YOUTH ATTITUDES TOWARDS GENDER AND SOCIAL NORMS, DEVELOPMENT AND HUMAN SECURITY IN KOSOVO

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Executive Summary

This study on youth attitudes towards gender and social norms, development and human security in Kosovo[1] seeks to contribute to a better understanding of young people's views and concerns about education, development, opportunity, migration, social norms and human security. The study is based on both quantitative and qualitative analysis, bringing together a survey conducted Kosovo-wide and seven in-depth focus group discussions with young people and civil society organizations. The study is based on a representative sample of Kosovo's young population and is the first of its type and size in Kosovo. The results should be contextualized in the fieldwork period of July-August 2022, when double-digit inflation and the energy crisis may have exacerbated economic and social inequalities.

This report begins with some of the main findings, followed by an overview of the legal and policy framework for youth and gender equality, and a summary of the methodology. It then elaborates and explores the findings about attitudes to education and professional development, the impact of social norms and human security. The conclusion provides youth-focused recommendations on advancing gender equality in response to some of the key challenges and opportunities identified.

Key findings

Approximately one third of respondents are dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with the **quality of education** in Kosovo; just over a quarter are satisfied or very satisfied. There are no significant gender differences on this point.

40% of the young people are unemployed, and gender differences are evident. While in full-time employment the gender gap is somewhat smaller, **when it comes to youth unemployment there is a significant difference between young women and young men.** The list of favored jobs and sectors is quite diverse and also indicates gender differences. Boys/young men are more oriented towards agriculture, business and manufacturing, while girls/young women incline to jobs in public administration, health and education.

Traditional cultural norms seem to dominate young people's views about women's rights and roles in society. For instance, boys/young men are more convinced than girls/young women that the most important role of women is to take care of the family. However, it should be highlighted that about a third of all participants in the survey agreed that starting a family is the most important role for women. Differences are much higher when it comes to perception of respondents about the appropriateness of men to work outside of the house vis-à-vis women. In relation to distribution of household chores and domestic work, survey results confirmed only

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[1] References to Kosovo shall be understood to be in the context of UN Security Council Resolution 1244 (1999).

some gender stereotypes. Most participants in this study believe that it is important for both women/girls and men/boys to learn how to perform domestic activities such as cleaning and washing. However, when considering other household work such as plumbing and gardening, the findings suggest that most young people agree that men/boys should be more prepared and learn how to do these tasks than women/girls.

Gender differences in attitudes are apparent over **social norms and aptitudes**: boys/young men are prejudiced against girls/young women having sex before marriage, while the latter do not discriminate; boys/young men tend to think that girls are not as good as boys at studying natural sciences, engineering and maths.

Gender differences are also apparent in **attitudes towards emotions and sexuality:** boys/ young men are readier to justify their use of physical violence if they are insulted; and most participants in the study consider that boys/young men would prefer not to be friends with members of the LGBTQI+ community. Interestingly, only a minority of men and women respondents think that boys/young men do not need to discuss personal issues with others.

Corruption and increasing poverty are the two **general issues of greatest concern to young people.** Girls/young women are notably more concerned about **security issues**. Gender differences are also apparent in issues such as sexual violence and harassment, and discrimination on grounds of gender identity or sexual orientation. Young people in Kosovo are also very concerned about the level of environmental pollution and the associated health risks. In all contexts, boys/young men feel safer and less threatened than girls/young women. While home and school/university are perceived as safer environments, parks are seen as the least safe environment. The level of threat from stray dogs is considered high by both girls/ young women and boys/young men. Other issues of significant perceived threat are traffic accidents and illegal use of firearms. Gender differences are negligible in relation to the threat of gang violence, ethnic violence, homophobia, hate speech, misogyny, human trafficking and natural disasters.

Gender-based violence remains one of the most common human rights violations in Kosovo. A very high proportion of young people (almost 70% of boys/young men and 82% of girls/young women) declare it common or very common. In addition, this study also investigated youth attitudes towards scenarios that reflect on myths related to sexual violence[2]. The overall results suggest that most young people in Kosovo do not blame women who have been survivors of sexual violence in situations that are associated with sexual assault or rape supportive or tolerant attitudes[3]. However, there are gender differences in response to scenarios that blame the survivor, explored through questions about what they were wearing, where they were during the assault or whether they were drunk during the assault. Indeed, in comparison to girls/young women participants, boys/young men's perception of sexual violence episodes are influenced more by situational level factors, thus being more likely to attribute some responsibility to survivors. Nevertheless, most young people agree that rape is always wrong and an act of violence. **Negative or harmful experiences** are more common among girls/ young women. The findings of this study indicate that inappropriate/unwelcome sexual jokes/ comments, followed by stalking and online harassments, including image-based abuse, are the most common forms of **sexual harassment** experienced by girls and women.

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[2] Obierefu, P.O., & Ezeugwu, C.R. (2017) "Risk and Protective Psychological Factors in Rape Supportive Attitude: A Systematic Review", Journal of Psychological & Educational Research, 25 (2).
[3] Gravelin, C. R. et al. (2019) "Blaming the Victim of Acquaintance Rape: Individual, Situational, and Sociocultural Factors." Frontiers in Psychology 9, https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2018.02422

Most of the survey findings have been validated by **the focus group discussions.** Almost all participants in focus groups agreed that **the key to breaking down stereotypes is proper education of children,** starting from the early years. Furthermore, a group of young participants from Prishtinë/Priština highlighted the need to revise textbooks before amending the existing legal framework.

All focus groups agreed that everyone should enjoy the company of whomever they want and have the freedom to be in **same-sex relationships**, although some individuals did disapprove, believing that the point of a marital relationship is reproduction.

Focus group participants highlighted the fact that **parents play an important role in choosing their future profession**. Parents often push young girls to choose the 'easiest' professions because in the future they should be starting families and perhaps leave the labour market or downgrade their career/move to part-time work to care for their families/children. In addition, early marriages and traditional norms may also impact on decisions to start/leave work or education, especially that, "in Kosovo it is common for couples to marry culturally, before friends and family, but wait to register the marriage for several years."[4]

Focus groups participants expressed their **dissatisfaction with the institutional efforts to help survivors of violence**. They harshly criticized the relevant authorities for their neglect in these cases, claiming that this discourages survivors from reporting incidents. Numerous factors **contributing to gender-based violence** were mentioned by participants, including psychological (anger management issues), lack of education and poor economic conditions.

Overall, there are many positive findings in relation to young people's views and attitudes towards gender equality, but the study also shows the enduring influence of patriarchal norms, practices and traditions. The recommendations of this study include ways to ensure youth-focused, effective and sustainable action to advance gender equality and tackle gender norms and stereotypes.

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[4] Kosovo Gender Analysis', Kosovo Women's Network, 2018, p. 25.

2

General context

In Kosovo, as across the Western Balkans, patriarchal norms and behaviours are prevalent, with a strong gendered division of labour and significant gender inequality. While much progress has been made in obtaining legal rights for women and girls, unfortunately these are weakly enforced. More effective law enforcement, better education and more empowered young people are necessary preconditions for tackling patriarchal norms and gender inequality. These issues are particularly important given that Kosovo is the youngest society in Europe with more than 50% of its population under the age of 25, and some 65% under 30 years of age[5]. This study accordingly strives to give policymakers and society overall an evidence-based analysis of youth attitudes towards gender and social norms for the first time.

Equality, human rights and individual freedom are integral to the existing legal framework in Kosovo, and much progress has been made in the last two decades, particularly towards aligning legislation with international standards of gender equality and women's rights.[6] Relevant legislation has been revised and improved, institutional mechanisms have been established, and research, educational programmes and advocacy plans have been implemented. This is important considering the inter-linkage between gender equality, development and human security.[7] However, gender inequalities continue to be pervasive in Kosovo, with women and girls underrepresented, marginalised and facing additional challenges in numerous sectors.[8] Major concerns remain with regard to the prevalence of gender-based violence, discrimination in the labour market, and gaps in access to justice, finance and property ownership.[9] In addition, one in three young people in Kosovo is not in employment, education, or training, while the unemployment rate is just above 25%, a concern even more prevalent among women (32.3% compared to 23.5% of men).[10]

Kosovo has the widest gender gap in labour force participation in the Western Balkans[11], with 77.5% of women not active in the labour market compared to 41.1% of men.[12] Research[13] has identified the key reasons for this as overall lack of job opportunities in combination with the

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[5] Kosovo Age Structure. Index Mundi;. Available at: https://www.indexmundi.com/kosovo/age_structure.html.

[6] EU Progress Report 2022

[7] Maxwell Adjei (2019) Women's participation in peace processes: a review of literature, Journal of Peace Education, 16:2, 133-154

[8] Folke Bernadotte Academy and UNDP, Social Cohesion in Kosovo: Context Review and Entry Points, 2019.

[9] Haug H.K. (2015) 'Gender Equality and Inequality in Kosovo'. In: Hassenstab C.M., Ramet S.P. (eds) Gender (In)equality and Gender Politics in Southeastern Europe. Gender and Politics. Palgrave Macmillan, London.

[10] Labour Force Survey 2020, Kosovo Agency of Statistics, https://askdata.rks-gov.net/pxweb/sq/ASKdata/ASKdata__Labour%20market__Anketa%20e%20Fuqisë%20Punëtore__Annual%20labour%20market/tab18.px/table/tableViewLayout1/

[11] World Bank Group. 2017. Promoting Women's Access to Economic Opportunities: Kosovo. World Bank, Washington, DC. Available at: https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/29587

[12] Kosovo Agency of Statistics, Social Statistics, Labour Force Survey, Q3, 2021, Available at: https://ask.rks-gov.net/media/7072/afp-tm3-2021.pdf (accessed 21 November 2022).

[13] According to Common Kosovo Analysis (2020), factors contributing to women's low participation in the labour market include low salaries, limited access to child and elderly care, unfriendly labour regulations (e.g. high costs of maternity leave), patriarchal social norms and discrimination.

gendered character of available jobs, including societal expectations for women to work in unpaid domestic/care roles.[14] These inequities, together with the impact of the pandemic on the labour market and the increasing demand for proficient technical and digital skills, mean that more needs to be done to enhance equal access for women to developing ICT skills. This is particularly important because Kosovo employers have underlined the mismatch between skills and market demand, and they have also assessed men to be much better qualified at demonstrating specific technical and computer skills.[15] The enduring effects of unemployment and periods of inactivity often include lower productivity and human capital accumulation later in life, meaning that women can find their prospects of upward economic mobility substantially impaired, which in turn affects Kosovo's potential for economic growth.[16] It has been assessed that this may "amount to potential economic losses in gross income per capita of approximately 28%."[17] Sustainable solutions to the gender pay gap and occupational gender segregation accordingly need not only to improve the representation and productivity of women, but also to address structural factors that trigger discrimination and gender stereotypes in the labour market and beyond.[18] Women and men from minorities and vulnerable groups[19] as part of relevant solutions to advance gender equality and development, must be included equally.

The Regional Youth Cooperation *Office's Shared Futures* report (2021) on youth in the region notes that "when asked about the impact of gender on their opportunities – whether economic, status, power and freedom of choice – young women and men did not have strong or differing views on the issue."[20] This highlights the necessity of continued research, open youth-led discussions and greater awareness about the gendered character of key challenges faced by young people in the region. Policy interventions and immediate actions are needed to help young people voice their concerns and find solutions to the multiple socio-economic challenges and the widening gender gaps, exacerbated by the COVID-19 crisis and ongoing economic problems.

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[14] Riinvest Institute. 2018. Facilitating Empowerment. Factors influencing women's economic decisions in Kosovo, Available at: https://www.riinvestinstitute.org/uploads/files/2019/February/20/Womens_economic_empowerment_ENG1550674295.pdf

[15] Alexandru Cojocaru (2017) "Jobs Diagnostic Kosovo" in Jobs Series: Issue No 5, Washington, DC: World Bank Group, Available at: http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/814361497466817941/pdf/ACS21442-WP-PUBLIC-ADD-SERIES-KosovoJDWEB.pdf.

[16] World Bank Group, 2017, p. 2.

[17] Ibid.

[18] G20. Fostering an Inclusive, Sustainable, and Resilient Recovery of Labour Markets and Societies: G20 Labour and Employment Ministerial Declaration, June 2021. Available from: https://www.g20.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/G20-2021-LEM-Declaration.pdf

[19] There is no agreed definition of 'vulnerable groups', but for the purposes of this study, vulnerable people are those who are affected by risks and poor outcomes because of individual characteristics, the impact of action or inaction by other people and their physical and social environment. In addition, vulnerability for youth is also linked to "growth, low levels of self-efficacy and well-being, irregularities in behaviour, and/or reduced capabilities for employment, interpersonal relationships, community membership and citizenship." For more on this, see Hardgrove. A. et al.. (2014) Youth Vulnerabilities in Life Course Transitions, UNDP, New York.

[20] UNDP, 2021, Shared Futures: Youth Perceptions on Peace in the Western Balkans, Available at: https://shared-futures.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Shared-Futures-Youth-Perceptions-on-Peace-in-the-Western-Balkans.pdf

3

Survey methodology

This study used both quantitative and qualitative research activities to better understand youth attitudes towards gender stereotypes, social norms and human security in Kosovo. The quantitative research consists of a survey conducted across 38 Kosovo municipalities, including non-majority communities. The qualitative research, meanwhile, comprises seven focus groups organized with young people and civil society organizations; this is further elaborated in a separate section below. It should be noted that the gender perspective has been incorporated across all research activities.

The quantitative survey used a sampling strategy reflecting the population at municipal level, divided into three age groups — 15-19, 20-25 and 26-29. The total sample size is 1,064 respondents (table 1), which is considered sufficient to provide statistically representative results at the Kosovo level. The number of respondents was determined in proportion to municipal population size (first stratification) and to the urban and rural population (second stratification). The margin of error for the sample is +/-3% with 95% confidence level. The questionnaire contained four sections, which focused on: (i) Demographic data; (ii) youth development; (iii) social norms; and (iv) human security.

For the purpose of this study, 30 enumerators were recruited for data collection. All of them received two days of training on data collection and questionnaire specification, with a survey-specific training manual explaining the importance and the overall goals of the survey. Groups of 2 to 5 enumerators worked under a team leader. The survey manager revisited 20% of the respondents for each enumerator, ostensibly to thank them for their cooperation but also to re-ask the most crucial for verification. Each questionnaire has been verified for correctness and logic. Once data was collected using the Kobotoolbox, the results were analyzed and interpreted using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Periodic checks were made by the survey manager, primarily by comparing variable means and distributions across files, to ensure that the data have not been altered, intentionally or otherwise. The research findings in this report are predominantly based on descriptive statistics using cross-tabulation techniques.

Municipality	N	%
Prishtinë/Priština	115	10.8%
Prizren	102	9.6%
Ferizaj/Uroševac	62	5.8%
Gjakovë/Đakovica	58	5.5%
Pejë/Peć	56	5.3%
Gjilan/Gnjilane	55	5.2%
Podujevë/Podujevo	53	5.0%
Vushtrri/Vučitrn	43	4.0%
Mitrovicë/Mitrovica	41	3.9%
Gllogoc/Glogovac	38	3.6%
Suharekë/Suva Reka	37	3.5%
Rahovec/Orahovac	36	3.4%
Lipjan/Lipljan	34	3.2%
Malishevë/Mališevo	34	3.2%
Skenderaj/Srbica	33	3.1%
Viti/Vitina	28	2.6%
Deçan/Dečani	26	2.4%
Istog/Istok	24	2.3%
Klinë/Klina	23	2.2%
Fushë Kosovë/ Kosovo Polje	20	1.9%
Kaçanik/Kačanik	20	1.9%
Kamenicë/Kamenica	19	1.8%
Dragash/Dragaš	16	1.5%
Gračanica/Graçanicë	16	1.5%
Shtime/Štimlje	16	1.5%
Severna Mitrovica /Mitrovicë e Veriut	15	1.4%
Štrpce/Shtërpcë	15	1.4%
Obiliq/Obilić	12	1.1%
Hani i Elezit/Elez Han	5	0.5%
Junik	4	0.4%
Zubin Potok	2	0.2%
Leposavić/Leposaviq	2	0.2%
Zvečan/Zveçan	1	0.1%
Novobërdë/Novo Brdo	1	0.1%
Ranilug/Ranillug	1	0.1%
Partesh/Parteš	1	0.1%
Total	**1,064**	**100%**

Table 1. Sample distribution

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Survey findings

The quantitative part of the study aimed to test and validate existing understanding about the attitudes of young people towards gender stereotypes, social norms and related security issues. In gender structure, ethnicity and geographical distribution the survey mirrors available demographic data.[21] For example, just over 50% of respondents declared themselves as girls/young women compared to 49.2% of boys/young men and a very small fraction (0.4%) who preferred not to declare their gender identity – a distribution that is almost identical to the structure of the population in Kosovo (table 2).

Residence	Rural	Urban				
	58.5%	41.5%				

Gender	Boys / young men	Girls / young women	Prefer not to answer			
	49.2%	50.4%	0.4%			

Marital status	Single	Cohabitation	Divorced	Married	Widowed	Prefer not to answer
	75.8%	2.7%	0.7%	19.7%	0.1%	0.9%

Ethnicity	Albanian	Serbian	Ashkali	Bosnian	Roma	Turkish
	94.5%	4.3%	0.2%	0.3%	0.4%	0.4%

Net household monthly income	0-250 EUR	251-400 EUR	401-800 EUR	801-1200 EUR	1201-2000 EUR	>2000 EUR	Prefer not to answer/
	1.1%	9.2%	29.0%	28.5%	11.9%	6.7%	13.5%

Table 2. Summary statistics

In this section the main survey results are divided in three separate sub-sections: youth development and education; gender stereotypes and social norms; and human security.

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[21] The only official source of population data is the 2011 Census; however, the results are also cross-validated with the Kosovo Agency of Statistics (KAS) annual projections of the population.

Youth Development

Kosovo's young population is considered one of its most valuable assets. However, development opportunities for young people remain limited. Despite a relatively high overall educational attainment rate among adults in Kosovo,[22] limited demand and labour market mismatches make the prospects for educated young people uncertain.

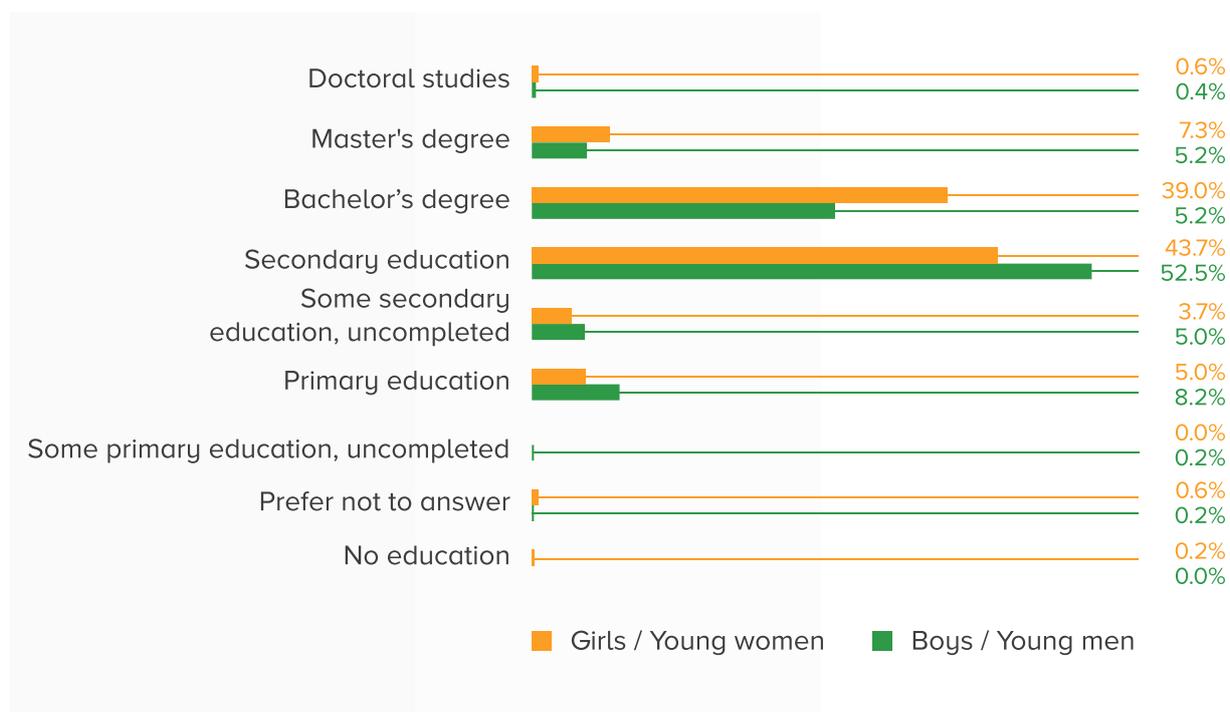|	Girls / Young women	Boys / Young men
Doctoral studies	0.6%	0.4%
Master's degree	7.3%	5.2%
Bachelor's degree	39.0%	5.2%
Secondary education	43.7%	52.5%
Some secondary education, uncompleted	3.7%	5.0%
Primary education	5.0%	8.2%
Some primary education, uncompleted	0.0%	0.2%
Prefer not to answer	0.6%	0.2%
No education	0.2%	0.0%

Figure 1. Educational attainment   Source: Riinvest (2022)

In line with previous studies and surveys, the survey shows (figure 1) that university-level education is higher among girls/young women than boys/young men:[23] [24] within the overall age group (i.e. 15-29) 39 of girls/young women have completed at least a bachelor's degree compared to 28.4% of boys/young men. A high proportion with only secondary level education may in part be explained by the age distribution of respondents, with 25% between 15 and 19 years old.

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[22] Kosovo Adult Education Survey (2021) available at: https://www.dvv-international.ge/fileadmin/files/caucasus-turkey/Kosovo/Resources/SURVAY___Kosovo_English.pdf
[23] Ibid
[24] Kosovo Agency of Statistics (2021). Educational attainment in higher education in Kosovo https://askdata.rks-gov.net/pxweb/sq/ASKdata/ASKdata__Education__14%20Public%20Universities/4edu.px/
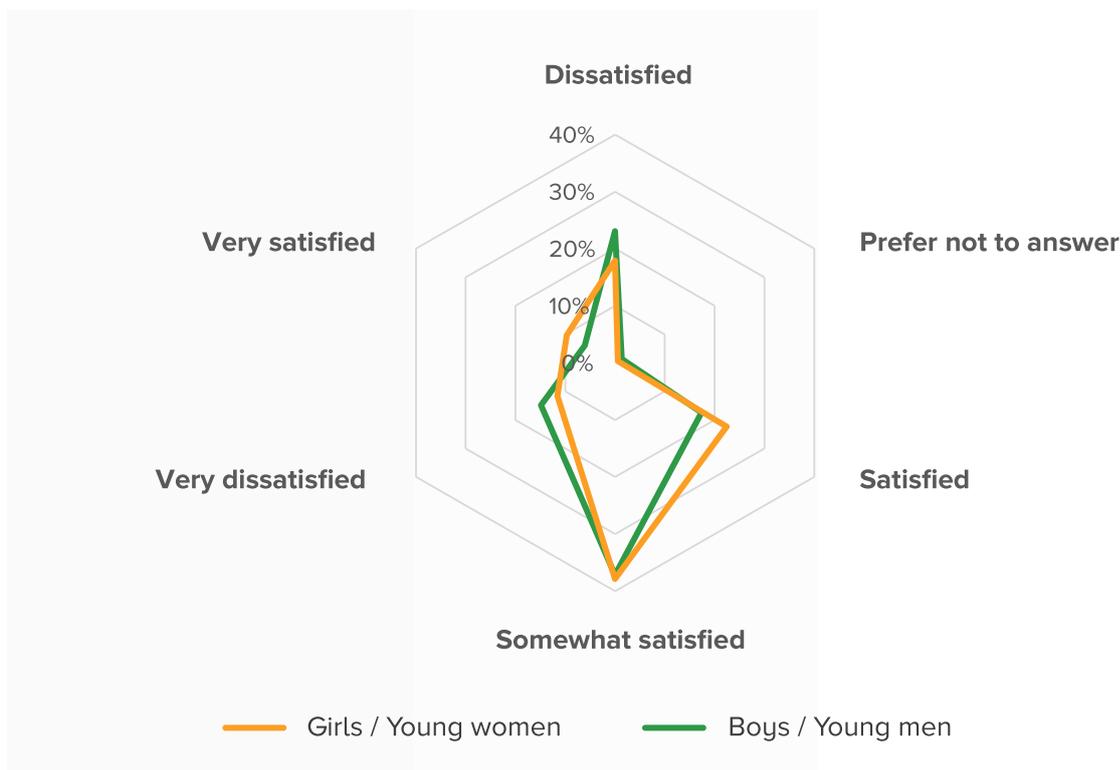
Figure 2. Quality of education

However, satisfactory educational attainment does not seem to be matched by the quality of the education as perceived by its beneficiaries. About one third of respondents are dissatisfied (13.3%) or very dissatisfied (20.5%) with education quality; a little more than a quarter are either satisfied (20%) or very satisfied (8%) – figure 2. These results are consistent with previous evidence.[25]

Figure 3. Expectations about the usefulness of education gained

[25] See FES (2019). Analysis of Kosovo's Education System https://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/kosovo/15185-20190220.pdf

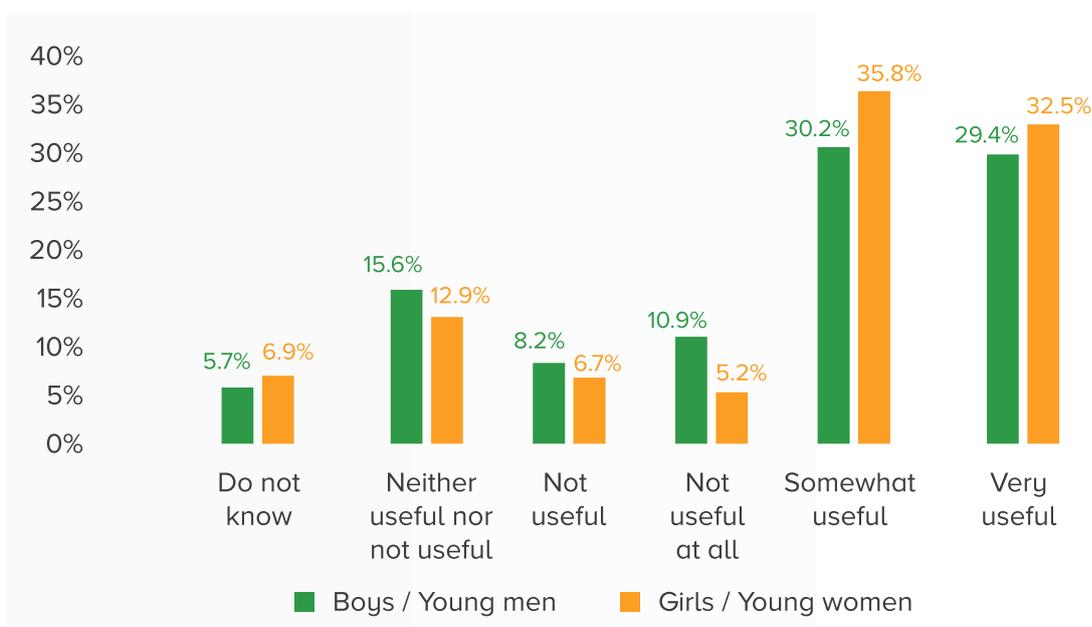Regardless of educational attainment, poor employment prospects for young people remain one of the most pressing socio-economic issues in Kosovo. Lack of new jobs, and to some extent the structural nature of unemployment, are the main factors in the high unemployment rate among youth in Kosovo. According to the official labour data published by the Kosovo Agency of Statistics (KAS), the unemployment rate among people aged 15-24 was approximately 30% in 2021. Within the same age group, the unemployment rate for girls/young women was almost twice as high as for boys/young men.[26] Among the key factors contributing to young women and women's lower labour force participation are care responsibilities, socio-cultural boundaries, access to finance, lack of property ownership, low educational attainment, unregistered labour, poor access and socialised gender roles.[27]

Survey results confirm the official unemployment data, with 40% unemployed. Within this, the gender difference is stark: 47% of girls/young women are unemployed compared to 31.5% of boys/young men. Differences are also significant when it comes to self-employment: some 4% of girls/young women are self-employed compared to about 16% of boys/young men (figure 4). These results are also in line with the KAS Labour Force Survey (LFS)[28] data from 2021.
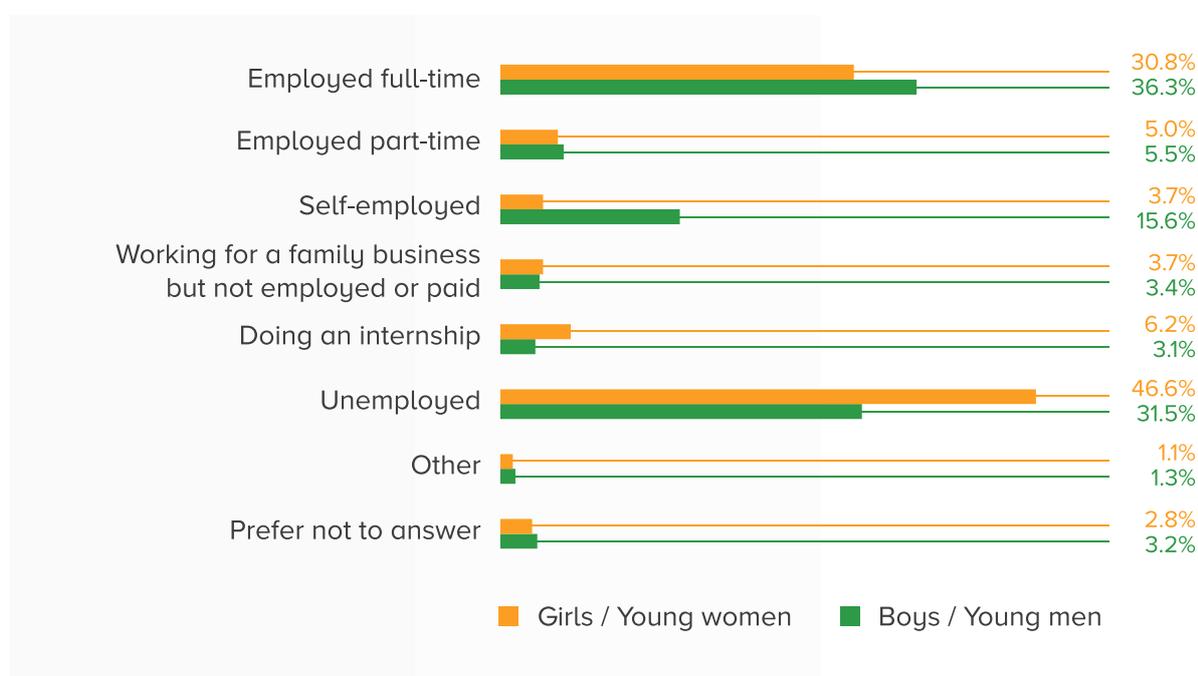
Figure 4. Employment status

Job preferences are diverse. Here too there are gender differences. For example, boys/young men seem to be more interested in agriculture (6.7% of boys/young men compared to 0.8% of girls/young women), business, or manufacturing while girls/young women expressed more interest in working in public administration, health and education (figure 5).

[26] Quarterly unemployment rate in 2021 available at: https://askdata.rks-gov.net/pxweb/sq/ASKdata/ASKdata__Labour%20market__Anketa%20e%20Fuqis%c3%ab%20Pun%c3%abtore__Quarterly%20labour%20market/tab21.px/table/tableViewLayout1/

[27] 'Kosovo Gender Analysis', Kosovo Women's Network, 2018.

[28] https://askdata.rks-gov.net/pxweb/en/ASKdata/ASKdata__Labour market__Anketa e Fuqis%C3%AB Pun%C3%ABtore__Quarterly labour market/tab12.px/table/tableViewLayout1/

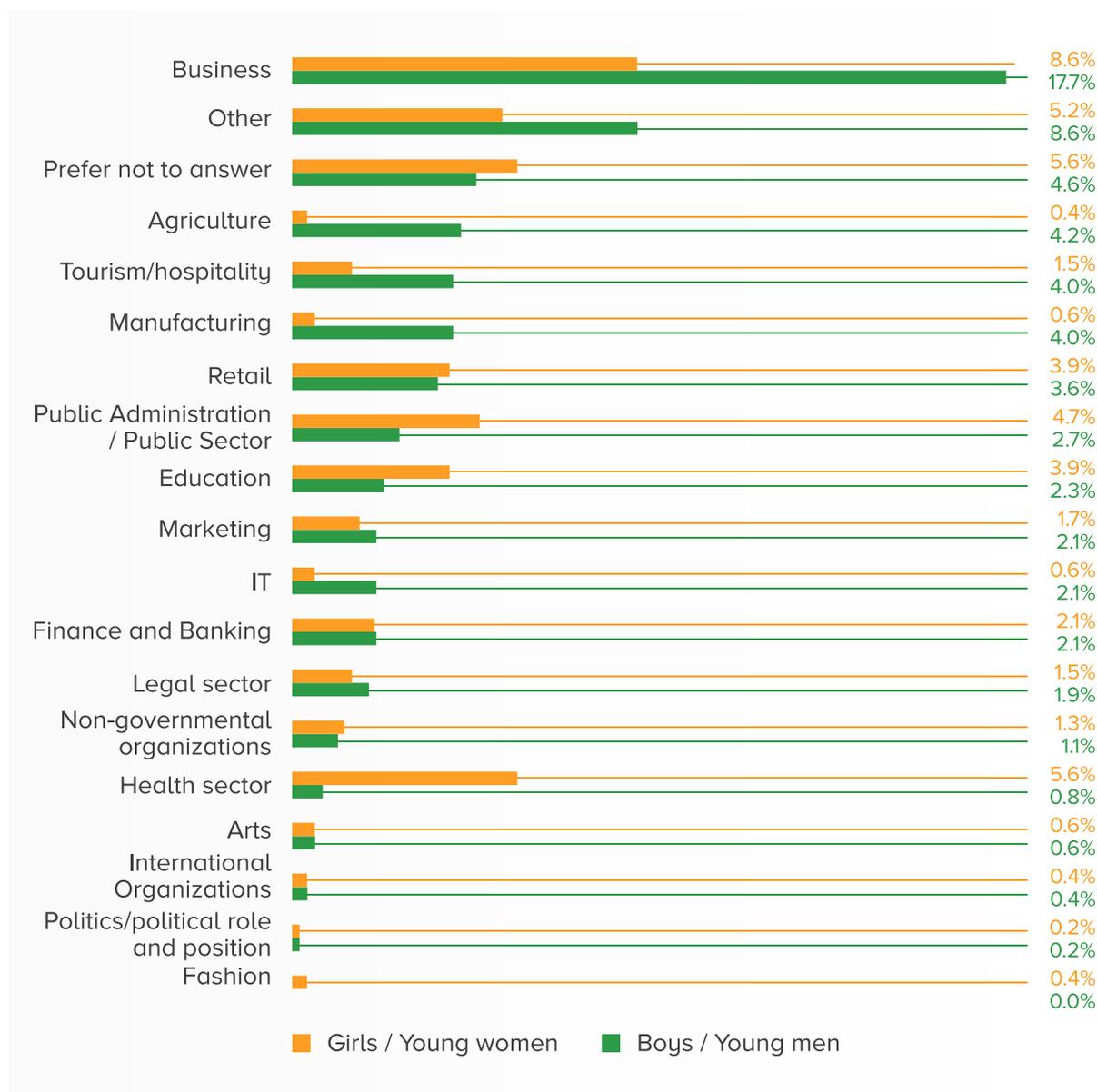| Category	Girls / Young women	Boys / Young men
Business	8.6%	17.7%
Other	5.2%	8.6%
Prefer not to answer	5.6%	4.6%
Agriculture	0.4%	4.2%
Tourism/hospitality	1.5%	4.0%
Manufacturing	0.6%	4.0%
Retail	3.9%	3.6%
Public Administration / Public Sector	4.7%	2.7%
Education	3.9%	2.3%
Marketing	1.7%	2.1%
IT	0.6%	2.1%
Finance and Banking	2.1%	2.1%
Legal sector	1.5%	1.9%
Non-governmental organizations	1.3%	1.1%
Health sector	5.6%	0.8%
Arts	0.6%	0.6%
International Organizations	0.4%	0.4%
Politics/political role and position	0.2%	0.2%
Fashion	0.4%	0.0%

Figure 5. Job preferences

The lack of jobs and structural unemployment may also help to explain the recent migration trends from Kosovo. It should be noted that the structure of emigration has changed in recent years. While previously there was mainly low-skilled migration, new evidence shows a mix of both skilled and low-skilled workers leaving.[29] Survey data also indicate that the inclination to migrate remains high among young people, with 48% of respondents saying they are considering migrating in the next one to three years. The figure is higher among boys/young men — approximately 46% compared to approximately 31% of girls/young women (figure 6).

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[29] See GAP (2020) available at https://www.institutigap.org/documents/38227_emigration-.pdf
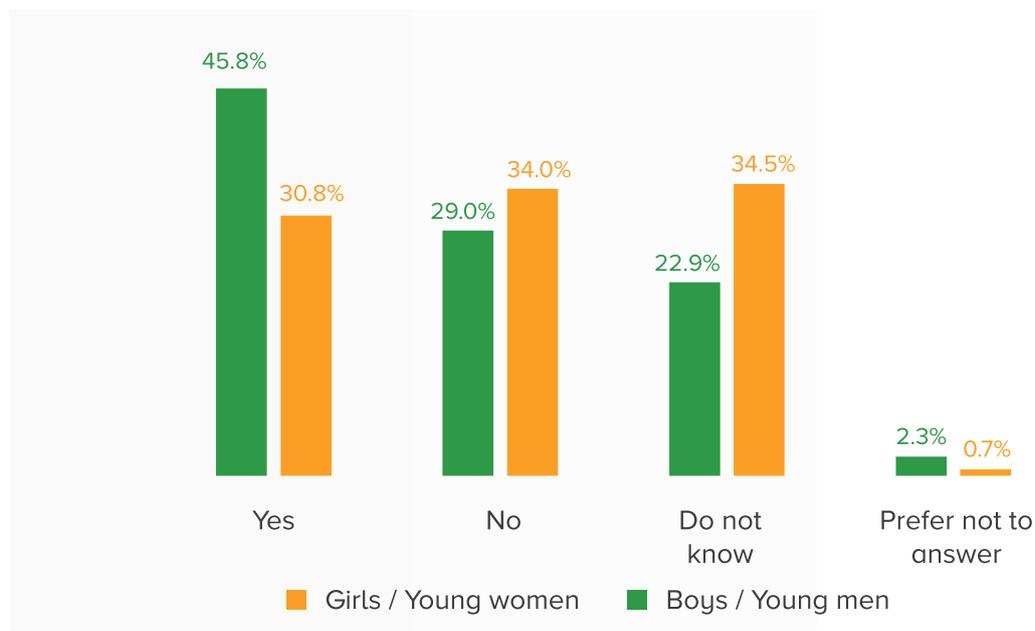
Figure 6. Propensity to migrate

High propensity to migration among young people may be also explained by pull as well as push factors – i.e. relaxed immigration policies in some western EU countries reinforce the unpromising Kosovo labour market. Young people's ability to make decisions independently may also be a factor: 51.3% of boys/young men and 48.1% of girls/young women say that they make their decisions independently (figure 7). Nevertheless, a considerable portion of young people still consider their parents as the main influencers in their decision-making. While the role of fathers in decision-making is considered somewhat more important for boys/young men, the role of both parents is more or less equal for girls/young women. In addition, girls/young women tend to have more family members as influencers in their lives (i.e. spouse, sister, brother) than boys/young men.
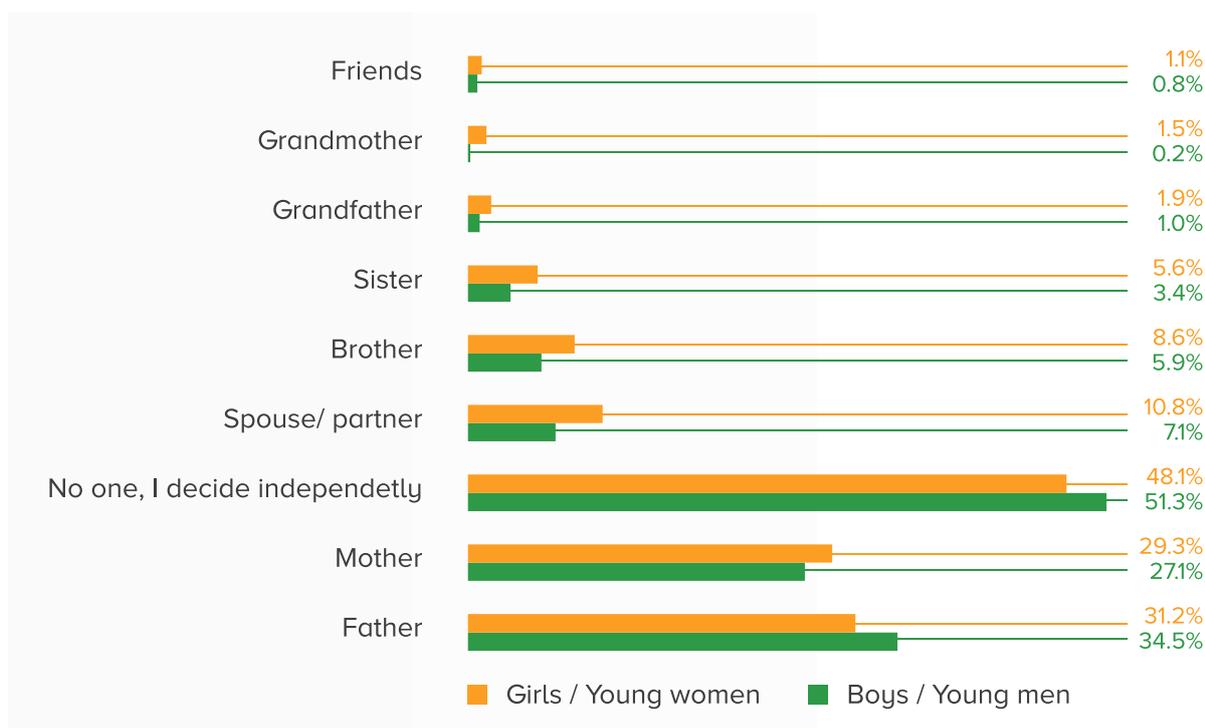

Figure 7. Main influencers in decision making

Social Norms

Young people's attitudes towards gender stereotypes and social norms were captured through their responses to declarative statements. Results were also disaggregated by gender. The survey confirms anecdotal and focus group evidence that young people are not free from stereotypes, and that there are systematic differences between men and women respondents on almost all points. In the figures below, beliefs are measured with an intensity score between 0 and 100, where 0 implies complete disagreement and 100 indicates full agreement with the given statement. Figure 8 suggests that both boys/young men and girls/young women believe that women and girls should learn to do domestic work (house cleaning, washing, etc.) more than men and boys. The reverse is true for perceived technical or external chores (plumbing, gardening), with both genders agreeing that men and boys should be more prepared for such tasks.

Gender differences in attitudes and perceptions are more obvious in relation to what are, according to traditional norms, morally unacceptable issues such as premarital sex: boys/young men find sex before marriage less acceptable for women and girls, while women respondents did not see much of a difference. However, it should be noted that most boys/young men and girls/young women are against sex before marriage regardless of gender. A majority of respondents (men distinctly more than women) are not in favor of same-sex relationships.

Statements	Boys and young men		Girls and young women	
	Women and girls	Men and boys	Women and girls	Men and boys
They should learn how to do domestic work like house cleaning, washing, ironing clothes and preparing food/cooking	84.5	65.7	82.9	76.9
They should learn how to do household work like minor plumbing, electrical and gardening	52.4	85.5	56.6	87.1
They should start a family	86.7	87.2	85.3	85.8
They should not have sex before marriage	50.5	43.5	43.7	41.4
They should be able to control their feelings and emotions	76.4	76.8	74.1	74.7
They should obey their parents	65.3	62.3	62.9	61.7
They should be free to decide for themselves their career paths and choices	86.7	88.4	89.1	89.3
They should not have friends from the opposite sex	28.8	26.3	22.6	22.3
They should not be in same-sex relationships	63.6	64.9	53.0	53.4
They should go to university	89.6	89.3	90.6	91.1

Figure 8. Gender stereotypes (0-100)

Gender differences are also manifest in figure 9, on education and independence of women. Asked whether it is normal for girls/young women to be less educated than their boyfriends/ husbands, the average intensity score among boys/young men is 17.9 as compared to 12.5 among girls/young women. Similarly, results show that boys/young men perceive that girls are not as good as boys at studying natural sciences and disciplines such as engineering and maths: the score is 23.6 for young men and boys, as compared to 15.6 for young women and girls. Gender differences are also apparent in perceptions about women independence and assertiveness.

Statements	Boys and young men	Girls and young women
It is normal for girls/women to be less educated than their boyfriends/husbands	17.9	12.5
Girls are not as good as boys at studying disciplines like engineering, science and maths	23.6	15.6
Girls/women should enrol in disciplines that would allow them to find jobs in the digital economy (science, technology, engineering and mathematics [STEM] and information and communication technologies [ICTs])	53.7	54.8
Women should be financially supported by their partners	46.9	38.1
Girls/Women are just as competitive, assertive and independent as boys/men	66.9	76.2

Figure 9. Education and independence of girls/young women (0-100)

Similar differences are captured in attitudes to emotions and sexual orientation (figure 10). Boys/young men are relatively more willing to justify men's use of physical violence if they are insulted compared to girls/young women. Girls/young women agree more than boys/young men that sexual relations are more important for boys and men. Moreover, men respondents believe more strongly than women that most boys and men would prefer not to be friends with members of the LGBTQI+ community, and that boys/young men do not need to talk about their personal matters with others.

Statements	Boys and young men	Girls and young women
Boys/Men do not cry or show emotions in public	42.6	40.9
It is acceptable for boys/men to use physical violence if they are insulted	21.8	14.5
Sexual relations are more important for boys/men	36.3	41.8
Most boys/men would not want to be friends with LGBTQI	62.6	57.3
Boys/men do not need to talk about their personal problems with others	30.6	21.7

Figure 10. Emotions and behaviour of boys/young men (0-100)

Despite what might be considered progress towards gender equality and the strengthening of women's rights in Kosovo, girls and women still face many challenges in their everyday lives in comparison to men. For instance, women continue to experience discrimination regarding access to property and social resources and they continue to face problems of personal security and social equity. Previous evidence on gender-based discrimination in Kosovo is supported by the survey results.[30] More exactly, there are obvious gender differences in young people's perception as far as human rights and equal opportunities are concerned. Youth attitudes and perceptions from the survey validate, to some extent, what many human rights activists and women's rights activists have been arguing – Kosovo is still far from being a gender-equal society. Although gender differences are not that large, the intensity score on different questions of rights and opportunities is consistently different between boys/men and girls/women.

For more progressive gender equality statements, girls/young women tend to have higher levels of agreement, whereas for more regressive statements there is higher agreement among boys/young men (figure 11). Cultural traditions seem to continue to dominate young people's perceptions of women's rights and roles in society. Men respondents on average have a higher intensity score (47.9) than women respondents (40.2) when asked if the most important role of women is to take care of their family. The difference is starker when it comes to the perceived suitedness of men to work outside of the house in comparison to women, and to the idea that men should have the final word in household decision-making. It is worth noting that ratings are high for both girls/young women and boys/young men on women's political leadership, equal pay, equal opportunities in all spheres of life, and property rights.

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[30] Kosovo Women's Network (2019) available at: https://womensnetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/GBD-Labour-Kosovo_ISBN-978-9951-737-31-9_FINAL.pdf

Statements	Boys and young men	Girls and young women
A woman's most important role is to take care of her family	47.9	40.2
Men are better suited than women to work outside of the house	59.8	43.9
Marriage is more important than career	35.0	32.5
It would be good to have an equal representation of women as political leaders	67.7	79.1
Women and men should generally get equal pay	75.3	83.0
Women need to have children in order to be fulfilled	46.3	41.1
It is the responsibility of women to take all measures necessary to avoid unwanted pregnancies	34.8	31.8
If you have children, it is preferrable to have more sons than daughters	31.5	17.9
A man should have the final word about decisions in the household/family	34.0	19.1
A woman should tolerate violence to keep the family together	14.3	10.5
Men and women should have equal opportunities in all spheres of life	77.9	83.0
Girls/women should have the same right to inherit property as boys/men	71.2	81.3
Young women in my community have the same chance and opportunities to work as boys	55.8	56.3
Men are less capable of raising children than women	48.5	47.5
It is wrong for a girl/woman to have male friends	24.5	15.5

Figure 11. Differences in gender roles and expectations (0-100)

Human Security

For the purposes of this study, human security refers to the absence of threats and injustices, including but not restricted to physical safety.[31] Using a scale of 0 (very unconcerned) to a 100 (very concerned), respondents were asked to express their level of concern about various aspects of insecurity. The results disaggregated by gender are shown as an average in figure 12 below. It is noticeable that the level of concern is consistently higher among girls/young women across all assessed security issues (average intensity score 75.9 and 67.0 respectively). Respondents are most concerned about corruption and increasing poverty. More noticeable gender differences are observed in issues such as sexual violence and harassment, and discrimination on grounds of gender identity or sexual orientation, with girls/young women more concerned than boys/young men about these issues. Official reporting of sexual assault and harassment where the survivors were predominantly girls/young women may help to explain such differences in perception. Meanwhile, young people in Kosovo are also very concerned about the level of pollution and the health risks that it poses. They also expressed significant concerns about social injustice regarding basic human rights and equal opportunities.

Statements	Boys and young men	Girls and young women
Getting robbed	57.8	65.1
Being a victim of physical violence	54.1	66.0
Terrorist attack	47.7	54.5
War in the region	48.1	55.0
Increasing number of immigrants and refugees	48.2	54.3
Access to proper healthcare when ill	54.2	61.7
Pollution	68.7	74.3
Climate change	41.1	45.9
Job security	65.2	69.2
Social injustice (rights, equal opportunities)	67.0	75.9
Increasing poverty in society	74.0	78.2
Corruption	77.2	79.6
Sexual violence	63.0	74.8
Discrimination on grounds of gender identity or sexual orientation	54.0	70.7
Sexual harassment	60.1	75.2

Figure 12. Security concerns (0-100)

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[30] UNDP (2016). Human Security Handbook https://www.un.org/humansecurity/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/h2.pdf.

Overall (figure 13), boys/young men feel safer than girls/young women in all environments about which they were asked, according to a scale from 0 (very unsafe) to 100 (very safe). While home and school/university are perceived as relatively the safest environments, parks are perceived as the least safe. (Again, the greater insecurity in this context among girls/young women may reflect a public record of gender-based harassment and violence in public parks.[32])

Environment	Boys and young men	Girls and young women
Home	91.5	90.2
Neighbourhood	82.3	76.0
Village/Town	80.0	72.3
School/University	83.5	79.8
Pubs/Restaurants	73.4	66.7
Park	64.9	55.6
Office	83.2	79.0
Shopping mall	72.5	67.1
Workplace	83.7	81.6

Figure 13. Safety in different environments (0-100)

In addition to information about how safe young people feel in different environments, the survey also collected data on perceptions about specific threats, using a scale from 0 to 100 where 0 implies that there is no threat at all and 100 a very high threat (figure 14). The most threatening factors are seen as traffic accidents, illegal use of firearms and – significantly, given reporting of attacks and the lack of an agreed institutional response – stray dogs.[33] Gender differences are negligible, except when it comes to the perceived threat posed by drunk people, sexual harassment, sexual violence and domestic violence, where the average intensity score is higher among girls/young women than boys/young men.

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[32] See e.g. a media article covering the rape of an 11-year-old girl in a park in Pristina in August 2022, at: https://kallxo.com/lajm/dosja-e-prokurorise-11-vjecarja-u-dhunua-ne-park-perderisa-ishte-duke-ecur/

[33] https://www.koha.net/metro/343377/qytetaret-edhe-kete-vit-te-rrezikuar-nga-qente-endacake/

Context	Boys and young men	Girls and young women
Traffic accidents	47.0	49.6
Stray dogs	47.5	51.2
Gang violence	41.5	43.8
Sexual harassment	38.3	47.5
Illegal use of firearms	47.3	49.3
Ethnic violence	36.1	37.5
Natural disasters	42.1	40.3
Online harassment and abuse	42.9	45.4
Drunk people	41.7	46.6
Domestic violence	32.5	35.5
Online/cyber threats	41.3	44.1
Sexual violence	38.3	43.3
Domestic abuse	32.1	34.6
Homophobia	34.0	35.3
Misogyny	31.7	31.1
Hate Speech	37.7	36.6
Human trafficking	31.5	32.8

Figure 14. Perceptions of insecurity and abuse (0-100)

Gender-based violence (GBV) unfortunately remains one of the most common human rights violations and life-threatening health and protection issues in Kosovo. Referring to harmful acts directed at individuals or groups of individuals because of their gender, it is rooted in gender inequality, the abuse of power and harmful norms.[34] This issue requires a strong and systematic response from all responsible institutions in Kosovo. Young people in general and girls/young women in particular are very concerned about GBV. Almost 70% of boys/young men and 82% of girls/young women said that this phenomenon is very or fairly common (figure 15). It might be seen as positive that boys/young men are also aware of the gravity and frequency of violence against women.

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[34] UN Women, https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/ending-violence-against-women
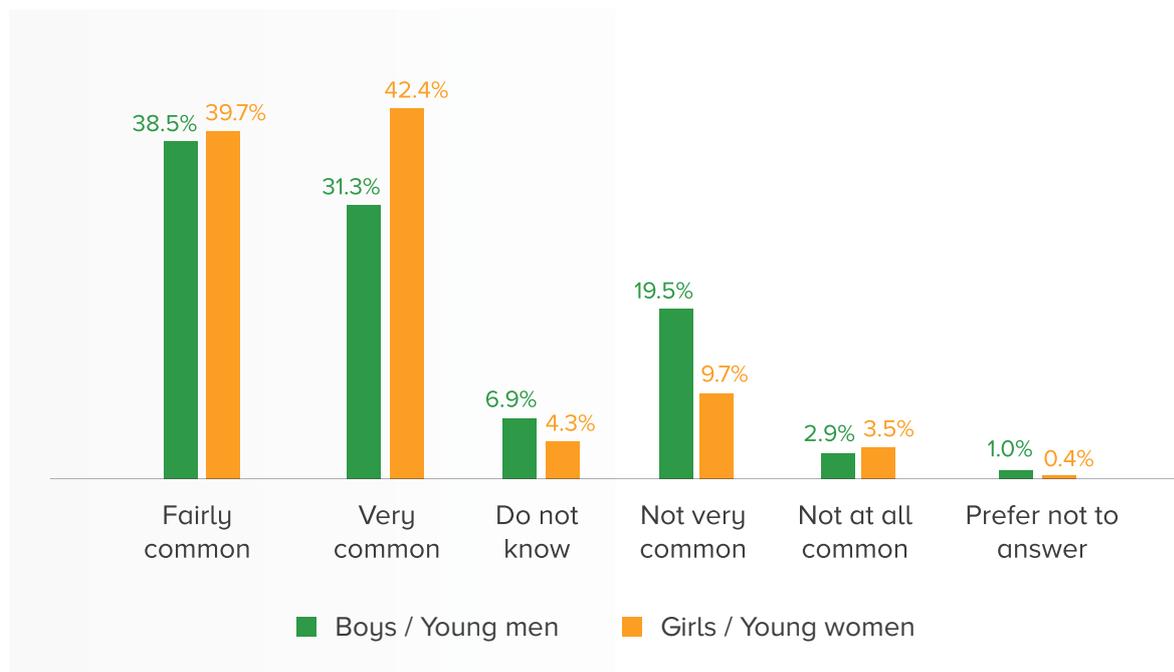
Figure 15. Violence against women

The survey also investigated youth attitudes towards situations and factors that reflect on myths related to sexual violence. On a scale from 0-100 (0 = no contribution at all, 100 = very high contribution), respondents assessed the level of victim blaming among respondents in different hypothetical scenarios of rape (women wearing revealing clothes, being under the influence of alcohol, flirting with a new acquaintance and attending a house party). The overall results do suggest that most young people in Kosovo do not think women themselves have any blame for being raped in any of the given scenarios. However, regardless of the relatively low figures for all behaviours, gender differences are noticeable (figure 16), with significantly more men than women believing that revealing clothing or drunkenness make a difference.

(Exact question- How much, if at all, is a woman to blame if she is raped when she:)

	Boys and young men	Girls and young women
Wears revealing clothing	20.1	10.4
Is drunk	23.6	16.8
Is friendly or flirty towards a new acquaintance	20.7	15.9
Attends a house party	17.8	12.0

Figure 16. Attitudes towards victim-blaming and rape myths (0-100)

The data reveal further nuances in attitudes to sexual violence (figure 17). Most respondents agree that rape is always wrong and violent.[35] Even the relatively low endorsement of statements such as 'It is not rape if it is between partners/spouses', and 'Domestic violence is a private matter and should not be reported', is a concern. Girls/women in general have a more sophisticated and rights-aware perspective, with the clearest differences in perceptions about the prevalence of false rape reports and the option of women not going out at night to avoid assault, with boys/young men believing both points significantly more.

Statements	Boys/Men	Girls/Women
There are a lot of false rape reports	42.0	27.1
When it comes to sex, men have a point of no return	39.9	49.2
It is not rape if it is between partners/spouses	15.9	13.1
Rape is always violent	79.0	82.5
Rape is always wrong	83.3	84.1
Rape often involves an intimate partner	58.8	56.3
Domestic violence is a private matter and should not be reported	12.1	9.6
Rape always involves a stranger	26.8	23.3
Women shouldn't go out alone at night if they want to be safe from sexual assault	30.3	18.9
Men can't be sexually assaulted	28.6	20.4
Men cannot be victims of rape	29.0	20.5

Figure 17. Rape and sexual assault (0-100)

Lastly, figure 18 summarizes respondents' own experiences of violent, abusive, restrictive or inappropriate behaviour, on a scale from 0 (never) to 100 (very often). As the data suggest, negative or harmful experiences are more common among girls/young women. The most common abuses experienced by girls/young women are inappropriate/unwelcome sexual jokes/comments, followed by stalking and online harassments, including image-based abuse. Gender differences are significant across all listed incidents, which confirms that girls/young women in Kosovo are more likely to experience gender-based violence, sexual harassment, abuse or similar issues.

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[34] The intensity score measured on a scale from 0-100 here reflects the level of agreement with the listed statements (0 "strongly agree" and 100 "strongly disagree").

Experience or incident	Men and Boys	Women and girls
Been in a relationship where you felt your partner/husband/wife stopped you from doing what you wanted to do	4.3	8.2
Been verbally abused, put down or criticised by a partner, husband or wife	4.8	9.4
Been physically attacked or abused by a partner, husband or wife	2.2	5.5
Been touched inappropriately by a teacher, colleague, or boss	2.4	6.8
Been a victim of stalking	4.9	12.1
Been a victim of homophobia	1.8	4.8
Unwanted sexual contact (e.g. sexual assault, rape)	2.2	3.2
Unwelcome touching, hugging or kissing by strangers	3.5	7.9
Sexually suggestive comments or jokes that made you feel offended	5.7	16.0
Somebody sending or showing you sexually explicit pictures, photos or gifts that made you feel offended	4.5	10.9

Figure 18. Abusive or oppressive experiences

5

Focus group discussions

The study has also used qualitative research to complement survey results and give a richer picture of the topics. Seven focus groups were held with diverse participants sampled according to geographical distribution, gender and ethnicity: one with young participants in Prishtinë/Priština and two outside Prishtinë/Priština (including one with girls/young women only); two with NGO representatives (one at Kosovo level and one at local level); and two with young people from non-majority communities (including one with young women only).

The focus group discussions enabled participants to clarify, process and explore their views in ways that would have been more difficult through the survey or one-to-one interviews. As ever, such discussions enabled the open-ended exploration of issues of importance to participants; focus groups elaborate why people think and feel as they do, investigate complex behaviours, verify or explain statistical data derived from quantitative surveys, and yield a large amount of information over a relatively short period.

The main findings from the focus group discussions can be summarized as follows:

- According to all participants, domestic work is gender-neutral and skills, not gender, should be considered when allocating a task. Everyone agreed that this topic is still an issue because of society's gender stereotypes and expectations around the domestic roles of girls and women.

- Almost all participants in all groups agreed that the key to breaking down stereotypes begins with proper education of children, starting from an early age. Young participants from Prishtinë/Priština highlighted the necessity of revising textbooks before amending the existing legal framework or introducing new laws and regulations. According to them, the existing 'Abetare' books in the very first grade of school teach children about the division of work, colors, and other preferences based on gender.

- In terms of same-sex relationships, in all focus groups participants agreed that everyone should enjoy the company of whomever they want and have the freedom to be in a same-sex relationship. While some of the participants agreed that everyone has the right to live their own life in the way that they see fit, some other participants (girls/young women outside Prishtinë/Priština) expressed their disapproval of same-sex relationships because the goal of a marital relationship is reproduction.

- Another important issue that was thoroughly discussed was girls' and women's education, where the survey had indicated that some 10% of men respondents and 8% of all respondents believed it normal for women/girls to be less educated than men. Participants attributed this result to the mentality of people (mainly men) in rural areas because they believe that this type of prejudice is more prominent there. Furthermore, they added that currently in Kosovo women have a higher educational attainment rate than men.

- Participants highlighted that, when it comes to choosing a profession, parents play an important role. Many parents push girls to choose the 'easiest' professions because in the future they would start their own families, and thus might leave the labour market or downgrade their career/move to part-time work to care for their families/children. This phenomenon was considered unfair by all participants because it is not acceptable that only women should sacrifice their careers for family obligations.

- Participants expressed their dissatisfaction with society's efforts to help survivors of violence. Furthermore, they harshly criticized the relevant authorities for their indifference and neglect in these cases, claiming that this discourages survivors from reporting. The recent case of an 11-year-old female survivor of sexual assault and rape in Prishtinë/Priština was mentioned in this context[36]. Participants stated that in most situations survivors only ask for assistance from close friends or family members with whom they feel comfortable, or they choose not to speak out because of fear, threats or social stigma.

- When asked about what they would do if anything serious happened to them, most of the participants said that they would talk to their families first. Very few agreed that the situation should be first reported to the police.

- Numerous causes of violence were mentioned by participants. They highlighted psychological factors and emphasized that most people who are violent struggle with anger management. Lack of education and economic factors were also mentioned as relevant. Participants added that another cause of violence might be the fact that many men in Kosovo find it difficult to accept equality since they grew up in a society where men represented leadership and authority in the family. In addition, none of them agreed that one should stay in an abusive relationship, not even for the sake of the family, mainly because doing so would only nurture violent/ abusive children.

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[36] 'Kosovo Protesters Demand Action After Rape of 11-Year-Old', BIRN, August 2022, Available at: https://balkaninsight.com/2022/08/30/kosovo-protesters-demand-action-after-rape-of-11-year-old/

6

Concluding remarks and recommendations

This study revealed some positive findings in terms of young people's standards and perceptions in Kosovo when it comes to gender equality. But it also showed that some traditional, gender-inequitable and stereotypical attitudes and behaviours persist. This study collected valuable data on social, educational, employment and security conditions, and the needs and concerns of young people in Kosovo. Among other things the survey results indicate **gender gaps and inequalities** in relation to education attainment, satisfaction with education quality, unemployment rates, emigration, career aspirations and job preferences. In addition, there are important differences between young men and women in relation to security and personal safety concerns and threats, including gender-based violence and harassment.

This study produced fresh and distinctive findings on youth attitudes towards social and gender norms. **Overall, the results suggest that young people in Kosovo, including boys/young men, are supportive of gender equality, women's rights and empowerment, aware of the need for change and willing to play their part for a more equitable future.** It should also be highlighted that most boys/young men who participated in this study expressed moderate views on most topics, which might suggest that younger generations are less impacted by harmful patriarchal norms and toxic masculinity. However, **young people are not free from gender stereotypes and there are differences between girls/young women and boys/young men** when it comes to issues such as social and family roles, personal attributes and skills, values, household responsibilities, sexuality, relationships, economic equality and opportunities, and risk factors for GBV, sexual violence, harassment and general lack of personal safety.

Despite some encouraging results and the potential of young people in Kosovo to contribute to advancing gender equality and women's rights, more research, resources and institutional efforts are needed to accelerate change and address harmful gender norms. The findings of this study prompt the following **youth-focused recommendations** to local and central level institutions, CSOs, media, and development actors determined to tackle negative gender norms and gender inequality:

Addressing general impact of gender norms and stereotypes on youth

- Conduct in-depth analysis of youth attitudes, in particular towards the roles, authority, rights and security of girls and women across Kosovo;

- Conduct empirical research on the importance and effectiveness of addressing the impact of gender norms and harmful stereotypes from early childhood;

- Enable platforms for dialogue and cooperation between institutions, civil society and the private sector to promote the economic and social benefits of gender equality and addressing gender norms and stereotypes as an essential means to eradicating gender-based discrimination;

- Research the challenges and discrimination faced by young people who are part of the LGBTQI+ community, advocate for their rights and protection, and provide psychological counselling and legal support;

- Promote positive stories of youth breaking gender stereotypes in different communities and regions of Kosovo;

- Build the capacity of key media players to ensure messages encourage diversity and equality in society, and do not reproduce or promote gender stereotypes;

- Support existing platforms that advance gender equality, such as social media groups, formal and informal youth groups, school and university networks, online forums and websites, and youth forums in politics;

- Enable dialogue and educational platforms that help parents and adults in general learn about gender equality and their role in tackling gender norms and stereotypes;

- Organize youth-led dialogues and involve more young people in discussions that contribute to gender equality and young women's engagement in decision-making.

Education

- Promote gender mainstreaming in education policy design and implementation, including gender training programs for teachers and school staff and gender proofing of school materials;

- Ensure that pedagogical training curricula are gender-responsive and support teachers to understand gender stereotypes and unconscious biases in learning and career choices;

- Support schools to implement gender-responsive policies, spaces and learning environments.

- Conduct pilot trials of anti-stereotyping initiatives in pre-school education and schools to test the benefits and effectiveness of gender-neutral playing, learning and teaching environments.

- Introduce age-appropriate and gender-sensitive sex education for all pupils. Sex education should cover sexuality, human development, sexual orientation and gender, bodily autonomy and consent, and be age appropriate.

- Promote best practices in STEM education in school and university settings and promote girls and women in STEM role models.

- Promote and support initiatives for women- and girl-led groups and empower young women activists, especially from disadvantaged groups, to participate in consultations, decisions and interventions to enhance education for girls and gender equality.

- Advocate for more women authors in the curricula and supplementary reading literature for pupils at all levels.

Transition to the labour market

- Engage young people in the process of identifying and analyzing the needs and concerns of women in the labour market and the causes of their persistent underrepresentation;

- Conduct in-depth research into the main factors impeding women's access to the labour market, especially young women;

- Research and develop strategies to address the tendency, particularly among young men, to emigrate because of economic insecurity and lack of opportunities;

- Ensure that human resource policies in the public and private sectors (including guidelines and tools) are gender-responsive and address negative gender stereotyping;

- Conduct a media campaign promoting positive gender portrayals of young people in employment and leadership;

- Ensure evidence-based gender-responsive educational strategies, reform and policy-making to respond to labour market trends;

- Promote affirmative measures that tackle gender stereotypes and gender-based discrimination in education and career opportunities.

Household and family

- Promote positive and egalitarian images of women in society and highlight women's contribution to the foundation of healthy societies;

- Promote the importance of men's participation, role and contribution in the family and society, by highlighting the value of men's involvement in domestic and care responsibilities, redistribution of domestic and care responsibilities and the importance of the diversity of family configurations;

- Design effective and efficient efficient childcare, elderly care and disability care programmes, and infrastructure, to shift the disproportionate domestic and care roles of women.

Gender-based violence and harassment

- Explore how the needs, rights and perspectives of girls/young women are addressed by the Strategy and Action Plan against Domestic Violence and Violence against Women (2022-2026) and take youth-responsive action to support the implementation and financing of evidence-driven prevention and protection measures regarding violence against women and girls;

- Conduct campaigns to address misconceptions about what constitutes gender-based violence, rape, harassment, sexual misconduct and psychological abuse and raise awareness about prevention measures as well as services available to survivors;

- Develop campaigns and initiatives to tackle toxic masculinity by educating boys/young men about consent, respect, gender-based violence and harassment, and by enabling them as allies and advocates for gender equality;

- Enhance support for girl- and women-led organizations working to end gender-based violence;

- Support collaboration and coordination between institutions, police, schools, community leaders and families across Kosovo to develop prevention measures and services for survivors, tailored to different communities and local contexts;

- Promote synergies among different stakeholders to raise awareness on the factors and challenges of online and technology-facilitated gender-based violence.

- Ensuring gender-responsive design of legislation, programmes, applications and social media to address online GBV.

- Introduce regulations to ensure that companies implement accurate age-verification technology and that websites containing pornography and other harmful content have proper controls in place to track and report illegal activity.

UNDP

YOUTH ATTITUDES TOWARDS GENDER AND SOCIAL NORMS, DEVELOPMENT AND HUMAN SECURITY IN KOSOVO

December 2022