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## Gender (In)Equality in Policing: The Perception of Montenegrin Police Officers<sup>1</sup>

ALEKSANDRA RABRENOVIĆ\*  
ZORICA VUKAŠINOVIĆ RADOJIČIĆ  
BOŽIDAR OTAŠEVIĆ

*This paper aims to analyse the Montenegrin police officers' perception of gender equality. The findings are based on comprehensive empirical research of the perception of both male and female police officers in Montenegro, carried out in May 2020 in the form of an online questionnaire survey, and the collected data was subsequently analysed using statistical methods. The research results have indicated the key challenges faced by women in the Montenegrin police force: the perception that women should primarily perform administrative rather than managerial jobs, insufficient opportunities for career advancement, poor attitudes of executives towards women, and incidents of sexual harassment. The paper also attempts to shed light on a broader social*

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<sup>2</sup> Dr Aleksandra Rabrenović is a Senior Research Fellow at the Institute of Comparative Law, Belgrade, Serbia. E-mail: a.rabrenovic@iup.rs.

<sup>3</sup> Dr Zorica Vukašinović Radojičić is a Full Professor at the University of Criminal Investigation and Police Studies, Belgrade, Serbia. E-mail; zorica.vr@kpu.edu.rs.

<sup>4</sup> Dr Božidar Otašević is an Assistant Professor at the University of Criminal Investigation and Police Studies, Belgrade, Serbia. E-mail: bozidar.otasevic@kpu.edu.rs.

*context and the status of women in the police force by demonstrating that the inequality of women in the Montenegrin police force can be attributed at least in part to a deep-rooted perception of the traditional patriarchal role of women in the family and in society.*

**Keywords:** *gender equality, perception, police officers, Montenegro.*

## Introduction

Gender equality is one of the main pillars of democracy and civilization progress founded on the principles of universal equality and equal respect for every person's dignity. It is a human right and the only way to build a socially just and democratic society (UN, 1995). Gender equality assumes that men, women, and persons of other gender identities enjoy their human rights under equal conditions. Despite the institutional and normative progress achieved in this area, in practice, women and men are often not equal in their rights – social, political, economic, and cultural inequalities are still present (Jugović, Vukašinović Radojičić, 2012). Equal rights do not always mean equal status, and that is why there is a need to continually improve the efficiency of the anti-discrimination measures.

It may be argued that the status of women in the police force reflects the overall situation regarding gender (in)equality in a society. In many countries, law enforcement is still considered a predominantly male occupation, further exacerbating the position of women in this sector. Many sources point to numerous difficulties faced by women who wish to join 'male professions', including the police service (Fleming, Lafferty, 2002; Butler et al., 2003; Brown, 2007). On the other hand, the literature is increasingly emphasising the importance of the favourable political context in the process of overcoming gender inequality, and the role of women's movements in the police force, whose activities have been intensifying and gaining significance over the past decade (Becker et al., 2012; Novović, 2019).

Recent report findings suggest that gender inequalities are still entrenched in the Montenegrin police, tradition and culture (OEBS, 2021: 4). That is reflected in the stereotypical roles and responsibilities of men and women, particularly in the traditionally male-dominant institutions, such as the police force.

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The aim of this paper is to analyse the police officers' perception of gender equality in the Montenegrin police force. The paper brings additional value to the topic of gender equality by presenting the findings of empirical research on the Montenegrin police officers' perceptions of gender equality, conducted in May 2020. In Montenegro, there has been only one research on this topic, and it was conducted as part of a broader analysis of gender equality in policing for Southeast Europe (including Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Montenegro and Serbia) more than ten years ago (Novović et al., 2010). However, there have been no individual studies conducted to date on the Montenegrin police officers' perception of gender equality that is adjusted to the local needs.

### **Concept of gender equality and previous research on police officers' perception of gender equality in policing**

The concept of gender equality has been developing over the past few centuries mainly as a part of the theory of feminist movements, bringing women's rights issues to the forefront of the global social debate. The first so-called feminist movement, which was rooted in the Enlightenment ideals of freedom and equality, emphasised that women and men are equal by nature as human beings (Karapetrović, 2019; Ždralović, 2019). In a similar vein, Skjeie and Teigen (2005) argue that gender equality assumes equal rights for every individual in society, including the rights of men and women. Since men and women should be equal, gender equality is perceived as a matter of societal justice. Holter's concept of gender equality is also based on the assumption of the equality of women and men as human beings (Zečević, 2008). However, Holter uses the concept of equality only to emphasise the existing differences between men and women, which are, in his view, determined by the historical and societal differences between women's and men's roles in society (Holter, 2003). In Ćopić's view, gender equality assumes equal opportunities and equal representation of men and women in all spheres of private and public life (Ćopić, 2016).

When it comes to policing, the concept of gender equality is often defined in a negative context as 'police inequality' or discrimination. Gender inequality could be defined as discrimination that implies exclusion, denial

or limitation of women's or men's rights based on sex and/or gender roles (Tomić, 2016). The majority of studies of gender issues in the police have focused on analysing the discriminatory experiences of policewomen (Dick, Metcalfe, 2007). These studies focus primarily on the limited opportunities that women have regarding different policing assignments and their experience of sexual harassment.

Another strand in gender equality research in policing focuses on job satisfaction and experiences of the police officers, through investigation of their beliefs and perceptions. This type of research examines the level of satisfaction of both men and women in policing and their views on internal and external barriers to achieving gender equality in the police force (Sousa, Gauthier, 2008). The internal barriers include management biases about women's capacities that keep women out of high-profile assignments and more prestigious crime investigation roles and responsibilities. Women typically work in more stereotypically female units such as administrative affairs and community relations (Schulz, 2003). The external barriers include a lack of balance between work and family roles, as women are still considered the primary caregivers in most households and bear most of the burden of taking care of the home (Sousa, Gauthier, 2008). This restricts their opportunities to be fully engaged in policing work, which can be highly demanding and with unpredictable working schedules.

One of the most comprehensive surveys on the perception of gender equality in Southeast Europe was conducted in 2010, covering Serbia, Montenegro, Macedonia, Croatia, Bulgaria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Albania (Novović et al., 2010). The analysis included various elements of human resource management (gender representation, employment, promotion, professional training, career development, etc.), focusing mainly on internal barriers to gender equality. The analysis showed several interesting observations: uneven gender representation, especially in managerial positions (Novović et al., 2010) and a statistically significant difference in the perception of men and women regarding career development in the police. Men were significantly more likely than women to believe that the possibility of advancement was equally available to everyone. Women, on the other hand, regardless of their position in the hierarchy, had the perception that men are given priority in advancement (Novović et al., 2010).

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Another research on police officers' perception was conducted in 2016 in Serbia on the example of the Police Directorate of the City of Belgrade. The research findings showed structural gender segregation and marginalisation, which was reflected in the confinement of women to a narrow circle of administrative and auxiliary police jobs (Tomić, 2016). This confirms the findings of other comparative studies, which speak of the practice that women in the police force, even when they do perform operational tasks, are most often assigned to positions in charge of working with minors and dealing with women perpetrators of certain criminal acts and victims of domestic violence (Sebire, 2020).

In the Republic of Croatia, there were several surveys on the perception of gender equality in the police force conducted over the past decade. The first survey (after the aforementioned 2010 regional survey) was conducted in 2013, and its results showed conflicting views about gender equality between women and men, especially older colleagues and managers (Balgač, 2017). Another study conducted in 2019 showed, *inter alia*, that men perceive that women advance faster in their careers, which contradicts the findings of all previous studies (Delač Fabris, Borovec, 2019). Finally, the most recent available research on the perception of gender equality analysed the citizens' perception of women in the police force (Delač Fabris, Borovec, 2020), and its results showed that women are still perceived as the weaker sex, who lack sufficient physical strength to effectively perform the police duties. (Delač Fabris, Borovec, 2020).

In 2021, research was conducted on the state of gender equality in the police force of Montenegro, without looking into the police officers' perceptions. The research results indicated that gender inequality is still present in the Montenegrin tradition and culture, which is manifested in the stereotypical roles and responsibilities of men and women, especially in traditionally male-dominated institutions, such as the police (OEBS, 2021: 4). However, there has been no research solely on the police officers' perception of gender equality in the Montenegrin police force.

## **Methodology**

For this research, gender equality in policing was defined as the existence of equal opportunities for both men and women in the police, without internal or external barriers that could undermine the equal position of men and women in the police force (e.g., limitations in career development or incidents of sexual harassment experienced by women; gender inequality of women in the family and society, etc.).

### *Aim of the research and hypotheses*

The research aimed to examine the beliefs of police officers on the achieved level of gender equality and the existence of internal and external barriers to gender equality. Three indicators of perception of gender equality have been identified: 1) police officers' perception of the level of gender equality in the police force in general; 2) police officers' perception of the internal barriers to gender equality, such as limitations in career development and incidents of sexual harassment experienced by women; 3) police officers' perception of the external barriers to gender equality, such as gender inequality of women in the family and in society.

In accordance with the research objective and theoretical framework and bearing in mind the previous research on gender equality in policing in Montenegro, the following hypotheses were set:

- H1 The police officers' perception is that gender equality in the Montenegrin police force has not been achieved to an adequate degree;
- H2 Police officers believe there are important internal and external barriers to gender equality in the Montenegrin police force.

### *Method and research instrument*

The level of gender equality was analysed by using a generic qualitative methodology, which investigates peoples' opinions, attitudes, beliefs and experiences of things within their world (Percy et al., 2015). This method allows for a deeper understanding of the police officers' beliefs. While there is no guarantee that the police officers' beliefs would be reflected in their behaviour, there is an evidenced assumption of consistency between the officials'

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abstract values and their operational application (Aberbach et al., 1981). Therefore, the focus on the police officers' beliefs should provide a sound empirical basis for examining gender equality in the Montenegrin police force.

The research was conducted in the Montenegrin Police Directorate in the period between May 4 and May 20, 2020. It was based on the survey method (questionnaire technique) and statistical methods. The data were gathered by a survey method. For this purpose, an online poll questionnaire has been developed, containing 22 questions. The answers to the questions were mostly closed-ended. For three questions respondents were given the option of an open (free) answer within the offered close-end answers.<sup>5</sup> Seven questions in the questionnaire relate to the sample characteristics, while the remaining questions focus on the attitudes and understandings of gender equality and the existence of internal or external barriers to gender equality in the Montenegrin Police Directorate and the ways to improve gender equality. Therefore, the questions in the survey were determined by the sample and the objective of the research. The scales from 1 (minimum) to 5 (maximum) were used to assess the perception of responders on gender equality.

Data were collected anonymously so that it was not possible for any answer to be connected with the respondent who provided them. Data were coded through the use of an electronic anonymizing system, which was tied to the data-gathering system through a mobile device application.

### *Sample characteristics*

The sample fully represents the target population of the Montenegrin Police Directorate employees. It was comprised of 576 respondents, out of which 79.9% (450) were male and 20.1% (116) were female respondents. The sample was stratified according to the following criteria:

- The surveyed population included respondents from different areas of Montenegro - both city residents and those living in rural areas;
- The survey included employees from different lines of work at the Montenegrin Police Directorate: uniformed police, criminal police, administrative and other staff;

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<sup>5</sup> In these questions, respondents were able to select the option "other". For example, in the question "What is the attitude of managers towards women?", respondents were able to pick one of the answers: "very good" "good", "I am not sure", "poor", "very poor" and "other" and to specify what "other" means for them.

- The survey included both the employees in the non-executive positions and the executives at all management levels.

When looking at the age structure, it may be noted that slightly more than half of the respondents (50.5%) were in the 41 to 50 age group. Such an age structure was expected, bearing in mind that the largest number of employees in the Montenegrin police force are in this age group.

When it comes to the education structure, the largest number of respondents had higher (university) education (46.4%) and high school education (45.8%), while the number of those who completed the Police Academy or some other form of college education was relatively low (4.9%) (Table 1).

**Table 1.** *Level of education of the survey respondents*

Level of education	Frequency	Percentage
Police Academy	28	4.9
Postgraduate studies	37	6.4
High school	264	45.8
College education which is not Police Academy	17	3.0
University degree	230	39.9
Total	576	100

### *Data analysis*

The survey results were processed statistically, using the appropriate selection of statistical methods. The statistical data processing was performed using the IBM SPSS 20.0. software package, which was preceded by the analysis of open-ended questions and their classification. In the research findings, the numerical features are shown by the mean values (median, arithmetic mean) and variability measures (standard deviation, range, IQR). The attributive features are presented through frequencies and percentages. The ratio of attributive features was tested using the chi-square test ( $\chi^2$ ). The differences in numerical features were tested using a t-test for large independent samples and a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA). In all cases where there were statistically significant differences found between the modalities of the categorical variable, Tukey's Post Hoc Test was applied. The relationship between two numerical variables was determined by Pearson's correlation



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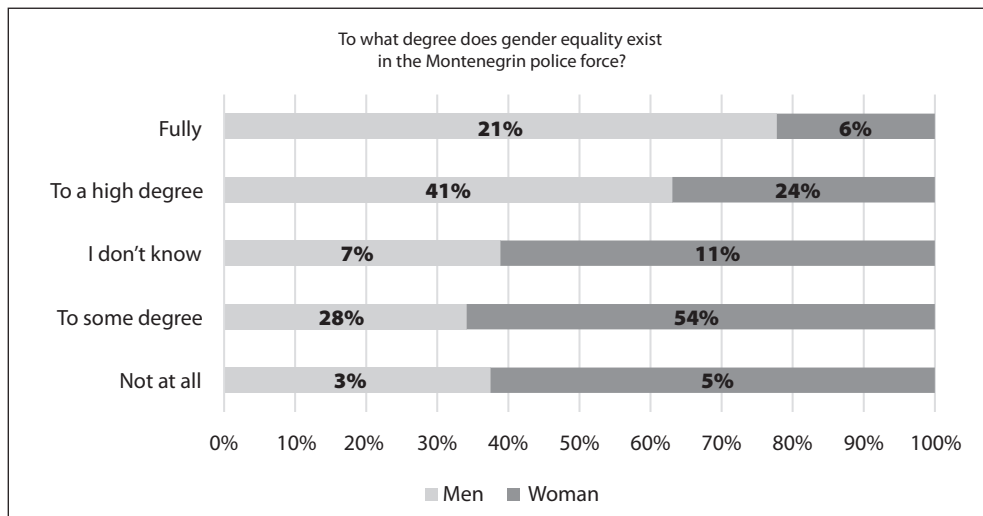
coefficient. Univariate and multivariate regression models were used to examine the predictive properties of individual variables. Grouping analysis (cluster analysis) was used to classify objects. The statistical significance is defined at the probability level of the null hypothesis from  $p < 0.05$  to  $p < 0.001$ .

## **Results**

The distribution of responses about the position in the service shows that only 4% of women manage an organisational unit, while three times as many men perform managerial tasks (12%). A smaller percentage (3%) of the respondents, however, described their position as 'senior management'. Given that the senior management positions refer only to assistant directors of the police, it is obvious that there was a misunderstanding about this issue on the part of some respondents, since in the Montenegrin Police Directorate no women are occupying senior managerial positions. If such a smaller percentage is added to the percentage of respondents who manage an organisational unit, it can be concluded that only 7% of women perform managerial tasks, compared to 15% of men who participated in the survey.

The research results show the prevailing perception that gender equality exists to some extent in the Montenegrin police force, but they also demonstrate that men have a much more positive view of gender equality in comparison to female police officers. A majority of the respondents (55.7%) believe that gender equality is present in the Montenegrin police, while one-third of them (33.5%) believe that gender equality exists only to a degree, 3.1% feel it does not exist at all, and 7.6% remain neutral. However, the t-test for large independent samples showed that male respondents ( $M=3.49$ ) believe in gender equality in the Montenegrin police significantly more ( $MD=-0.718$ ) than the female respondents ( $M=2.72$ ). The breakdown of the male and female responses on gender equality is shown in Graph 1 below.

**Graph 1.** Responses to the question about the degree of gender equality in the Montenegrin police force: differences in perception of men and women



It is interesting to note that the respondents' age and education level did not statistically significantly affect their opinion about gender equality. Furthermore, the ANOVA test showed no statistically significant relationship between the respondents' education level and their views on gender equality ( $p=0.482$ ).

The research findings have also shown that internal barriers to gender inequality are present in many aspects of policing, with recognised incidents of sexual harassment. Almost half of the respondents (45.6%) believe the highest degree of gender inequality is in the area of women's career advancement, especially in the management positions in the police force. The finding that as many as 102 (17.7%) respondents of both sexes recognise that women in the police force face some forms of sexual harassment is also a major cause for concern.

In order to understand the perception of the nature of jobs women should carry out in the police, the following question was posed: "Which jobs in the police should be carried out by women?". Four answers were offered - uniformed police jobs, criminal police jobs, administrative jobs and managerial jobs. All answers received a relatively high average value above 3.5 on a five-point scale. It is interesting, however, that the highest value was given to administrative jobs ( $M=4.17$ ), and the lowest was accorded to managerial jobs ( $M=3.77$ ). According to the respondents, uniformed police jobs ( $M=3.86$ ) and criminal police jobs ( $M=3.81$ ) were rated with an average score of 3.8.

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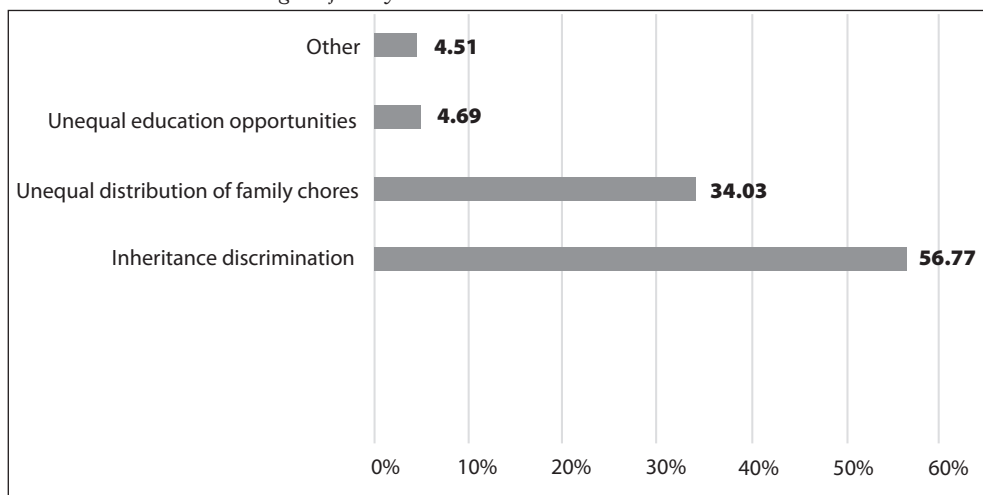
The attitudes of men and women in relation to women's capacities to carry out managerial duties in the police, however, differed significantly statistically ( $t=-4.230$ ,  $p<0.05$ ). As many as 33% of male respondents were not convinced that women should perform managerial tasks. Contrary to the answers of male respondents, only 15% of women believed that women should not perform managerial duties, while 85% of them believed that women could perform managerial tasks equally well as their male colleagues. These findings indicate that male respondents do not have enough confidence in the leadership abilities of their female colleagues. It also appears that women are aware of this since four female respondents provided fairly similar comments to this question: "Senior managerial positions in the police are reserved for men."

Another important internal barrier to achieving gender equality is the poor attitude of the executives towards women. The distribution of responses to the question "What is the attitude of the executives towards women?" revealed a high degree of discontent, with 55.2% of respondents rating the executives' attitude as poor. Given that a further 36.6% of respondents consider the executives' attitude towards women as very poor, it can be concluded that in total 91.7% of respondents are dissatisfied with the attitude of the police executives towards women. Only five respondents (0.9%) view this attitude as good, and a further three (0.5%) view it as very good. The number of respondents who remained neutral was 39 (6.8%).

The research findings have also shown important external barriers to achieving gender equality in the police, as most of the respondents believe that different forms of gender inequality manifest not only in the workplace but also in the family. The question posed to the respondents was: "In your view, which form of gender inequality is most prevalent in a Montenegrin family?", and several answer options were provided: "inheritance inequality", "distribution of household chores", "unequal educational opportunities" and "something else (please specify)". More than half of respondents (56.8%) view women's inheritance inequality as the most common form of gender inequality, one-third of them (34.03%) believe that gender inequality is most pronounced in the distribution of household chores, while not such a small per cent of them (4.6%) identify unequal educational opportunities as the most common form of gender inequality in the family. The same per cent of respondents (4.5%), consider that, apart from the offered response options,

the most prevalent form of gender (in)equality in the family in Montenegro is something else entirely, with a particularly interesting response by a female respondent that “the most common form of gender inequality is sex selection at birth” (Graph 2).

**Graph 2.** Perception of gender equality in the family (men and women), based on answers to the question “In your view, which form of gender inequality is most prevalent in a Montenegrin family?”



Interestingly, both male and female respondents equally believe that gender inequalities in the family do exist in the Montenegrin society. The chi-square test shows no statistically significant differences ( $p=0.307$ ) in the responses of men and women when it comes to the forms of gender inequality in the family.

The research questionnaire offered several options for improving gender equality in the Montenegrin Police Directorate, all well-received and supported by the respondents. All the proposed options had a mean score of more than 3. The highest mean was assigned to the option of providing better working conditions in terms of improving work-life balance ( $M=3.59$ ), followed by providing incentives for women’s career advancement ( $M=3.46$ ), recruiting more women in the police force ( $M=3.40$ ), and, finally, changing awareness of the status of women in the family and society ( $M=3.37$ ) (Table 2).

**Table 2.** Ways to improve gender equality in the Montenegrin police force

Ways of improving gender equality	MIN	MAX	MEAN	SD
Changing awareness of the status of women in the family and society	1	5	3.37	1.244
Recruiting more women in the police force	1	5	3.40	1.280
Providing incentives for women's advancement in the service	1	5	3.46	1.238
Providing better working conditions in terms of improving work-life balance	1	5	3.59	1.204

The above results were supported by additional statistical findings, showing that almost two-thirds of the respondents (64.9%) agreed that providing better working conditions in terms of improving work-life balance would substantially contribute to improving gender equality in the police force. If this respondent group is added to those who partially agree with this statement, it can be concluded that in total 83.2% of male and female respondents believe that ensuring better conditions to facilitate women to achieve a work-life balance would indeed have a positive impact on the improvement of gender equality in the Montenegrin Police Directorate.

## Discussion

Due to their weaker physical strength, women in the police force are often perceived as less capable and less hardworking, although all the evidence points to the contrary (Spasić et al., 2014). Multiple studies have shown that women have the same levels of work motivation as their male colleagues (Dick, Metcalfe, 2007) and that they even perform better than men in particular activities, such as investigations concerning child protection or domestic violence, operational analytics, and many other police duties (Sebire, 2020).

It may be argued that in Montenegro the police vocation is still considered a predominantly male occupation. This was recently confirmed by the study conducted in 2021, according to which the level of participation of women in the Montenegrin police force is rather low (OEBS, 2021). In the Police Directorate, women constitute only 15% of the workforce, of whom only 12% carry out core policing tasks, while approximately two-thirds of them (67%) perform administrative tasks (OEBS, 2021).

Our research findings confirm the existence of important internal barriers to achieving gender equality exemplified primarily in traditional biases about women's capacities to carry out managerial police jobs. As noted above, most of the respondents in our research view administrative jobs as typical of women in policing, which raises a question of possibilities to access core police jobs in the service, including managerial positions. Furthermore, a significantly higher percentage of men (relative to women) believe that performing managerial duties is not typical of women, which reflects the traditional perceptions of women's role in the police and society.

These findings confirm the results of the research conducted in Serbia, which showed that 96.4% of women in police worked in non-managerial positions (Spasić, Radovanović, 2019). This recent research also demonstrated that Serbian policewomen mostly occupy positions in human resources management, administrative tasks, analysis and records, food and accommodation business, mutual services, and information technology (Spasić, Radovanović, 2019). Similarly, the research conducted in 2016 in Serbia in the Police Directorate of the City of Belgrade showed that women are most often assigned to administrative and auxiliary police tasks (Tomić, 2016).

Research on citizens' attitudes toward female police officers in Croatia yielded similar results, showing that women are still perceived as the weaker sex lacking adequate physical strength for effective policing, in spite of the obvious advantages they bring to the police organisation (Delač Fabris, Borovec, 2020). According to this study's findings, female police officers are more successful than their male colleagues in the protection of children and women against violence. A larger number of female officers improves the reputation and image of the police in enforcing the law and the interactions with the community. Furthermore, female police officers have better communication skills than their male colleagues (Delač Fabris and Borovec, 2020). In spite of these findings, the results of their research and previous analyses have shown that women in the labour market are most often assigned gender role jobs (Kamenov, Galić, 2011).

The view of almost one-half of the respondents in our survey that gender inequality is the highest in the area of promotion of women to higher managerial positions, is mainly in line with the findings of other perception studies conducted in the region. The research results of a Serbian study showed that women in the police force believed that their career advancement was slower

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in comparison to men (Novović et al., 2010; Balgač, 2017). However, it is interesting to note that research conducted in Croatia in 2019 showed the opposite results, as men had the perception that women progressed faster in the service than their male colleagues in the police structure (Delač Fabris, Borovec, 2019).

Broadly speaking, our research findings suggest that the traditional understanding of the role of women in the family and in society represents an important external obstacle to a higher representation of women in the police force. This means that gender inequality in the police force most likely has its deeper roots in the family and society. The traditional views and stereotypes, division of labour into male and female jobs, and unequal educational opportunities shape the organisational culture and undermine the role and status of women in society. The research on gender (in)equality and domestic discrimination in Croatia showed similar findings, with women's share of domestic responsibilities ranging from 52.4% to the amazingly high 91.4% (Galić, Nikodem, 2009). Changing these traditional stereotypes will not be an easy task, as it requires changing the awareness of gender equality, improving working conditions, and practical implementation of the equal opportunities principle in human resources management.

The research results also indicate the presence of sexual harassment in the Montenegrin police, which is quite disturbing, but unfortunately, not uncommon to the police organisations in other countries as well - 17.7% of male and female respondents acknowledge the existence of some forms of sexual harassment in the workplace faced by women in the police force. These forms of unlawful and discriminatory behaviour are common in many police and other organisations. One larger study (Brown, Heidensohn, 2000) involving 804 female police officers from 35 countries in Europe and the Americas found that 77% of women in the sample reported sexual harassment by male colleagues, which constitutes an important issue for women's motivation and work effectiveness. One of the key findings of the study was that "policewomen considered harassment by male colleagues to be a bigger problem than the violent encounters that they experienced while they were on patrol." (Spasić, Radovanović, 2019: 38).

Finally, our research has attempted to answer an important question - how could gender equality in the police force be improved? The results have revealed that almost two-thirds of the respondents consider that providing better working conditions in terms of improving work-life balance would

significantly contribute to improving gender equality in the Montenegrin police force. Undoubtedly, overcoming gender inequalities can be regarded as a reflection of the capacity of the state to ensure respect for the fundamental freedoms and rights of every individual. However, the findings of the studies conducted to date have yet to confirm that the Western Balkan countries have brought this capacity to the optimal level (Čvorović et al., 2021). The gender inequality phenomenon still surrounds these societies, including the Montenegrin society.

## **Conclusion**

The issue of gender equality in the security sector in general and the police force has been the subject of numerous scientific research papers. Although various legal international instruments have supported women's employment in male-dominated jobs, the question remains not only of the (in)equality in the traditionally male-dominated occupations but also of discrimination when it comes to division of labour, availability of managerial positions, advancement opportunities, etc. The findings of the many studies outlined in this paper have not yet confirmed that the Western Balkan countries have brought this capacity to the optimal level (Čvorović et al., 2021).

The findings of our research confirm both hypotheses of this paper: that police officers believe that gender equality in the Montenegrin Police Directorate has not been achieved to a satisfactory degree and that police officers recognise important internal and external barriers to gender equality. Prejudices appear to remain one of the major obstacles that women face in the workplace. They are mostly regarded as the 'weaker sex' and as less capable than men in performing managerial duties, and often even some operational police tasks that may require physical strength. Furthermore, the traditional perception of the role of women in the family and in society presents a barrier to a higher representation of women in policing and equality of their position within the police organisation.

The research findings have also shown the ways to improve gender equality in policing. These are, among other things: improving the working conditions for women in terms of reconciling professional and family responsibilities; motivating women to advance in their careers; increasing the



number of women in managerial positions; recruiting more women in the police force; changing awareness about the status of women in the family and in society, changing the executives' attitudes towards women, and eliminating all forms of discriminatory behaviour, such as sexual harassment in the workplace faced by female police officers. It is also crucial to continuously raise awareness in the Montenegrin, and in the police force in particular, that women are as capable as men of performing the policing duties, and that women are equally needed in the police force in order to reflect the structure and the needs of the entire society.

There are several limitations of this research. First, although the sample size used in this study is representative of the achievement of the objective of this research, the use of a larger sample could have provided different results. Second, the present study represents officer opinions at one point in time. If this kind of survey were carried out in the future, findings may differ due to changes in the demographic characteristics of the Police Directorate. Although conducting this kind of survey in the future would be interesting for monitoring changes in police officers' perception toward gender equality, another way to pursue this kind of research would be to analyse the perception of the potential barriers women face when entering the police force (i.e. recruitment and selection process) and while trying to climb to the top of the police organisation, as there are no women at the senior managerial levels in the Montenegrin Police Directorate. Further empirical research on these matters is warranted in order to understand better the complexity of gender equality issues in the police force in Montenegro and the whole Southeast European region.

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ALEKSANDRA RABRENOVIĆ\*  
ZORICA VUKAŠINOVIĆ RADOJIČIĆ  
BOŽIDAR OTAŠEVIĆ

## **Rodna (ne)ravnopravnost u policiji: Percepcija policijskih službenika Crne Gore<sup>6</sup>**

Cilj rada je analiza percepcije policijskih službenika Crne Gore o rodnoj ravnopravnosti. Nalazi rada zasnovani su na sveobuhvatnom empirijskom istraživanju percepcije žena i muškaraca policijskih službenika u Crnoj Gori, koje je sprovedeno onlajn anketom, dok su prikupljeni podaci naknadno obrađeni statističkom metodom. Rezultati istraživanja otkrivaju ključne izazove sa kojima se suočavaju žene u crnogorskoj policiji: percepciju da žene prvenstveno treba da obavljaju administrativne, a ne menadžerske poslove; nedovoljne mogućnosti za napredovanje u karijeri; kao i incidente seksualnog uznemiravanja. Rad, takođe, pokušava da osvetli širi društveni kontekst položaja žena u policiji pokazujući da se nejednakost žena u crnogorskoj policiji jednim delom može pripisati duboko ukorenjenoj percepciji tradicionalne patrijarhalne uloge žene u porodici i društvu.

**Gljučne reči:** rodna ravnopravnost, percepcija, policijski službenici, Crna Gora.

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\* Dr Aleksandra Rabrenović je viša naučna saradnica Instituta za uporedno pravo, Beograd, Srbija. E-mail: a.rabrenovic@iup.rs.

Dr Zorica Vukašinić Radojičić je redovna profesorka Kriminalističko-policijskog univerziteta, Beograd, Srbija. E-mail: zorica.vr@kpu.edu.rs.

Dr Božidar Otašević je vanredni profesor Kriminalističko-policijskog univerziteta, Beograd, Srbija. E-mail: bozidar.otasevic@kpu.edu.rs.

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