressive nationalism?***(Choose ONE answer)*

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

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

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

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

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

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

[www.osi.bg](http://www.osi.bg)