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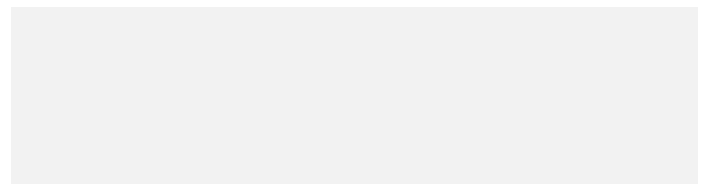
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This report has been prepared in cooperation with MLSW staff and its contents reflect joint contributions of the contractor and its ministry counterparts. The views expressed in the report do not necessarily reflect the views of Support to Social Partners Project managed by EU Office in Kosovo and Implemented by 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 (SSP) project, funded by EU Office in Kosovo. Specifically, the project contributes to “Developing skills and knowledge of social partners in legislation 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 the 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 the Social Economic Council and the Ministry of Labour 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

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.

Given that Kosovar Stability Initiative (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.

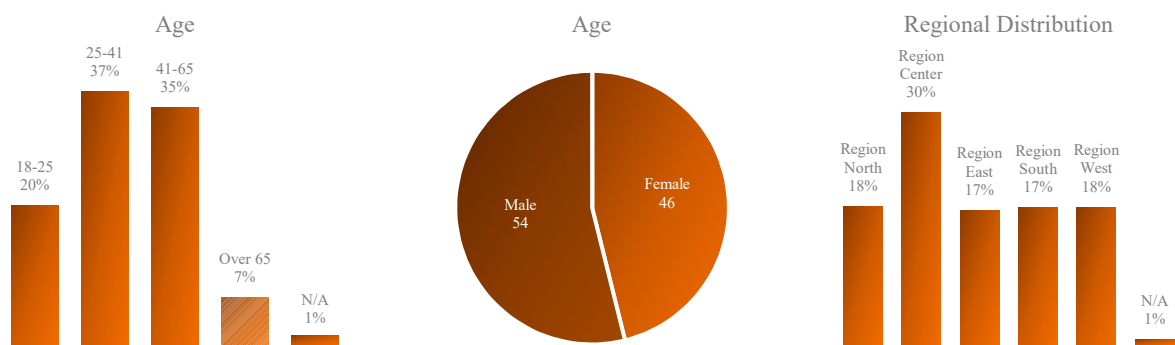


Figure 1. Sample Characteristics

As for the 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 EUR per month. 30.6% of respondent's report having a household monthly income

of 100 EUR – 300 eur, with an additional 28% of them having 301 eur – 500 eur per month. 12.4% of respondent's state to have between 501 eur – 800 eur with an additional 5.5% of them stating to have 801 eur – 1,000 eur household income. 3.1% of respondent's report having household income of over 1,000 eur/month.

The household living 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 that 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 apartments/houses.

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

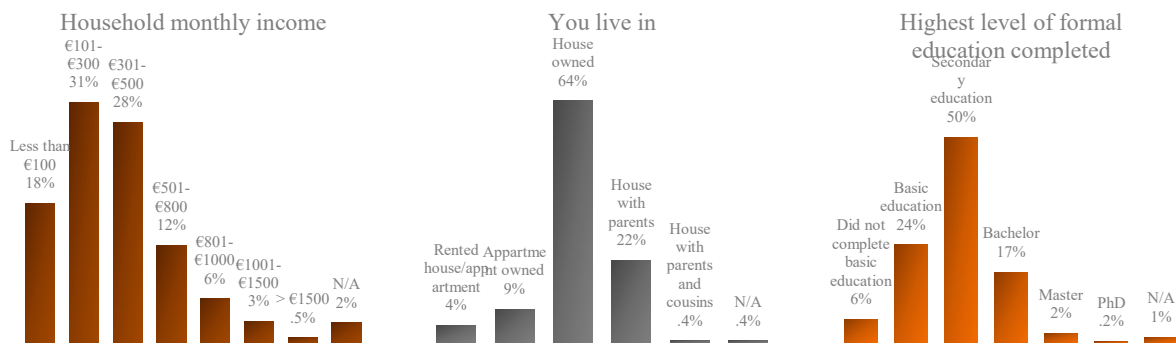


Figure 2. Income, education and living conditions

FINDINGS

Perceptions on socio – economic situation in Kosovo

The employment situation is one of the most important characteristics for determining the socio-economic situation in the country. As such, this was the first aspect inquired about when assessing the citizen perceptions about the situation in Kosovo. Almost 54% of respondent’s state that in every 100 persons in Kosovo over 50 are unemployed. An additional 12.4% state that 45-49 persons are unemployed in every 100 Kosovars, while 10% of respondent’s state that in every 100 persons, 40-44 are unemployed in Kosovo. Such composition of responses indicates that citizen perceive unemployment to be much higher than the official reported figures.

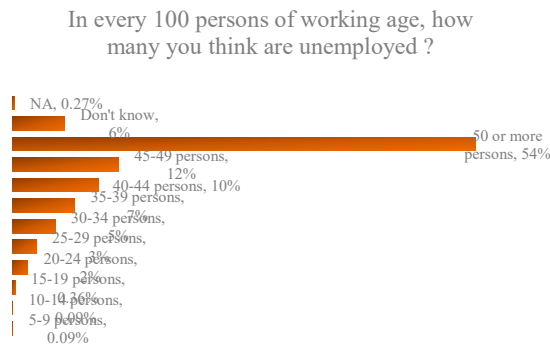


Figure 3. Perceived unemployment

Over 75% of respondents in the sample also believe that the unemployed are actively seeking for work, but that employment is not available for them. To this end, over 57.3% of citizens interviewed believe that over 40 persons out of 100 unemployed are actively seeking for work with an additional 12.7% of them stating that 35-39 persons in 100 unemployed is an active job-seeker. The perceptions captured through this question indicate that citizens have a rather grim outlook on the employment situation in the market, which by far exceeds the official figures of both unemployment and

percentage of active job-seekers within those unemployed. The complete overview of responses regarding this aspect is presented in Figure 4.

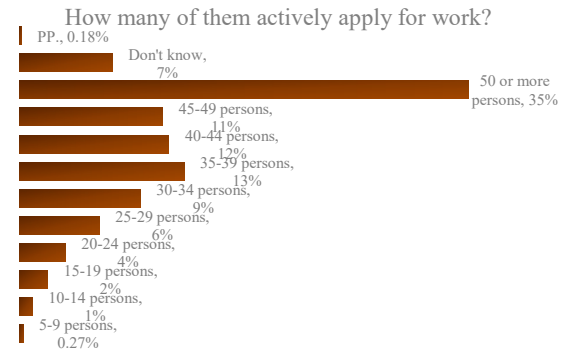


Figure 4. How many of them actively apply for work

Another aspect that citizens were asked relating to the ability of Kosovars to cover for their basic needs, a question was asked again in a similar format requiring respondents to state in 100 persons in Kosovo that are of the active working age how many do not have sufficient income to cover their needs. 38.2% of respondent’s state that over 50 persons of working age in each 100 persons do not have sufficient income to cover their basic needs. 8% each believe that this percentage is between 35 – 39 persons and 40 – 45 persons and 46 - 50 persons. This composition of responses indicates that 65% of respondents believe that over 35% of persons in the working age cannot generate enough income to cover their basic needs. When compared to official figures in Kosovo, these perceptions appear to be even grimmer. The official estimates of poverty situation in the country indicate that around 30% of the total population in Kosovo lives below poverty line. There appears to be a widely acknowledged poverty across all segments of society and respondents regardless of gender age, or location confirm it. A very small percentage of respondents report the poverty figure low. 2.3% of respondents interviewed think that 10 -14 persons out of

100 cannot cope with covering living expenses. An additional 5.5% believes that 15 -20 persons out of 100 in Kosovo cannot cope with living expenses. The distribution of responses across all answering options is presented in the Figure 5 below.

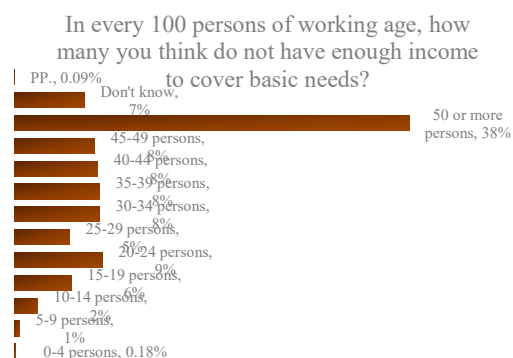


Figure 5. Number of persons that does not have sufficient income to cover basic needs in every 100 persons

One aspect that the survey inquired about also relates to citizen knowledge and awareness on which social categories are protected in Kosovo and receive some type of benefits. To this end, the most talked about social categories in the media, those deriving from the last war in Kosovo, or the war categories, as they are popularly known. One of these categories emerges as the first choice for a significant part of respondents. It is important to note that the knowledge of schemes is entirely based on media coverage as these benefits have begun being awarded just recently and they comprise of a smaller part of the social benefits and pensions schemes awarded through the public budget. The biggest bill that the public budget has in terms of publicly funded schemes—old age pensions (and as of recently work-related pensions), is presented as the first choice for 1.1% of respondents. Similarly, the poor¹ are identified as recipients of social welfare benefits by only 7.8% of respondents. 62% of respondents have indicated war veterans as a category that receives social assistance

¹ Social assistance is one of the biggest budget lines in the MLSW budget

in Kosovo, with an additional 15.8% and 5.1% believe that families of war victims and families of missing persons respectively, receive benefits. 2.7% of respondents indicated victims of rape to be recipients of public assistance in their first choice. While the scoring was not ranked in any way and the question asked intuitively (not always in the same order), the responses obtain illustrate the influence that the media reporting, particularly on the abuses with regards to the war categories' schemes, has on shaping the opinion of the public. Below, overview or responses is presented figuratively.

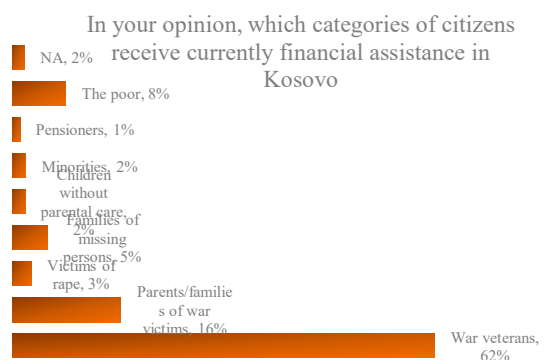


Figure 6. Which categories currently receive financial assistance

Social differences and income inequalities

The survey also inquired about the citizen perceptions about unequal distribution to wealth as well as their core values on which they are founded. To this end, the first question inquired about under this theme was whether big differences in income distribution between people are justifiable and under what is the rationale for such opinion. The statement that they were expected to rate in a five-point scale varying from completely disagree to completely agree, was “Large differences in people's incomes are acceptable, because they represent differences in talents and efforts”. 22.7% of respondents completely disagreed

with this statement, with an additional 17.9% of respondents stating they disagree more than they agree with that statement. On the other hand, significantly smaller percentage of people express their full (5.4%) or partial agreement (9.9%) with that statement. Neutrality has been expressed by 24.1% of respondents in the sample, while 20% state not to know what the most accurate assessment of the statement was. The result obtained is presented in Figure 7 below.

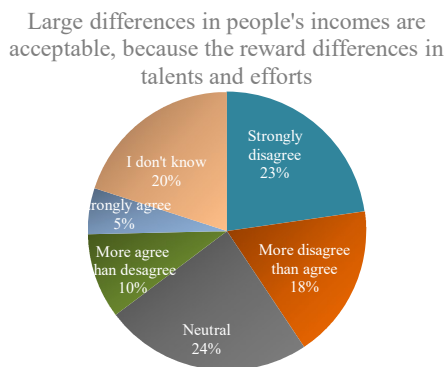


Figure 7. Is difference in income distribution acceptable?

Another aspect that the survey inquired about is what the respondents considered as just society. The definition of just has been associated with redistribution of wealth and income in order to identify the perceptions of citizens and values on which they are based on. The statement which the respondents were requested to state their opinion on, was phrased: "For a society to be called just, differences in living standards between people should be small". 54.5% have expressed positive attitude towards this statement with 34.4 stating to completely agree while 20.1% of them are more agreeing than disagreeing towards this statement. 17.4% of respondents have stated to be neutral to the statement and the meaning it encompasses, while 13.4% have stated disagreement with this statement (5.5% completely disagree, while 7.9% of them disagree more than they agree with it. Almost 15% of respondents state they do not know whether they agree or disagree with the statement. A cross tabulation of

results with key demographic characteristics indicates that women more than men are those disagreeing with the statement. The higher the education level, income and other aspects that ensure decent living, the lower is the sensitiveness towards the less fortunate. To this end, the people reporting lower household incomes, with fewer people employed in the household and lower education levels, tend to be in the disagreeing side more regarding this statement.

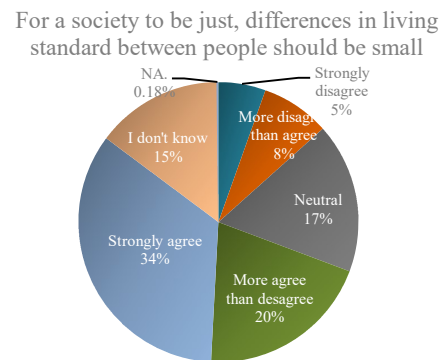


Figure 8. Does just society imply small differences in people's in standard of living?

The state and society

When asked to state their opinion of the state's and society's role on taking care of the most vulnerable categories, the vast majority of respondents have answered positively. A staggering 61% of respondents indicate that they completely agree with the society shielding the least fortunate among its midst. An additional 17% of respondents indicate that they agree more than disagree with society and state taking care of the vulnerable groups. Only 6.5% of respondent's express disagreement with the statement. Complete overview of responses provided is presented in the Figure 9.

Society and the state must care for the most vulnerable among its mids

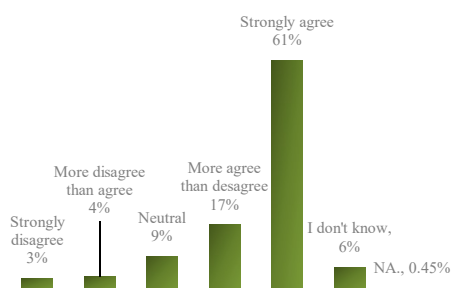


Figure 9. The society and the state should take care of the most vulnerable

The role of the state was inquired about also with regards to employment. The statement that respondents were asked to rate was “Government is responsible for ensuring work for anyone that wishes to work”. The responses obtained are quite interesting as they indicate very high citizen expectations with regards to state involvement in creating jobs. 71.7% of respondent’s state that they completely agree with the statement with an additional 16.2% stating to be more on the agreeing side than on the disagreeing one. Only 2.7% and 2.3% respectively state to fully disagree and more disagreeing than agreeing with the statement. 4.1% of respondents have remained neutral towards this statement while, 2.8% did not know.

Similar views are also expressed with regards to provision of health services. Here too, the vast majority of respondents (86.1%) completely agree with the

statement “Government is responsible for providing adequate health services for all in need”. An additional 16.2% state to agree more than disagree with the statement, while only 2.7% of respondent’s state to disagree completely.

The Kosovars appear to be sensitive towards the elderly. The respondents interviewed, by large believe that the government is also responsible for providing an acceptable living standard for the elderly. While 84.5% of them completely agree that it is the government’s responsibility to provide the elderly with a decent living standard, an additional 9.5% states to agree more than disagree with that statement. Only half a percent each state to completely disagree or more disagree than agree. A smaller percentage appear to share the same view with regards to ensuring a decent standard of living for the unemployed. When asked to present their attitudes towards the statement, “The government is responsible for providing an acceptable living standard for the unemployed”, 77.7% of respondents agree completely with it. An additional 13.5% of them state to agree more than disagree with it, while 3.6% report being neutral. 2% and 0.7% of respondents respectively declare to disagree more than agree and to completely disagree that the government should provide decent living for the unemployed. Figure 11 illustrates

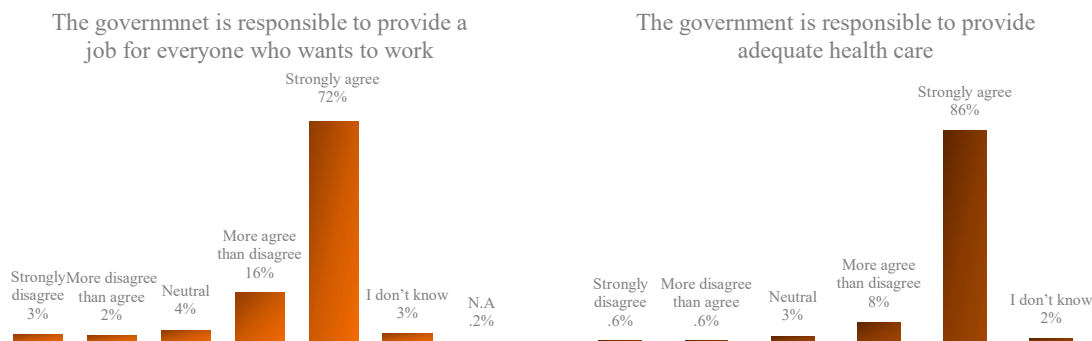


Figure 10. Government should ensure jobs for all those willing to work and Government is responsible for providing adequate health services for all in need

attitudes towards these two categories visually.

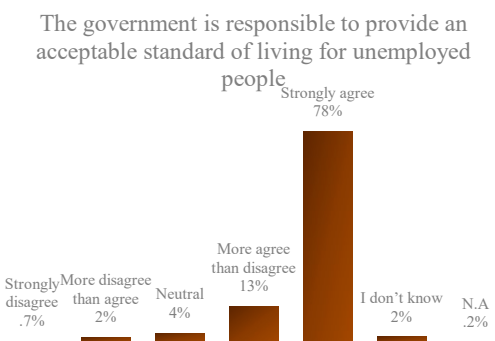
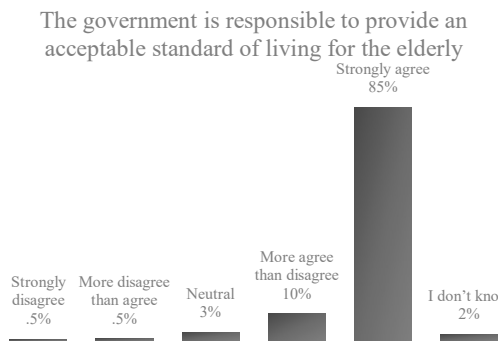


Figure 11. The government is responsible for providing and acceptable living standard for elderly and the unemployed

Daycare for children is an aspect that was also included in the survey. Unlike other two categories presented above, when asked whether “The government is responsible to provide day care for children of working parents, only 40.6% of respondents completely agree with the statement. 15.1% of them state to agree more than disagree with it, while 10% of respondents report to be neutral. 16.5% of respondent’s state to completely disagree with this statement while 8.7% report to disagree more than agree with it. 8.9% of respondents’ state not to know whether this is responsibility of the government. Results are presented visually in Figure 12. As it may be expected, given that women are those mostly affected by child care, they also tend to be more supportive of the statement, while men are less so.

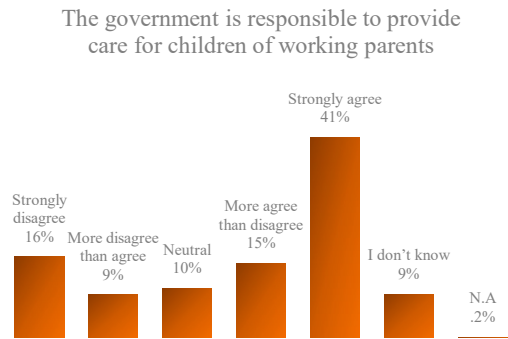


Figure 12. The government is responsible for providing day care for children of working parents

Taking care of the sick in the family is often a reason for missing out of work or temporary quitting jobs. This particularly holds true if the sickness affecting the family member requiring care is long-term illness. To this end, one of the questions covered particularly this aspect, and whether it is the government’s responsibility to provide with paid leave those being forced to temporarily leave their jobs to care for sick family members. Over 53% of respondent’s state to completely agree with this statement, while 21% of them state to agree more than disagree with it. 2.9% completely disagree with this statement while 6.4% disagree more than they agree with it. 8.2% of respondents are neutral towards this statement while 7.9% do not know whether it is the government’s responsibility to cover this risk.

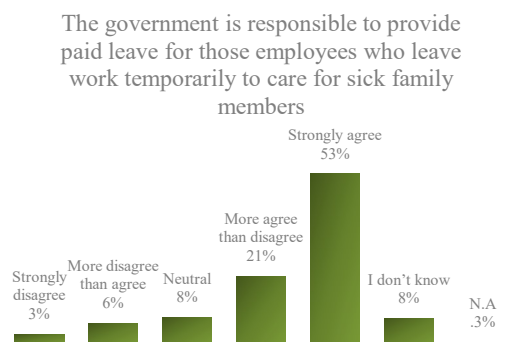


Figure 13. The government is responsible for providing paid leave for those temporary leaving jobs to care for sick family members

Taxation is the main source of government budget to provide for public services. In this regards, the respondents were asked whether the government should increase taxes and public services accordingly, or whether it should offer fewer public services, in exchange for lower taxes. 66.3% of respondents in the survey endorse a minimalistic government with fewer taxes and smaller budget for services and social assistance. The opinion that the government should raise taxes and proportionally increase the spending in public services and social assistance, is endorsed by 6.3% of respondents in the sample. Around 20% of respondents do not know, while 7.6% of them did not provide an answer to this question. Answers are presented visually in the Figure 14 below.

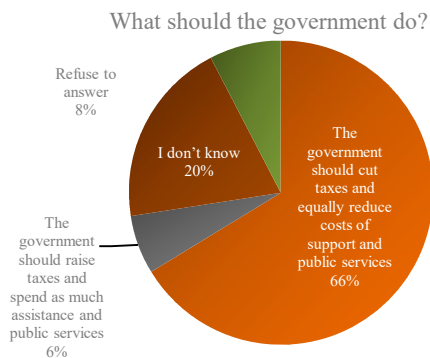


Figure 14. Should the government raise taxes to offer more services, or reduce taxes and offer fewer services?

Perceptions and satisfaction with public services and social protection

This subsection covers the citizen perceptions about the availability and quality of public services. The first types of services that the survey asked for personal experience/encounters with are those of health services. 52.4% of respondents in the sample confirm having had personal experiences with the public healthcare system within the last 12 months; 2.3% of them refuse to answer, and 45.4% state not to have received services from public health service providers. This implies that the assessment of these services are realistic and

based on experiences for more than half of the respondents in the sample. When asked to rate these services, the sentiment is more on the negative side. 15.8% of respondents in the sample state to be very dissatisfied with the services received in public healthcare institutions, while 15.2% state they are more dissatisfied than satisfied. 3.4% of respondents in the sample state to be very satisfied, while 9.5% report being more satisfied than dissatisfied. 16.6% of respondents interviewed report being neutral towards this question and 34.5% have not received services from these institutions. 4.8% of respondents claim not to know what the quality of service is in the public health system. These two aspects (whether they have had personal experiences with public health service providers and the rating of that experience) are presented in the Figure 15, below.

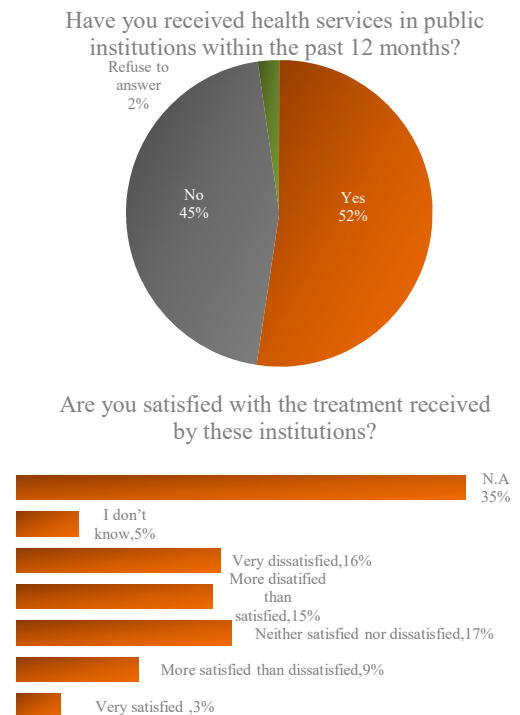
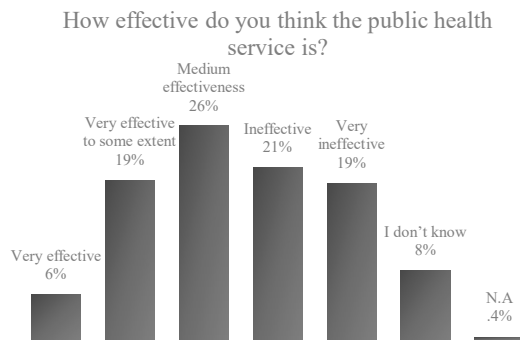


Figure 15. Have you received public health services in the last 12 months, and how happy were you with it?

The efficiency of public healthcare system was also dedicated a specific question in the survey. Slightly over 40% of respondents

rate it as inefficient (19.1% very inefficient and 21% not efficient). On the other hand, 5.5% of respondents rate it as very efficient and an additional 19.5% of them rate it as efficient. 26.1% of interviewees rate the public healthcare system as having medium efficiency, and 8.5% do not know or have no opinion on the matter.



Are all patients treated equally by doctors and nurses or do they treat some categories differently?

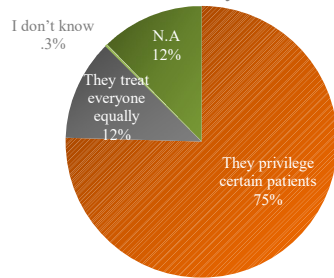


Figure 16. How effective do you think is the public health service in Kosovo and do all patients receive same treatment

When discussing the perceptions of the fairness of the system and society as a whole, the respondents were also asked to state whether they agree that “most of the unemployed, in fact do not look for work”, 46% of persons interviewed are in complete disagreement. 28.2% of respondent’s state to disagree more than they agree with this statement and 10% of respondent’s report neutrality towards it. 4.3% completely agree that unemployed do not look for jobs, while 5.3% disagree more than they agree. Such results indicate that over 70% of respondents in the sample perceive that

there are no jobs in the market for those wanting to work.

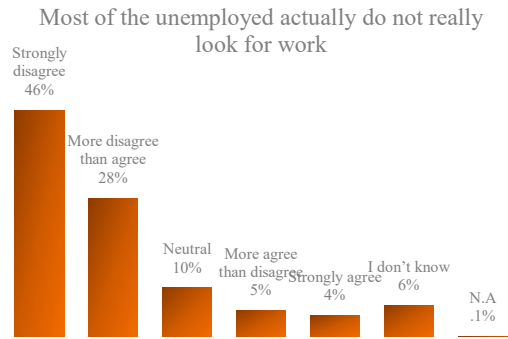


Figure 17. The biggest part of the unemployed actually do not look for work

The second aspect of assessing system’s fairness was through the rating of the statement that “Most people with low incomes receive less assistance than what they are entitled to legally”. 27.9% of respondent’s state that they completely agree with that statement, while 25.5% agree more than disagree with it. Almost 13% of respondents in the sample state to be neutral, and 11.1% disagree more than they agree. 8.1% of respondents strongly disagree and 14.5% state that they do not know whether most people in need receive less assistance than what they are eligible/entitled by law. Figure 18 represents the distribution of responses visually.

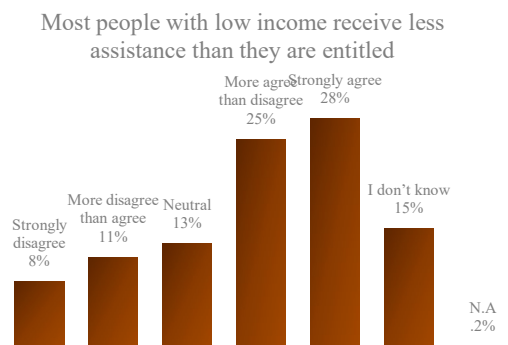


Figure 18. Most people with low income receive less social assistance than what they are entitled

The other aspect of fairness of the system that was inquired about, is in fact, the space for abuse that it provides to ill intended persons. To this end, when asked whether “Many people benefit social assistance or services that they are not legible for” almost 40% of respondents strongly agree with this statement. 29.7% of them report to agree more than disagree with such claim, and 13% are neutral. 6.5% of people in the sample completely disagree that there is space for abuse in the social assistance and services schemes, while 8.7% are more on the disagreeing side than agreeing.

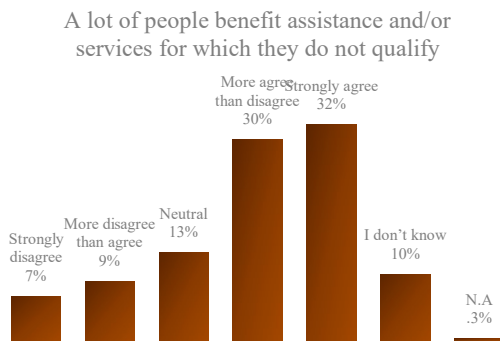


Figure 19. A lot of people benefit assistance and/or services for which they do not qualify

Aside from providing for all that are in need for such assistance and the space for abuse are only one side of the coin. The second side that respondents provided feedback on was the ability to finance through public budget the assistance for the neediest. 25% of respondents completely disagree that Kosovo can afford to finance assistance to

all those that are in need, while 18.1% of them more disagree than agree with it. Over 40% of respondents appear to believe that Kosovo can afford to provide assistance for all persons in real need for such assistance. 9.7% of respondents do not know whether Kosovo has the financial resources to deliver such assistance or services to the neediest.

Effects of social assistance and services

The standard of living for the unemployed and pensioners has been one of the first aspects that was covered in assessing the perceptions of what the actual impacts of certain social benefits funded by public schemes. To this end, 65.9% of respondents rate the standard of living of pensioners as ‘very bad’, while the same rating has been given for unemployed category by 74% of respondents. 16.2% of respondent’s state that the standard of living is ‘bad’ for pensioners, while 21.5% of them believe the same for the standard of living of the unemployed. The survey does not provide insights to why the respondents have grimmer perspective about the unemployed than pensioners, but the comparison of scores between the two brings forth such differences. Figure 21 provides the composition of responses regarding these two categories visually.

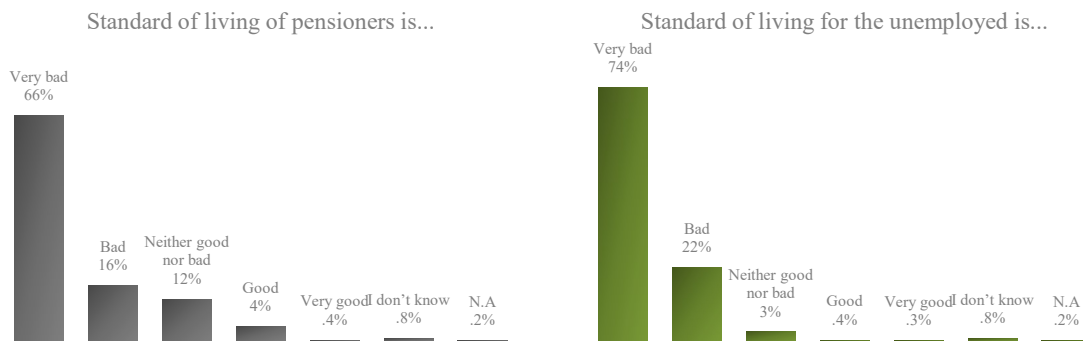


Figure 20. Standard of living for pensioners and unemployed is...

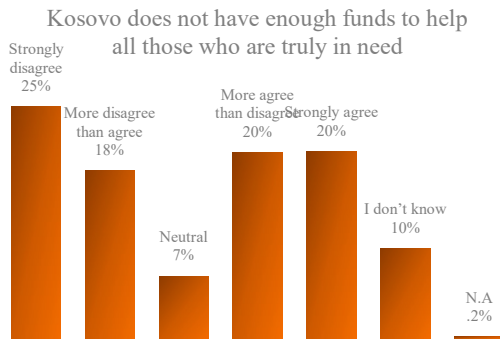


Figure 21. Kosovo does not have enough funds to assist all those that are truly in need

The situation with regards to childcare services for children of working parents appears to be not very pleasant and it has been assessed by respondents as such. 28.5% of respondents in the sample rate these services as very bad, with an additional 15.5% of them rating them as bad. 24.5% perceive childcare services as neither good nor bad, while 12.7% of respondents rate them as good. 9.8% of the total number of respondents in the sample rate childcare services as very good, while 8.9% don't know how to rate these services.

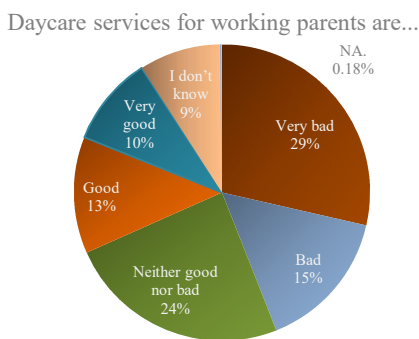


Figure 22. Daycare for children of working parents is...

While the supply and quality of services is one side of the coin, the other is defined as effectiveness of these tools to achieve their objectives. To this end, when asked whether social assistance in Kosovo goes to the function of preventing the spread of poverty, 23.3% completely disagree, and 21.3% of them select the option of more disagree than agree. While 13.5% of respondents claim neutrality towards this

statement, 15.3% of them more agree than disagree. 12% of the total number of respondents included in the sample completely agree that this measure is serving its function of preventing poverty.

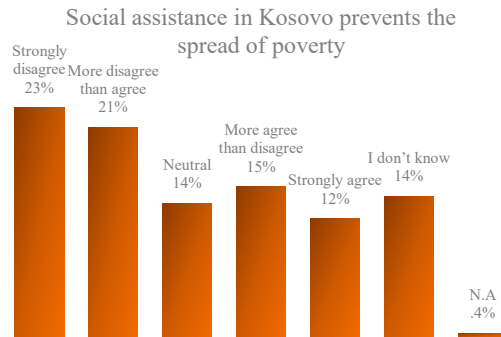


Figure 23. Social assistance in Kosovo prevents poverty

The other function that redistribution of wealth and income in favor of the least fortunate in a society has is that of forwarding a just and equal society. To the statement "Social assistance and public services in Kosovo create an equal society.", 20.9% of respondents have stated their complete disagreement. An additional 22.7% of respondents disagree with the statement more than they agree. 18.3% of them have selected the option 'neutral' while a total of 22.9% of respondents agree with this statement (11.2% more agree than disagree, and 11.2% strongly agree).

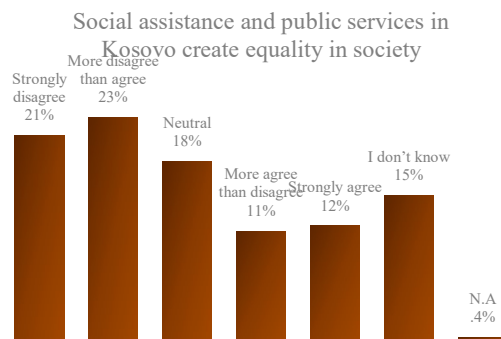


Figure 24. Social assistance and public services create an equal society

The analysis cannot be complete without assessing the respondents' views on the current tax burden. To this end, 54.7% of Citizens Perceptions & Attitudes | 12

respondents disagree with the statement “Social Assistance and public services in Kosovo are a heavy burden for businesses that pay high taxes.” Of which, 26% strongly disagree with it, while 28.7% of them more disagree than agree. 18.2% of respondent’s state not to know whether the statement is accurate, with an additional 13.6% of them stating neutrality in rating it. Only 4.4% of respondents included in the sample completely agree with the statement and 8.3% more agree than disagree with it. The overview of results is provided visually in the Figure 25 below.

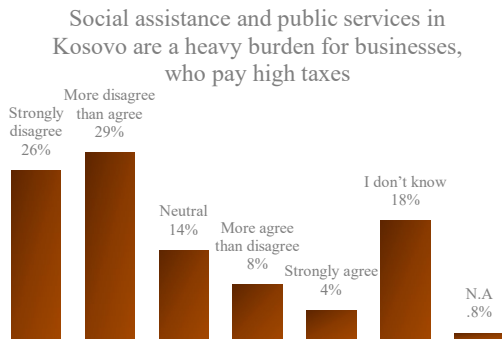


Figure 25. Social assistance and services are a heavy burden for Kosovo businesses who pay high taxes

The other function that social benefits and services should serve is providing a balanced life between work and family for their recipients. When asked whether social assistance and public services serve this purpose in Kosovo, 19.2% of the people surveyed completely disagree, with another 16.9% of them more disagreeing than agreeing that this function has been served. 16.5% of citizens interviewed are neutral to this question, while 15.8% more agree than disagree. A significant percentage of respondents (14.4%) that balances views of the total sample population strongly agrees with this statement. 16.3% of respondents included in the survey do not know whether that is the intended policy goals are met with regards to achieving balanced life between work and family.

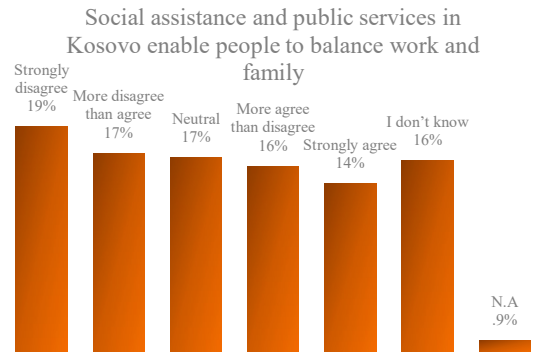


Figure 26. Social assistance and services in Kosovo enable people to easier balance life, at work and family

The space for abuse always exists when cash benefit schemes are implemented. The argument against social assistance and public services is often that they inspire laziness and reduce the incentives of people to find jobs. To this end, 38.5% of respondents strongly disagree with this assertion, followed by 22.5% of them more disagree than agree with it. An equal percentage of 11.5% each has expressed neutrality and slight favor towards agreeing with the assertion. Only 6.1% of respondent’s state to completely agree that social assistance and public services stimulate laziness in people.

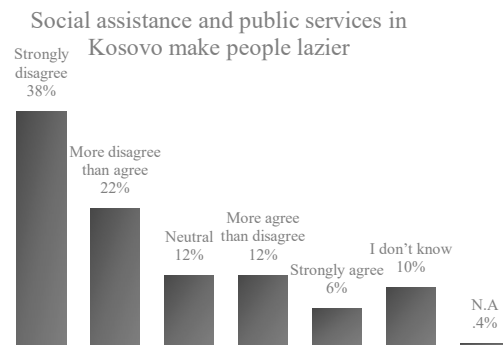


Figure 27. Social Assistance and public services make people lazier

Another question asked about the potential negative effects of social assistance and public services, regards to the impact they have on the readiness of people to provide for their families. When asked this question, 39.6% of respondents strongly disagree that

this might be the case. 18.7% of them more disagree than agree, while 13.8% of people included in the research sample have selected the option ‘neutral’. 11.3% of respondents are more in favor than against of this statement and 4.8% strongly agree with it. 12.2% of people asked in this survey do not know whether social assistance and public service reduce the people’s willingness to provide for their families. Figure 28 below, provides a visual illustration of response distribution to this question/statement.

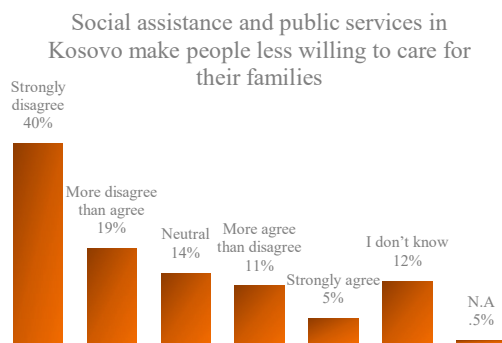


Figure 28. Social assistance and services reduce people’s readiness to provide of their families

In order to get a clearer view of what respondents consider as acceptable living standard or minimum required income for making a decent living, the survey also

asked them on what would be the minimum pension in order to cover basic needs in Kosovo. 23.6% of respondents suggest a minimum pension value between EUR 101 – EUR 200. Almost 50% of respondents suggest that the minimum basic pension value that would cover the basic needs of a person, would be between EUR 201 – EUR 300. A total of 21.5% of respondents included in the sample state that the minimum basic pension value should be set in the range between EUR 300 - EUR 500. Only 4.6% of respondents believe that the minimum basic pension value should be higher than EUR 500.

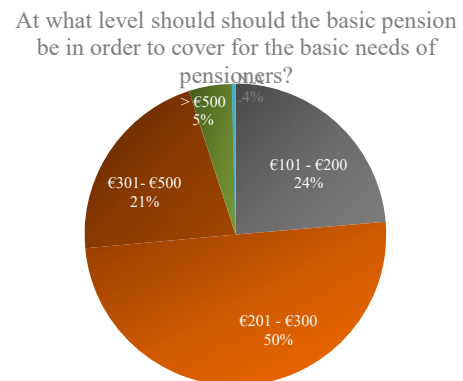


Figure 29. At what level should the basic pension be to cover for basic needs of pensioners?

CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

Main conclusions

Survey provides for some disturbing findings that should receive immediate attention from institutions, while at the same time, provides for some unexpected conclusions that emerge quite strongly from the survey results.

Citizens perceive the social welfare and services system as unfair and that does not achieve its intended objectives. They believe that citizens who are not entitled to receive benefits and services do so, while not those in need receive what they should.

The public health system is also regarded as unfair and inefficient. While citizens believe that every citizen regardless of socio-economic status should receive health care from public providers which is paid by the government, they also perceive that not all patients are treated equally in this system. The satisfaction with public healthcare services is low and for over 60% of respondents based on their personal experience within the last 12 months.

The citizen opinions are largely influenced by the media. The pensions/benefits of war-related categories which have received significant media attention are identified as the first choice of large share of respondents as categories receiving assistance from public budget. Social assistance scheme and basic pensions scheme, which are the largest publicly funded schemes, are identified by significantly lower percentage of citizens interviewed.

Lack of information and citizen awareness on the functioning of the social welfare system as they display contradictory attitudes and opinions. While stating that social benefits should be increased, and that (largely) believing that Kosovo budget can sustain taking care of the needy in the society, they also state that government involvement in re-distribution of income should be minimal. While this is not possible (as tax levels are directly linked with social welfare and services), it shows the public's lack of information on the policy functioning.

The majority of citizens interviewed believe that social assistance and services do not influence people's laziness negatively and they do not reduce their recipients' readiness to provide for their families. This may be based on citizen perceptions that social policies in Kosovo do not ensure that peoples' lives are balanced between work and family and that social assistance does not prevent spread of poverty.

The majority of citizens interviewed (75%) believe that the minimum level of pensions (also can be attributed to any scheme that is based on citizen's need and economic situation—i.e. social assistance) should be over 200 EUR/month. There is a significant percentage of respondents that believe that basic pensions should be over 500 EUR in order to cover for all basic needs of their recipients.

Key recommendations

From the conclusions drawn above, the following recommendations to key stakeholders can be made:

Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare should invest more efforts in informing citizens about policies in place and raise their awareness on how public budget is re-distributed to socially vulnerable categories against which Kosovo laws protect them. Outreach and information would also improve the public's understanding of expenditures dedicated to particular social category and improve the identified information gap.

The scandals that are published by the media that involve ministry of health and the public health system in general, have also shaped the views of the public about the fairness and efficiency of the healthcare system. But given that for over 60% of respondents, the low satisfaction is based on their personal experience within the last 12 months, measures should be taken to improve the healthcare system urgently.

Broader outreach and public consultations should be carried out with citizens and interest groups on the type of social protection that is to be established in Kosovo. The broad social debate should pave the way for establishing a longer-term vision on how the society is to be organized, and on what values should it be based. Matters related to taxation levels and

services that should be covered by public budget should be among key topics to be discussed. This would dramatically improve the quality of policy making and policy responsiveness, transparency and better representation of citizen views.

Government should periodically review its social and welfare schemes (be it cash or in services) to address the needs that may emerge in time. Coverage should be extended to include other socially vulnerable categories, but not withstanding a careful review of existing schemes and whether they are serving their intended purpose.

Social assistance and pensions schemes should be set at values that enable recipients to live a life with dignity and with all their basic needs fulfilled. The majority of citizens believe that this minimum pay level is above 200 EUR/month (pensions). Given the amount of expenses that pensioners have (particularly related to costs for medicines), the current payment levels (even after the increase) are insufficient to cover all their basic needs. The distribution of household incomes (from the second paper in this series) according to spending categories indicates that household food and consumables and utility costs absorb most of the citizen's incomes. The income for pensioners relying solely on basic pensions for survival does not cover these costs.



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