

## Safe and Sound: Enhancing Youth Knowledge on Sexual Health and Diversity Analytical report

Questionnaire „Safe and Sound: Enhancing Youth Knowledge on Sexual Health and Diversity“ included **84 participants**, mainly aged **13–18**. Most respondents (63%) were girls, and **80%** lived in small or rural communities. This shows that the study successfully reached its target group – **students from smaller communities with limited access to systematic sexual education**.

The results indicate that young people show **interest and awareness**, but their knowledge is **uneven** and **fragmented**. More than half of the participants rated their knowledge as good, while over one-third admitted feeling **insecure or limited** when it comes to topics related to sexual education. Most young people obtain information **from friends and the Internet (29%)**, while only **around 20%** reported having received **formal education in school or at home**. This highlights a **lack of a structured approach** and a **dependence on informal sources**, which are not always reliable.

In terms of values and attitudes, young people demonstrate **emotional maturity and awareness**. They associate a “healthy relationship” with **trust, respect, and love**, and most clearly identify **jealousy and control** as **unhealthy behaviors**. The majority (87%) believe it is **not acceptable for a partner to control their personal life**, and 81% state that they **have not felt pressured in a relationship**. At the same time, 14% admit to having **experienced pressure**, showing that the topic of **personal boundaries and consent remains crucial**.

Regarding sexual health knowledge, **78%** correctly recognize that **herpes can be transmitted through kissing**, but some participants have **misconceptions about HIV transmission and other STIs**.

More than 60% know that the **withdrawal method is unreliable**, yet one-third are uncertain about what it entails. This points to a **need for clear, practical explanations** of contraceptive methods.

Almost all participants (**over 90%**) agree that **comprehensive sexual education is important**.

The most desired topics for learning include:

- Emotional aspects of relationships (73%)
- Contraception and safe sex (66%)
- Consent and personal boundaries (57%)

As for preferred learning formats, **74%** favor **online platforms and social media**, over half (**54%**) want the topic to be addressed **in school**, and **50%** prefer to discuss it with **professionals** such as psychologists and doctors.

The main challenges identified by participants are:

- Lack of information and lessons on the topic
- Fear and embarrassment to ask questions
- Lack of understanding from adults
- Prejudice and judgment

In conclusion, the study shows that **young people are eager to learn and discuss these topics**, but they need:

- **A safe and supportive environment**

- **Up-to-date and practical content**
- **Involvement of professionals and peers** in the learning process

The results can serve as a foundation for **future educational initiatives, campaigns, and policies** aimed at developing an **informed, confident, and responsible young generation**.

### Results of the conducted survey

#### 1. Gender Identity

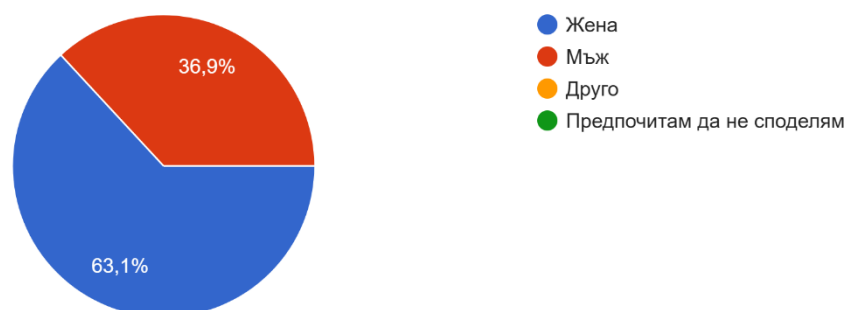
Out of a total of **84 participants**, **63.1% identified as female (53 individuals)** and **36.9% as male (31 individuals)**.

The data show a **higher participation rate among girls**, which may be attributed to **greater openness and willingness to engage with topics related to sexual health** among young women.

Similar trends are observed in other youth studies, where **girls tend to show more interest in issues related to health, relationships, and personal development**.

Nevertheless, the share of male participants (**36.9%**) is also **notably significant**, indicating **increasing engagement and awareness among young men** regarding these subjects.

Полова идентичност  
84 отговора



#### **Important Note!**

**Questions related to sexual orientation were not included in the survey, in accordance with the requirements of the Bulgarian Preschool and School Education Act and related regulatory documents.**

**Such questions are not permitted in the school environment, where the survey was primarily distributed.**

**The research therefore focuses exclusively on participants' knowledge, attitudes, and perceptions regarding sexual education, health, and safety, without addressing issues of personal orientation or identity.**

#### Age

- The majority of respondents (**over 80%**) fall within the **core target age group of 13–18 years**, indicating that the survey successfully reached its **primary audience – students and young people in their teenage years**.

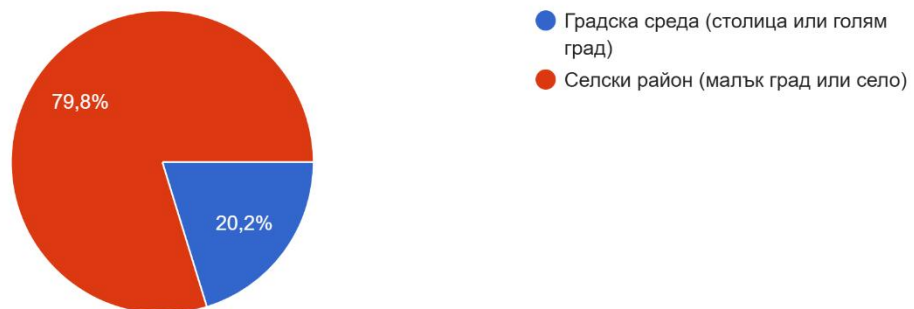
- A small percentage (**11.9%**) of participants aged **19 and above** most likely includes **older secondary school students or young volunteers involved in the project.**
- Participation of children **under the age of 13 (4.8%)** was limited, which is positive, as this age group is generally **not the primary focus of sexual education topics without special adaptation.**

➔ **In conclusion**, the age distribution is **appropriate and aligned with the project's objectives**, providing a **reliable basis for analyzing attitudes and knowledge among students and adolescents.**

### Place of Residence

- **80% of the respondents live in rural areas or small settlements.** This shows that the project **successfully reached young people from smaller communities**, where access to quality sexual education and health information is often more limited.
- Only **one fifth (20.2%)** of participants live in **urban environments**, which may reflect **lower engagement among students from larger cities** or **different access to youth initiatives.**

Къде живееш в момента?  
84 отговора



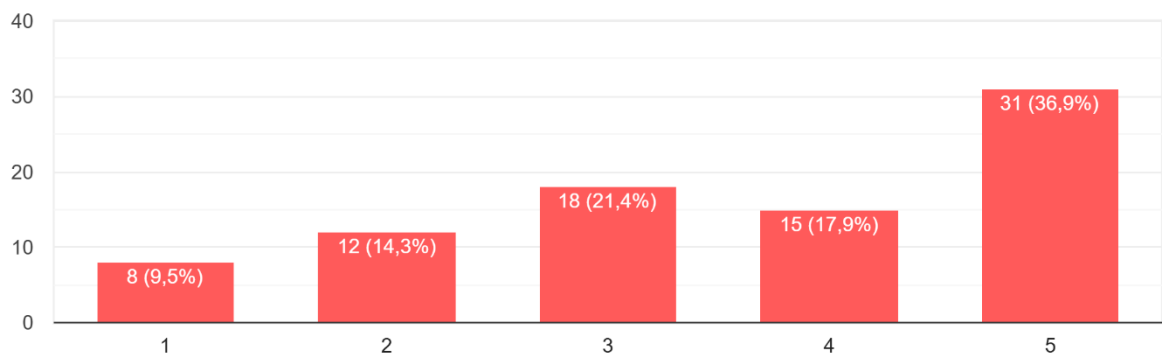
➔ **These results highlight the importance of implementing educational activities and awareness campaigns in smaller communities**, where topics related to sexual health and relationships are often less represented and discussed.

### How would you rate your current knowledge about sexual health and education?

- The results show that most young people have a good self-assessment of their knowledge about sexual health and education. Over a third of respondents (36.9%) rated their knowledge with the highest score (5), and another 17.9% gave it a score of 4. Overall, more than half (54.8%) believe that they have satisfactory to very good knowledge on the topic.
- On the other hand, about a quarter (23.8%) admit that their knowledge is limited (scores 1 and 2), which highlights the need for more practical and accessible sexual education, especially for students from smaller settlements.

Как бихте оценили настоящите си знания за сексуалното здраве и образование?

84 отговора



→ The average values show that young people have basic knowledge, but probably lack systematicity and depth – which is one of the key goals of projects like this one.

#### Who do you feel most comfortable talking to about sex education or relationships?

- The results show that the largest number of participants (around 11–12%) indicated that they felt most comfortable talking to friends about topics related to sex education and relationships. This confirms that informal environments and peers play a key role in sharing information on sensitive issues.

- On the other hand, a significant proportion of participants (over 13%) said that they did not feel comfortable talking to anyone, indicating shame, lack of trust or fear of judgment.

→ This result highlights the need for safer, supportive environments in school and the community, where young people can ask questions and receive reliable information without embarrassment.

#### Have you ever avoided asking a question about sex, health or relationships because you felt embarrassed or were afraid of being judged?

More than half of the participants (over 53%) admitted that they had avoided asking questions about sex, health or relationships due to shame, fear of being judged or not having the right person to confide in. This is a clear signal that the topic remains sensitive and socially taboo for a large proportion of young people.

Only around 18% said they were not embarrassed to ask questions, meaning that most young people still need a safer environment in which to feel heard and understood.

#### How would you describe your feelings towards same-sex couples?

More than half of the respondents (59.5%) stated a neutral attitude towards same-sex couples. This shows that the majority of young people do not express strong emotions in either a positive or negative direction, which can be interpreted as a manifestation of tolerance or a lack of a clearly formed opinion.

Around 13% expressed a positive attitude, while 17.9% shared a negative attitude. The small but visible group of participants (9.5%) admitted that they did not have enough information to form an opinion, which indicates the need for information campaigns and conversations about respect, differences and equality.

→ In summary, the results indicate that among young people in the community, a neutral

**or moderately positive attitude prevails, which can be developed towards greater empathy and acceptance through educational activities, without violating the legal and ethical frameworks of the school environment.**

### **Do you think your school/youth environment is a safe place for LGBTQI+ people?**

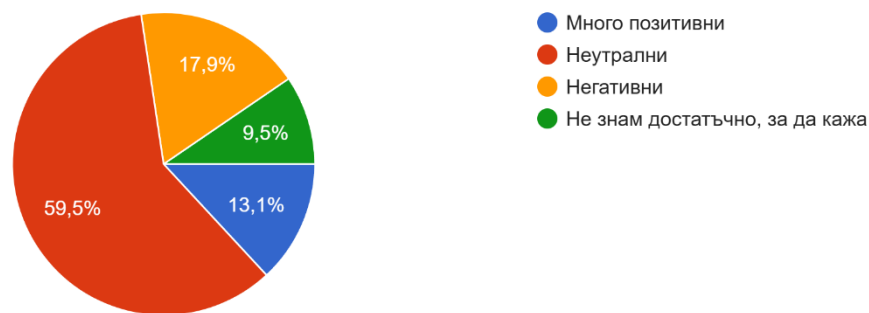
Only about a third of respondents (28.6%) believe that their school or youth environment is a safe place for LGBTQI+ people. This shows that a sense of security and acceptance is not fully built among students and young people.

About a quarter (25%) of participants believe that the environment is not safe, while nearly 12% express uncertainty or lack of opinion (“I don’t know”, “I can’t say”). This may indicate a lack of awareness and conversations about the topic at school, as well as avoidance of the topic due to fear of misunderstanding or stigma.

**→ The results highlight the need for clearer rules and prevention of discrimination, as well as activities that promote respect and inclusion among students.**

Как бихте описали чувствата си към еднополовите двойки?

84 отговора



### **How confident do you feel in your knowledge of topics related to sex education?**

The results show that nearly half of the respondents (45.2%) feel only partially confident in their knowledge on topics related to sexual education.

One third (34.5%) of young people define themselves as very confident, which is a positive sign of growing awareness and self-confidence.

At the same time, 20.2% say that they feel unsure, which points to an uneven distribution of knowledge among the participants.

**→ This picture suggests that despite the interest in the topic, knowledge is still fragmented – probably acquired mainly from informal sources (internet, friends, etc.).**

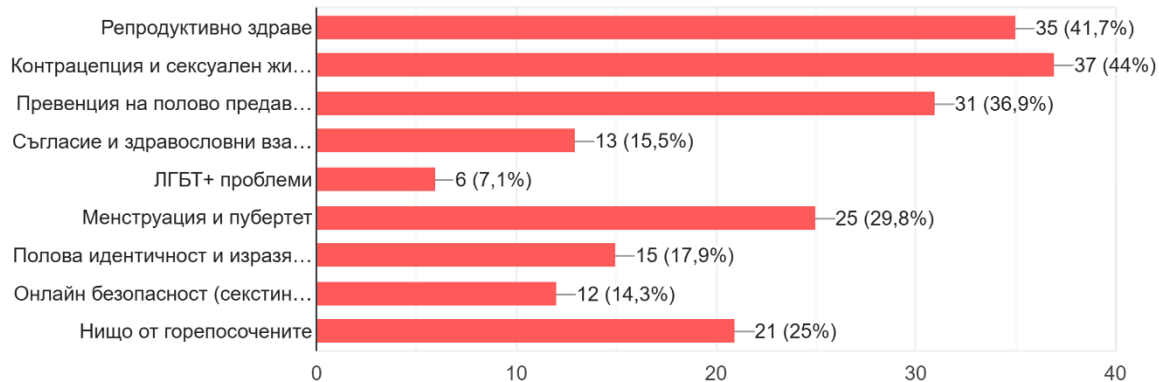
### **Which of the following topics have you studied?**

Most respondents indicated that they had some access to information on the topics of contraception and sexual health (44%), as well as reproductive health (41.7%). This indicates that some students have already been introduced to the basic elements of sexuality education, probably through biology or health education classes.

At the same time, however, a quarter of respondents (25%) stated that they had not studied any of the listed topics, which is a significant proportion. This may indicate a lack of systematic teaching or uneven coverage of the curricula across schools and regions.

### Кои от следните теми сте изучавали? (Изберете всички подходящи)

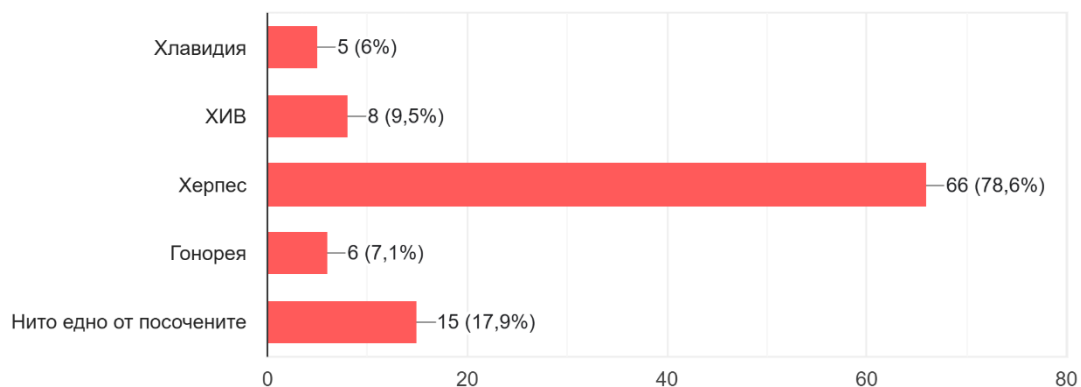
84 отговора



### Which of the following sexually transmitted diseases do you think can be transmitted through kissing?

Кои от следните полово предавани болести според вас могат да се предадат чрез целувка?

84 отговора



The majority of respondents (78.6%) correctly associated herpes as a disease that can be transmitted through kissing, which indicates basic awareness on the topic.

However, about 10% of participants mistakenly believe that HIV can be transmitted through kissing, and 7% – that gonorrhoea is transmitted in this way.

These data point to a partial understanding of the ways of transmission of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), but also the presence of myths and misconceptions among some young people.

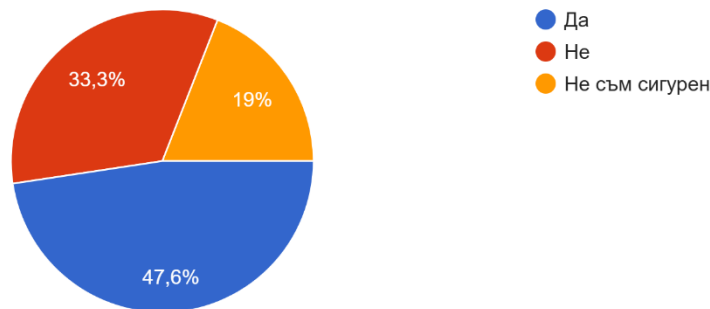
About 18% indicated that none of the listed diseases is transmitted through kissing — which may be due either to lack of information or difficulty in choosing the correct answer.

**→ It is recommended that future trainings place greater emphasis on the mechanisms of transmission of STDs, distinguishing facts from myths, and the role of prevention in everyday relationships.**

**Do you think a person can get pregnant even if they use a condom?**

Мислите ли, че човек може да забременее, дори ако използва презерватив?

84 отговора



Almost half of the respondents (47.6%) believe that it is possible to get pregnant even when using a condom, while a third (33.3%) believe that this is not possible.

About 19% express uncertainty about the effectiveness of this method.

These results reflect a mixed understanding of the reliability of contraceptives. While it is true that no method is 100% effective, the high share of uncertainty and misconceptions indicates the need for clearer information about the correct use of condoms and their real effectiveness (about 98% when used correctly).

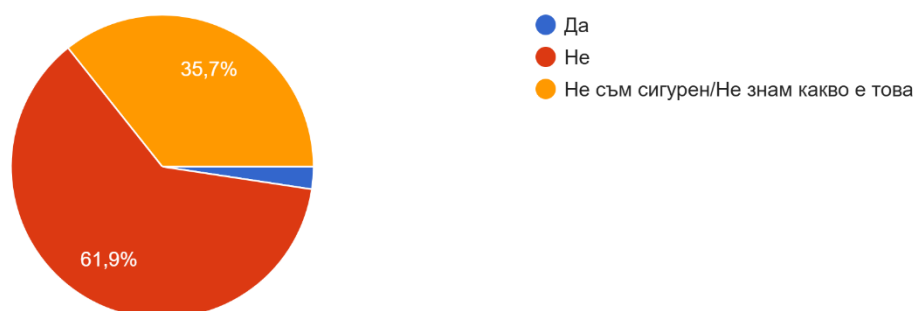
➔ In future trainings, it is advisable to include practical demonstrations and visual materials that explain:

- how to use a condom correctly;
- what are the possible errors during use;
- and what other methods of protection exist.

Is the withdrawal method ("pulling out") a reliable method of contraception?

Методът на прекъснатия полов акт („издърпване“) надежден метод за контрацепция ли е?

84 отговора



Most respondents (61.9%) correctly recognize that the withdrawal method is not reliable as a contraceptive method. This indicates basic awareness on the topic.

At the same time, over a third of the participants (35.7%) said that they were not sure or did not know what the method was, which points to a lack of sufficient educational information about the different types of contraceptives and their effectiveness.

Only 2.4% responded that this method is reliable — a result that, although low, indicates the presence of misconceptions that can lead to risky sexual behavior.

➔ It is recommended that during trainings, attention be paid to:

- explaining the effectiveness of different contraceptive methods,

- **distinguishing between myths and real facts,**
- **and promoting the use of safe and accessible methods of protection.**

### What does a healthy relationship look like to you?

Open-ended responses show that young people associate a “healthy relationship” primarily with trust, respect, and love. This demonstrates emotional maturity and awareness of the importance of mutual respect and honesty in relationships.

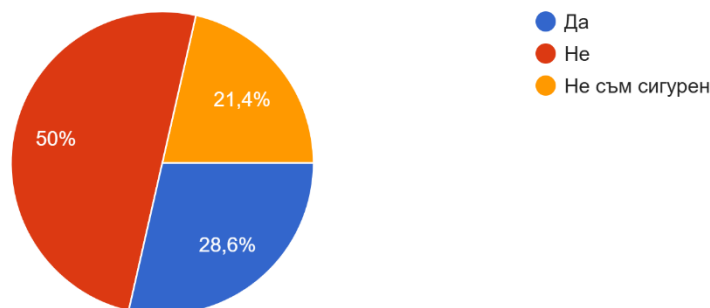
Some participants emphasize mutual support and understanding, which suggests that young people see the relationship not only as romantic, but also as a partnership and friendship. There are no pronounced signs of unhealthy patterns such as control, jealousy, or dependency, which is a positive signal for the attitudes in the group.

➔ **These results can be used as a basis for developing training modules for healthy relationships, including topics such as trust, communication, emotional intelligence, and respect for personal boundaries.**

### Is jealousy a sign of love?

Ревността признак на любов ли е?

84 отговора



Half of the participants (50%) correctly distinguished that jealousy is not a sign of love, but rather of insecurity, lack of trust or control. This shows maturity and an understanding of healthy boundaries in relationships.

At the same time, almost a third (28.6%) still associate jealousy with love, which shows that traditional stereotypes about romantic relationships continue to influence young people's perceptions.

Around 21.4% are insecure, which may be due to mixed messages in society, the media and social networks, where jealousy is often presented as a sign of affection.

➔ **These results highlight the need for more training in emotional literacy and healthy relationships to help young people distinguish love from control and understand that mutual trust and respect are the true marks of a healthy relationship.**

### Is it okay for your partner to check your phone or tell you what to wear?

Добре ли е партньорът ви да проверява телефона ви или да ви казва какво да облечете?

84 отговора



The overwhelming majority of respondents (86.9%) categorically stated that it is not acceptable for a partner to control personal space – be it by checking their phone or dictating what to wear. This indicates a high level of awareness regarding personal boundaries and autonomy in relationships.

However, a small percentage (around 9.5%) still believe that such behavior is acceptable, and a few participants (around 3.5%) take an intermediate position (“it depends on the situation” or “maybe”).

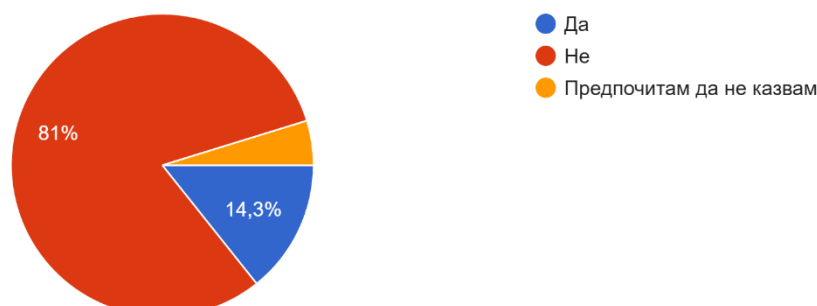
This shows that some young people still do not fully recognize controlling behavior as a form of unhealthy dynamic.

➔ **These results highlight the need for educational discussions about personal boundaries, respect and equality, including how to recognize signs of control and psychological abuse.**

**Have you ever felt pressured to do something in a relationship that you weren't comfortable with?**

Чувствали ли сте се някога подложени на натиск да направите нещо във връзка, с което не сте се чувствали комфортно?

84 отговора



Most participants (81%) stated that they had not been subjected to pressure in a relationship, which is a positive result, indicating that the majority of young people did not experience intrusive or controlling behavior in their personal relationships.

However, 14.3% of respondents said that they had been subjected to pressure, which is a significant signal and should not be ignored.

Another 4.8% of participants chose the answer "I prefer not to say", which probably indicates discomfort when discussing sensitive topics or personal experiences that they do not want

to talk about openly.

➔ **It is recommended that confidential conversations, role-playing games and emotional intelligence training be held within the project to help young people recognize pressure and react confidently in such situations.**

### **What does 'consent' mean to you?"**

Open-ended responses show that the majority of respondents (over 70%) understand “consent” as a clear, voluntary and informed “yes”, given without pressure or coercion.

This indicates a high level of awareness of the topic and understanding of the basic principles related to personal boundaries and mutual respect.

Some participants explicitly mentioned that consent should be freely given and informed, which demonstrates a deeper understanding of the concept.

However, a small number of young people used more general or vague descriptions, which suggests that further conversations and examples are needed to clarify what consent is not (e.g. silence, pressure, guilt or fear).

➔ **It is recommended to include interactive activities and role-play situations to help students practice communicating consent and refusal in a variety of contexts — from personal boundaries to romantic relationships.**

### **Have you ever received any form of sex education?**

The data show that almost a third of the participants (28.6%) receive information on sexual health topics mainly from friends and the Internet, which confirms that informal sources are the main channel for education on the topic.

Nearly a quarter (23.8%) of the respondents indicated that they had not received any form of sexuality education, which represents a significant share and highlights a systematic lack of formalized training in a school environment.

Only about 20% of the participants received sexuality education at school or in the family, which points to insufficient institutional commitment on the topic.

➔ **These results clearly show that young people rely mainly on peers and online content, which is often unverified or misleading.**

**Therefore, it is crucial that the project provides structured, accessible and reliable information through schools, workshops and campaigns targeting students and parents.**

### **What topics would you like to learn more about?**

The results show that young people have a strong interest not only in the biological side of sex education, but also in the emotional and psychological aspects of relationships.

The largest number of participants (72.6%) indicated that they wanted to learn more about emotions and relationships, which indicates a need for conversations about communication, trust and respect in personal relationships.

Also, a significant part (65.5%) is interested in contraception and safe sex, and over half (57.1%) want more information about consent and personal boundaries.

This shows that young people are aware of the importance of mutual respect and safety in relationships.

The topics of sexually transmitted diseases (51.2%) and body image (48.8%) are also among the priorities, which indicates a desire for better information and self-acceptance.

➔ **It is recommended that future training and initiatives be multidisciplinary - combining medical, psychological and social aspects, with an emphasis on communication, respect**

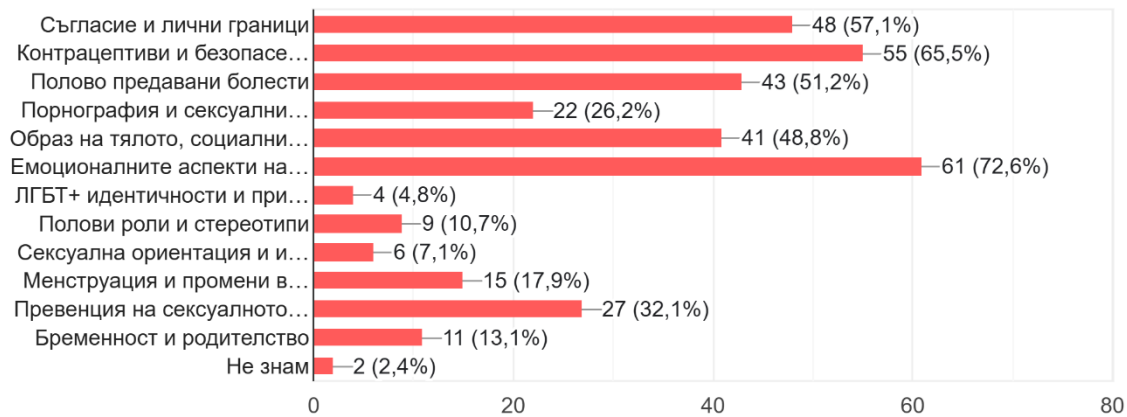
and

emotional

maturity.

За кои теми бихте искали да научите повече? (Изберете до 5)

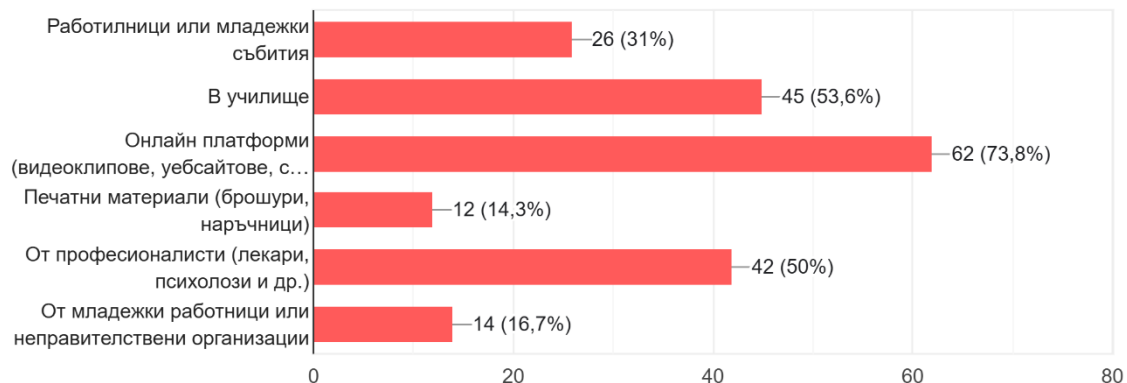
84 отговора



### Where would you prefer to learn about sex education?

Къде бихте предпочели да научите за сексуалното образование? (Изберете всички подходящи)

84 отговора



The largest share of respondents (73.8%) prefer to receive information about sex education through online platforms, videos, websites and social media. This is a clear indicator of the habits and preferences of the younger generation, which seeks information in an accessible and digital form.

The school comes in second place (53.6%), which shows that students recognize the role of the educational institution as a reliable source of knowledge, but probably want a more up-to-date and open approach to the topic.

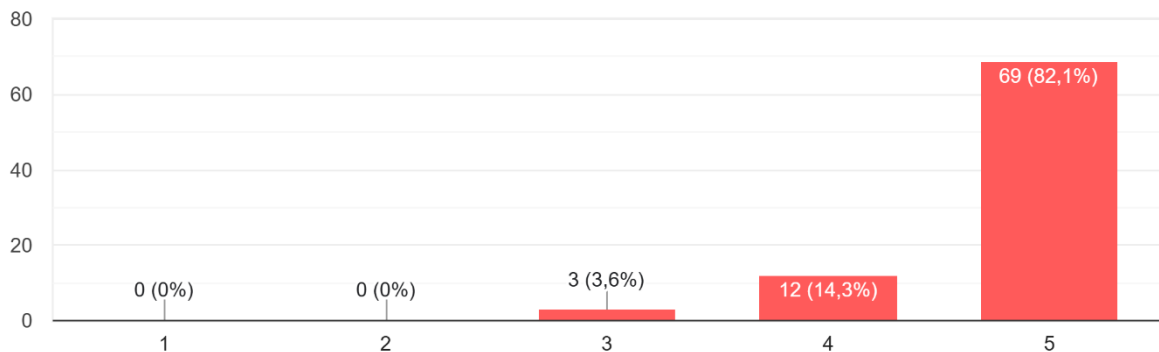
Half of the participants (50%) express a desire to learn more from professionals - doctors, psychologists and other specialists, which emphasizes the search for reliable, scientifically based and practical information.

**➡ It is recommended that future activities combine the accessibility of online content with the expert authority of trainers and teachers, as well as interactive approaches in a school environment (workshops, videos, games, campaigns).**

**In your opinion, how important is it to receive quality sex education?**

Според вас, колко важно е да се получи качествено сексуално образование?

84 отговора



Almost all participants give high marks for importance – over 90% answer with 4 or 5 on a scale of 1 to 5.

Analysis:

The data clearly shows that young people perceive sex education as extremely important. This confirms the attitude that the topic is no longer considered taboo, but a necessity.

➔ **This is a strong argument in support of the need to officially include sex education in the curricula and to conduct workshops and discussions with experts.**

**What are the biggest challenges facing young people in your community related to sex education?**

Most common answers:

- Lack of sufficient information and classes on the topic.
- Fear or shame to ask questions.
- Lack of understanding on the part of adults.
- Prejudice and judgment.

Analysis:

The main difficulties are related not so much to a lack of interest, but to a lack of an accessible, safe and supportive environment for discussing these issues.

➔ **A more open dialogue between students, teachers and parents is needed, as well as better accessibility to reliable information, especially in smaller settlements.**

**“What would make sex education more relevant or helpful to you personally?”**

Most common ideas:

- More open conversations without judgment.
- Interactive lessons, games and videos.
- Topics about emotions, respect and personal boundaries.
- More participation of psychologists and young trainers.
- Online access to materials and anonymous questions.

Analysis:

Participants want less theory and more practical, accessible and understandable activities. They emphasize emotional health and communication, not only on biological aspects.

➔ **This confirms the need for modern and interactive approaches that make the topic close and safe to discuss.**

## **Do you have any suggestions on how this project can help young people better understand sexual health, diversity, and relationships?**

Most common suggestions:

- Conducting talks, presentations, and workshops.
- Information campaigns and educational materials.
- Online content and videos with experts.
- More discussions with students from different schools.

Analysis:

Young people demonstrate constructive thinking and a desire to participate. They see the project as an opportunity for open conversation, not just for training.

**➔ It is recommended that the project emphasize the participation of young people as active content creators, not just listeners — for example, through collaborative videos, podcasts, or youth campaigns.**

### **CONCLUSION**

The results of the survey show that Bulgarian youth have basic awareness and positive attitudes on the topic of sexual education, but lack systematicity and access to reliable sources of information. The majority of students understand the importance of the topic, but hesitate to discuss it openly due to fear of judgment and lack of appropriate spaces for dialogue.

It is evident that young people are aware of the need for knowledge about relationships, trust, consent and emotional intelligence, and not only about the biological aspects of sexuality. Their responses point to a desire for more interactive, practically oriented and accessible education, which should be presented in understandable language and through modern channels - digital platforms, videos and discussions with peers.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. Introduction of structured and accessible training on sexual and emotional health in schools, tailored to the age and cultural context.
2. Development of online resources and interactive materials - videos, games, platforms for anonymous questions.
3. Involving specialists (doctors, psychologists, educators) in training processes and campaigns.
4. Supporting peer educators and youth leaders who can convey information in an accessible and understandable way.
5. Promoting open dialogue between students, parents and teachers, in order to overcome shame and prejudice on the topic.
6. Integrating elements of emotional intelligence and interpersonal skills as a basis for healthy relationships and personal boundaries.

This analysis clearly emphasizes that young people have the potential and willingness to be active participants in building an informed and responsible generation. To achieve real progress, cooperation between schools, institutions, parents and young people themselves is necessary in the direction of education, prevention and support for personal development.

All activities promote **inclusion, gender equality, and respect for diversity**, fully aligned with



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