



LEAVE NO ONE BEHIND!

**Progress made in accomplishing
Sustainable Development Goals
among the population of Roma
settlements in Serbia**

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LEAVE NO ONE BEHIND!

Progress made in accomplishing Sustainable Development Goals among the population of Roma settlements in Serbia

Leave No One Behind is the basic principle of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals. It represents the unanimous commitment of all states to fully eradicate poverty, social exclusion and discrimination in all their forms, and reduce the inequalities and various forms of vulnerabilities that exclude individuals and social groups from development processes and undermine their development potential and well-being and the development potential of humanity as a whole.¹

This principle is grounded in a finding that due to intertwining of various exclusion factors, some groups experience multiple and mutually strengthening forms of deprivation and inequalities, which results in their exclusion from development processes (they are left behind). Five key exclusion factors are the following: discrimination (on the basis of inherited or acquired characteristics), geographic remoteness or staying in an unfavourable geographic area (environmental degradation, lack of transport and communications, under-developed economy, technology, services), governance (inadequate laws, policies, non-transparent and unaccountable institutions, lack of democratic participation), socio-economic status (inequalities in access to resources and in employment possibilities, poverty and deprivation), vulnerability to shocks (includes conflicts, crises, climate change and natural disasters).²

This short informative publication from the “Leave No One Behind” series shows the situation with regard to achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) related to one of the most vulnerable and most marginalised population group in Serbia - the population living in Roma settlements. Owing to the data acquired through the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) that was conducted in Serbia in six rounds in the 2000-2019 period (from the third round onward, it was conducted in cooperation with UNICEF and the Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia), we can now track the progress made in achieving SDGs for this social group. The situation with SDGs is followed through a perspective of life developments, for the purpose of overviewing the way in which exclusion from one area of life leads to the exclusion from other areas (e.g. exclusion from education leads to exclusion from the labour market), resulting in the most severe forms of multiple exclusion. This approach also allows overviewing the manner in which exclusion from development processes (leaving someone behind) in early stages of life affects exclusion in later stages, leading to a long-term and intergenerational exclusion.

For the purpose of presenting the situation, the publication uses both official SDG indicators followed on the web portal of the Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia³, and other indicators enabling a better overview of some aspects of life and position which are important signs of being left behind. Every time an official indicator is used, it is emphasised in brackets, while all the other indicators are additional.

1 <https://unsdg.un.org/2030-agenda/universal-values/leave-no-one-behind>

2 UNSDG (2019) Leaving No One Behind. A UNSDG Operational Guide for UN Country Teams, <https://unsdg.un.org/sites/default/files/Interim-Draft-Operational-Guide-on-LNOB-for-UNCTs.pdf>

3 <http://sdg.indikatori.rs/sr-Cyrl/>

Average overall life satisfaction score of women in Roma settlements

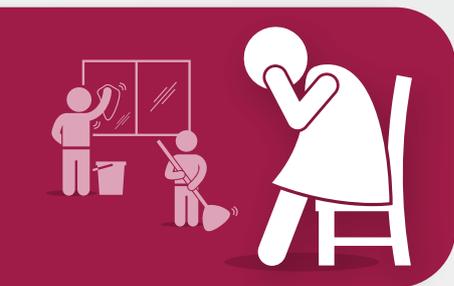
7,5 (on a scale of 1-10)



13% of women living in Roma settlements have experienced discrimination over the past 12 months, and 29% of them do not feel safe in their neighbourhood.



82% of women in Roma settlements are materially deprived of three or more items that ensure meeting of their basic needs, and additional 9.6% of two items; 60% of households receive financial social assistance, and 49% receive child allowance.



The unemployment rate in Roma settlements is 23.5%, and 60% of women are inactive; in the 2014-2019 period, the prevalence of child labour increased among children aged 5-11 years from 4.1% to 5.3%, among children aged 12-14 years from 0.6% to 2.3%, and among children aged 15-17 years from 0.5% to 4.5%.



16% of young women (20-24) in Roma settlements entered into a marital union before age 15, and 56% of them before age 18.



77% of children in Roma settlements are covered by the compulsory preparatory preschool programme; 92% of them attend primary school, but only 64% of them complete it; 28% of them attend secondary education, and among them, only 61% of them complete it; girls are less included in secondary education than boys.



9 out of 1000 children in Roma settlements die before their fifth birthday, and 17% of children aged under 5 are stunted; 11% of children in Roma settlements aged 3-4 years are developmentally not on track in the literacy-numeracy domain, physical domain, social-emotional domain and learning, and only 7% of them go to kindergarten.

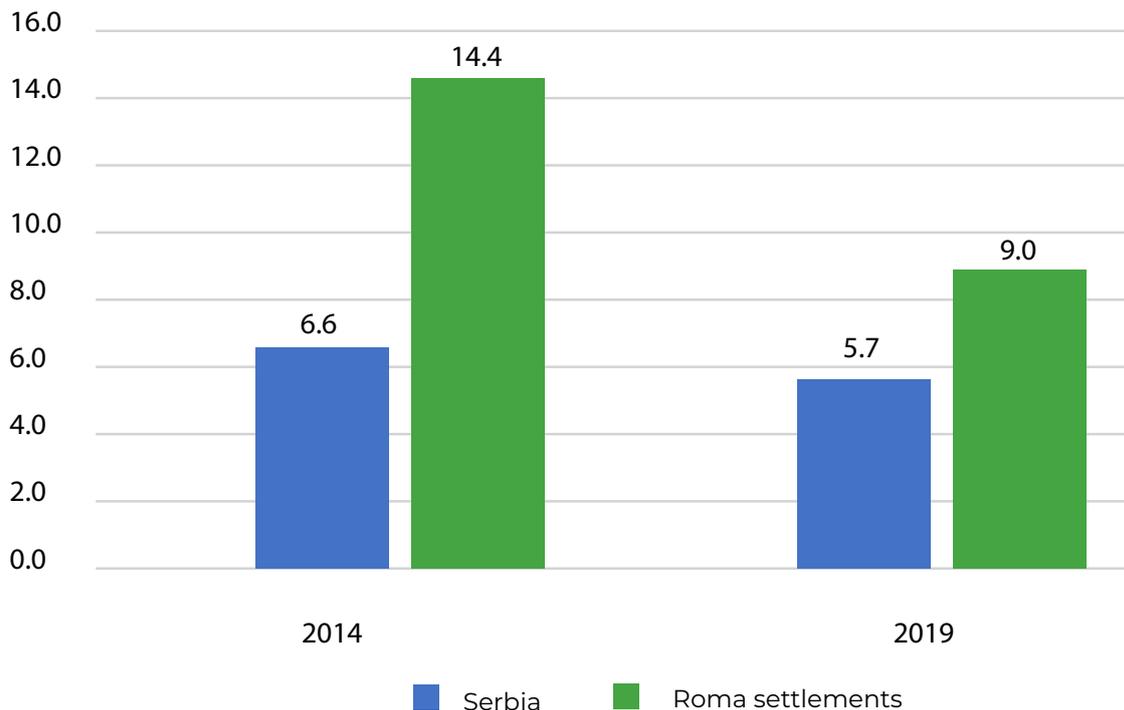


ARRIVAL TO THE WORLD: CHILDREN’S CHANCES OF SURVIVAL



Chances for children under five living in Roma settlements to survive are still much lower than the chances of children in the overall population, although in the 2014-2019 period a significant progress was achieved in that regard (Graph 1). The fact that the child mortality rate is lower than the globally set goal (25 deaths per 1000 children) should not be interpreted as a sign of a satisfactory situation, but rather as a sign that further efforts need to be invested in improving the quality of parents’ life and their healthcare in order to reduce this rate and to close the gap between children living in Roma settlements and children in the overall population.

Graph 1: **Under-five mortality rate⁴, total in Serbia and in Roma settlements (SDG indicator 3.2.1)**



Source: Vital statistics of the Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia (SORS) and Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS), SORS and UNICEF

⁴ The number of deaths among children aged 0-4 years per 1000 live births

EXERCISE OF THE RIGHT TO LEGAL IDENTITY



Access to numerous rights referring to protection, development and well-being is related to a legal status. Therefore, immediate registration of children in the Birth Register is extremely important for their protection and development from an early age. According to the 2019 Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey data, it may be concluded that the birth registration coverage of children in the overall population is almost full (99.9%), while for children living in Roma settlements it is somewhat lower (98.5%). Among children in the overall population, there are no differences by sex (99.8% of girls and 100% of boys), nor by the area of residence (99.9% in urban and in rural areas). Among children living in Roma settlements, differences by sex are also not so big (98.6% of girls and 98.3% of boys), but there are a bit more children from urban areas whose births remain unregistered than from rural areas (97.9% vis-à-vis 99.7%)⁵.

SDG
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SDG
4.2

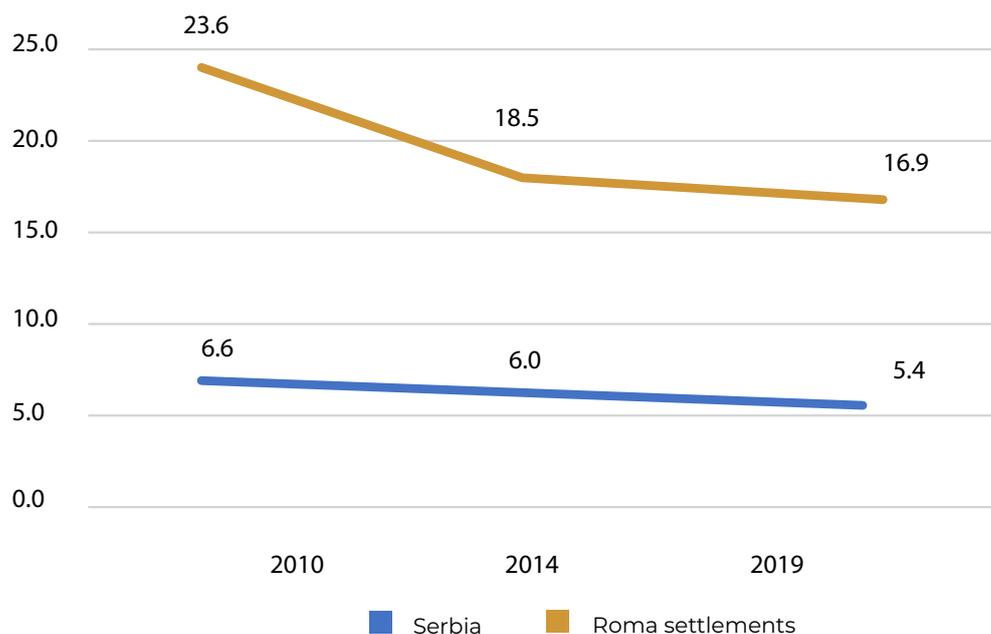
PROGRESS - HEALTH, NUTRITION AND EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT



A child's physical development greatly depends on healthy diet and nutrition. A significant progress was achieved in that regard because all forms of child malnourishment were reduced: stunting, wasting, and overweight. However, among children living in Roma settlements, despite reduction of the prevalence of child undernutrition that reflects in stunting (moderate and severe), there are still much more children with this form of malnutrition than among the overall population of children under age of 5.

⁵ ORS, UNICEF, Serbia, 2019 Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey and Serbia - Roma settlements, 2019 Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey

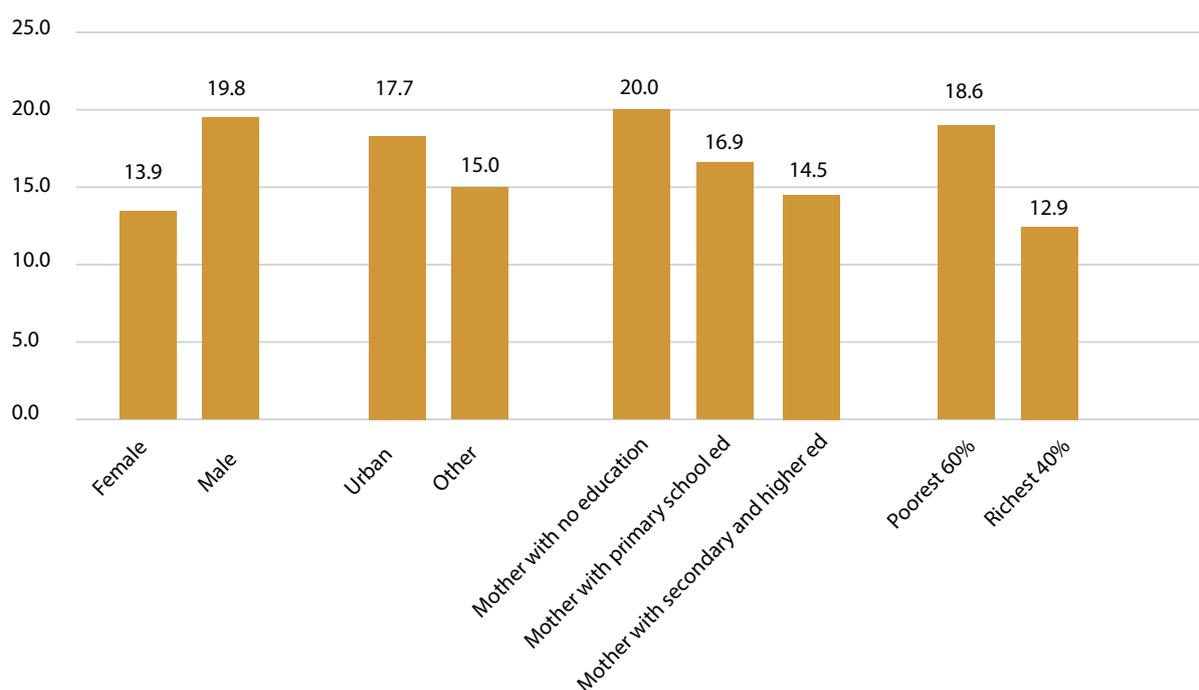
Graph 2: **Prevalence of stunting (moderate and severe) among children under 5 years of age, Serbia and Roma settlements, 2010-2019, in % (SDG Indicator 2.2.1)**



Source: Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS), SORS and UNICEF

Combination of factors that increase risks of exclusion results in the fact that in Roma settlements there are greater risks of stunting for boys than for girls, for children in urban areas than for those in rural areas, for children whose mothers do not have any education, and for children who live in poorest households (Graph 3).

Graph 3: **Prevalence of stunting (moderate and severe) among children under 5 years of age, by sex, area of residence, mother’s education level and well-being index, Roma settlements, 2019, in % (SDG Indicator 2.2.1)**

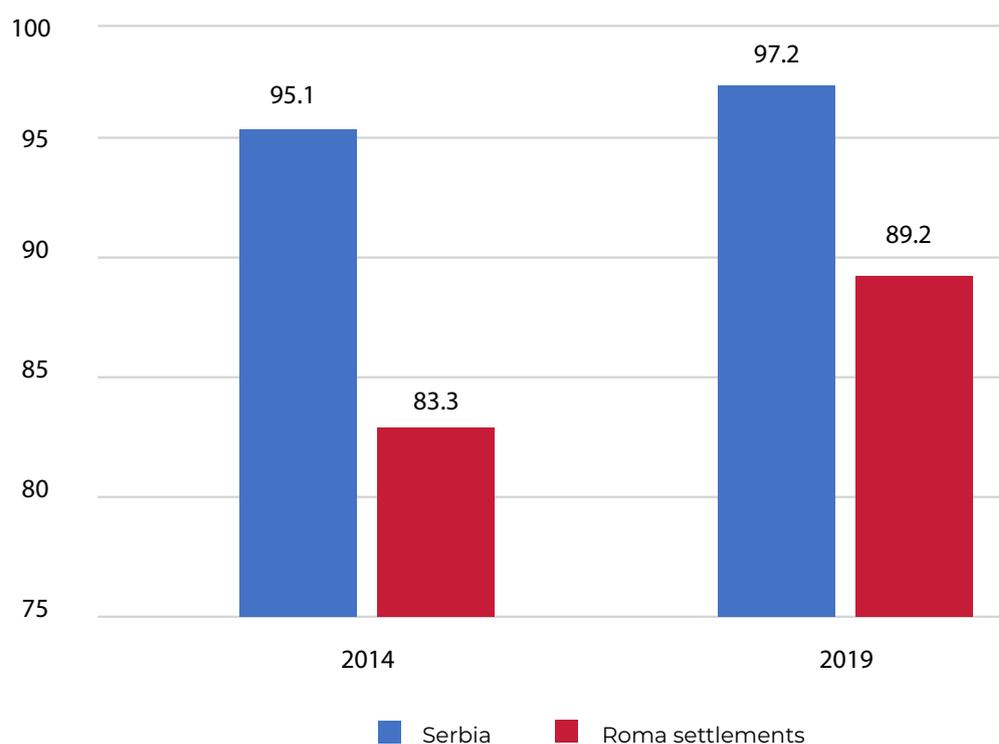


Source: Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS), SORS and UNICEF

With regard to the type of malnutrition reflected in wasting (moderate and severe) (SDG Indicator 2.2.2b), the gap between children under 5 years of age in the overall population and those living in Roma settlements was almost fully eliminated. The prevalence of this form of malnutrition is 2.6% among children in the overall population, and 2.8% among children living in Roma settlements. Moreover, the prevalence of overweight is lower among children living in Roma settlements (SDG indicator 2.2.2a) than among children in the overall population (6.9% vis-à-vis 10.9%). Overweight is more frequent among boys than among girls, both among children in the overall population and among children living in Roma settlements.

Some positive trends were registered with regard to early childhood development measured against a complex Early Child Development Index analysing several aspects of development: development in the literacy-numeracy domain, physical, social-emotional development and learning. In the 2014-2019 period there was an increase in the percentage of children who were developmentally on track, both among the overall population and among children living in Roma settlements, and the gap between them was reduced from 11.8 to 8.0 percentage points (Graph 4).

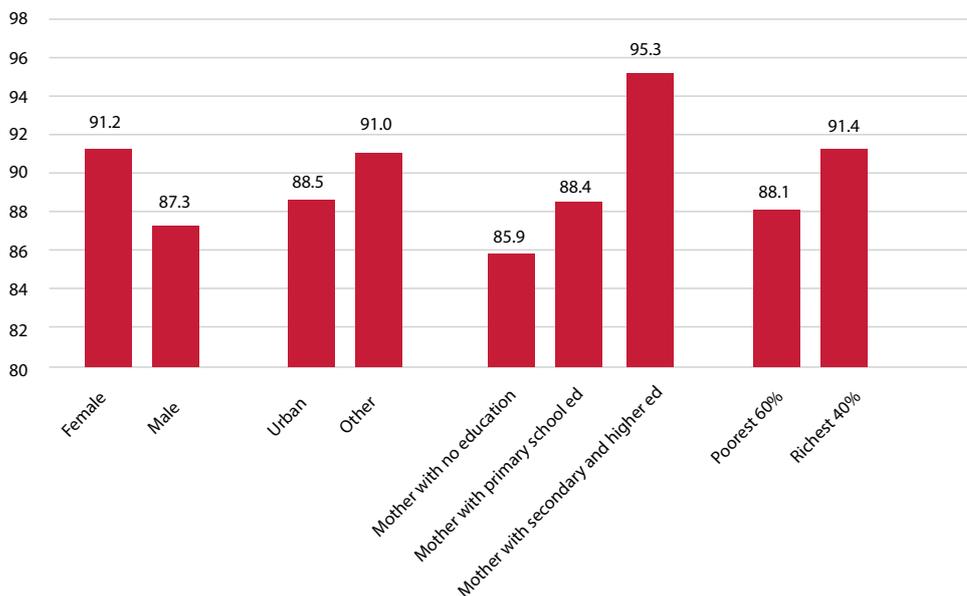
Graph 4: Proportion of children aged 3-4 years who are developmentally on track in the literacy-numeracy domain, physical domain, social-emotional domain and learning, Serbia and Roma settlements, 2019, in % (SDG Indicator 4.2.1)



Source: Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS), SORS and UNICEF

Among children living in Roma settlements, there is a higher risk of exclusion from positive processes of improving early child development for boys than for girls, for children living in urban areas than for children living in other areas, for children whose mothers have no education at all and for children from the poorest households (Graph 5).

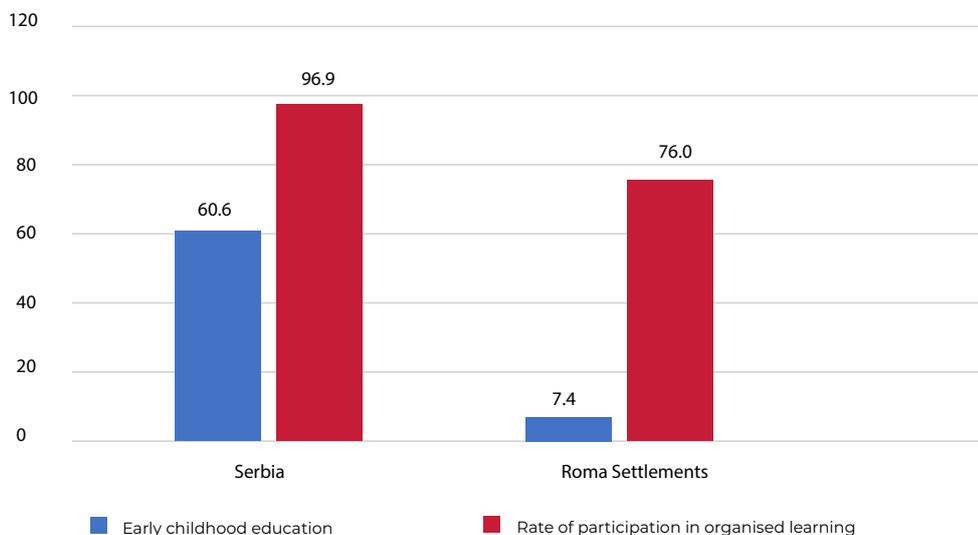
Graph 5: Proportion of children aged 3-4 years who are developmentally on track in the literacy-numeracy domain, physical domain, social-emotional domain and learning, by sex, area of residence, mother's education level and well-being index, Roma settlements, 2019, in % (SDG Indicator 4.2.1)



Source: Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS), SORS and UNICEF

It is vital to note that early childhood development still needs improvements for children living in Roma settlements, in order to fully eliminate the existing gap. For this purpose, it is necessary to significantly increase the preschool education coverage of children living in Roma settlements. According to the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey, in 2019, preschool education covered 60.6% of children aged 36-59 months in the overall population and only 7.4% of the same-age children living in Roma settlements. Furthermore, the data indicate a lower inclusion of children living in Roma settlements in an organized early childhood education (ECE) programme among children one year younger than the official primary school entry age (Chart 6).

Graph 6: Early childhood education⁶ and rate of participation in organised learning (SDG Indicator 4.2.2)⁷, Serbia and Roma settlements, 2019, in %.



Source: Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS), SORS and UNICEF

6 Percentage of children aged 36-59 months who are attending early childhood education

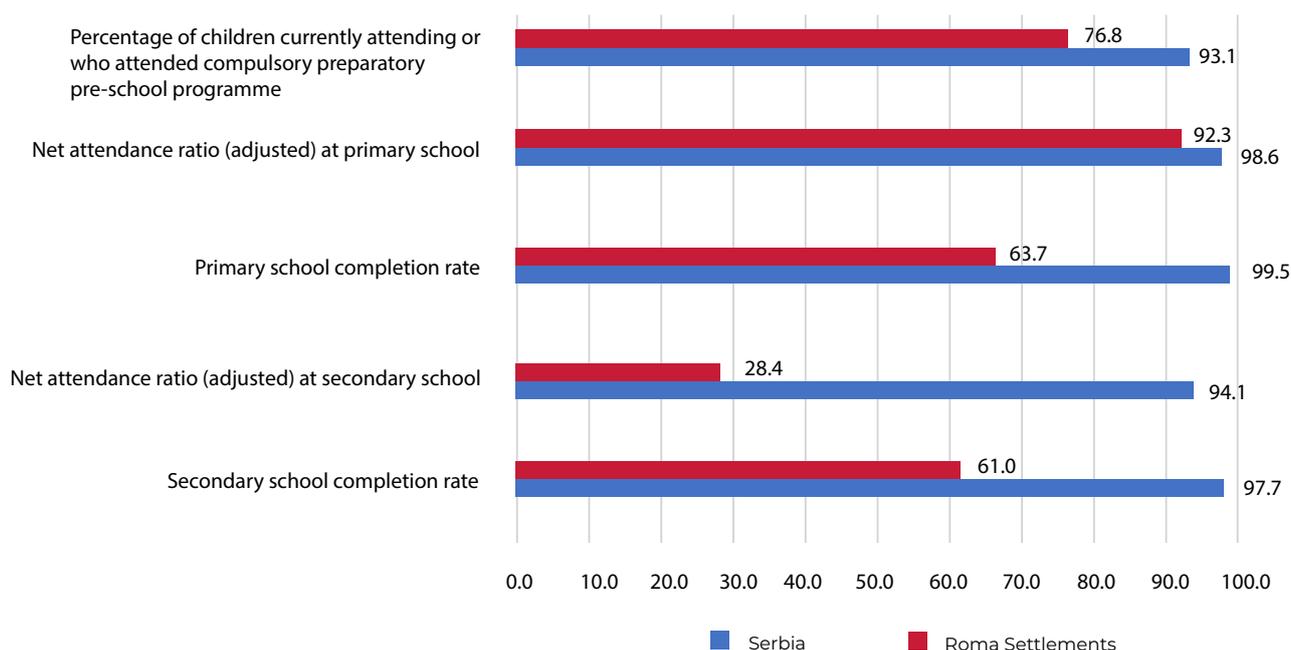
7 Percentage of children aged one year younger than the official primary school entry age at the beginning of the school year, by attendance to education, and attendance to an early childhood education programme



EDUCATION

Exclusion of children living in Roma settlements from development processes is noticeable at all education levels. Moreover, the higher the education level is, the smaller the number of children from Roma settlements who attend school (Graph 7). Children living in Roma settlements are less included in the compulsory preparatory preschool programme, and coverage of these children by education is highest at the primary school level where the gap between them and children in the overall population is the smallest. However, this gap increases with the grades of primary school and at higher educational levels, so among these children there is much lower primary school completion rate and far much lower rate of secondary school attendance than among children in the overall population.

Graph 7: **Basic indicators of education⁸, Serbia and Roma settlements, 2019, in %.**



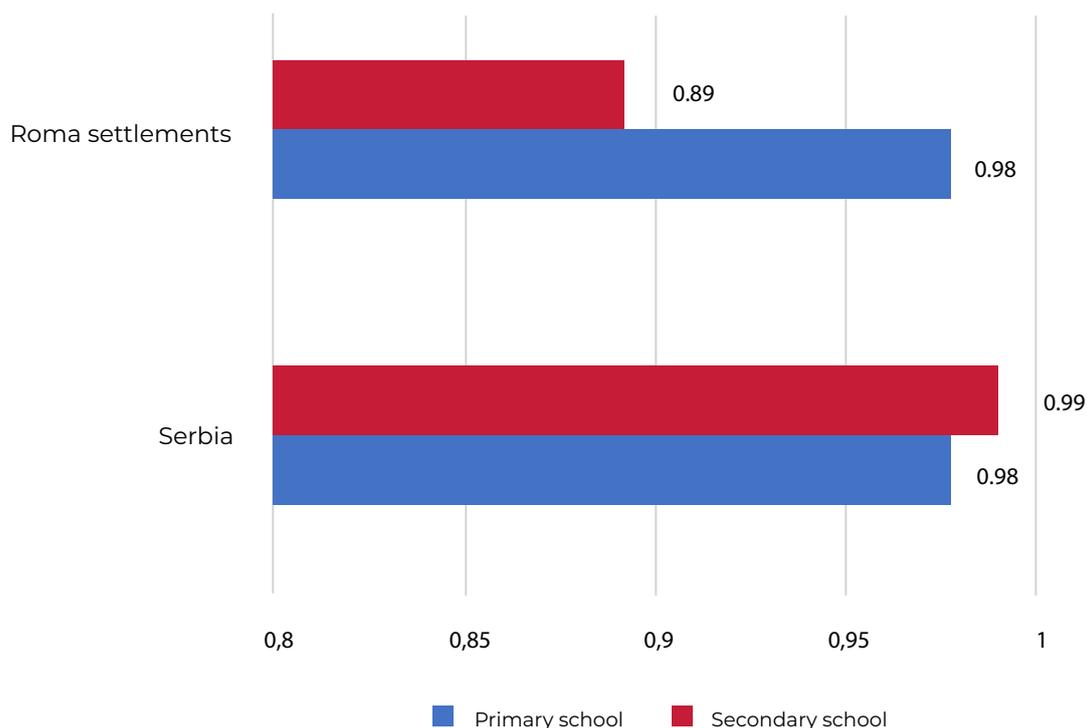
Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS), SORS and UNICEF

According to the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey data, among children living in Roma settlements, boys have higher odds of getting included in all levels of education than girls, which is also the case for children from non-urban areas as compared to children from urban areas (except with regard to compulsory pre-school education), for children whose mothers have primary or even better, secondary education, and for children from 40% of the richest households.

⁸ Definitions of indicators: Primary school/secondary school net attendance ratio is a percentage of children of official primary school/secondary school age currently attending primary or secondary school; primary school/secondary school completion rate (SDG indicator 4.1.2) is a percentage of children aged 3–5 years above the intended age for the last grade who have completed that grade of primary/secondary school (Serbia, 2019 Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey and Serbia - Roma settlements, 2019 Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey, pg. 25.)

Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey indicates generally positive processes with regard to gender equality in primary and secondary education. At the primary school level, as presented in Graph 8, both among the overall population children and among children living in Roma settlements, there is almost a full gender parity in school attendance. However, as the index values presented in the next Graph are below 1 (1 indicating a full parity), it may be concluded that the gender imbalance is in favour of boys, which means that a bit higher number of boys than girls are included in education at the primary and secondary school level. It is evident, however, that at the secondary school level, there is a less favourable parity among children living in Roma settlements, which is a consequence of lower inclusion of girls in secondary-school education.

Graph 8: **Gender Parity Indices in education⁹, 2019 Serbia and Roma Settlements (SDG Indicator 4.5.1)**



Source: Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS), SORS and UNICEF

⁹ Gender Parity Indices in education are calculated by dividing the net attendance ratio (adjusted) for girls by the net attendance ratio (adjusted) for boys, at the primary school level and at the secondary school level.

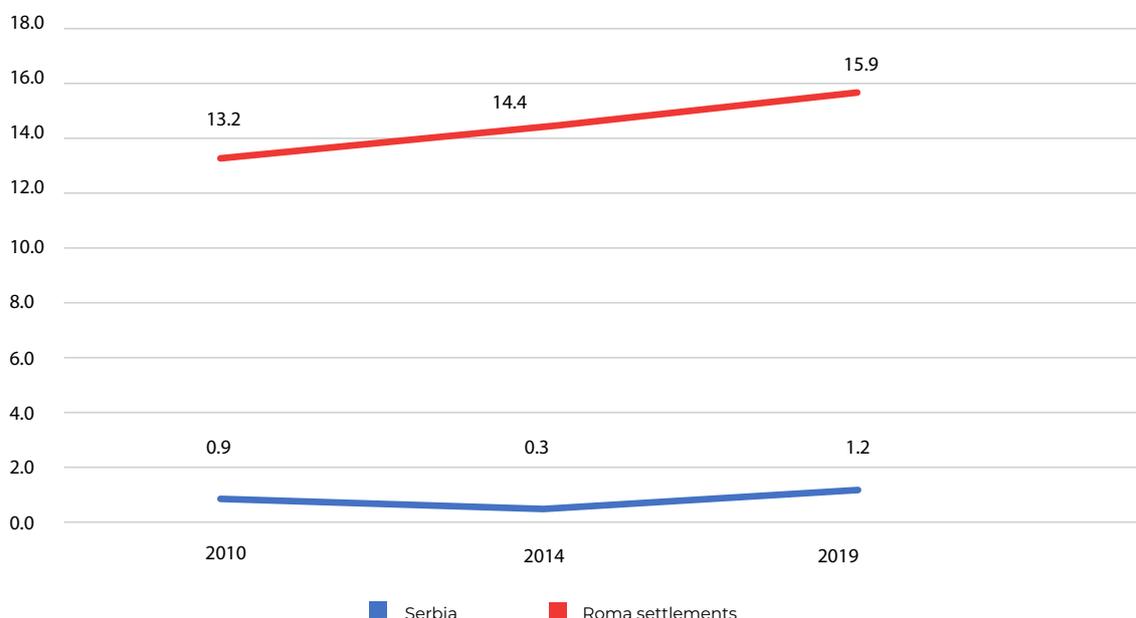


GENDER EQUALITY AND EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN AND GIRLS

One of the reasons why girls drop out of school are early marriages, which is a harmful practice defined by the Istanbul Convention as a form of gender-based violence against women that significantly violates girls' rights, development potential and well-being and that undermines their chances of social inclusion and quality life in later stages of their lives.

As presented in Graphs 9 and 10, early marriages are much more common among women living in Roma settlements than among women in the overall population. Nevertheless, the good news is that there is a mild decrease in the proportion of women living in Roma settlements who get married for the first time before they turn 15, both on the long-term basis (as compared to 2010) and on the short-term basis (as compared to 2014), despite the fact that the proportion of these women in the overall population is mildly increasing.

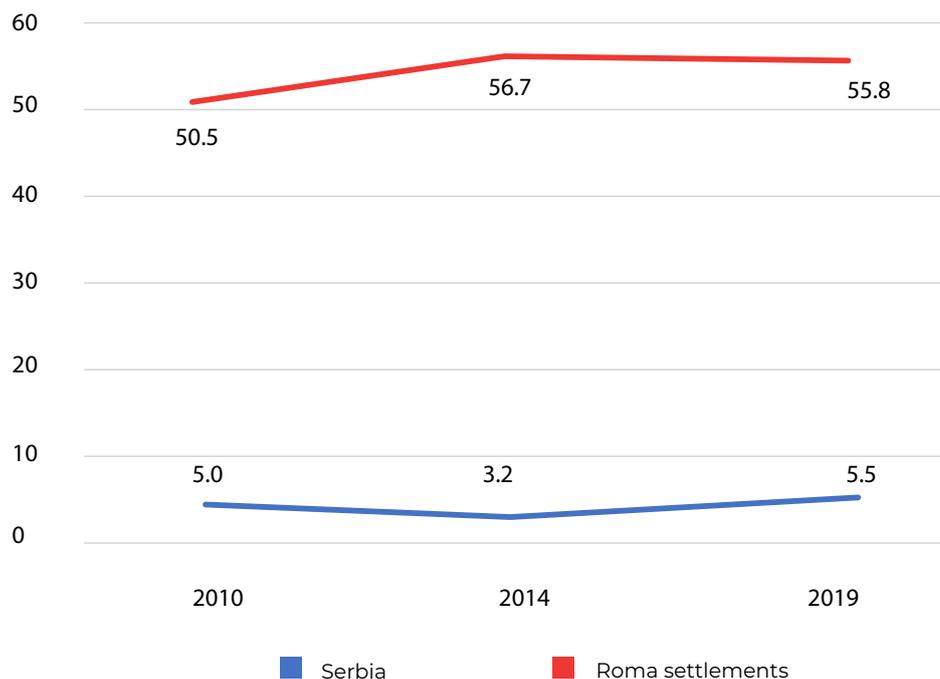
Graph 9: **Proportion of women aged 20-24 years who were married or in a union before age 15, Serbia and Roma settlements 2010-2019, in % (SDG Indicator 5.3.1a)**



Source: Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS), SORS and UNICEF

The positive short-term trend was registered with regard to decrease in the proportion of women living in Roma settlements who get married for the first time before turning 18, but it is still above the level registered in 2010. Nevertheless, we must not forget that the percentage of early marriages is far from the set goal entailing a full elimination of this practice!

Graph 10: **Proportion of women aged 20–24 years who were married or in a union before age 18, Serbia and Roma settlements 2010-2019, in % (SDG indicator 5.3.1b)**



Source: Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS), SORS and UNICEF

The data indicate that women, in particular women living in Roma settlements, do not have control over their sexual and reproductive health, nor the access to sexual and reproductive healthcare services. Namely, 84.2% of women in the overall population and 67.7% of women living in Roma settlements make their own informed decisions about having sexual intercourse, contraceptive use and reproductive health care (SDG indicator 5.6.1), which indicates that there is still a significant number of women who cannot fully exercise their right to protection of their sexual and reproductive health and have autonomy in family planning. There are differences among women of different education levels, economic activities, and material status, so that among women living in Roma settlements who have no education, there are 59.8% of those who make decisions on their own, and 71% of them among women with secondary or higher education level. Moreover, among employed women, there are more of those who make decisions on their own as compared to those who are inactive (70.2% vis-à-vis 65.1%), and there is also a difference that is not negligible among those who belong to poorest 60% and those belonging to the richest 40% (66.1% vis-à-vis 69.9).



EMPLOYMENT AND DECENT WORK

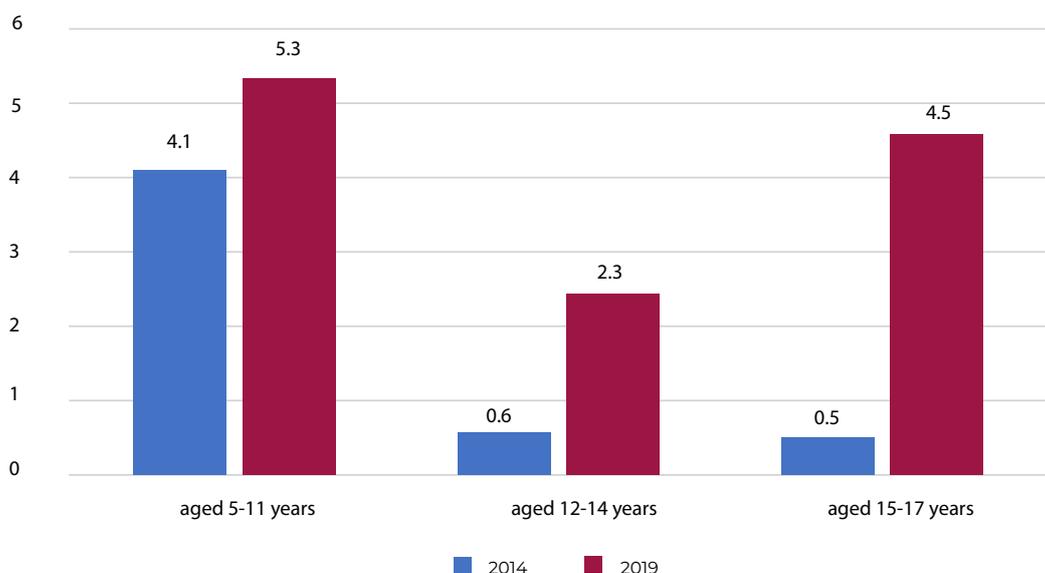
The consequence of a lower school attendance rate is lower participation rate in the labour market. Official SDG indicators used for following this sustainable development aspect are not available for population in Roma settlements, so the situation is overviewed based on related indicators for which data are available in the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey.

The employment rate for the population covered by the Roma Settlements MICS Sample was only 39.9%, and the unemployment rate was 23.5%. Particularly unfavourable are women employment indicators. Namely, among women living in Roma settlements who participated in MICS, aged 15-49 years, only 24.6% had some form of employment, 15.7% were unemployed, and 59.7% were inactive. This indicates a huge unused economic potential of women and their weak odds to improve their living conditions by participating in the labour market.

Moreover, there are some negative tendencies with regard to child labour. As noted by the Progress Report on the implementation of Sustainable Development Goals by 2030 in the Republic of Serbia¹⁰ of the Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia, due to the slight increase in child labour prevalence, moderate movement away from the target 8.7 was recorded. Increase in the prevalence was recorded among girls, from urban population and in Roma settlements, aged 5-11 years, who attended school and lived in households that were not poor. Moreover, reduction of child labour was registered among the groups of children where there was the highest prevalence, like among boys living in rural settlements. Data in the Graph below indicate that there was an increase in the prevalence of child labour among all age groups of children living in Roma settlements.

10 <http://sdg.indikatori.rs/sr-cyrl/news-events/hapredak/>

Graph 11: **Proportion of children engaged in child labour,¹¹ by age, Roma settlements in 2019, in %**



Source: Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS), SORS and UNICEF

**SDG
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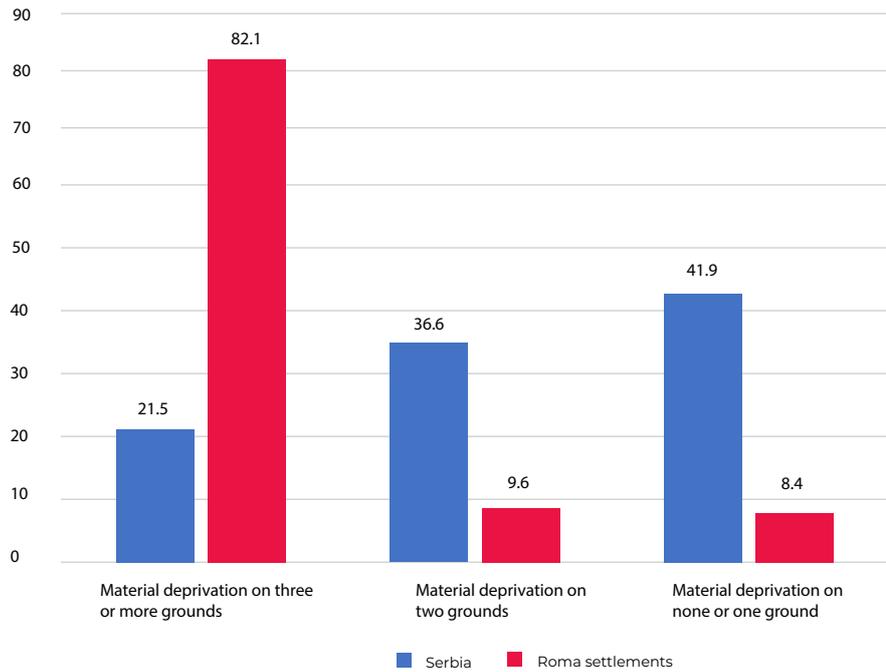
POVERTY



Poor integrity in the labour market increases risks of poverty. There are no available data for the official poverty indicators acquired based on the statistics on incomes and living conditions. However, MICS enables some comparative analysis. Among women aged 15-49 years covered by this survey, there were far more women living in Roma settlements who lived in households experiencing material deprivation than women in the overall population. (Graph 12). As many as over 80% of these women claimed to be deprived of three or more items that ensure meeting of their basic needs in everyday life.

¹¹ The term “child labour” is an official term introduced by the International Labour Organisation to distinguish between a harmful child labour and participation of children in economic activities that are not necessarily harmful and that may actually be beneficial for their labour socialization and development. Harmful child labour is defined based on the number of hours of economic activities performed by a child during a reference week. Therefore, there are different criteria for children of working age. According to UNICEF methodology, for children aged 5-11 years, at least 1 hour of economic work per week is considered detrimental, for children aged 12-14 years at least 14 hours of economic work, and for children aged 15-17 years, at least 43 hours of economic work per week.

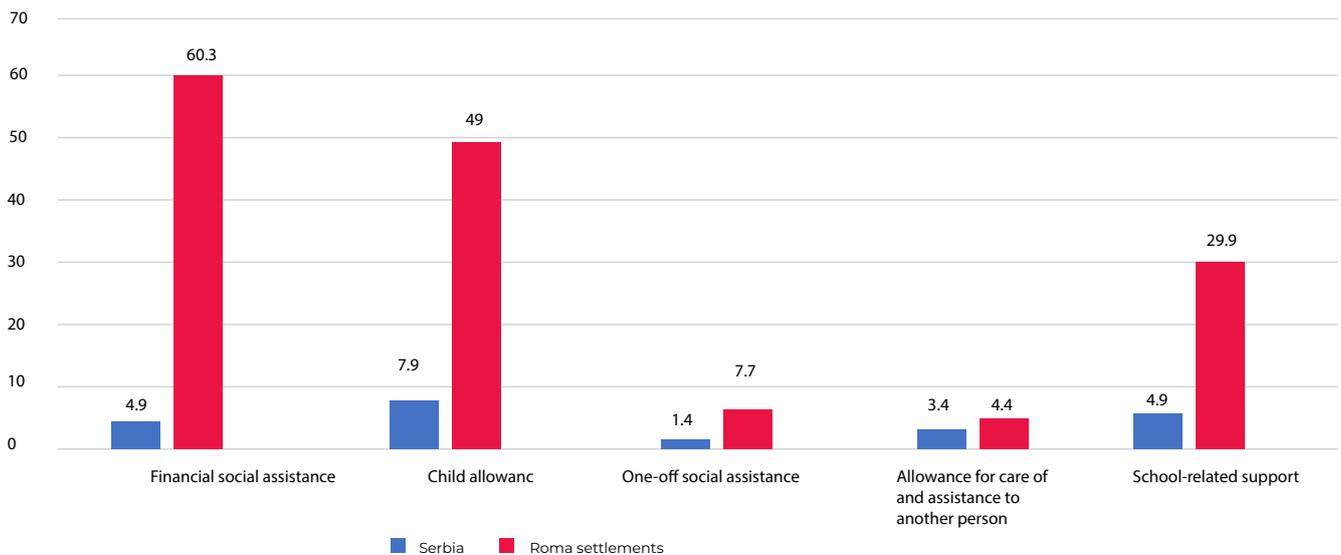
Graph 12: **Women aged 15-49 years, by material deprivation, Serbia and Roma settlements, 2019, in %.**



Source: Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS), SORS and UNICEF

Due to being exposed to higher poverty risks, households in Roma settlements much more often receive some form of social assistance (Graph 13).

Graph 13: **Percentage of households receiving some type of support over past 3 months, Serbia and Roma settlements in 2019.**



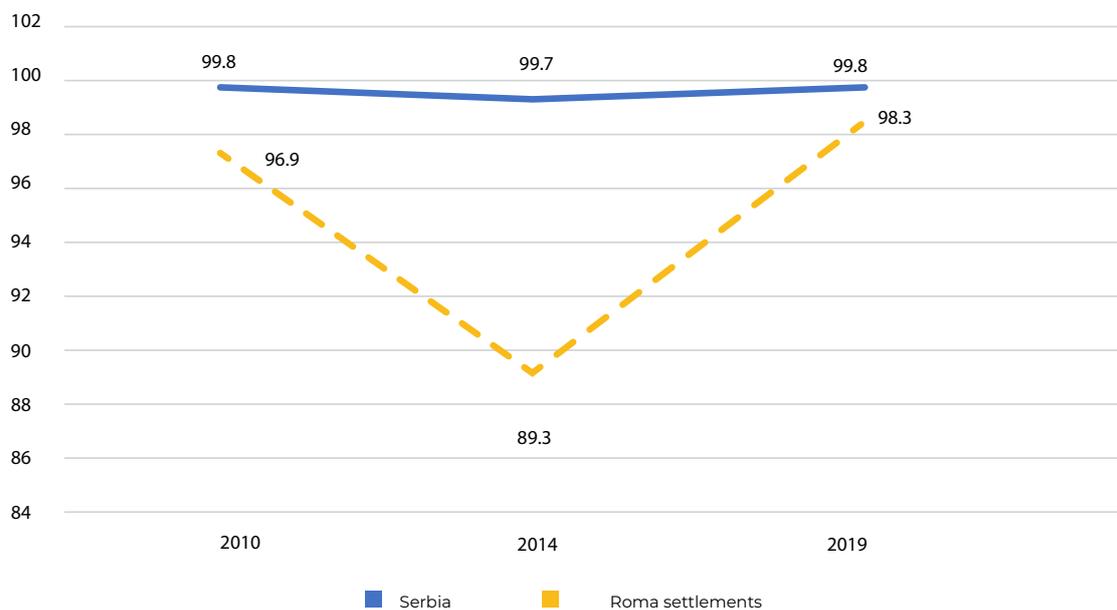
Source: Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS), SORS and UNICEF

ACCESS TO RESOURCES AND HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT



Life in Roma settlements is characterised by poorer access to sanitation, and due to poverty, by not relying on clean fuels and technologies for cooking. As regards access to improved sources of drinking water, there are not many differences between the population living in Roma settlements and the overall population - 98.8% of the population living in Roma settlements have access to improved sources of drinking water, while this percentage is 99.8% among the overall population. However, the most favourable situation is with the access to sanitation, as 93.0% of population living in Roma settlements have access to improved sanitation facilities, and 98.6% of the overall population have such access. There was a progress made by the population living in Roma settlements when it comes to access to electricity (Graph 14).

Graph 14: **Proportion of population with access to electricity, Serbia and Roma settlements, 2010-2019, in % (SDG 7.1.1)**

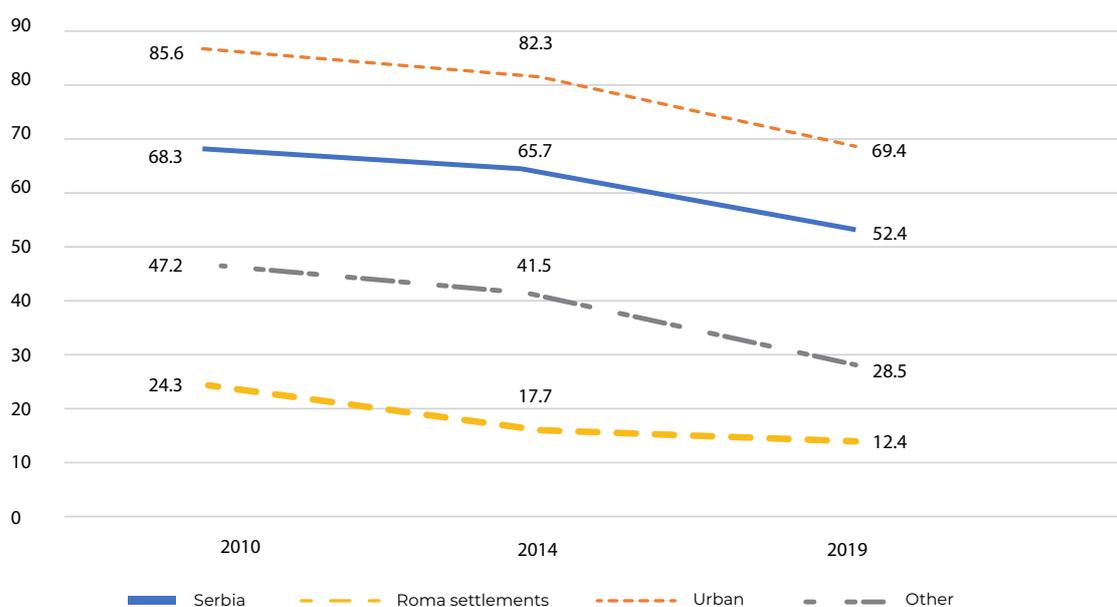


Source: Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS), SORS and UNICEF

However, there was a significant distancing from the target when it comes to proportion of population with primary reliance on clean fuels and cooking technology¹², both among the overall population and in Roma settlements (Graph 15).

¹² The indicator presents ratio between the number of population primarily relying on clean fuels and cooking technologies (electricity, liquefied propane, LPG and natural gas) and a total number of population, expressed in percentages.

Graph 15: **Indicator 7.1.2 Proportion of population with primary reliance on clean fuels and technology (SDG Indicator 7.1.2)**



Source: Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS), SORS and UNICEF

SECURITY, DISCRIMINATION AND HARASSMENT

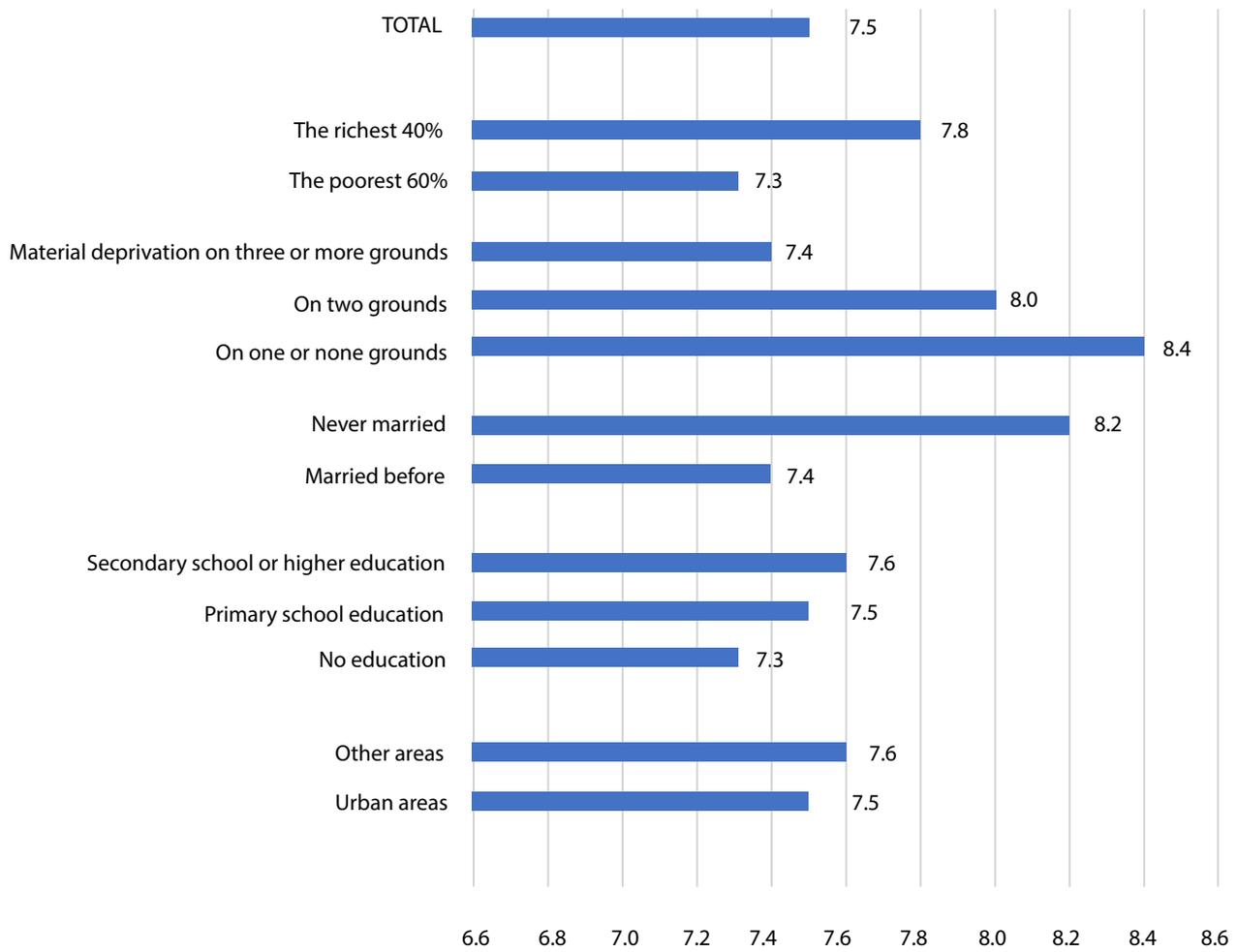
Exclusion from development processes is largely caused by discrimination, violence and harassment. Data on exposure to discrimination are available only for women based on 2019 Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey, according to which women living in Roma settlements more often experience various forms of discrimination than women in the overall population. In the 12 months prior to the survey, 6.9% of women from the overall population experienced some form of discrimination, while the percentage of women with such experience among women living in Roma settlements was twice as high (12.5%).

Women living in Roma settlements also feel less safe. Namely, 87.5% of women in the overall population and 71% of women living in Roma settlements claimed to feel safe walking alone in their neighbourhood after dark or while being at home alone after dark.

SUBJECTIVE WELLBEING

Having regard to the living conditions of the population living in Roma settlements described above, it is no surprise that there is a lower subjective well-being or life satisfaction, although the data about it are available only for women aged 15-49 years. While the average life satisfaction score is 8.0 for women from the overall population, the average life satisfaction score for women living in Roma settlements is 7.5. A similar gap in life satisfaction could also easily be expected among men. Life satisfaction of women living in Roma settlements vary depending on various living conditions, but on average, more satisfaction is felt by women living in households of greater well-being, women not facing material deprivation, women with secondary or higher education, women living in non-urban areas and women who have never been married.

Graph 16: **Average life satisfaction score of women living in Roma settlements, 2019.**



Source: Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS), SORS and UNICEF