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KOSOVAR STABILITY INITIATIVE



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This report has been prepared in cooperation with MLSW staff and its contents reflect joint contributions of the contractor and its ministry counterparts. The views expressed in the report do not necessarily reflect the views of Support to Social Partners Project managed by EU Office in Kosovo and Implemented by Kosovar Stability Initiative (IKS), upon whose request the research has been carried out.

BACKGROUND & METHODOLOGY

Project background

This report is part of the activities that are planned for the implementation of the Support to Social Partners Project funded by EU Office in Kosovo. Specifically, the project contributes to “Developing skills and knowledge of social partners in legislative drafting, legal research and analysis”, “Strengthen the administrative and management capacities of social partners”, “Strengthen the capacities of social partners in advocacy, lobbying and negotiations”, and “Facilitating the organizational reform of social partners”.

The report represents direct support to the work of Social and Economic Council (SEC), which legally is in charge of facilitating tripartite social dialogue in the country. This report is the SSP project contribution to feeding information collected in the field to the discussions in SEC. Active secretarial support has also been provided to SEC, which combined with digitalization of SEC materials is aimed at improving process management within this body.

The project is streamlined with ongoing processes, and has taken into consideration all major events and programs taking place during the implementation period. The approach of harmonizing all project activities into ongoing processes of other actors is perceived to be the most adequate for obtaining the most qualitative results. As such, some of the project activities are

dependent on processes and stakeholder cooperation, and cannot be implemented without their participation.

Objectives

The purpose of this survey with the general population is to assess the following:

- The level of public awareness and knowledge about social policies;
- The level of public opinion and attitude towards welfare systems and level of protection desired by citizens;
- Public attitude towards illegal migration;
- Expectations and attitudes of the general public towards social and employment policies;
- Individual savings habits and attitudes of the general public.

The findings from this research should be used by members of Socio-Economic Council and the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare as citizen feedback on priority policies and reliable information to be used for decision-making. Hence, institutional representatives are the primary audience of this report, but other stakeholders such as social partners, international donor organizations, Kosovo parliament, political parties, Civil Society Organization (CSO's), media, as well as the general public, are also targeted with this report. Given the scarcity of literature and research in the topics covered by the report, the information presented herein can also be used by students and academia in their work.

Approach and methodology

The approach research subject to this report has been carried out through structured face-to-face interviews with a representative sample of 1,100 respondents across Kosovo which was distributed through a proportional-to-size sample reflecting the data from the last census. This provides for most optimal sampling approach to ensuring the representativeness of data on one hand, and cost-effective means to achieving the objectives set forth above. The 1,100 respondents' sample, was randomly distributed to 100 drilling locations/settlements across Kosovo, selected from the registry of polling stations in Kosovo randomly by selecting every 20th polling station/settlement on the list. The selection of respondents in within the settlement has also been carried out at random, by using every third house principle.

Research sample and sampling methodology

The research subject to this report has been carried out through structured face-to-face interviews with a representative sample of 1,100 respondents across Kosovo which was distributed through a proportional-to-size sample reflecting the data from the last

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Given that IKS provided the research instrument, AnketaCo translated and mock tested, instrument/questionnaire before it reached its final form. Once the tested questionnaire was finalized, it was considered as the approved research instrument for carrying out the survey.

The proposed methodology produced a sample that is faithful to the reality in the field as the both respondent selection and settlement selection were selected completely at random. As a result, the sample has normalized itself and has the following characteristics. As for the

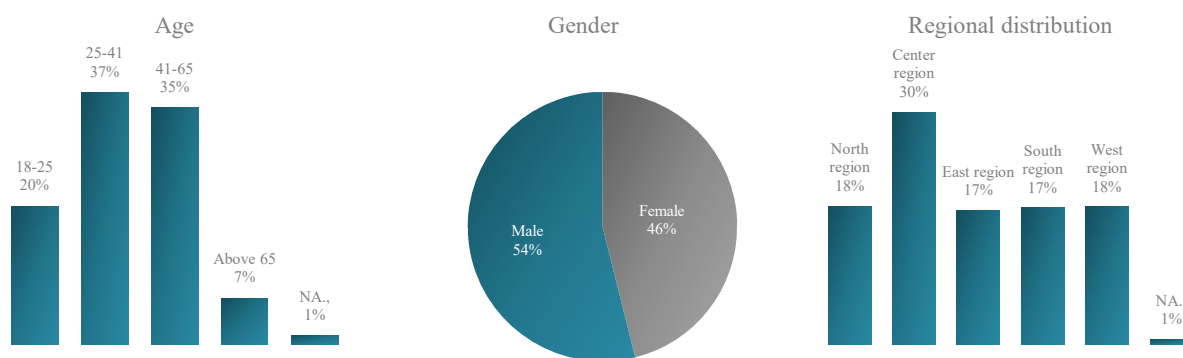


Figure 1. Sample characteristics

demographic characteristics of respondents and their composition, they too match closely the distribution that is recorded in the national official statistics. 66% of the respondents interviewed reports to be married, followed by 29.8% of those being single. Other social statuses follow with significantly lower percentages. In terms of family size, the biggest group in the sample is that reporting between 3-5 members (47.9% of respondents), followed by those reporting between 6 -10 members (42.9%). Smaller households (1-2 members) and larger units (over 11 members) are represented in considerably smaller percentages with (4.6% and 4.8% respectively).

As it regards the social and economic situation within the sample interviewed, similarly to the other aspects discussed above, it reflects the situation that is considered to prevail on the ground. To this end, 17.7% of respondents report to have a joint household income of less than 100 euro per month. 30.6% of respondents report having a household monthly income of 100 – 300 euro, with an additional 28%

of respondents having 301 – 500 euro per month. 12.4% state to have a monthly income between 501 – 800 euro while 5.5% profess to have 801 – 1,000 euro household income. 3.1% of respondents report to having a household income of over 1,000 euro/month.

The shelter situation of the sample indicates that the biggest part of the respondents interviewed live in houses they own (64.3%), followed by 21.7% of respondents who live in their parents' houses. 8.8% of the respondents in the sample live in apartments they own, while 4.5% of them live in rented housings.

With regard to the education levels of respondents, the biggest group in the sample is of individuals with completed secondary education (50%), followed by those with completed primary education (23.7%), and by bachelor level graduates (17.1%). Figure 2 provides an overview of respondents' incomes, shelter situation and education into detail.

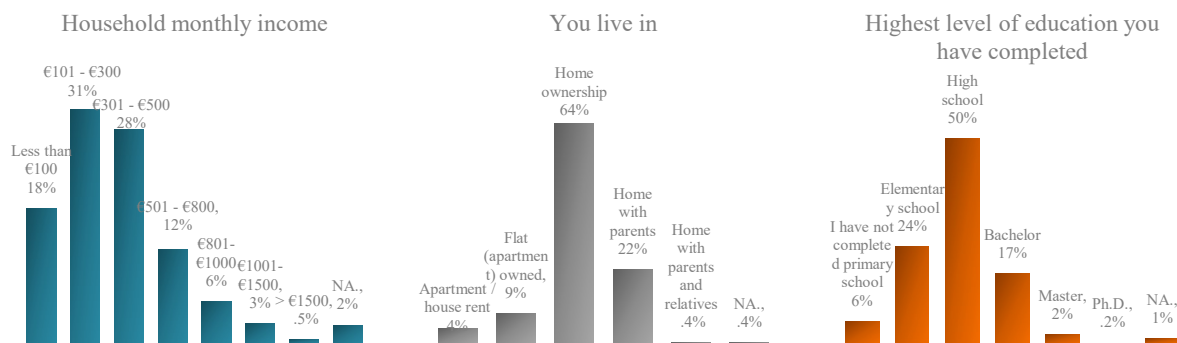


Figure 2. Income, education and type of shelter

FINDINGS

Living standards and household budgets

The first set of questions covering the living standards and lifestyles of respondents included those related to the distribution of household budgets. To this end, respondents were asked to provide approximate percentages of household budgets spent per each of the categories listed in the questionnaire. The purpose of this set of questions is to inquire on the type of life that Kosovars can afford and on what they spend their incomes. The findings from this question cluster indicate that the vast majority of respondents spend their income primarily on covering basic needs and very little are spent on long-term investments or leisure activities and luxury. The results obtained through this sub-set of questions is elaborated upon in this section.

The first expenditure categories that the survey asked the respondents include food and consumables, and public utility bills. To this end, 24% of respondents state that these expenses comprise between 31% -

50% of expenses. Food represents 21% - 30% for almost 20% of respondents, while for over 13% of them, it represents 51% - 60%. Such composition of responses indicates that the majority of citizens spend most of their budget on food for their households. The second category that also consumes a significant amount of household budget, and represents a cost of 21% - 30% for 25.5% of respondents are public utility costs. Over 32% of respondents set this cost at 11% - 20% of their total income, while 20% set it at below 10% of their income. The lower income respondents set this percentage at even higher levels with 11% setting it at 31% - 40% of their total income and an additional 7.4% stating that utility bills reach up to 50% of their income.

Clothes and other personal belongings were the other two categories that the questionnaire inquired about. Clothes and other shopping items do not appear to represent a major expense category for the respondents included in the sample. To say the least, there are by far lower costs related to clothing or other personal belongings than there are to food and public utilities discussed above. Over 70% of respondents

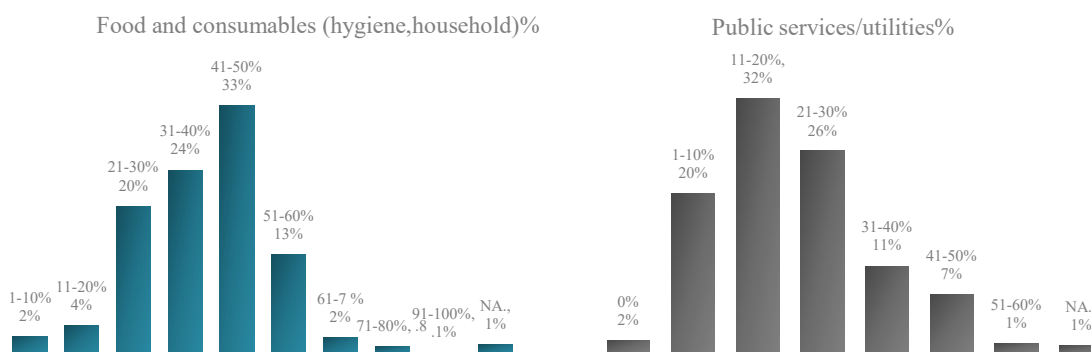


Figure 3. Percentage of household budget dedicated to food and consumables, and public utilities

in the sample report to spend less than 20% of their total budgets on buying clothes and other personal belongings. 18% of respondents claim to spend 21% - 30% on clothes, while 8.8% of respondents reported to spend nothing on clothes.

Recreation and travel also represent a minor cost for Kosovars' budgets. The response obtained to the question on travel and recreation indicate a rather minimal travel and recreation time spent for a large percentage of respondents. 36.3% of respondents report to spend nothing on these two categories, while over 40% of them spend between 1% and 10% on these categories. A total of 15.5% of respondents set their spending for recreation and travel at 20% of their total income. Higher percentages dedicated to these categories are more seldom and represent less than 5% of total respondent's in the sample. Below, Figure 4 presents a visual overview of percentages of household budget spent on clothes and other personal belonging purchases, as well as, recreation and travel.

The limited purchasing power of Kosovars is also evidenced by the results obtained on the question on the money spent on capital investments or savings. To this end, a

striking 69% of respondents state to have spent 0% of their income on investments or savings. An additional 19.5% report to save or invest up to 10% of their total income, while 8% set the percentage of household budget saved between 11% - 20%. Higher percentages of savings as a total of the household budget represent less than 3% of respondents.

Travelling abroad is a luxury for a

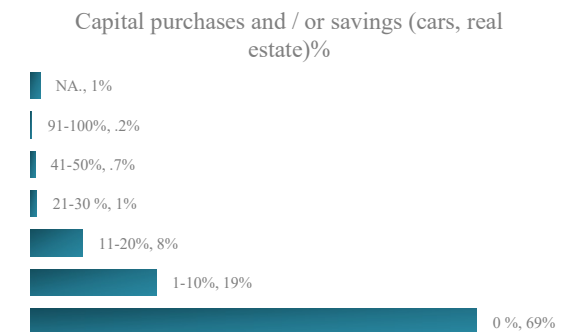


Figure 5. Percentage of household budget dedicated to capital investments or savings

significant part of Kosovars. Lack of freedom of movement has without doubt been a primary reason for their inability to travel. Furthermore, the costs associated with visa and travel are very high for most of the respondents in the sample. As such, the vast majority of respondents indicate neighboring countries as primary

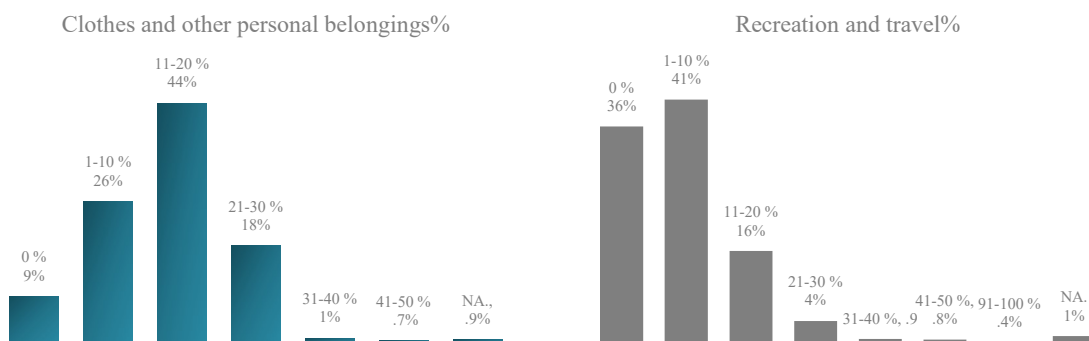


Figure 4. Percentage of household budget dedicated to clothes and personal belongings, and recreation and travel

destinations abroad. From all countries reported to be visited, Albania is the primary destination for most of the respondents (59.9%). The second most visited country as reported by interviewees is Montenegro, which 3.6% reporting to have visited in the

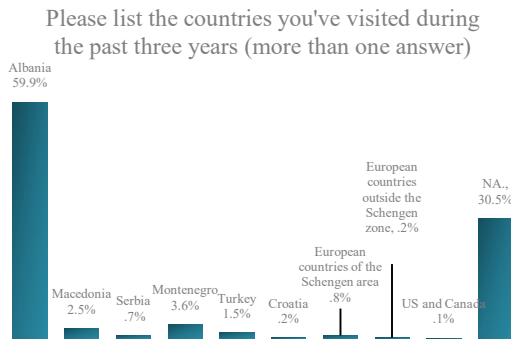


Figure 6. Countries visited within the last three years

last three years. The third most popular destination reported to be visited by Kosovars is Macedonia with 2.5%. Turkey (1.5%), a country also having a visa free regime for citizens of Kosovo, follows this. The Schengen area has been a travel destination for a mere 0.8% of respondents in the past three years.

30% of respondents have not provided an answer to this question. This percentage can be attributed to the persons who have

reported to spending 0% of their income on travel and recreation.

Other types of leisure or luxury activities are also seldom experienced by the respondents in the sample. When asked whether they eat out in restaurants or other types of food services, almost 42% of respondents claim to never having done this. Another 36.8% of respondent's report to eating out several times per year, while 16% state that they eat out several times per month. 4.4% of interviewees in the sample report to eating out several times per week. Respondents who dine out daily represent only 0.6% of the sample.

Aside from rarely eating out, the vast majority of respondents do not report attending other social events such as going out to cafes and bars at night. 49.5% of respondents state that they never go out at night in bars or cafes. An additional 22% of them state that they go out at night several times per year. 8.1% of respondents included in the sample state to go out in bars and cafes at night several times per week. Going out at night is a regular activity for 1.8% of respondents. The responses obtained to this question appear to be relevant to the age of respondents, with

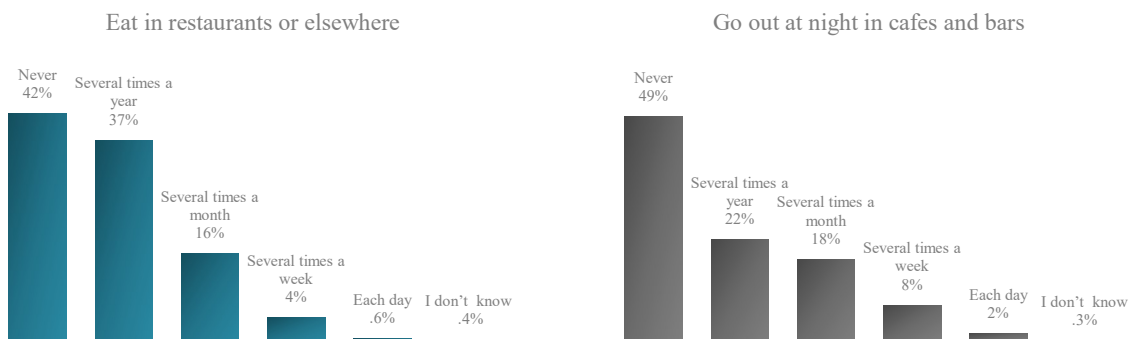


Figure 7. Frequency of eating out, or going out at night in cafes and bars

younger respondents reporting to go out at night more often. The question also appears to be biased in terms of social status, namely whether the respondents are married or single. Slight differences in response can also be observed in terms of gender, with women reporting to go out more rarely than men, but this can also be attributed to the availability of income and employment, where men tend to score better in Kosovo. Figure 7 presents a visual overview of responses obtained by respondents on their habits of eating out and going out at night.

Going to the cinema is also not a very frequently experienced activity for Kosovars. With so few functioning cinemas across Kosovo, going to the cinema is not even an option for the majority of respondents in the sample. This is also

evidenced by the fact that 86.6% of respondents report never having gone to the cinema. Almost 11% of respondents report to go to the cinema several times per year, and an additional 1.8% of them set the frequency of this experience at several times per month.

The experience of going to the theater is even more foreign to respondents included in the sample. 92.7% of respondents in the sample report never to attend theater productions. 5.4% of the respondents included in the sample report to go to the theater several times per year, while around 1% of respondent's state to visit theaters a couple of times per month. A full overview of results obtained on the frequency of attending cinemas and theaters is presented in Figure 9 below.

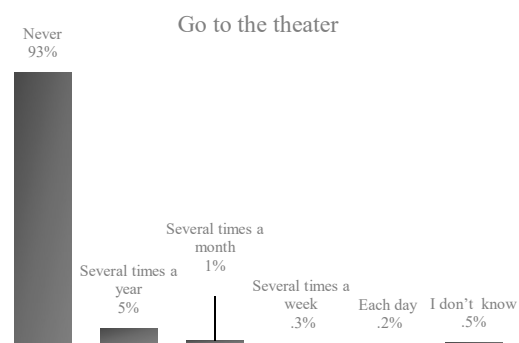
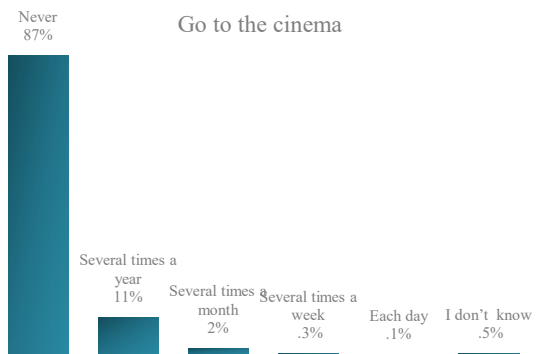


Figure 8. Frequency of going to the cinema and theater

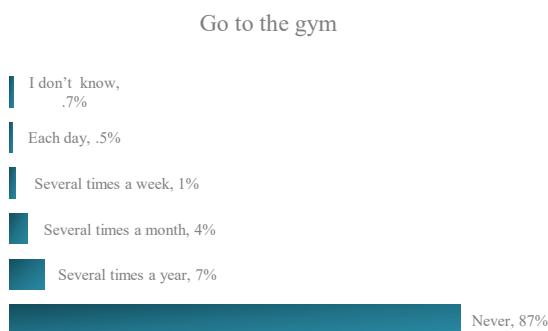


Figure 9. Frequency of going to the gym and sports events

Sports and sports events are another form of spending leisure time that the respondents were asked to report frequency of occurrence. The vast majority of respondents (87.1%) also never go to the gym. This experience of visiting the gym is an event that happens several times per year for 6.8% of respondents. 3.5% of all persons in the sample go to the gym several times per month, while 1.3% report to go to the gym several times per week.

With regard to sports events, the situation appears to be slightly better. 74% of respondent's report to never having attended sports events. 20.2% of respondents in the sample report to joining sports events several times per year. 3.8% of respondents state sports events to be part of their reality several times per month. The low cost of sports events tickets in Kosovo may be another factor, aside from the general popularity of sports, which attributes to the relatively high attendance in sports events reported by the respondent's. Figure 9 provides a visual illustration of practices of respondents going to the gym and sports events. Cultural and arts events like concerts and exhibitions are even more foreign for Kosovo citizens than either cinema, theater, or sports events. 90.4% of

respondent's report to never going to a concert or exhibition. A total of 6.9% of respondents in the sample report to attending concerts or visiting exhibitions several times per year. 1.6% of respondent's state to joining these types of events several times per month. The low attendance of most of exhibitions organized in the capital Prishtina provides for additional confirmation of the stated frequency of visiting such events.

The frequency of buying gifts for oneself or for close ones is another aspect that the survey inquired. 38.9% of respondents report to never having bought gifts for either themselves or others. 50.9% of respondent's claim to make such purchases several times a year, like birthday presents and presents on marked dates (i.e. anniversaries, 8th of March, Valentine's Day or similar). 9.1% of respondents appear to be keener (or more financially capable) on buying presents for themselves or for others as they report doing so several times a month. A full illustration of responses provided on the frequency of visiting concerts or exhibitions and buying gifts is presented in Figure 10.

Travelling abroad or going on holidays represent other leisure activities that the

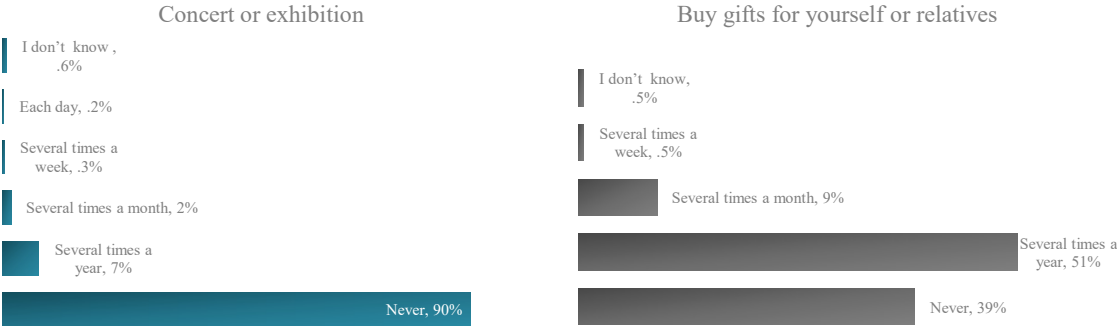
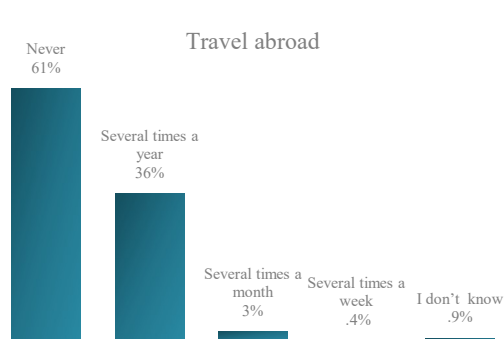


Figure 10. Frequency of going to concert or exhibition or buying gifts for self or others

respondents were asked to provide information. To this end, 60.6% of respondent's report never to having traveled abroad. 35.5% report to experience traveling abroad several times per year, while 2.5% of the total number of respondents travel outside Kosovo several times per month. Traveling abroad is usually linked to summer holidays for Kosovars. This is also confirmed by the responses obtained on the question regarding the frequency of going on holiday. 39.4% of respondents report never having gone on a holiday. Several times per year is the frequency of holidays reported by 58.6% of respondents in the sample. 1% of respondents report to having gone on some form of holiday several times per month. Figure 11 provides an overview of results obtained with regard to traveling abroad and going on holidays.

Attention to personal health and concerns is another dimension that was covered in the survey. 22.7% of respondents in the sample report never to have taken medical tests. 64.5% of the total number of respondent's in the sample report to taking medical tests, with or without reasons to do so, several times per year. 10.5% of respondent's report undergoing tests several times per month.



One explanation for such composition of responses can be that a poor situation of public health is represented when a significant percentage of respondents reports to having the need for medical testing. Such argument is also strengthened/supported by insufficient household budgets, which barely suffice in covering the basic living costs (food, utilities, and clothes). Another way of

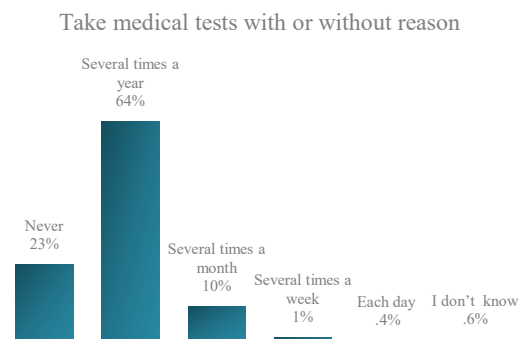


Figure 12. Frequency of taking medical tests with or without reason

interpreting this data is that the public is aware of the importance of their health and thus do medical testing often. However, the evidence from the healthcare institutions' statistics on prevalence of smoking among the general population, as well as the general low interest of citizens on issues of health (i.e. late examinations for diagnosing

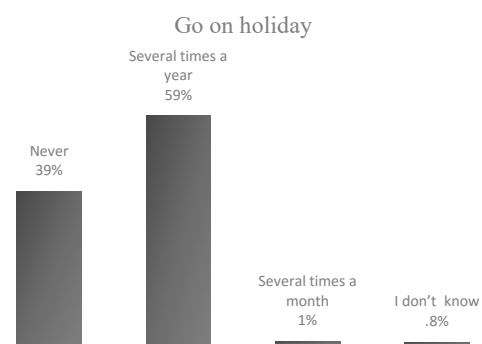


Figure 11. Frequency of travelling abroad or going on holiday

diseases) which disapproves such argument, makes it less likely to be true.

Expectations for the short-term future

Being that the respondents' outlook on the near-term and long-term future largely shapes their behavior and practices, these aspects were also included in the survey. Job security is the first aspect of respondents' outlook of the future. When asked about the likelihood of remaining without a job for more than four consecutive weeks within the next twelve months, 42.5% of respondents have selected the option 'very likely'. Another 19.5% state that they do not know. Only 14.8% of respondents in the sample perceive that losing their job in the next twelve months is not likely at all. Remaining without work for four consecutive weeks or more within the next year is 'somewhat possible' for 23.1% of respondents. This composition of responses reflects the general job insecurity prevailing in the country both regarding well paid jobs and low paid jobs, and across sectors. Even jobs within the international organizations and companies, which are generally considered as good jobs, usually come with short-term contracts of up to one year. Job

Is it likely that in the next 12 months you're unemployed and looking for work for at least 4 consecutive weeks?

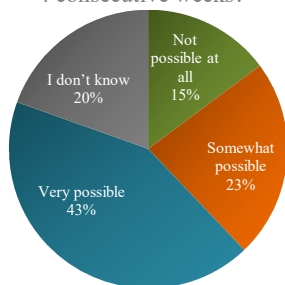


Figure 13. Likelihood to be unemployed looking for work for four consecutive weeks in the next 12 months

insecurity also impacts the way people treat their money, their spending habits and most importantly long-term obligations in the form of loans or long term financing. The full overview of expectations for probable employment of respondents is presented in Figure 13.

Caretaking for household members is another aspect that is interesting to note. Having to shorten working hours in order to take care of a family member is not possible at all for 21.4% of respondents. This may be somewhat possible for 31% of respondents, while very possible for 26.3%. An additional 21.1% report to not knowing whether they will need to shorten the working hours in the next twelve months to take care of someone else in the family. When this aspect is cross analyzed with the gender of respondents, a significantly higher percentage of women have answered both somewhat possible and very possible. On the other hand, most of the 21.1% of respondents stating that this is not possible at all are men. The only gender-neutral answer appears to be the "I don't know" choice, which has been selected by a similar percentage of men and women. An overview of the response distribution to this question is presented in Figure 14.

Is it likely that in the next 12 months you should shorten the time you spend in paid work to care for other family members?

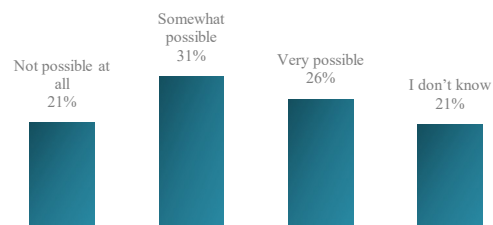


Figure 14. Likelihood to leave work to take care of other family members in the next 12 months

Another aspect that is important to discuss is the likelihood of not having enough income to cover the basic needs of the household within the next year. Income uncertainty to the level of not being able to cover the basic needs is not possible at all only for 14.4% of respondents. 28.8% state that it is somewhat possible not to have enough income to cover their basic needs within the next twelve months, while a staggering 43.7% of respondents assess this possibility as very likely to occur. 12.8% of respondents do not know whether they will be in a situation where they will not have enough income to cover their basic needs. If one considers the responses received with regard to their expectations about their employment situation in the next twelve months, the concerns about being able to cover basic needs for themselves and their families is understandable. Such high uncertainty related to basic survival is really concerning to record among the respondents in the sample.

Is it likely that during the next 12 months to have periods when you do not have enough income to cover the basic needs of your family?

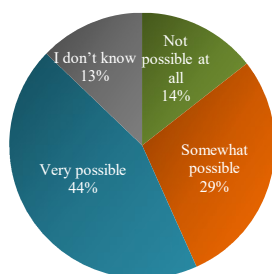


Figure 15. Likelihood of periods with insufficient income to cover for basic needs of families in the next 12 months

The likelihood of not receiving proper medical care possibly needed within the

next twelve months is considered as not possible at all by 15.5 % of respondents. ‘Somewhat possible’ has been the answer to this question provided by 37.3% of respondents, while 33.6% of the respondents rate such a possibility as very plausible. 13.6% of respondents do not know whether they would receive medical services in case they needed them in the following year.

Is it possible to not get medical services that you need if you get ill during the next 12 months?

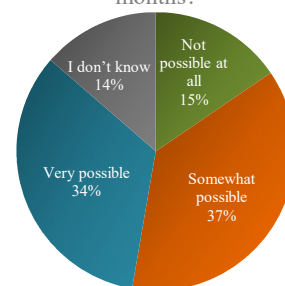


Figure 16. Likelihood of receiving medical services if sick in the next 12 months

Perceptions on social assistance and services

This section covers the perceptions of citizens on social assistance and services offered by public providers. The fairness of the system, as well as costs associated with the two major social risks (health and old age) were part of the questions included to assess the perceptions of citizens about the social security system in Kosovo. While the perceptions on the availability of health services in itself is a significant indicator of the how the respondents feel about the healthcare system in Kosovo, the additional aspects treated in this section provide a broader understanding of the citizens’ perceptions.

In order to assess to what extent the social assistance scheme dedicated to the most in need in the society is serving its function, the respondents were asked on whether they think that the neediest among our midst are the actual recipients of social assistance. 30.5% of respondents completely disagree that the most in need actually are the beneficiaries of social assistance whereas an additional 29.5% of the respondents show milder disagreement. The two categories disagreeing with the statement account for 60% of total respondents in the sample. It is important to note that only 3.4% of total respondents included in the survey completely agree that social assistance end-address the neediest in society. Another 11.8% of respondent’s state that they agree with the statement, while 17.5% declared

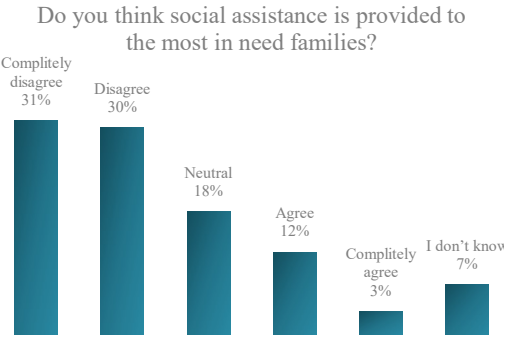


Figure 17. Does social assistance provide for the most in need families?

neutrality. With 7.2% of respondents stating not to know where social assistance is distributed, the overall perception towards social assistance, communicated through the responses to this question, is grim.

The respondents were also asked how they see the sustainability and outlook of the pension and healthcare systems. To this end, the respondents were asked to present their opinions on whether Kosovo will be able to

cope with the cost of public health services in the near future. The first option provided to respondents was that Kosovo will not be able to maintain even the current level of services as it will become too costly. The second option given to respondents was that Kosovo will be able to maintain current levels of services, but will not be able to improve them. The third option was the most optimistic outlook/answering option provided, which was aside from maintaining the current levels of services, Kosovo will also be able to invest in improvements on the system. 27.5% of respondents in the sample believe that Kosovo will not be able to afford even maintaining the current level of services. 34.7% of respondents think that the current level of services will be maintained, but no improvements can be expected in the near future, while 14.5% think that Kosovo will be able not only to maintain, but also to improve the current level of services offered by public providers. Almost a quarter of all respondents in the sample answered ‘I don’t know’. A complete visual overview of responses is provided in the Figure 18.

A similarly phrased question was also asked with regard to pensions being one of

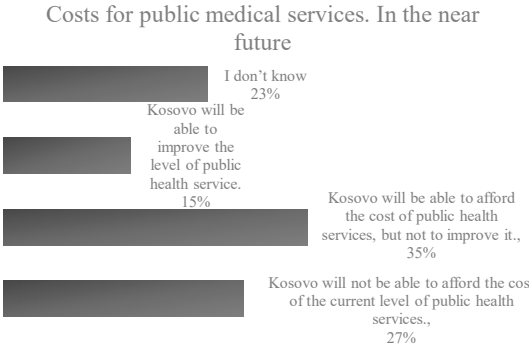


Figure 18. Near-term prospects for the cost of medical services

the biggest budget lines of Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare in Kosovo. To this end, 23.4% are pessimistic that Kosovo can maintain the current levels of basic pensions. 36.5% of respondents in the sample consider that the current basic pension levels can be maintained, but no increases in the pay level should be expected in the near future. Almost every fifth respondent in the sample (19%) thinks that Kosovo will be able to afford pension increases in the near future, as well as maintain the current levels. An additional 21% of respondents state not to know whether Kosovo will be able to afford the basic pensions bill in the near future. The

responses obtained on this matter are presented in Figure 19.

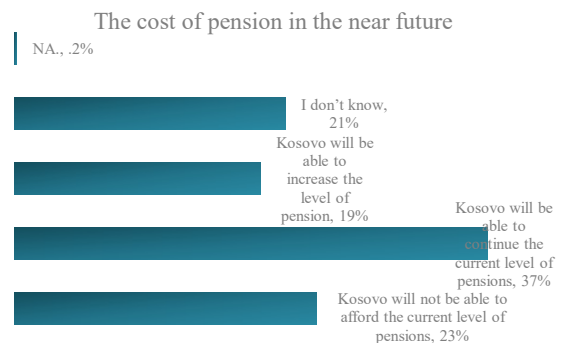


Figure 19. Near-term prospects for the cost of pensions

CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

The study shows a rather difficult financial and social situation of a representative sample in Kosovo and provides an extensive information on the lifestyles and expectations of Kosovars. Most of the respondents in the sample report spending the biggest part of their disposable income on food, consumables and utilities. For a large part of respondents, these basic expenses represent the bulk of their budgets, with little or no money left for leisure or luxury expenses. Because of a rather limited financial situation, most Kosovars do not attend social or sports events, arts exhibitions, or concerts. They also rarely eat out or engage in an active nightlife. Over 60% of respondent's have not traveled abroad in the past year, with those who had traveled primarily visiting neighboring countries. Only 1% of the total number of respondents in the sample report to have visited an EU country in the past year. The poor quality of life is further confirmed by the fact that almost 40% of respondents report never to go on holidays.

With over-stretched budgets that barely allow them to make ends meet, Kosovars cannot afford a richer social life and more leisure activity budgets. When the socio-cultural poverty presented above is combined with the dismal economic outlook of the near future, which is based on rather high uncertainty of employment, the

situation becomes concerning. The current level of income does not give the certainty of safely meeting the basic needs in the next twelve months for a significant part of the population. With 70% of respondents reporting not being able to save or invest any of their incomes, an unexpected cost that may be incurred by any household gets them off balance and makes it impossible to cover for their basic living costs.

The perceived impartiality of the system in place in Kosovo, which is also assessed through this study, appears to be lacking in the eyes of the respondents included in the sample. While a significant percentage of respondents are unsure whether they will receive medical treatment/services in case of need in the forthcoming year, a considerable portion of respondents do not believe that they will. Furthermore, most Kosovars do not think that the social assistance funds serve the neediest in society. The basic pension scheme and current healthcare service system are perceived by respondents as fairly sustainable, but very few respondents are actually optimistic that the services will improve and pensions will increase.

The current hardship and uncertainty for the future coupled with very little social and leisure activities make Kosovars' quality of life substandard. Lack of financial

resources, lack of ability to travel, expensive and rare sports and culture events, all contribute to an overall rather concerning situation. There is a great need to restore faith and optimism for the future for most of the respondents in the sample as they present rather low expectations of the future. In order to do so, systemic and systematic change is needed, and multi-level and dimensional interventions are required.

While the Government of Kosovo cannot influence the income of the people directly, policy measures should be introduced to protect the most vulnerable categories of workers—those having to work for minimum wage. The minimum payment for full time work should be increased so that people working for minimum wage should have the ability to cover their basic needs. Systemically, the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare (MPMS) should improve communication with citizens, by providing a clear explanation of social protection schemes, as the current information level displayed by respondents on these topics is very low.

While disposable income of citizens depends on many factors, providing them with the opportunity to attend leisure activities for free would improve their quality of life significantly. To this end, organizing public events such as concerts, theater plays or sports events in public spaces would enrich the social life of Kosovars. This is particularly valid for smaller towns and settlements, where the population has even more limited opportunity. In some areas/villages in Kosovo, the social life is limited to

weddings that take place during the summer, while the other nine months of the year, citizens, and the youth in particular, have no opportunity to attend social events. Line ministries, especially the Ministry of Culture, Youth, and Sports (MCYS) should invest more on the organization of free public events to encourage attendance even from low income individuals. Alternatively, MPMS or MCYS can also give free entry tickets to such events for persons with low or no income.

Faith in the social protection and healthcare system should also be restored. If the benefits and services provided by public institutions are aimed at improving the wellbeing of citizens, their bad public image is a big hindrance in achieving this function. The numerous scandals involving public health institutions have been identified as the primary reason for the citizens' distrust, but personal experience with said institutions justifies such prejudice.



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