

SURVEY ON THE PRESENCE OF HATE SPEECH TOWARDS SEXUAL MINORITIES IN THE REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA

The *Rating* agency conducted a survey on the presence of hate speech towards sexual minorities in the Republic of Macedonia for the needs of the Macedonian Institute for the Media, specifically for the series of shows entitled "Hatefree" in the period 23 May - 4 June 2014. Due to difficulties identifying, locating and contacting members of the sexual minorities in the Republic of Macedonia, the survey was conducted online by means of the snowball sampling methodology. First of all, several non-interrelated starting points (entities) were contacted who were asked to fill in the survey questionnaire and distribute it to their acquaintances who belong to the sexual minorities in the country. Furthermore, every respondent shared the survey questionnaire with as many members of this community exclusively through a private channel (e-mail, social network inbox, etc.) to prevent the study from being sabotaged or misused. The total number of respondents participating in the survey amounts in 70 members of sexual minority groups in the country.

Due to the lack of information on the number of members of sexual minorities group in the Republic of Macedonia, we were unable to plan a selection of a representative sample. Thus, the sample itself provides information about the population subject of the survey. Namely, two-thirds of the respondents are women (61%), whereas 39% are men. Less than half of the respondents (43.9%) are aged 17-22, while 29.3% are aged 23-27 and over 28, respectively. The majority of the respondents (65.9%) have completed college and university education, postgraduate or PhD studies, while 34.1% have graduated from secondary school. Most of the respondents are ethnic Macedonians (90.2%); 2.4% are ethnic Turks; 2.4% are ethnic Serbs, and 4.9% belong to other ethnic community. The structure according to the place of residence shows that 75.6% of the respondents are from Skopje, whereas 24.4% live in other towns. 46.3% of the respondents are members of the lesbian-feminist group; 31.7% are gay men; 17.1% are transgender, and 4.9% are bisexuals.

The question: "How often do you manifest your sexual orientation/gender identity in public?" was answered by 17.1% of the respondents by always; 22.0% answered often; 34.1% said sometimes; 19.5% said rarely, and 7.3% answered never. Two-thirds of the respondents (65.9%) answered that people from their extended surrounding are informed of their sexual orientation/gender identity, while 34.1% answered that they are not.

The first question measuring presence of hate speech towards sexual minorities in the country read as follows: "How often have you noted hate speech towards sexual minorities?"

From the answers to the question it can be concluded that 43.9% of the respondents have noted hate speech towards sexual minorities on a regular basis; 46.3% answered often; 9.8% answered sometimes, whereas no respondent (0%) answered to have never noted hate speech towards sexual minorities. Nearly all respondents (97.6%) have noted hate speech in the social networks; 85.6% have noted it on websites; 78.0% on television; 73.2% on wall graffiti; 70.7% in newspapers or magazines; 12.2% on the radio, and 14.4% elsewhere (on streets, in discotheques, clubs, workplace, casual conversations at school/university, etc.).

Then the respondents were asked: "Which specific words or phrases do you find insulting to the sexual minorities?" The term "faggot" is the most insulting one to the sexual minorities, followed by "sickos", "freaks", "confused", "death", "perverts", "insane", "deranged", "disgusting", "paedophiles", "unnatural", "unhealthy", "reversed", etc.

The majority of the respondents (53.7%) believe that in the last several years hate speech towards sexual minorities in the country has been increasing; 26.8% believe that it has been at the same level as before, and only 12.2% say that it has decreased.

Because of their sexual orientation/gender identity, the highest rate of respondents (43.9%) have been the subject of mockery (jokes, gags); 41.5% have suffered damage to their personal property; one-third (34.1%) have been insulted; 29.3% have been intimidated; 19.5% have been discriminated against, and 17.1% have been exposed to physical violence. Nearly every fourth respondent (24.4%) said that they had not been exposed to any of the aforementioned because of their sexual orientation/sexual identity.

Nearly every third respondent (36.6%) has suffered violence; damage to property; has been insulted, discriminated, intimidated or otherwise by their superior on the workplace; 29.3% by a family member, 29.3% by a friend; 22.0% by an unknown person, and 7.3% by a co-worker. 2.4% of the respondents have been exposed to hate speech or violence by someone in a position of authority (policeman, teacher, doctor), classmates, employees in the public administration or health workers.

From the respondents who have been insulted, discriminated, intimidated, exposed to physical violence or have had their property damaged in the last 5 years, only 4.2% have notified the competent authorities of said event; 4.2% did not answer the question, and 91.7% have not done so. The ones who have informed the competent authorities of said event were then asked: "What was the consequence/outcome of the report?" Thus, half of them (50%) answered that nothing had occurred as a result of the report, and the other half were not informed of the outcome thereof.

Important portion, 29.4%, of the respondents not having informed the competent authorities of said event answered that the reason for not doing so lies in their perception that the report would not be seriously considered, while 17.6% said that reporting it would imply the revelation of their sexual orientation/gender identity, which they didn't wish to happen. Furthermore, 17.6% failed to report because they dealt with the problem on their own, with the help from friends and family, whereas 5.9% were afraid of the consequences and another 5.9% didn't know where to turn or how to report.

When noting hate speech towards sexual minorities, 36.6% feel motivated to take action; 29.3% are anxious; 12.2% are certain in their beliefs and convictions; 9.8% ignore it and suffer no impact from it; 7.3% feel helpless, and 4.9% feel jeopardized.

The highest percentage rate of the respondents (36.1%) believe that the incitement to hate speech towards sexual minorities is mostly encouraged by the poor quality of sexual education, insufficient awareness and education. Nearly one-fifth of the respondents (20.8%) attribute the problem with the incitement of hate speech towards sexual minorities to the ignorant (homophobic) policy of the state and to the impunity of hate speech towards the LGBT community by the competent state institutions. Moreover, 15.3% of the respondents find that the main factor for the incitement of this occurrence is the conservativeness of our society, the traditional values and upbringing, prejudice and strong prevalence of patriarchal values, while 11.1% of the respondents attribute this to the low awareness of human rights, intolerance to and non-acceptance of differences. Homophobia of the media, religion (religious fanaticism and its misinterpretation), as well as the growing loudness and overtness of the LGBT community are perceived as the main factors for the incitement of hate speech towards sexual minorities by 8.3%, 7.0% and 1.4% of the respondents, respectively.