

SURVEY ON RELIGION AND RELIGIOUS HATE SPEECH IN THE REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA

The *Rating Agency* conducted a survey on religion and religious hate speech in the Republic of Macedonia for the needs of the Macedonian Institute for the Media on 14 and 15 October 2014. The survey was conducted through a telephone poll on 800 respondents with a representative coverage of all ethnic communities, urban and rural areas in Republic of Macedonia. Statistical error margin for this type of polls amounts from -3.5% to +3.5%.

According to socio-demographic data, 48% of the respondents were male and 52% were female. The largest portion of the respondents were aged 50 to 64 years (35.8%); followed by respondents aged 30 to 49 (33.5%); respondents aged over 65 were represented with 16.3%, and 14.5% of all respondents were of the 18-29 age group. Half of the respondents were holders of secondary education degree (49.5%); 34% of the respondents had completed college and university education, postgraduate or doctoral studies, and 16.5% of all respondents were holders of a primary school degree. As to the ethnic affiliation of the respondents, the Macedonians (69.5%) were the most widely represented group, followed by Albanians (24.8%), ethnic Turks (3.5%), ethnic Serbs (1%) and others (1.3%). The structure according to their place of residence shows that 22.8% of the respondents come from Skopje and 49% from the other towns, whereas 22.8% come from a village. A large proportion of the respondents (83.5%) declared their affiliation with a certain religion, whereas only 16.5% of all respondents stated they are not affiliated with any religion. From the respondents having declared their religious affiliation, 74.6% answered they belong to the Macedonian Orthodox Church, 23.6% belong to the Islamic religious community, 1.5% are affiliated with the Catholic Church in RM and an insignificant percentage (0.3%) are affiliated with the Evangelical Methodist Church. Nearly half of the respondents (45.8%) answered they are strongly attached to their religious community, whereas 39.5% answered they are moderately attached, and 12.6% stated they are not attached to their religious community. Outside of marriage, funeral and christening ceremonies, 54.3% of all respondents practice the religious customs only on religious holidays, 14.2% practice religious customs more than once a week, 11.2% practice once a week, 8.7% practice religious customs more than once a month, 7.3% several times a year, 2.3% of the respondents practice religious customs at least once a year and only 2% of the respondents within the survey never practice religious customs.

To the question, "Have you noted so far public statements associated with disagreement, hatred or aggression towards members of various religious groups in the country?" 57.5% of all respondents answered they had noticed such statements in the public and 42% answered they hadn't noted such statements.

The analysis of the several following questions covers only affirmative answers of respondents having noted public statements associated with disagreement, hatred or aggression towards members of the various religious groups in the country. Namely, 38.3% of these respondents stated that they note hate speech statements only occasionally, whereas 23% of them answered they frequently note such statements, 13.5% answered they regularly note hate speech in the public, whereas 25.2% said they rarely note public statements involving hate speech towards members of various religious groups in the country. Analysis of the answers to the question as to which religious group members are addressed by these statements shows that the most common victims of hate speech in the public are the members of the Islamic religious community (55.7%); 33.5% are targeting members of the Macedonian Orthodox

Church, and 2.7% of all respondents answered that such public statements are aimed at members of the Catholic Church of RM and of the Evangelical Methodist Church, respectively. Respondents having completed college or university education, postgraduate or doctoral studies were the highest in percentage to note hate speech (63%), whereas the percentage of respondents having completed only primary education to note hate speech in the public amounts in 47%. Members of the Macedonian Orthodox Church were higher in percentage points to note hate speech (59%) in comparison with members of the Islamic religious community where the percentage is 47%.

Hate speech towards members of various religious groups is mostly noted on television (76.1%), in personal contacts (61.5%), on various websites (53%), social networks such as Facebook, Twitter, and the like (51.7%), on wall graffiti (47.8%), in newspapers and magazines (47.4%), whereas 26.9% of the respondents noted hate speech in public places (schools, concerts, football matches, etc.) and 10% of respondents noted hate speech on the radio. Other spots where respondents noted hate speech are the means of public transport (3.8%), churches and mosques (3.8%), their working place (1.9%) and on banners (1.9%).

The respondents were asked, "Which specific words or phrases do you find insulting towards the members of the various religious groups?" According to the respondents, the wording "Death for Sqiuptars" is considered to be the most insulting one, followed by Kauris (*Infidels – translator note*), Bulgarians, Burqa Wearers, Wahhabi, Terrorists, Newly Religious, Sabbath Devotees, various curses, dogs, mujahedin, etc. Moreover, a small portion of the respondents find the term "Great Albania" insulting.

Large portion of the respondents having noted hate speech in the public (62.2%) think that in the last several years hate speech towards members of various religious groups has been increasing, 23.5% think that it is at the same level as before, and only 12.2% said it has been decreasing. Ethnic Albanians are more numerous in percentage points to believe that hate speech has increased (77%) unlike ethnic Macedonians (59%).

High 96.5% of all respondents answered that they do not approve the use of public statements involving the disagreement, hatred or aggression towards members of various religious groups. Namely, analysis has shown that only 3% of Macedonians approve the use of such statements in the public, whereas this percentage point is 7% with Albanians.

The respondents were asked, "Have you been ever insulted, discriminated, intimidated, exposed to violence due to your religious affiliation?" 16% of the respondents answered that had been insulted, 15.8% had been discriminated, 11.3% had been intimidated and only 5% of the respondents had been exposed to physical violence due to their religious affiliation. Parameters used to analyse the citizens' exposure to hate speech demonstrated that Albanians have been more in percentage points to be insulted (20%), discriminated (22%), intimidated (17%) and 9% of them have been exposed to physical violence unlike Macedonians where these percentage points are lower (insulted 13%, discriminated 13%, intimidated 10% and only 3% of the Macedonians have been exposed to violence due to their religious affiliation).

- In sum, the survey showed that the perception of various groups of citizens in relation to religion and religious hate speech issues is quite similar.
- Hate speech in the public is more noticed by citizens having completed college or university education, postgraduate or doctoral studies. This is due to their greater awareness and knowledge of the existence of hate speech.
- Citizens believe that hate speech towards members of various religious groups in the country is on the rise, and it is mostly noted on television and is aimed at members of the Islamic religious community. Namely, ethnic Albanians are more widely insulted, discriminated, intimidated and exposed to violence due to their affiliation with the Islamic religious community.