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# KOSOVO GENDER COUNTRY PROFILE

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November 2024

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# LIST OF ACRONYMS

ADA	Austrian Development Agency
AERK	Agency for Employment in the Republic of Kosovo
AFLA	Agency for Free Legal Aid
AGE	Agency for Gender Equality
AIDS	Acquired immunodeficiency syndrome
AIS	Agency for Information Society
AMC	Action for Mothers and Children
BPO	Basic Prosecution Offices
CEC	Central Election Commission
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women
CLIP	Country Level Implementation Plan
CoE	Council of Europe
CRSV	Conflict-Related Sexual Violence
CSW	Center for Social Work
ECDC	European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control
EU	European Union
EULEX	European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo
EUOK	European Union Office in Kosovo
GAP	Gender Action Plan
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GEF	Gender Equality Facility
GEOs	Gender Equality Officers
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit/ German Agency for International Cooperation
GRB	Gender Responsive Budgeting
GREVIO	Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence
HIV	Human immunodeficiency virus
HPV	Genital human papillomavirus
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
IPA	Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance
IPK	Police Inspectorate of Kosovo
KGSC	Kosovo Gender Studies Center
KIPA	Kosovo Institute for Public Administration
KJC	Kosovo Judicial Council



KOC	Kosovo Olympic Committee
KOI	Kosovo Ombudsperson Institution
KP	Kosovo Police
KPC	Kosovo Prosecutorial Council
KRCT	Kosovo Rehabilitation Center for Torture Victims
KSF	Kosovo Security Force
KWN	Kosovo Women's Network
LGBTI+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex
MCYS	Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports
MEC	Municipal Election Commissions
MESPI	Ministry of Environment, Spatial Planning and Infrastructure
MESTI	Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation
MFMC	Main Family Medical Centers
MIA	Ministry of Internal Affairs
MJ	Ministry of Justice
NDI	National Democratic Institute
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisations
OGG	Office of Good Governance
OPM	Office of the Prime Minister
OSCE	Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe
PS	Polling Station
SIDA	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
STI	Sexually Transmitted Infections
UCCK	University Clinical Center of Kosovo
UN Women	UN Agency for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund in Kosovo
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNKT	United Nations Kosovo Team
VA	Victim's Advocates
VAAO	Victim's Advocacy and Assistance Office
VAWG	Violence Against Women and Girls
VTC	Vocational Training Center
W4WK	Women 4 Women Kosovo
WHO	World Health Organization
WSCO	Women Civil Society Organizations





# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Kosovo Gender Country Profile provides an in-depth analysis of existing gender inequalities in Kosovo. It begins with the political, legal, and human rights situation and then focuses on GAP III Thematic Areas, including “Ensuring freedom from all forms of gender-based violence,” “Promoting sexual and reproductive health and rights,” “Promoting economic and social rights and empowering girls and women,” “Promoting equal participation and leadership,” “Integrating the women, peace and security agenda,” and “Addressing the challenges and harnessing the opportunities offered by the green transition and the digital transformation.” The Profile used a mixed-method approach, combining qualitative and quantitative research methods, including a literature review, gender policy analysis, and analysis of existing quantitative statistics. The latter included both recently published statistics and, where those were unavailable, data shared with the researchers directly by relevant institutions. Lastly, focus groups were used to obtain qualitative data on topics where recent statistics or analyses were not available. The Profile is primarily based on the most recent data available, with the vast majority coming from the past three years.

Overall, the Gender Country Profile identifies many improvements and persisting gender inequalities in all the analysed thematic areas. There have been notable improvements in the legal framework of Kosovo addressing gender-based violence, highlighted by the inclusion of the Istanbul Convention in the Constitution, revisions to the Criminal Code and implementation of the National Strategy on Protection Against Domestic

Violence and Violence Against Women for 2022–2026 and the Law on Protection against Domestic Violence, Violence against Women and Gender-based Violence of 2023. Despite the progress made, there are still challenges that remain, as indicated by surveys reporting that 54 per cent of women have experienced violence from an intimate partner since the age of 15. Sexual and reproductive health topics remain taboo, leading to significant gaps in public knowledge and contraceptive use. Only 40 per cent of youth use contraceptives, considerably lower than their European peers. This gap highlights the need for comprehensive sexual education and better access to family planning resources.

Economic inequality persists, with a higher percentage of women living below the poverty line compared to men. Gender-based discrimination in the labour market remains a significant barrier, with women less likely to be part of the workforce due to societal norms, unpaid care responsibilities and persistent gender-based discrimination. Although the advancements in the legal framework and, in particular, the gender quota have led to more gender diversity in governance, women remain underrepresented in decision-making roles. Significant progress has been noted in gender diversity in governance. In the 2021 national elections, 35 out of 44 women members of parliament were elected without a quota. Additionally, two women mayors were elected in the 2021 municipal elections, and the current government includes 2 women deputy ministers and 5 women ministers. However, the representation of women in decision-making roles within the Kosovo public administration is only 22.5 per cent. Despite advocacy efforts under UNSCR 1325 and national laws promoting gender

equality, women's participation in Kosovo diplomatic missions and decision-making levels remains significantly low. Specifically, women constitute only 24.4 per cent of decision-making positions in diplomatic missions. Regarding the environment and digitalisation, legislation on environmental and climate change in Kosovo lacks a gender perspective, does not address gender impact assessments and fails to recognise distinct effects on women and men. Despite high connectivity, women face significant barriers to accessing digital opportunities in digitalisation.

The document concludes with several recommendations for the European Union Office in Kosovo (EUOK) to address the identified challenges.





# INTRODUCTION

Gender equality is integral to the internal and external policies and actions of the European Union (EU). EU remains committed to promoting inclusive, equitable and sustainable development. In this regard, it has developed comprehensive frameworks, guidelines and policies, such as the EU Gender Action Plan III, which highlights the importance of mainstreaming gender perspectives in all areas of its work. GAP III is a comprehensive framework for the EU to promote gender equality and women's empowerment. It is based on five pillars of action, including the goal of having 85 per cent of all new actions contributing to gender equality and women's empowerment by 2025. GAP III takes a transformative approach by mainstreaming a gender perspective in all policies and actions. It actively encourages changes in social attitudes, engaging men, boys and young people as drivers of change. The overarching aim of GAP III is to trigger more positive transformations, achieve better results, highlight role models through the narratives of women and girls, and integrate gender equality into all EU policies and actions, ensuring women and girls can fully enjoy their rights and participate equally in social, economic and political life.

The EU Office in Kosovo (EUOK) shares the commitment to implementing GAP III, making it a priority in their efforts to promote gender equality and women's empowerment in the region.<sup>1</sup> To this end, in April 2024, the EUOK updated the Kosovo [Country Level Implementation Plan \(CLIP\)](#) of the EU GAP III, which was initially prepared in 2021.

The CLIP serves as a strategic roadmap tailored to the specific context of Kosovo, outlining the actions and initiatives to advance gender equality and women's empowerment in the country. However, the EU GAP III has another essential requirement. It mandates creating and updating **gender country profiles and sector-specific gender analyses**. These gender country profiles cover policy and legislative frameworks, the status of government, and gender statistics on violence, education, health, employment, political participation, obstacles to gender equality, specific issues related to discriminatory social norms and attitudes, harmful practices and more. The last Kosovo Gender Profile, "Kosovo Gender Analysis," was published in 2018 and is now outdated. In 2021, some data was updated in the [Kosovo Brief Gender Profile](#) to inform the Kosovo CLIP, but no in-depth Kosovo Gender Country Profile has been drafted since 2018.

This Kosovo Gender Country Profile provides an in-depth analysis of existing gender inequalities in Kosovo. The initial focus is on the political, legal and human rights context, followed by a detailed examination of the GAP III Thematic Areas, including "Ensuring freedom from all forms of gender-based violence," "Promoting sexual and reproductive health and rights," "Promoting economic and social rights and empowering girls and women," "Promoting equal participation and leadership," "Integrating the women, peace and security agenda," and "Addressing the challenges and harnessing the opportunities offered by the green transition and the digital transformation."

1 [https://www.eeas.europa.eu/delegations/kosovo/country-level-implementation-plan-gap-iii-kosovo\\_en?s=321](https://www.eeas.europa.eu/delegations/kosovo/country-level-implementation-plan-gap-iii-kosovo_en?s=321)



# METHODOLOGY

The Profile used a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative and quantitative research methods, including a literature review, gender policy analysis and analysis of existing quantitative statistics. The latter included both recently published statistics and, in cases where those were unavailable, data shared with researchers directly by relevant institutions. Lastly, three focus groups were conducted to obtain qualitative data on topics where recent statistics or analyses were unavailable, outdated or insufficiently specific.

The literature review has served as the primary foundation for the Gender Country Profile. It has delved into various sources, including the national legal and policy framework, policy papers, research reports, prior country gender profiles and existing quantitative statistics. Often, existing statistics were insufficient or outdated, so the researchers contacted relevant institutions to obtain data directly. This included, among many others, the Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation, the Central Election Commission, the Ministry of Environment and Spatial Planning, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Kosovo Police, the Ministry of Youth, Culture and Sports, the Prosecutorial Council and the Judicial Council. The Agency for Gender Equality has provided valuable support throughout the research, including participating in focus groups, providing data and information, and putting the researchers in touch with crucial contact points.

Lastly, three focus groups were conducted to obtain qualitative data on environmental and climate change topics, intersectional discrimination and gender-based violence. Twenty-two participants participated in the focus group discussions, making for lively and thoughtful discussions. The discussions were transcribed and analysed using thematic analysis, which entails extracting and organising the data into recurring themes. One focus group was held on gender-based violence and included institutional and civil society representatives. Another focus group was conducted on the topic of intersectional discrimination and included participants from CSOs working with vulnerable groups such as ethnic minorities, the LGBTQI+ community and women with disabilities. Participants from institutions, CSOs, and activists participated in a third focus group on climate change and environmental protection topics.





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# THE COUNTRY CONTEXT

## Political, legal and human rights situation

### Demographics

Kosovo is inhabited by approximately 1,771,293 people, 48.5 per cent women and 51.5 per cent men.<sup>2</sup> It has a relatively young population, with 27.17 per cent under 15, 66.13 per cent between 15 and 64, and 6.70 per cent aged 65 and older. In terms of ethnicity, the population is predominantly Albanian at approximately 92.9 per cent, with Serbs constituting about 1.5 per cent, Bosniaks 1.6 per cent, and Turks 1.1 per cent. The religious composition is primarily Muslim at 87.0 per cent, followed by Christians at 11.4 per cent, and 1.6 per cent being religiously unaffiliated.<sup>3</sup> The average life expectancy is 69 years, with men reaching 67 years and women 71.<sup>4</sup>

## Political and legal framework

Gender Equality and Social Inclusion are among the fundamental values of the constitutional and legal framework of Kosovo. The **Constitution** itself recognises gender equality and equal opportunities as core values.<sup>5</sup> It also acknowledges that Kosovo is a multi-ethnic society where everyone is equal under the law, regardless of ethnicity.<sup>6</sup> Additionally, the Constitution establishes the direct applicability of international agreements, such as the **Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)**, within Kosovo. CEDAW requires measures to be taken to eliminate discrimination against women in various domains, including the workplace, and to ensure equal rights for both women and men. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the European Convention on Human Rights also directly apply to Kosovo through the Constitution. International Conventions for the protection of national minorities are also directly applicable to Kosovo, including the Council of Europe Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, and the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence.

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2 This data is based on 2024 estimates by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs. The Agency of Statistics is currently conducting a population census, and updated, reliable data should be available in 2024. See more at: <https://countrymeters.info/en/Kosovo>

3 Ibid.

4 Ibid.

5 Ibid.

Assembly of the Republic of Kosovo (2008), [Constitution of the Republic of Kosovo](#), Article 7.2.

6 Ibid. Article 3.

In addition to the Constitution, the **Law on Gender Equality** is the primary legal instrument for encouraging gender equality and preventing discrimination against women in all sectors, including employment, education, energy and healthcare.<sup>7</sup> It requires equal gender representation, defined as 50 per cent - 50 per cent across all decision-making levels in all public institutions, including legislative, executive, and judicial bodies, as well as other public institutions.<sup>8</sup> Through Article 5.1.3, the Law further requires that a gender perspective be mainstreamed in all government laws and policies to address existing problems and promote equality among women and men.<sup>9</sup> Additionally, it obliges all public institutions in Kosovo to implement Gender Responsive Budgeting (GRB) in their budget planning, allocation and monitoring processes.<sup>10</sup> GRB requires institutions to distribute government funding equitably and address existing gender inequalities. Lastly, the Law on Gender Equality promotes using affirmative measures to address existing inequalities.<sup>11</sup> These measures can include quotas, support programs, economic empowerment and preferential treatment while still considering individual qualifications.

Additionally, the Law on **Protection from Discrimination** protects the citizens of Kosovo from discrimination based on race, gender, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation or national origin. It prohibits discrimination, among others, in employment, education, housing and access to public services.<sup>12</sup> Similar to the Law on Gender Equality, this law also allows for affirmative measures to be taken to promote the representation of underrepresented groups aimed at achieving equal treatment. It highlights that affirmative measures do not constitute discrimination when taken to support underrepresented or marginalised groups.<sup>13</sup> In terms of protecting ethnic minorities (Bosniaks, Serbs, Turks, Ashkali, Egyptians, Gorani and Roma), there is the **Law on Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Communities and Their Members**.<sup>14</sup> The law ensures full equality for all citizens in Kosovo, including all national minorities. In addition to fundamental rights, it emphasises the prevention of discrimination, equal opportunities, the preservation of cultural identity, and the promotion of intercultural dialogue.

Another important instance of legislation is the **Law on the Ombudsperson**.<sup>15</sup> The Law establishes a legal mechanism for protecting, supporting and promoting fundamental rights and freedoms in Kosovo. Among the responsibilities of the Ombudsperson are investigating human rights violations and discrimination, making recommendations to stop such cases, promoting awareness of human rights, publishing reports and recommendations, and cooperating with local and international organisations. Additionally, the Ombudsperson has the authority to review complaints, access relevant files and documents, and conduct inspections where individuals report being deprived of their fundamental rights and freedoms.<sup>16</sup>

7 Assembly of the Republic of Kosovo (2015), [Law No. 05/L-020 on Gender Equality](#).

8 Ibid. Article 6.7

9 Assembly of the Republic of Kosovo (2015), [Law No. 05/L-020 on Gender Equality](#). Article 5.1.3

10 Ibid. Article 5.1.5

11 Ibid. Article 6.

12 Assembly of the Republic of Kosovo (2015). [Law No.05/L-021 on Protection from Discrimination](#).

13 Ibid. Article 7.3

14 Official Gazette of the Republic of Kosovo (2008). [Law No 03/L-047 on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Communities and Their Members in Kosovo](#).

15 Official Gazette of the Republic of Kosovo (2010). [Law No.05/L-19 on the Ombudsperson](#).

16 Ibid.

## Main policy documents

The **Kosovo Program for Gender Equality 2020-2024**, considered the main strategy for gender equality in Kosovo, is based on three pillars: Pillar I: *Economic Empowerment and Social Welfare*; Pillar II: *Human Development, Roles, and Gender Relations*; Pillar III: *Women's Rights, Access to Justice, and Security*.<sup>17</sup> Each pillar has its own overall objective, specific objectives and activities. The first review of progress for this program, covering the periods of 2020 and 2021, showed an overall progress rate of 66 per cent.<sup>18</sup> The overall rate for 2022 was 63 per cent.<sup>19</sup>

**The Economic Reform Programme 2022-2024** outlines the strategic economic policies and structural reforms necessary to ensure economic growth, improve financial stability and enhance competitiveness in Kosovo. It prioritises several areas, including public finance management, energy, employment, education and social policies. A gender perspective is integrated throughout the programme, primarily aimed at reducing economic inequality between women and men and enhancing women's employment through gender-sensitive policies in workforce development and entrepreneurship.<sup>20</sup>

The **Strategy for Advancing the Rights of Roma and Ashkali Communities in the Republic of Kosovo 2022-2026 and the Action Plan 2022-2024** were drafted to reduce the exclusion of Roma and Ashkali communities.<sup>21</sup> It contains actions to achieve five objectives: inclusive quality education, sustainable employment and reduction of poverty, access to quality healthcare services, access to sustainable housing and essential services and prevention of discrimination, racism and hate speech.<sup>22</sup>

**The National Development Strategy 2030** focuses on achieving sustainable economic development by creating more enterprises, integrating modern technologies in small and medium-sized enterprises, and contributing to rural development through a strong agricultural sector. It also focuses on equitable human development through improved access to education, healthcare, and cultural opportunities, with special attention to empowering women and youth to participate fully in the economy and society.<sup>23</sup>

The National Programme for the Implementation of the SAA 2022-2026 outlines the strategic framework and action plan for Kosovo to align with the European Union standards and policies as part of the Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA). The programme aims to guide the reforms of Kosovo toward EU integration. This includes detailed actions and measures across various sectors, such as the rule of law, economic development, governance, environment, and social policies, which are crucial for the European integration process of Kosovo. A gender perspective is integrated throughout the NPISAA 2022-2026 through specific commitments to enhance the legislative and institutional framework concerning gender equality and women's rights. Among others, this includes the adoption

17 Kosovo Agency for Gender Equality (2020), [Kosovo Programme for Gender Equality](#) 2020-2024.

18 Kosovo Agency for Gender Equality (2023). Monitoring and evaluation report on the achievements of the objectives for the indicators and the implementation of the activities of KPGE Action Plan 2020-2022.

19 Kosovo Agency for Gender Equality (2024). The second monitoring report of the KPGE Action Plan, for the year 2022.

20 Government of Kosovo (2022), [Economic Reform Programme](#), 2022-2026

21 Office of the Prime Minister of Kosovo. (2022) [Strategy for Advancing Rights of Roma and Ashkali Communities in the Republic of Kosovo 2022-2026 and the Action Plan 2022-2024](#). Page 22.

22 Office of the Prime Minister of Kosovo. (2022) [Strategy for Advancing Rights of Roma and Ashkali Communities in the Republic of Kosovo 2022-2026 and the Action Plan 2022-2024](#). Page 23-24.

23 Government of Kosovo (2023), [National Development Strategy 2023](#).

of the EU acquis on gender equality, aiming to reduce discrimination and improve the socio-economic status of women in Kosovo, and ensuring that gender perspectives are mainstreamed across all policy areas covered by the agreement.<sup>24</sup>

The laws and policies discussed in this chapter are critical provisions in the legal framework of Kosovo that promote gender equality and social inclusion. It is important to note that additional laws and policies addressing related issues, such as Gender-Based Violence, Property and Inheritance, Education, among others, have not been discussed here and will be explored below within different Thematic Areas.

Lastly, it is important to highlight that the provisions within these laws are not always implemented. For instance, while equal representation is a legal obligation, women in Kosovo continue to be underrepresented across decision-making positions in all public institutions at the central and local levels. Moreover, although gender mainstreaming is required in all policies and laws, most primary and secondary legislation in Kosovo requires additional efforts to integrate the gender perspective because, as it stands, the different needs of women and men in different sectors remain unaddressed.<sup>25</sup>

## Institutional Framework

Kosovo has a strong institutional framework for ensuring gender equality and women's empowerment. The institutional framework is largely enshrined in the Law on Gender Equality and focuses on two main mechanisms: the Kosovo Agency for Gender Equality (AGE) and Gender Equality Officers (GEOs).

AGE is an executive agency under the Office of Prime Minister (OPM). It is the central institutional body responsible for promoting, coordinating, and monitoring gender equality in Kosovo.<sup>26</sup> The Agency also proposes amendments to laws and policies, drafts policies, and collaborates with civil society and international donor organisations by cooperating, consulting and implementing joint projects to enhance gender equality and women's empowerment in Kosovo. AGE has various other responsibilities, including advocacy, awareness campaigns, reporting on international obligations and monitoring institutions on gender mainstreaming and budgeting practices.<sup>27</sup> Two additional key responsibilities for AGE are drafting the Kosovo Programme for Gender Equality, monitoring its implementation, and cooperating and coordinating with GEOs.

According to the Law on Gender Equality, Gender Equality Officers should be located in each ministry and municipality in Kosovo. Among others, GEOs are responsible for reviewing laws and policies relevant to their sector from a gender perspective and ensuring the implementation of the Law on Gender Equality and the Kosovo Programme for Gender Equality within their institutions.<sup>28</sup> With the reorganisation of public administration and the merging of different entities, GEOs are often assigned duties beyond their scope of work, impeding them from serving their functions, which violates the Law on Gender Equality

24 Government of Kosovo (2022), [National Programme for Implementation of the Stabilisation and Association Agreement \(NPISAA\) 2022-2026](#).

25 Kosovo Women's Network (2018), [Kosovo Gender Analysis](#).

26 Assembly of the Republic of Kosovo (2015), [Law No. 05/L-020 on Gender Equality](#).

27 Ibid. Article 7.

28 Ibid. Article 12.



and the Regulation on Duties and Responsibilities of Relevant Officials for Gender Equality in Ministries and Municipalities.<sup>29</sup> In 2024, several ministries do not have GEOs, including the Ministry of Culture, the Ministry of Finance, Labour and Transfers, the Ministry of Local Government Administration, and the Ministry of Industry, Entrepreneurship and Trade. Additionally, the GEO based in the Ministry of Internal Affairs also covers the Ministry of Public Administration.<sup>30</sup>

The National Coordinator for Domestic Violence is based at the Ministry of Justice and has a central role in combating domestic violence and violence against women. Established by Decision No. 04/83 on 11 July 2012, the Coordinator oversees the National Strategy on Protection Against Domestic Violence and Violence Against Women.<sup>31</sup> Responsibilities include coordinating with governmental and non-governmental entities, enhancing institutional capacities, supporting victims, holding perpetrators accountable and leading awareness campaigns. The role ensures the legal and policy frameworks of Kosovo align with international standards, particularly the Istanbul Convention. Before 2024, the role was attached to the Deputy Minister of Justice, and as of 2024, it is held by the Minister of Justice.

The Assembly Committee on Human Rights, Gender Equality, Victims of Sexual Violence, and Petitions is a functional committee of the Kosovo Assembly. It addresses all matters relating to human rights and gender equality, ensuring adherence to relevant legislation. The Committee reviews laws and policies to promote gender equality, oversees the protection and advancement of women's rights, and provides recommendations for improvements. It also deals with issues of missing persons, offering legislative and strategic support. Furthermore, it deals with petitions from citizens, ensuring that their concerns are addressed in accordance with legal procedures. The Committee collaborates with local and international organisations to enhance its functions and impact.

The Women's Caucus in the Kosovo Assembly is a cross-party group established to promote gender equality and enhance women's representation in politics. The Caucus, comprising 38 members, focuses on legislative advocacy, policy development, and fostering dialogue on women's issues. Key achievements include advocating for the Istanbul Convention's incorporation into the Constitution of Kosovo and amending the Criminal Code to address domestic violence better. The Caucus also collaborates with local and international organisations to support women's empowerment and political participation.

Other offices within the OPM include the Office of Good Governance, Human Rights, Equal Opportunity and Non-discrimination, and the Office of Community Affairs, which contributes to coordinating efforts to implement the national legal framework on the rights of communities.

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29 Government of Kosovo (2016). [Regulation No. 12/2016 on Duties and Responsibilities of Relevant Officials for Gender Equality in Ministries and Municipalities](#).

30 Information provided by the Agency for Gender Equality, May 2024.

31 Government of Kosovo (2012). [Decision 04/83](#).





# ENSURING FREEDOM FROM ALL FORMS OF GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

## Policy Analysis

Kosovo has made significant advancements in the legal framework that ensures protection against domestic violence, violence against women and gender-based violence. A key milestone was in 2020 when the Kosovo Constitution was amended to include the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence, otherwise known as the Istanbul Convention.<sup>32</sup> This paved the way for a series of changes in the legal framework, as required by the Convention. In 2022, the Kosovo Government adopted the National Strategy on Protection Against Domestic Violence and Violence Against Women 2022–2026.<sup>33</sup> The strategy and its action plan provide a platform for the coordination of actions and stakeholders toward identifying and preventing violence, protecting and reintegrating victims, and holding perpetrators accountable.<sup>34</sup>

This vision is reflected through four strategic objectives: 1) Identifying and preventing violence through education and awareness-raising; 2) Advancing and harmonising public policies with international standards; 3) Enhancing institutional capacity to prevent and address domestic violence; and 4) Providing general services and specialised support services to victims.<sup>35</sup>

Another step forward was the adoption of the Law on Prevention and Protection from Domestic Violence, Violence against Women, and Gender-based Violence in 2023.<sup>36</sup> The Law provides various protections for victims of violence, including the requirement for all the relevant entities to prioritise these cases, the option to issue emergency protection orders to victims within 24 hours based solely on documents and without a court session, as well as other protections related to safety, access to justice, and other services.<sup>37</sup> In addition, the Law establishes the role of the National Coordinator, which is “the highest institutional authority for coordination, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and measures to prevent and combat all

32 Official Gazette of the Republic of Kosovo (2020). [Amendment 26 of the Constitution of the Republic of Kosovo](#).

33 Office of the Prime Minister of Kosovo (2020). [National Strategy on Protection Against Domestic Violence and Violence Against Women 2022–2026](#).

34 Ibid, page 8.

35 Ibid, page 39–47.

36 Official Gazette of the Republic of Kosovo (2023). [Law No. 08/L-185 on Prevention and Protection from Domestic Violence, Violence against Women, and Gender-based Violence](#).

37 Ibid, Article 5 and 46.

forms of violence that this Law covers.”<sup>38</sup> The current National Coordinator is the Minister of Justice, who, in this new capacity, also chairs the Inter-Ministerial Coordinating Group for protection from domestic violence, violence against women and gender-based violence.

The Ministry of Justice has established two working groups, one of which is working on the draft law against femicide<sup>39</sup> and the other is responsible for drafting by-laws for the Law on Prevention and Protection from Domestic Violence, Violence against Women, and Gender-based Violence. These by-laws include: 1) Draft regulation for organising and functionalising the Office of National Coordinator for Protection against Domestic Violence and the functionalising of the inter-ministerial working group; 2) Draft regulation for the local coordination mechanisms for protection from domestic violence, violence against women, and gender-based violence; 3) Draft administrative instruction for maintenance, security and use of the system and generation of public reports that protect the confidentiality of the victims; 4) Draft administrative instruction on establishing an emergency fund for the needs of the victims while they are at the police; 5) Draft administrative instruction for the emergency phone line for victims of domestic violence, violence against women and gender-based violence; 6) Draft administrative instruction for procedures for distributing, monitoring, licensing, and funding of shelters specialised in housing victims of abuse; and 7) Program for standard operating procedures.<sup>40</sup>

Another positive development is the amendment of the Law on Free Legal Aid, which now covers the following groups as special categories of beneficiaries of free legal aid: survivors of sexual violence during the war, victims of domestic violence and their dependent witnesses, victims of gender-based violence, victims of any kind of sexual violence, including sexual harassment, and victims of trafficking in human beings.<sup>41</sup> Before this, the victims had to meet certain qualifications, financial and legal criteria,<sup>42</sup> but with this amendment these special categories are exempt.

The Criminal Code of Kosovo recognises domestic violence, sexual harassment, sexual assault, rape and sexual services of a victim of trafficking as penal violations, punishable by fines or imprisonment, depending on the case.<sup>43</sup> Within the context of domestic violence, the code criminalises physical, psychological, sexual, and economic violence, as well as mistreatment toward family members.<sup>44</sup> It also covers violations of sexual integrity, including a series of sexual activities and child pornography.<sup>45</sup> The minimum age of consent to engage in sexual acts is 14 years, provided the age difference between the two individuals does not exceed two years.<sup>46</sup> Otherwise, it is 16 years. In 2023, the Criminal Code was

38 Official Gazette of the Republic of Kosovo (2023). [Law No. 08/L-185 on Prevention and Protection from Domestic Violence, Violence against Women, and Gender-based Violence](#). Article 13.2.

39 Ministry of Justice (2024). [Decision Nr. 128/2024 on establishing the working group responsible for drafting and finalizing the Draft Law against Femicide](#).

40 Ministry of Justice (2024). [Decision Nr. 29/2024 on Establishing the working group for drafting and finalizing bylaws deriving from Law. Nr. 08/L-185 for prevention and protection from domestic violence, violence against women, and gender based violence](#).

41 Official Gazette of the Republic of Kosovo (2022). [Law No. 08/L-035 on Amending and Supplementing the Law No.04/L-017 on Free Legal Aid](#). Article 10A.

42 Official Gazette of the Republic of Kosovo (2012). [Law No.04/L-017 on Free Legal Aid](#).

43 Kosovo Ministry of Justice (2019). [Code No. 06/L-074 Criminal Code of the Republic of Kosovo](#). Article 248, 183, 229, 227, and 228.

44 Ibid. Article 248.

45 Ibid. Articles 225–236.

46 Ibid. Articles 225.

amended, with key changes related to the fight against domestic violence, violence against women, and gender-based violence. Included in these changes are the criminalisation of virginity tests, the introduction of harsher punishments for sexual harassment perpetrators, and the establishment of legal consequences for instances of violence against women in public life.<sup>47</sup> In 2022, the Government of Kosovo adopted a state protocol to treat cases of sexual violence, where there is no voluntary agreement.<sup>48</sup> The protocol is a step-by-step guide for a multisectoral, coordinated institutional response in the management of sexual violence cases.

The Kosovo Program for Gender Equality 2020–2024, drafted by the Agency for Gender Equality (AGE) and approved by the Government of Kosovo, includes several actions implemented across multiple sectors that aim to prevent and address gender-based violence.<sup>49</sup> AGE is currently reviewing the implementation of this program and preparing for the next phase. AGE has also initiated drafting the new Program for Gender Equality and updating the Standard Operation Procedures (SOPs). In addition, AGE drafted the SOPs for Protection from Domestic Violence in Kosovo<sup>50</sup>, and has been training different stakeholders on them. AGE has facilitated 19 training sessions with relevant stakeholders across Kosovo in the past four years.<sup>51</sup> The Law on Social and Family Services is the newest addition to the relevant legal framework. Adopted in January 2024, the law covers rights to social services, where children and adults who have been victims of domestic, gender-based, and other forms of violence are beneficiaries.<sup>52</sup> The establishment and competencies of social service institutions, including the Center for Social Work and Shelters, are also included in this law.<sup>53</sup> In addition to services, victims of domestic and gender-based violence have the right to compensation. This right is defined in the Law on Crime Victim Compensation adopted in 2022.<sup>54</sup> Victims of human trafficking, rape and domestic violence are entitled to receive immediate compensation, which covers physical injury, mental health impairment and mental suffering, among other forms of compensation.<sup>55</sup>

The Law on the Electronic Supervision of Persons Whose Movement is Limited by the Decision of the Court foresees the use of electronic tags in cases of domestic violence when a protection order or an emergency protection order has been enforced.<sup>56</sup> This measure is designed to prevent escalations or fatalities. To date, this has not been implemented. The National Strategy has included the “Establishment of a digital monitoring system for the adequate implementation of protective orders under the Law on Electronic Supervision and monitoring of the effectiveness of this system” in the action plan.<sup>57</sup> So

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47 Official Gazette of the Republic of Kosovo (2023). [Law No. 08/L-188 on Amending and Supplementing the Criminal Code No. 06/L-074 of the Republic of Kosovo](#). Article 10, 11, and 13.

48 Kosovo Ministry of Justice (2022). [State Protocol for Treatment of Sexual Violence Cases](#)

49 Kosovo Agency for Gender Equality (2020). [Kosovo Program for Gender Equality 2020-2024](#).

50 Kosovo Agency for Gender Equality (2013). [Standard Operation Procedures for Protection from Domestic Violence in Kosovo](#).

51 Information provided by the Agency for Gender Equality, March 2024.

52 Official Gazette of the Republic of Kosovo (2024). [Law No. 08/L-255 on Social and Family Services](#). Article 29.

53 Ibid. Chapter VII.

54 Official Gazette of the Republic of Kosovo (2022). [Law No. 08/L-109 on Crime Victim Compensation](#).

55 Ibid. Article 8 and 10.

56 Official Gazette of the Republic of Kosovo (2015). The Law on the Electronic Supervision of Persons whose Movement is Limited by the Decision of the Court, Article 2.

57 Office of the Prime Minister of Kosovo (2022). [National Strategy on Protection Against Domestic Violence and Violence Against Women 2022–2026](#). Action No. II.1.12. Page 76.

far, Kosovo Police have drafted technical specifications for this system, which is in the procurement process.<sup>58</sup>

In 2022, Kosovo reported to the Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (GREVIO) for the first time.<sup>59</sup> Despite not being a member of the Council of Europe, Kosovo provided an update on the implementation of the Istanbul Convention, followed by the first monitoring report of GREVIO.

## Access to justice and access to essential services

**Kosovo Police (KP)** is usually the first entity that victims of gender-based and domestic violence contact when they report their cases. Kosovo Police is responsible for protecting the victim, investigating the case, and assessing the risk for potential threats to safety.<sup>60</sup> They also provide victims with information about the next steps and the services available, and they can also issue temporary emergency protection orders outside of the court's working hours.<sup>61</sup> As per the action plan<sup>62</sup> of the national strategy, Kosovo Police now has a designated Directorate for Prevention and Investigation of Domestic Violence, which has its sectors and more staff and resources than it had when this matter was handled on a sector basis.<sup>63</sup> They are also establishing friendly rooms<sup>64</sup>, with rooms already set up in 26 out of 41 stations.<sup>65</sup> In regards to evaluating the typical rate at which the police respond to incidents of domestic violence, precisely measured as the duration between the call recipient and their arrival at the scene, IPK discovered that in 2022, it averaged 19.2 minutes. Notably, the quickest response occurred in Junik at a mere 6 minutes, while the slowest was recorded in Gjilan at 32.8 minutes.<sup>66</sup>

While there have been several advancements in the services provided by the Kosovo Police, the attitude of police officers toward victims of gender-based and domestic violence has often been an issue. Conscious and unconscious biases derived from traditional norms have led to the belittlement of experiences and even justification of violence by police officers.<sup>67</sup> Upon the inclusion of the Istanbul

58 Police Inspectorate of Kosovo (2023). Inspection report for the treatment of cases of domestic violence by the Kosovo Police. Page 16.

59 Kosovo Agency for Gender Equality (2023). Monitoring and evaluation report on the achievements of the objectives for the indicators and the implementation of the activities of KPGE Action Plan 2020–2022.

60 Office of the Prime Minister of Kosovo (2022). [National Strategy on Protection Against Domestic Violence and Violence Against Women 2022–2026](#). Page 25.

61 Official Gazette of the Republic of Kosovo (2023). [Law No. 08/L-185 on Prevention and Protection from Domestic Violence, Violence against Women, and Gender-based Violence](#). Article 19 and 28.

62 Office of the Prime Minister of Kosovo (2022). [National Strategy on Protection Against Domestic Violence and Violence Against Women 2022–2026](#). No. IV 1.11. Page 102.

63 Insights from UN Women focus group on gender-based violence held on February 29, 2024.

64 Office of the Prime Minister of Kosovo (2022). [National Strategy on Protection Against Domestic Violence and Violence Against Women 2022–2026](#). No. IV 1.15. Page 103.

65 Police Inspectorate of Kosovo (2023). Inspection report for the treatment of cases of domestic violence by the Kosovo Police. Page 17.

66 Police Inspectorate of Kosovo (2023). Inspection report for the treatment of cases of domestic violence by the Kosovo Police. Page 10.

67 Kosovo Center for Security Studies (2024). [Concerns about the Security of Women in Kosovo](#). Page 8.; [From Paper to Practice: Kosovo must keep its commitments to domestic violence survivors – Executive Summary](#). Amnesty International. 2023. Page 4.

Convention in the Kosovo Constitution, KP organised a series of training sessions to address these biases among police officers and to end the efforts to reconcile the parties.<sup>68</sup> However, the perception that the attitude of police officers toward victims of gender-based and domestic violence is derogatory and judgmental is quite widespread, regardless of whether that is the case. Even if the experience at the station is professional, this perception may impede current or potential victims from reporting.

When receiving a new case, KP informs the State Prosecutor, the Victim's Advocacy and Assistance Office (VAAO), and the Center for Social Work (CSW), who are asked to respond immediately.<sup>69</sup> KP investigators prepare the file for **the State Prosecutor**, who is then responsible for collecting evidence and proceeding with criminal prosecution even if the victim chooses not to do so.<sup>70</sup> Research has found that prosecutors have received training on domestic violence, and with the increase in reporting and direct handling of cases, they have gained more experience in managing such cases, particularly in comparison to 2017.<sup>71</sup> This is not necessarily the case with sexual harassment and sexual assault, where they have less experience due to low reporting. The representation of women in the Kosovo Prosecutorial Council (KPC) is 27 per cent, and only 31 per cent of women prosecutors are at the State Prosecutor's Office.<sup>72</sup> The underrepresentation of women in these entities is another factor contributing to the poor inclusion of the gender perspective. Concerning the number of cases, between July 2022 and June 2023, the Basic Prosecution Offices (BPO) across Kosovo received 3,169 domestic violence cases and solved 3,679 cases, including some inherited cases.<sup>73</sup> At the end of the abovementioned period, the BPOs had 2,496 inherited cases remaining.

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68 Insights from UN Women focus group on gender-based violence held on February 29, 2024.

69 Official Gazette of the Republic of Kosovo (2023). [Law No. 08/L-185 on Prevention and Protection from Domestic Violence, Violence against Women, and Gender-based Violence](#). Article 19.

70 Office of the Prime Minister of Kosovo (2022). [National Strategy on Protection Against Domestic Violence and Violence Against Women 2022–2026](#). Page 26.

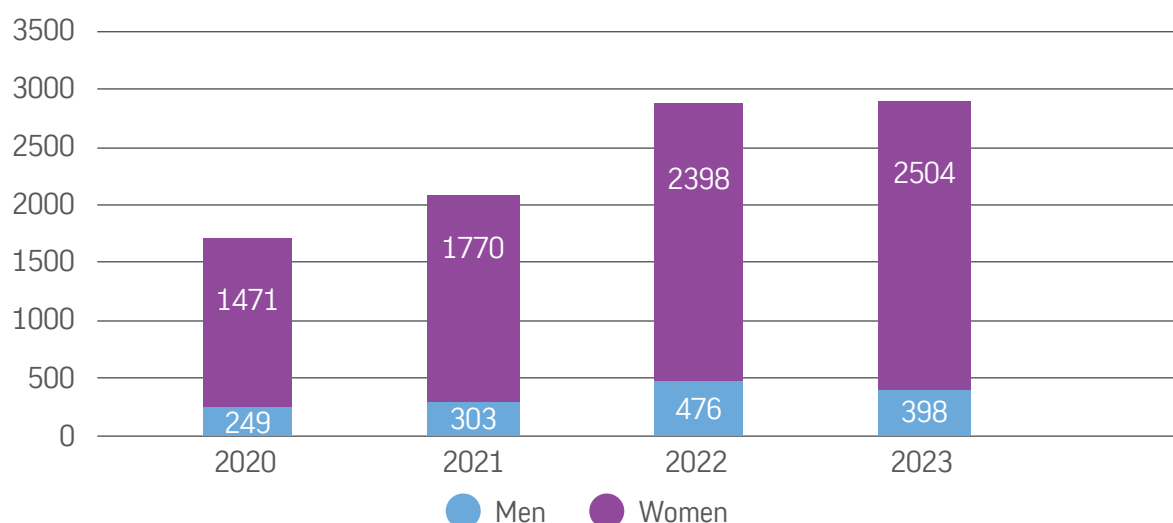
71 Kosovo Women's Network (2021). [From Laws to Action](#). Page 85.

72 Kosovo Women's Network (2024) [Gender Equality: At the Centre of IT... and Beyond A Gender Analysis of Digitalisation in Kosovo](#). Page 178.

73 Group for Legal and Political Studies (2023). [Institutional treatment of cases of domestic violence](#). Page 13.

The Victim's Advocacy and Assistance Office (VAAO) is an independent entity within the Office of the State Prosecutor, whose mandate is to protect crime victims' rights.<sup>74</sup> **Victim's Advocates (VAs)** are authorised to legally represent the victim throughout the proceedings, including requesting protection measures and filing compensation claims.<sup>75</sup> VAs support victims of various categories of crimes, and women represent a significantly higher number of victims who need their services. This graph shows the number of cases received by VAAO over the past four years, disaggregated by gender.<sup>76</sup> Furthermore, victims of gender-based violence represent between 90 per cent and 93 per cent of the cases they received in this period.<sup>77</sup> Furthermore, a 24-hour helpline is available to the victims for reporting cases and offering callers guidance, information and referrals. This helpline is accessible to the public and is toll-free. However, VAAO is understaffed, with 22 Victim's Advocates covering the entire territory of Kosovo, and due to limited resources, it cannot always offer an immediate response to every case.<sup>78</sup> According to the IPK report, the overall presence of VAs in regional police directories in 2022 was 0.4 per 10 cases handled,<sup>79</sup> a significant decrease from 2021, when they were present in 5.4 out of 10 cases. In 2022, Prishtina had the lowest presence with 0, whereas Northern Mitrovica had the highest with 3.2 per 10 cases.

*Graph 1 Cases received by VAAO, disaggregated by gender*



<sup>74</sup> Office of the State Prosecutor (n.d.). [Victim's Advocacy and Assistance Office](#).

<sup>75</sup> [National Strategy on Protection Against Domestic Violence and Violence Against Women 2022-2026](#), Office of the Prime Minister of Kosovo 2022. Page 26.

<sup>76</sup> Data provided by the Victim's Advocacy and Assistance Office, March 2024.

<sup>77</sup> Data provided by the Victim's Advocacy and Assistance Office, March 2024.

<sup>78</sup> Insights from UN Women focus group on gender-based violence held on February 29, 2024.

<sup>79</sup> Police Inspectorate of Kosovo (2023). Inspection report for the treatment of cases of domestic violence by the Kosovo Police. Page 12.



**Centres for Social Work (CSWs)** are municipal institutions that assist victims of domestic violence in accessing social services and reintegration. Each victim is assigned a case manager, who is responsible for providing comprehensive assistance in a wide range of services from housing to employment to social aid and more, as well as participating in court hearings and providing their anamnesis of the case.<sup>80</sup> CSWs must also be present when the police inform them about a new case, but their response is also limited. The IPK report shows that in 2022, their overall presence in regional police directories was 3.3 for 10 cases, with the lowest in Gjilan at 0.6 and the highest in Prishtina at 4.8.<sup>81</sup> In comparison, their presence in 2021 was higher, at 5.6 per 10 cases.

Most women and children who are victims of domestic violence are sent to one of the eight **shelters**, which are non-governmental organisations contracted by the government to offer protection and care to the victims.<sup>82</sup> Shelters are an integral part of the institutional response to domestic violence, and their primary role is the rehabilitation and social integration of the victims.<sup>83</sup> These shelters are in Ferizaj, Gjakova, Gjilan, Mitrovica, Novoberda, Peja, Prishtina and Prizren.<sup>84</sup> In addition to these, there is a government-run shelter for victims of human trafficking. Shelters provide temporary housing for up to six months, during which the victims are supported through recovery and reintegration. Between 2019 and 2023, 2,516 women and children have been sheltered in these shelters.<sup>85</sup> This graph shows the disaggregation per year. In 2023, the shelter in Prishtina accommodated 148 women and children, followed by Gjakova and Peja, which provided shelter to 125 and 97 individuals, respectively.<sup>86</sup> Shelters in Kosovo accommodate victims of domestic violence and trafficking, who are women and children. Currently, there are no shelters for boys over the age of 13, men, or members of the LGBTI+ who experience violence, and the provision of such services is foreseen in the national strategy.<sup>87</sup> Since the shelters are NGOs, they have had issues ensuring funding sustainability and have often struggled to cover their operations. Limited resources constrain the capacities and professional development opportunities for shelter staff. Nevertheless, despite these limitations, they continue to provide the services outlined in the Standard Operating Procedures for Protection from Domestic Violence.<sup>88</sup> The government has increased support for shelters, where the amount distributed in 2020 was almost double the amount received in 2016.<sup>89</sup> This has been necessary with the increase in reporting, resulting in an increase in the number of victims housed in these shelters.

80 Office of the Prime Minister of Kosovo (2022). [National Strategy on Protection Against Domestic Violence and Violence Against Women 2022–2026](#). Page 30.

81 Police Inspectorate of Kosovo (2023). Inspection report for the treatment of cases of domestic violence by the Kosovo Police. Page 13.

82 Office of the Prime Minister of Kosovo (2022). [National Strategy on Protection Against Domestic Violence and Violence Against Women 2022–2026](#). Page 33 and 115.

83 Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (2019). [Shelters for Victims of Domestic Violence in Kosovo](#).

84 Kosovo Women's Network (2023). [Homeless after the shelter](#).

85 Kosovo Ministry of Justice (2024). [Database for recording cases of domestic violence](#).

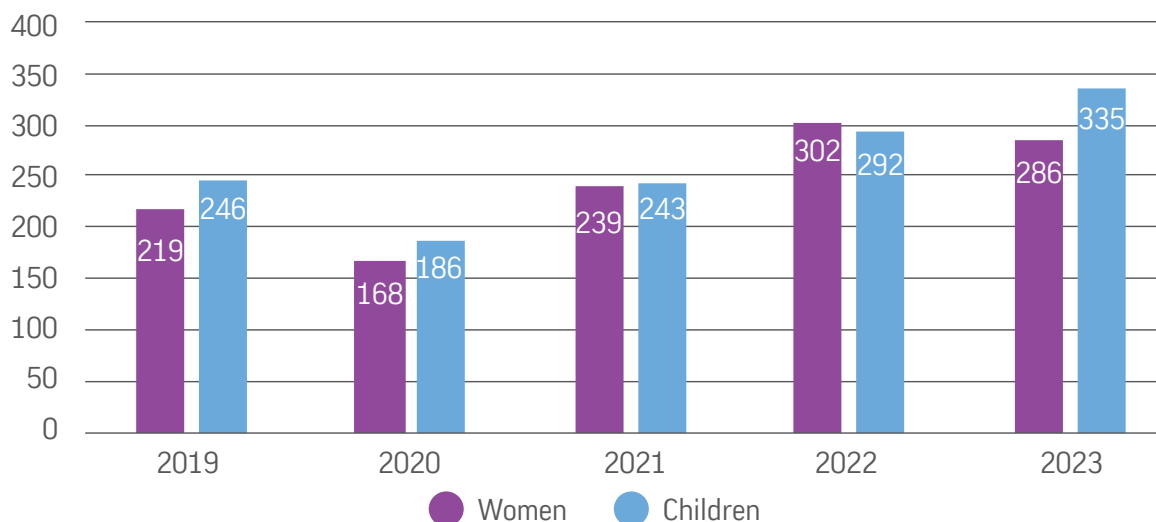
86 Ibid.

87 Office of the Prime Minister of Kosovo (2022). [National Strategy on Protection Against Domestic Violence and Violence Against Women 2022–2026](#). Page 33 and 116.

88 Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (2019). [Shelters for Victims of Domestic Violence in Kosovo](#). Page 13.

89 Ibid. Page 115.



*Graph 2 Number of women and children housed in Kosovo shelters 2019-2023*

**Municipal response to domestic violence and violence against women** involves coordination mechanisms that bring together relevant entities at the municipal level to address such cases. The main responsibility of these Municipal Coordination Mechanisms is to coordinate the response from identification and referral of cases to housing, rehabilitation and reintegration of victims of domestic violence.<sup>90</sup> The coordination mechanisms also play a crucial role in supporting the shelters in addressing the needs of the victims hosted there, as they provide easy access to multiple stakeholders.<sup>91</sup> As of now, there are 20 Municipal Coordination Mechanisms.<sup>92</sup>

**The Agency for Free Legal Aid (AFLA)** supports the victims through legal services, and now, with the new law, it supports victims of gender-based and domestic violence as one of their beneficiaries. AFLA has seven regional offices and 14 mobile ones, four of which cover six additional municipalities.<sup>93</sup> In the past four years, 452 women and 121 men who experienced domestic violence requested the support of AFLA for various legal services.<sup>94</sup> The amendments in law resulting in the inclusion of more categories eligible for free legal aid have reflected a slight increase in the number of requests for support received by AFLA, particularly in cases of domestic violence. In 2020, there were 44 cases of domestic violence. In 2021 and 2022, there were 150 and 173, respectively.<sup>95</sup> In 2023, following the legal amendment, there were 206 cases of domestic violence, 2 cases of sexual assault and 3 cases of sexual harassment. Additionally, in 2023, AFLA began collecting data disaggregated by the special categories.

90 Office of the Prime Minister of Kosovo (2022). [National Strategy on Protection Against Domestic Violence and Violence Against Women 2022–2026](#). Page 24.

91 Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (2019). [Shelters for Victims of Domestic Violence in Kosovo](#). Page 9.

92 Ibid. Page 46.

93 Agency for Free Legal Aid (n.d). [Regional and Mobile Offices](#)

94 Information provided from the Agency for Free Legal Aid, March 2024.

95 Information provided from the Agency for Free Legal Aid, March 2024.

*Graph 3 Number of women and men receiving services from the Agency for Free Legal Aid for divorce and alimony payments*



Support with divorce and alimony payment processes are some of the services required by AFLA, which have increased in the past four years. While not all individuals needing these services are victims of domestic violence, it is important to note that women request help in these matters significantly more than men. This graph shows the requests for support from AFLA for divorce and alimony payments in the past four years, disaggregated by gender.<sup>96</sup>

However, one of the issues is that there is not enough awareness about AFLA and its services. Survey data shows that 78 per cent of respondents, comprised of women and youth, reported that they had never heard of it.<sup>97</sup>

**Courts** treat cases of domestic violence, including both penal and civil procedures. Women are also underrepresented at decision-making levels in the courts, which impacts the ability to include the gender perspective in the issues that they face. Women constitute 31 per cent of the Kosovo Judicial Council

<sup>96</sup> Information provided from the Agency for Free Legal Aid, March 2024.

<sup>97</sup> Jahjaga Foundation (2021). Public Opinion on Free Legal Aid Services for Kosovo Women and Youth.

(KJC) and court decision-making levels.<sup>98</sup> Regarding the number of cases, between July 2022 and April 2023, the Basic Courts across Kosovo received 625 cases of domestic violence, most of which went to the Basic Court of Prishtina (258 cases), followed by the Basic Court of Peja (91) and the Basic Court of Gjilan (82).<sup>99</sup> Different entities have criticised courts for inadequate treatment of cases of gender-based violence and domestic violence in particular. Adequate treatment of cases includes fair penalties, which would provide justice for the victim and serve as a deterrent to potential perpetrators. However, penalties are often considered inadequate in comparison to the criminal violation. After reviewing 218 cases, Amnesty International found that “74 per cent received a suspended prison sentence, 45 per cent received a fine, and 20 per cent received a suspended fine.”<sup>100</sup> In addition, the analysis found that in six cases of violence between intimate partners, both of them were convicted as perpetrators. However, in all of these cases, the woman was the first victim, and the violent response could have been deemed as self-defence.<sup>101</sup>

Access to **reparations** is low. While the law ensures that victims of domestic violence have the right to immediate compensation, in practice, most survivors do not receive reparations. The 2023 Amnesty International report found that courts did not offer reparations in criminal proceedings in 197 reviewed court decisions.<sup>102</sup> Furthermore, the vast majority of survivors did not apply for compensation due to a lack of awareness and legal support. When 5.1 per cent of survivors sought reparations in their criminal cases, the courts referred them to civil court.<sup>103</sup>

**Reintegration** of victims of domestic violence, mainly through shelter and employment, remains a challenge.<sup>104</sup> Lack of economic independence often corners victims into a position where returning to their abusers appears to be the only option. Furthermore, financial dependence is a critical factor in why women justify and tolerate violence.<sup>105</sup> Due to their hesitation in exercising their right to inherit from their families and jointly own property with their spouses, they often find themselves without a solid economic foundation.<sup>106</sup> As a result, employment is crucial in empowering victims to break away from the circle of violence. In December 2023, the Government of Kosovo introduced a measure to subsidise 70 per cent of the gross salary (up to €300) for six months for survivors of domestic violence, aiming to support their economic independence.<sup>107</sup> To apply for this measure, survivors are required to place a toll-free call<sup>108</sup> to the Ministry of Justice, and they will be directed to register with the Employment Office in their respective municipalities as job seekers rather than survivors. Once registered, the Ministry of Justice checks their database to confirm that the individual has indeed experienced domestic violence.

98 Kosovo Women's Network (2024) [Gender Equality: At the Centre of IT... and Beyond A Gender Analysis of Digitalisation in Kosovo](#). Page 184 and 186.

99 Group for Legal and Political Studies (2023). [Institutional treatment of cases of domestic violence](#). Page 20.

100 Amnesty International (2023). [From Paper to Practice: Kosovo must keep its commitments to domestic violence survivors – Executive Summary](#). Page 5.

101 Ibid. Page 6.

102 Amnesty International (2023). [From Paper to Practice: Kosovo must keep its commitments to domestic violence survivors – Executive Summary](#). Page 6.

103 Ibid. Page 6.

104 Insights from UN Women focus group on gender-based violence held on February 29, 2024.

105 Bërxiulli D., Gashi, A., Gusia, E. (2023) Determinants of Women's Tolerant Attitudes toward Gender-Based Violence against Women in Kosovo”, *Psychological Thought*, Vol. 16(2), 389-405. <https://doi.org/10.37708/psyc.v16i2.865>. Page 399.

106 Ibid. Page 390.

107 Information received from representatives of the Ministry of Justice.

108 The free-of-charge number to contact to benefit from this measure is 080010010.

Then, their information is shared with the focal point at the Agency for Employment in the Republic of Kosovo (AERK). AEK attempts to connect the individual with an employer through the municipal employment offices. To date, 14 women have benefited from this measure.<sup>109</sup>

## Incidence of Violence against Women and Girls

Women and girls continue to be the primary targets of gender-based and domestic violence in Kosovo. Traditional gender norms have historically normalised violence as a form of discipline for women and girls and treated it as a matter to be resolved within the home.<sup>110</sup> This has led to underreporting, which means that the issue's prevalence is not reflected in official statistics. However, some indication can be found in a survey showing that 54 per cent of women have experienced psychological, physical or sexual violence from an intimate partner since the age of 15.<sup>111</sup> Police Inspectorate of Kosovo (IPK) data shows that 81.5 per cent of domestic violence victims in 2022 were women, with 47 per cent experiencing violence from their spouses and 11 per cent of them from their live-in partners.<sup>112</sup>

This graph shows the number of cases reported to the Kosovo Police.<sup>113</sup> Prishtina is the region with the highest level of reporting, with almost three times the number of cases compared to the following highest regions, Prizren and Peja.<sup>114</sup> This does not necessarily reflect that there is a higher prevalence of violence in Prishtina. Instead, it reflects the larger population in this region and more significant opportunities for employment and education, which contribute to increased reporting.<sup>115</sup>

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109 Information received from representatives of the Ministry of Justice.

110 Kosovo Agency for Gender Equality (2020). [Kosovo Program for Gender Equality 2020–2024](#). Page 10.

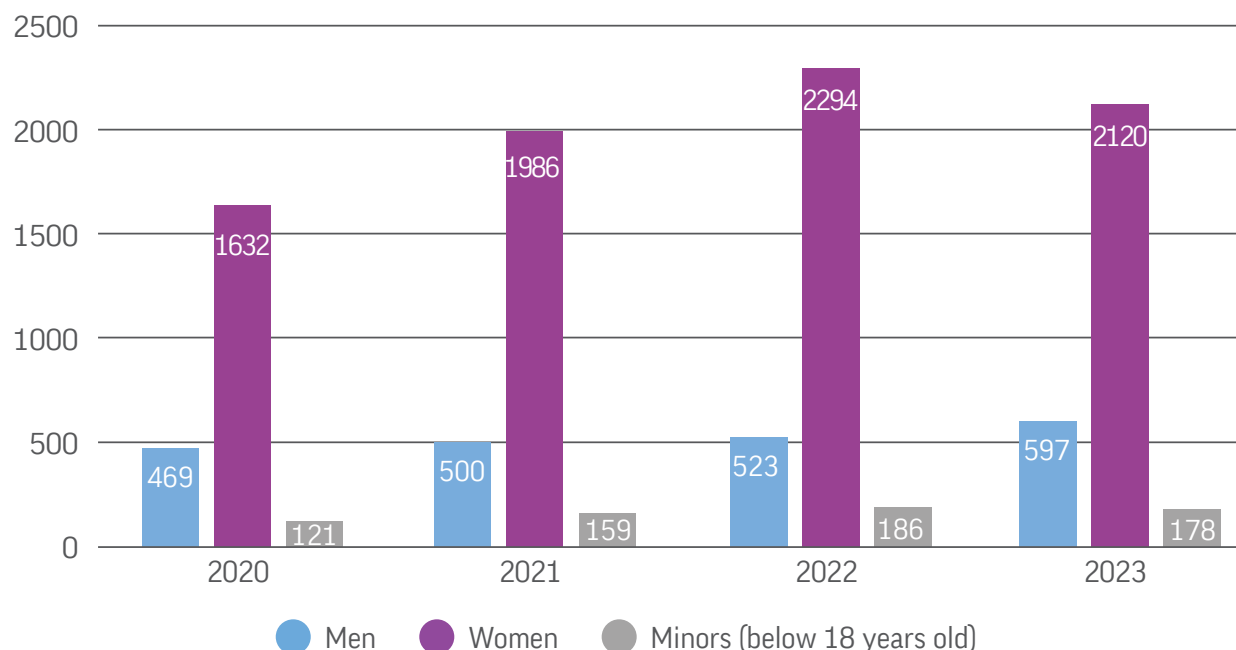
111 Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (2019). [Survey on the Well-Being and Safety of Women in Kosovo](#). Page 8.

112 Police Inspectorate of Kosovo (2023). Inspection report for the treatment of cases of domestic violence by the Kosovo Police. Page 8.

113 Data provided by the Directorate for Prevention and Investigation of Domestic Violence of the Kosovo Police, 2024.

114 Kosovo Ministry of Justice (2024). [Database for recording cases of domestic violence](#).

115 Insights from UN Women focus group on gender-based violence held on February 29, 2024.

*Graph 4 Cases of domestic violence reported at the Kosovo Police*

As can be seen from the graph, as well as from the data in the Ministry of Justice's database, 2022 recorded the highest number of cases of domestic violence in the past five years.<sup>116</sup> The age group with the most reported cases was 30–40, followed by 20–30 and 40–50.<sup>117</sup> Between 2019 and 2023, a total of 338 temporary protection orders were issued by Kosovo Police, with 121 of them in the last year alone.<sup>118</sup> During the same period, 23 women were murdered as a result of domestic violence.<sup>119</sup>

Data from IPK show that in 2022, the exposure to domestic violence was 1.56 cases per 1,000 residents and 0.25 cases per km<sup>2</sup>.<sup>120</sup> The municipality with the highest number of cases per 1,000 residents was Fushe Kosova, with 3.62, while the lowest was Junik, with 0.31. In this line, the municipality with the highest number of cases per km<sup>2</sup> was North Mitrovice, with 3.09, while the lowest was Zubin Potok, with 0.01.

The data provided for gender-based violence is rather binary, and when referring to violence against women, it only accounts for cisgender heterosexual women.<sup>121</sup> In doing so, it excludes the LGBTI+ communities from the discourse and, consequently, from strategies for their protection against gender-based violence.

<sup>116</sup> Kosovo Ministry of Justice (2024). [Database for documenting cases of domestic violence](#).

<sup>117</sup> Ibid.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid.

<sup>120</sup> Police Inspectorate of Kosovo (2023). Inspection report for the treatment of cases of domestic violence by the Kosovo Police. Page 6.

<sup>121</sup> Insights from UN Women focus group on marginalized groups held on February 27, 2024.

## Sexual harassment, sexual assault and stalking

Sexual harassment, as defined in the Criminal Code of Kosovo, includes “any form of unwanted verbal, non-verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature which aims at or effectively constitutes a violation of the dignity of a person, which creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading or offensive environment.”<sup>122</sup> It is a violation punishable by a fine or imprisonment of up to three years, which could be increased if the crime has been committed under specific graver circumstances, as noted in the code. Yet, sexual harassment is underreported, making its prevalence challenging to measure. Survey data shows that 29 per cent of women have experienced sexual harassment.<sup>123</sup> When exploring the level of harassment in the workplace, survey data showed that only 9 per cent of women had this experience, primarily in the form of verbal remarks of a sexual nature and inappropriate comments.<sup>124</sup> Between 2020 and 2023, Kosovo Police received 84 reports of sexual harassment, with 77 from women and 7 from men.<sup>125</sup> This data reveals how sexual harassment remains one of the most underreported forms of gender-based violence.

In 2020, the Kosovo Government adopted the Policy Against Sexual Harassment in the Public Administration of the Republic of Kosovo.<sup>126</sup> This policy guides entities of the central and local levels of the public administration on measures to prevent and address sexual harassment in the workplace. It also outlines the reporting mechanisms, allowing individuals to report their case through an authorised representative if they cannot report it themselves.<sup>127</sup> The policy was a good starting point but required a follow-up to serve as a step-by-step guide for managing cases. In 2023, the Office of Good Governance (OGG) within the Office of the Prime Minister published the Manual for Implementing the Policy Against Sexual Harassment in the Public Administration of the Republic of Kosovo.<sup>128</sup> This manual also does not provide a step-by-step guide for the different entities to manage cases, particularly in investigating such matters.

Between 2022 and 2023, AGE and the Kosovo Institute for Public Administration (KIPA), with the support of UN Women Kosovo, trained over 350 public servants from central and local levels on sexual harassment.<sup>129</sup> For all participants, this was their first training on the matter, and except for a few individuals, no one knew about the policy. To date, there have been no reported cases of sexual harassment in their institutions. However, many of them had heard of cases unofficially. According to the policy, if someone experiences sexual harassment, they should report it to their immediate supervisor. If the harasser is the immediate supervisor, they can turn to the higher authority or the Officer for

122 Kosovo Ministry of Justice (2019). [Code No. 06/L-074 Criminal Code of the Republic of Kosovo](#). Article 183.2. Page 74.

123 Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (2019). [Survey on the Well-Being and Safety of Women in Kosovo](#). Page 8.

124 UN Women and IDRA (2023). [Occupational Safety and Health: A study of sexual harassment in the workplace in Kosovo for public and private sector](#). Page 46.

125 Data provided by Kosovo Police, March 2024.

126 Office of the Prime Minister of Kosovo (2020). [Policy Against Sexual Harassment in the Public Administration of the Republic of Kosovo](#).

127 Ibid. Article 6.

128 Office of Good Governance within the Office of the Prime Minister of the Republic of Kosovo (2023). Manual for Implementation of the Policy Against Sexual Harassment in the Public Administration of the Republic of Kosovo.

129 Information provided by UN Women Kosovo, 2024.

Personnel. Depending on the situation, the person receiving the report may manage it themselves or initiate procedures for the case to be addressed by the disciplinary commission. Without a step-by-step guide and training, they cannot handle such sensitive matters.

One of the significant issues is that sexual harassment and sexual assault are often confused and treated as the same. Even prosecutors tend to confuse these two.<sup>130</sup> One research showed that most judges interviewed were not aware that, under the new Criminal Code, sexual harassment is a criminal offence and did not recognise sexual violence as a form of gender-based violence.<sup>131</sup> Between 2020 and 2023, there were 63 reports of sexual assaults, with 56 from women and 7 from men.<sup>132</sup>

Stalking is another form of gender-based violence, which is also underreported. Survey data shows that 8 per cent of women experience stalking in the form of calls, deliberate following and texts.<sup>133</sup> Another issue raised with the increased usage of social media is cyber violence in the form of enticing victims to open different links or share pictures and then misusing this content or blackmailing them for it.<sup>134</sup> Women are the primary targets and victims of these crimes, and some who reported such cases to the Kosovo Police maintained that they were not treated seriously but instead blamed for sharing the pictures in the first place.<sup>135</sup> Still, survey data shows that Kosovo Police remains the first authority to turn to if one feels threatened, as reported by 57 per cent of women respondents.<sup>136</sup>

## Perpetrator Programs

Between 2020 and 2023, 2,566 men and 25 women were arrested for domestic violence.<sup>137</sup> In 2022, the number of persons detained per 10 cases of domestic violence was 3.9, reflecting an increase from 2021, when it was 2.5.<sup>138</sup> The highest number was in Gjakova, with 5.8 persons detained per 10 cases, while the lowest was in South Mitrovica, with 1.8. Most perpetrators of domestic violence are men. In 2023, 86.40 per cent of perpetrators were men, whereas 13.6 per cent were women.<sup>139</sup> Most of these perpetrators were from the Prishtina region, followed by Prizren and Peja. In terms of age group, most perpetrators are aged between 30 and 40, followed by those aged 20–30 and 40–50.<sup>140</sup>

130 Kosovo Women's Network (2021). [From Laws to Action](#). Page 80.

131 Ibid. Page 91.

132 Data provided by the Kosovo Police, March 2024.

133 Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (2019). [Survey on the Well-Being and Safety of Women in Kosovo](#). Page 44.

134 Kosovo Women's Network (2024). [Gender Equality: At the Centre of IT... and Beyond A Gender Analysis of Digitalisation in Kosovo](#). Page 175.

135 Ibid. Page 176.

136 Kosovo Women's Network (2024). [Gender Equality: At the Centre of IT... and Beyond A Gender Analysis of Digitalisation in Kosovo](#). Page 207.

137 Data provided by the Kosovo Police, March 2024.

138 Police Inspectorate of Kosovo (2023). Inspection report for the treatment of cases of domestic violence by the Kosovo Police. Page 11.

139 Kosovo Ministry of Justice (2024). [Database for recording cases of domestic violence](#).

140 Ibid.

Article 16 of the Istanbul Convention requires countries to design and implement perpetrator programs as a means of transforming the attitudes and behaviour of perpetrators in an effort to prevent potential violence in the future.<sup>141</sup> Initially, there were 1) two experimental initiatives for perpetrator programs, implemented by the Safe House in Gjakova and the Center for Counseling, Social Services and Research – SIT in Prishtina; 2) some anger management programs available in prison but without specifics to domestic violence perpetrators, and 3) limited access to health institutions providing treatment.<sup>142</sup> In 2022, the curricula for training professionals in offering programs for perpetrators of domestic violence<sup>143</sup> was adopted. These curricula provide a comprehensive framework for working with perpetrators of domestic violence. Building on these curricula, the National Program for Treatment of Perpetrators of Violence against Women was launched in the Correctional Center in Dubrava, which will serve as a pilot.<sup>144</sup> This program covers 10 modules implemented throughout 24 sessions.<sup>145</sup>

## Human Trafficking

The Law on Preventing and Combating Trafficking in Human Beings and Protecting Victims of Trafficking covers the prevention, investigation and prosecution of human trafficking, as well as assistance and protection of victims.<sup>146</sup> In 2021, the new Standard Operating Procedures for Trafficked Persons in Kosovo were adopted, with specific measures that must be taken throughout all stages.<sup>147</sup> In 2022, the Kosovo Government adopted the Anti-trafficking National Strategy 2022–2026 and the National Action Plan 2022–2024. The strategy has five objectives: strengthening institutional mechanisms, prevention, improvement of services for victims, investigation and prosecution of traffickers, and regional and international collaboration.<sup>148</sup>

Kosovo Police has a Directorate for Trafficking in Human Beings, which investigates cases of human trafficking.<sup>149</sup> In 2022, Kosovo Police investigated 16 cases of trafficking, 14 for sex trafficking and 2 for labour trafficking, involving a total of 39 suspects.<sup>150</sup> In 2022, there were 21 victims, 17 of sexual trafficking and 4 of labour trafficking. Among these victims, there were 14 girls, 6 women and 1 man.<sup>151</sup>

The Criminal Code of Kosovo criminalises human trafficking, including the facilitation or compelling of prostitution, the use of sexual services of a victim of trafficking, and the withholding of identity papers

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141 Oddone, C and Morina, D. [Implementing perpetrator programmes in Kosovo\\* Policy Brief](#). Council of Europe. 2023. Page 2.

142 Ibid. Page 3.

143 Kosovo Ministry of Justice (2022). [Curricula for training professionals in offering programs for perpetrators of domestic violence](#).

144 Kosovo Ministry of Justice (2024). [National Program for Treatment of Perpetrators of Violence](#).

145 Council of Europe (2024). [National Program for Treatment of Perpetrators of Violence - Leaflet](#).

146 Official Gazette of the Republic of Kosovo (2013). [Law No. 04/I218 on Preventing and Combating Trafficking in Human beings and Protecting Victims of Trafficking](#).

147 Ministry of Internal Affairs (2021). [Standard Operating Procedures for Trafficked Persons in Kosovo](#).

148 Ministry of Internal Affairs (2022). [Anti-trafficking National Strategy 2022–2026 and the National Action Plan 2022–2024](#). Page 11.

149 Kosovo Police (n.d). [Department of Investigations](#). Accessed in March 2024.

150 Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons. U.S. Department of State (2023). [2023 Trafficking in Persons Report: Kosovo](#).

151 Ibid.



of victims of slavery or trafficking.<sup>152</sup> However, implementing penalties has not been in line with the code. A U.S. Department of State report found that “judges continued to issue sentences below the minimum penalty of five years’ imprisonment” and that “courts did not reduce the overall backlog of trafficking cases”.<sup>153</sup>

There is only one licensed centre to assist victims of human trafficking, which is the NGO Centre for Protection of Victims and Prevention of Trafficking in Human Beings (PVPT).<sup>154</sup> “Between 2015 and 2020, the PVPT provided rehabilitation to 187 beneficiaries (40 adults and 147 children), of whom 101 were residents in the Centre, and 86 attended the Centre daily without being residents there.”<sup>155</sup>

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152 Kosovo Ministry of Justice (2019). [Code No. 06/L-074 Criminal Code of the Republic of Kosovo](#). Article 166, 228 and 234.

153 Ibid.

154 Council of Europe (2021). [Second report on the compliance of Kosovo with the standards of the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings](#). GRETA. Page 27.

155 Ibid.

# PROMOTING SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH AND RIGHTS

The Law on Reproductive Health, among other aspects, covers access to information, family planning, assisted reproduction and sexually transmitted infections, including HIV/AIDS.<sup>156</sup> However, the topic remains taboo in Kosovo, particularly in rural areas. According to the Kosovo Ombudsperson Institution (KOI) report on sexual and reproductive health, Main Family Medical Centers (MFMC) and secondary and tertiary care are responsible for providing patients with information on this subject. However, this is primarily done through direct consultations with doctors about their health rather than designated meetings focused on sexual education.<sup>157</sup> While access to information may be limited, access to professional services is considered high. The percentage of women aged 15–49 years with a live birth in the last two years whose most recent live birth was attended by skilled health personnel is 99.5 per cent.<sup>158</sup>

Access to menstrual hygiene products has been an issue of public debate, with civil society organisations advocating for these products to be tax-free.

Women are estimated to spend €56 per year on these products, including the 18 per cent value-added tax, which adds to the financial obligations of women who are already underrepresented in the labour market.<sup>159</sup>

## Sexual education, the use of contraceptives, and adolescent births

Sexual education is not part of the formal education at any level in Kosovo due to the mentality and the stigmatisation resulting from it. Students mainly learn about reproduction as part of biology, but other aspects of sexual education are not covered. As a result, there is a lack of information about it. Survey data shows that only 40 per cent of youth use contraceptives, which is significantly lower than their peers in Europe, where 71 per cent of them use protection.<sup>160</sup> There have been efforts from the Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation (MESTI) and UNFPA to build the capacities of teachers to manage this discussion. Specifically, a designated Guide for Teachers about Inclusive Sexual Education was

156 Official Gazette of the Republic of Kosovo (2008). [Law 02/L-76 on Reproductive Health](#).

157 Kosovo Ombudsperson Institution (2021) [Report ex officio nr. 577/2021 regarding sexual and reproductive health](#). Page 49.

158 UNICEF (2020). [2019–2020 Kosovo Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey \(MICS\)](#). Page 13.

159 Beka, Elirjeta (2024). [Policy Brief: Menstruation isn't a luxury. Why are we taxing it?](#) Kosovo Women's Network. Page 2.

160 Ministry of Youth, Culture, and Sports (2024). [National Strategy for Youth 2024-2032](#). Page 11.

developed, covering tailored information for different levels of primary and secondary education.<sup>161</sup> However, most teachers and parents reject the distribution of this content to students at these levels.

According to MICS, looking into the methods used by women currently married or in union, withdrawal is the primary method used as contraception, followed by IUDs, male condoms and pills.<sup>162</sup> Conversely, 33.3 per cent of them reported using no methods for protection, and this percentage is slightly higher among the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities, 37.9 per cent of whom do not use any methods.<sup>163</sup> Overall, the percentage of women of reproductive age (aged 15–49 years) who have their needs for family planning satisfied with modern methods is 12.5 per cent.<sup>164</sup> In terms of adolescent births, the teenage birth rate in Kosovo is 13 births per 1,000 women, whereas the rate among the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities is 78.<sup>165</sup>

Contraceptives are part of the list of essential medications in Kosovo and are available for free at the pharmacies of Main Family Medical Centers with a prescription from a doctor. However, they are not always available due to the lack of ordering or insufficient supply to meet the needs.<sup>166</sup> In addition to the low supply, there have been a few cases of discrimination, where pharmacists told patients of ethnic minorities that they did not have contraceptives in stock. Still, when the same patients came with representatives of civil society, contraceptives became available.<sup>167</sup>

Emergency contraceptive pills are an alternative form of preventing pregnancy and can be bought without a doctor's prescription. This exempts professionals from guiding women in their decisions while also increasing the risks of unwanted pregnancies due to their limited effect.<sup>168</sup> The extent of their usage cannot be defined, but there are increasing concerns about surpassing recommended levels.

## Abortion

In Kosovo, women have the right to abortion. This right is set in Law Nr. 03/L-110 for ending the pregnancy. According to Article 5, women can end the pregnancy because of their choice or because of medical conditions (Article 15).<sup>169</sup> However, according to Article 14, selective abortion based on gender is forbidden. Abortions must be performed by licensed obstetrics and gynaecology professionals, and patients must be offered specific care before and after the process. Yet, this is not always the case. According to the Kosovo Ombudsperson Institution report on sexual and reproductive health, numerous patients who have ended their pregnancies at the University Clinical Center of Kosovo (UCCCK) have received undignified and insensitive treatment, which has made the experience of seeking an abortion even more traumatising.<sup>170</sup> In general, abortion can be done in private and public clinics. However, due

161 Ibid. Page 50.

162 UNICEF (2020). [2019–2020 Kosovo Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey \(MICS\)](#). Page 118.

163 UNICEF (2020). [2019–2020 Kosovo Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey \(MICS\)](#). Page 118 and 122.

164 UNICEF (2020). [2019–2020 Kosovo Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey \(MICS\)](#). Page 120

165 UNICEF (2020). [2019–2020 Kosovo Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey \(MICS\)](#). Page 105–106.

166 Kosovo Ombudsperson Institution. (2021) [Report ex officio nr. 577/2021 regarding sexual and reproductive health](#). Page 66.

167 Ibid.

168 Information provided by the Secretariat of the Association of Obstetricians and Gynecologists of Kosovo.

169 [Official Gazette of the Republic of Kosovo \(2009\). Law Nr. 03/L-110 for ending the pregnancy](#). Page 2,4

170 Kosovo Ombudsperson Institution (2021) [Report ex officio nr. 577/2021 regarding sexual and reproductive health](#). Page 71–72.

to the lack of a system that collects data from all these entities and the sensitivity of the issue, there are no comprehensive statistics about the total number of abortions.

## Early detection of cervical and breast cancer

The research conducted for the report of Kosovo Ombudsperson Institution on sexual and reproductive health shows that most women do not undergo regular PAP tests. 44 per cent of respondents said they have never had a PAP test, and 37 per cent said they have.<sup>171</sup> Of the vast majority of those who have PAP tests, 76 per cent have them in the private sector, whereas 24 per cent have them in the public sector. Of those who have not had a PAP test, 64 per cent said they did not need it, 30 per cent cited a lack of information, whereas 6 per cent expressed embarrassment regarding the procedure. "Since 2016, over 15,000 women have undergone the PAP test, and according to the obtained results, some have been referred for additional tests or treatment as needed. In 2023, 94 women (4.2 per cent) out of 2,246 who underwent the PAP test tested positive for abnormal epithelial cells and were subsequently referred for further tests and treatment."<sup>172</sup>

The KOI research found that 61 per cent of respondents had never had a mammogram or breast ultrasound, and only 18 per cent had. The remaining 21 per cent claimed that they did not have any information about it. Of the respondents who did not have these tests, 64 per cent said they did not need it, whereas 36 per cent claimed they did not have information about it.

## HPV vaccines

Genital human papillomavirus (HPV) is a common sexually transmitted infection that poses a risk for the development of cervical cancer. A study conducted in Kosovo examining HPV and its relation to cervical cancer shows that the overall prevalence of HPV is 13.1 per cent.<sup>173</sup> However, there is a lack of information regarding HPV and its associated risks. The vast majority of respondents in this study (66.4 per cent) had no information about HPV, and only 27.6 per cent of them were aware that HPV could lead to cervical cancer. Fortunately, there is an HPV vaccine, but the study indicates that 70.1 per cent of respondents were unaware of its existence. This vaccine was not available in Kosovo until 2022 when the Government of Kosovo procured the first contingent of 300 HPV vaccines to be used for girls between the ages of 12 and 26.<sup>174</sup> The HPV vaccine has since been incorporated into the Action Plan for Vaccination for 2022–2025.<sup>175</sup>

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171 Kosovo Ombudsperson Institution (2021) [Report ex officio nr. 577/2021 regarding sexual and reproductive health](#), Page 54.

172 UNFPA Kosovo (2024) [Empowering Women's Health: Milestones and Collaborative Efforts in Cervical Cancer Prevention in Kosovo](#).

173 Raçi, P.Z., Raçi, F. & Hadri, T. [Kosovo women's knowledge and awareness of human papillomavirus \(HPV\) infection, HPV vaccination, and its relation to cervical cancer](#). BMC Women's Health 21, 354 (2021). Page 1.

174 UNFPA Kosovo (2022). [Strengthening the Pillars: Cervical Screening and Prevention](#).

175 Ministry of Health (2023) [Three new vaccines to protect the health of citizens](#).

## Sexual and reproductive health of women with disabilities

Women with disabilities encounter various challenges when accessing healthcare services, particularly regarding sexual and reproductive health. Due to a lack of government-provided interpreters, women with hearing disabilities have to rely on family members for sign language interpretation<sup>176</sup>, raising concerns about both privacy and accuracy. There have been cases when women with physical disabilities have experienced stigmatisation and inappropriate treatment during gynaecological visits, being told that they should not become pregnant due to their disabilities without undergoing any tests or further examinations.<sup>177</sup>

## HIV/AIDS and STIs

The first case of HIV/AIDS in Kosovo was registered in 1986. Since then, until the end of 2023, there have been a total of 181 cases registered at the National Institute of Public Health in Kosovo, 80 per cent of whom are men and 20 per cent are women.<sup>178</sup> Throughout this period, 51 of these individuals have died from HIV/AIDS. The numbers among men are particularly concerning because 40 of the 144 cases of men diagnosed with HIV/AIDS (27.8 per cent) were registered in the last two years alone.<sup>179</sup> This is more than the total number of women diagnosed since the beginning. Antiretroviral (ARV) therapy is available at the Infectious Disease Clinic at UCCK, and most people living with HIV/AIDS receive treatment there.<sup>180</sup> A few individuals did not return after receiving the results and thus were lost to follow-up.

Despite the presence of HIV/AIDS in Kosovo, there is a general lack of awareness regarding HIV transmission. The “percentage of women and men aged 15–24 who correctly identify the two ways of preventing the sexual transmission of HIV, who recognise that a healthy-looking person can be HIV-positive and who reject the two most common misconceptions about HIV transmission” is 10.5 per cent among women and 10.1 per cent among men.<sup>181</sup> The percentage is lower among the Roma, Ashkali, and Egyptian communities, which stand at 2.7 per cent and 5.8 per cent, respectively.

176 Kosovo Ombudsperson Institution (2021) [Report ex officio nr. 577/2021 regarding sexual and reproductive health](#). Page 51.

177 Kosovo Ombudsperson Institution (2021) [Report ex officio nr. 577/2021 regarding sexual and reproductive health](#). Page 63.

178 National Institute of Public Health in Kosovo, Department of Epidemiology (2024) “Annual reports of the epidemiological situation with HIV/AIDS and STIs in Kosovo”.

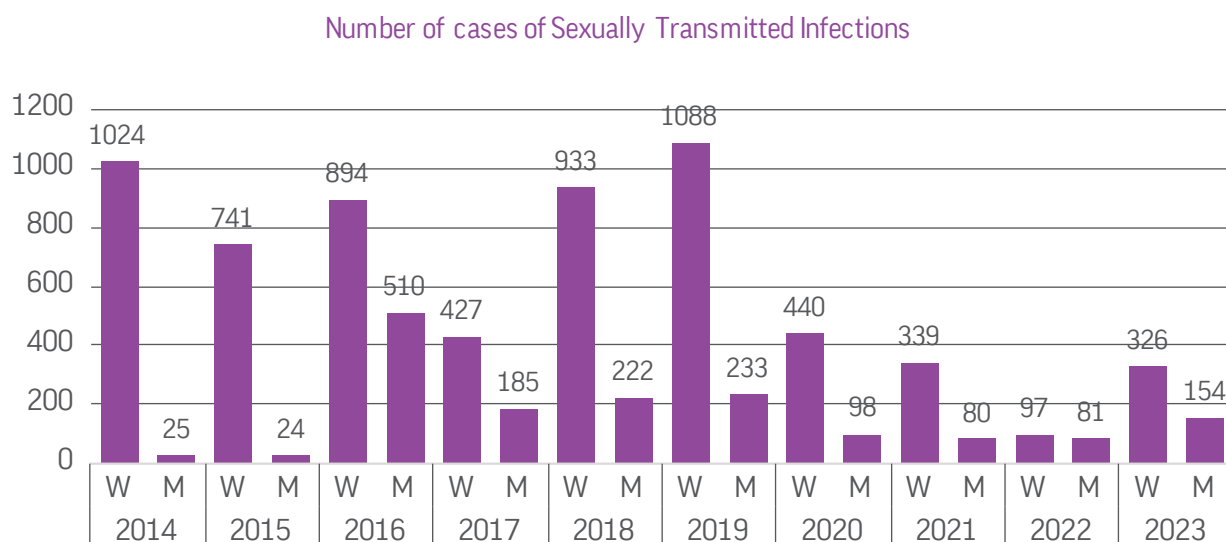
179 National Institute of Public Health in Kosovo, Department of Epidemiology (2024) “Annual reports of the epidemiological situation with HIV/AIDS and STIs in Kosovo”.

180 Information received by representatives of the National Institute of Public Health in Kosovo.

181 UNICEF (2020). [2019–2020 Kosovo Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey \(MICS\)](#). Page 15.

Cases of Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) are registered at the National Institute of Public Health in Kosovo (NIPHK), which possesses data from the public sector and a few laboratories in the private sector. Below are the data regarding STIs from the past 10 years, as provided by NIPHK.<sup>182</sup>

*Graph 5 Number of cases of sexually transmitted infections among women and men 2014–2023*



The data shows that more women than men have been diagnosed with STIs. The general number of registered cases of STIs has dropped significantly in the past four years, which is due to two main reasons: 1) most cases are now diagnosed in private laboratories, which do not report these cases of STIs to NIPHK; and 2) changes in categorisations by the WHO and the ECDC, due to which these numbers do not include some infections that were previously registered as STIs.<sup>183</sup> As a result, the extent of the spread of STIs cannot be defined.

<sup>182</sup> National Institute of Public Health in Kosovo, Department of Epidemiology (2024) "Annual reports of the epidemiological situation with HIV/AIDS and STIs in Kosovo".

<sup>183</sup> Information received by representatives of the National Institute of Public Health in Kosovo, March 2024.



# PROMOTING ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL RIGHTS AND EMPOWERING GIRLS AND WOMEN

## Economy

### Brief Policy Analysis

**Law No. 03 L-212 on Labour** incorporates the Law on Protection from Discrimination provisions, extending its application to employer-employee relationships in both the public and private sectors. This law includes maternity and paternity leave rights and protections for breastfeeding and pregnant workers.<sup>184</sup> Women are entitled to up to 12 months of maternity leave under this law, which is among the longest maternity leave provisions in the world. The employer is required to provide 70 per cent of the regular salary for the first six months. Following that, the employer pays 50 per cent of the average Kosovo salary for the subsequent three months.

The final three months of maternity leave will be unpaid if women choose to take them.

Men, on the other hand, are entitled to only three days of paternity leave.<sup>185</sup> It is noteworthy that while Kosovo has one of the longest maternity leave provisions in the world, statistical analysis reveals that longer leave durations decrease the likelihood of women returning to work.<sup>186</sup> **Law No.03/L-019 on Vocational Ability, Rehabilitation and Employment of People with Disabilities** establishes a mandatory quota for public and private employers to assist individuals with special needs. According to this law, employers must hire one person with special needs for every 50 employees.<sup>187</sup>

184 Assembly of the Republic of Kosovo (2010), [Law No.03/L-212 on Labour](#).

185 Assembly of the Republic of Kosovo (2010), [Law No.03/L-212 on Labour](#).

186 Kosovo Women's Network (2019), [Gender-Based Discrimination and Labour in Kosovo](#).

187 Assembly of the Republic of Kosovo (2009), [Law No. 03/L-019 on Vocational Ability, Rehabilitation, and employment of people with disabilities](#).

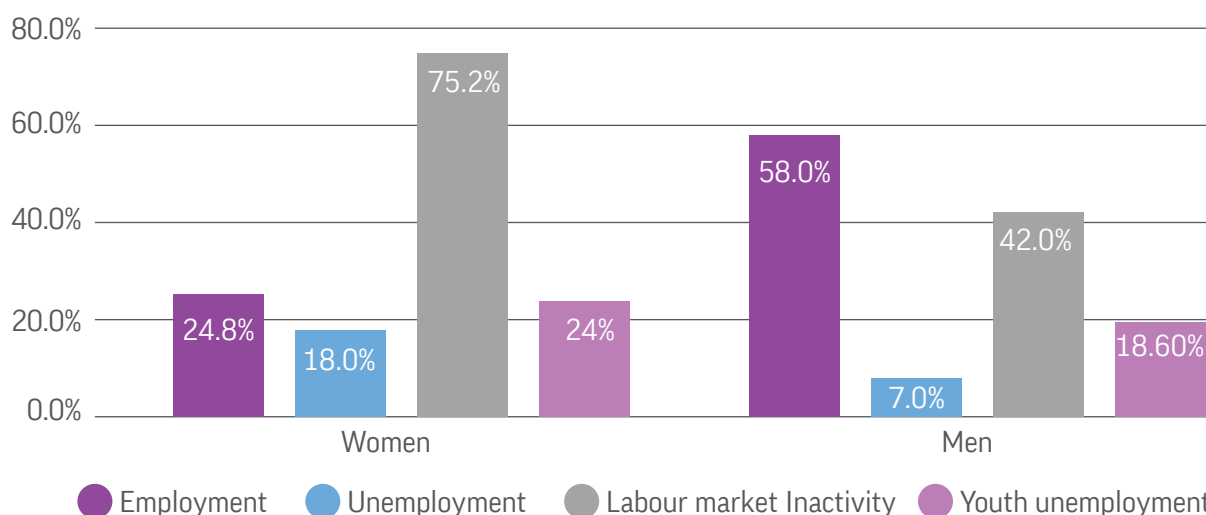


## Current situation

Poverty is widespread in Kosovo, with 18 per cent of the population living below the poverty line and 5.1 per cent in extreme poverty.<sup>188</sup> It is more prevalent in rural areas, where 64.4 per cent of people experiencing poverty and 63.7 per cent of people experiencing extreme poverty reside.<sup>189</sup> Poverty affects women more than men, with 19 per cent of women and 17 per cent of men living below the poverty line.<sup>190</sup> Labour force indicators for women's participation in the labour market and their employment are among the worst in the region despite the National Development Strategy highlighting women's employment as a priority.

Unemployment and labour market inactivity rates in Kosovo are alarmingly high across different sectors. Kosovo has a 10.6 per cent unemployment rate and a 59.1 per cent labour force inactivity rate.<sup>191</sup> Youth unemployment is also concerning at 16.7 per cent. Women and girls face unemployment and a lack of labour force participation at significantly higher rates than men. For instance, 42 per cent of men are inactive (which means they are neither working nor looking for work), compared to 75.2 per cent of women.<sup>192</sup> Women are predominantly engaged in education (18.9 per cent), health and social work (15.1 per cent), and financial and insurance activities (2.5 per cent). Men, on the other hand, are more represented in construction (17.2 per cent), manufacturing (9.9 per cent) and wholesale and retail trade (19.5 per cent). Both genders show significant participation in trade and services, with 21.1 per cent of women and 19.5 per cent of men working in these sectors. Additionally, women are more likely to work as professionals (33.2 per cent), while men are more dispersed across various sectors, with many employed in skilled trades and elementary occupations.

*Graph 6 Key labour market indicators, disaggregated by gender, KAS*



<sup>188</sup> Kosovo Agency of Statistics (2019), [Consumption Poverty in the Republic of Kosovo](#).

<sup>189</sup> Ibid.

<sup>190</sup> Ibid.

<sup>191</sup> Kosovo Agency of Statistics (2023), [Labour Force Survey](#), 2023, Q3

<sup>192</sup> Ibid.

80,775 individuals were registered as unemployed in the employment offices in Kosovo in 2022, comprising 39,169 (48.5 per cent) women and 41,606 (51.5 per cent) men.<sup>193</sup> In 2022, 4,460 people were employed through regular employment intermediations by the Employment Offices and 2,012 through active labour market measures. Women comprised 2,147 of those employed in regular intermediations (48.1 per cent) and 1,249 through active labour market measures (62.1 per cent). Men accounted for 2,313 of the regular employment intermediations (51.9 per cent) and 763 in active labour market measures (37.9 per cent).<sup>194</sup>

*Table 1: Additional employment indicators, disaggregated by gender, 2022.*

Indicator	Men (%)	Women (%)	Total
Registered unemployed at EOs	51.5%	48.5%	80,775
Employed through regular EO intermediations	51.9%	48.1%	4,460
Employed through active labour market measures	37.9%	62.1%	2012

It is important to note that women and men cite distinct reasons for being inactive in the labour market. Men state that their participation in education and training is the main reason for their inactivity, while women cite unpaid care responsibilities, including childcare, as the main reason.

Women in Kosovo spend 6.2 hours on unpaid care work per day, 44 per cent more time than men, who spend 3.5 hours.<sup>195</sup> Unpaid care work in Kosovo has an estimated value of €2,824,248,757 or 33 per cent of the GDP of Kosovo.<sup>196</sup>

The women who are active in the labour market continue to encounter unequal opportunities and discrimination despite existing legal protection. Gender-based discrimination is prevalent in hiring, with employers discriminating against women due to existing maternity leave provisions.<sup>197</sup> Since, as discussed above, the burden of paying for maternity leave lies with the employer, many private-sector employers hesitate to employ pregnant women or those planning to start families.<sup>198</sup> Research also indicates that few employers have policies and measures in place to identify and prevent risks to pregnant workers.<sup>199</sup> Despite discrimination in the labour market, there is an exceptionally dwindling number of reported cases. Several reasons exist, including fear of job loss, long and tiring procedures, concerns over anonymity, public institutions distrust, and difficulties documenting cases.<sup>200</sup>

To promote gender equality and empower women in the workplace, marketplace and community, twenty-two private companies in Kosovo have committed to the Women's Empowerment Principles

<sup>193</sup> Kosovo Agency for Employment (2022). [Employment and Professional Development](#).

<sup>194</sup> Ibid.

<sup>195</sup> Instituti Musine Kokalari (2022), Who Cares? Unpaid Care work in Kosovo.

<sup>196</sup> Ibid.

<sup>197</sup> Kosovo Women's Network (2016). [Striking a Balance: Policy Options for Amending Kosovo's Law on Labour](#).

<sup>198</sup> Kosovo Women's Network (2019), [Gender-Based Discrimination and Labour in Kosovo](#).

<sup>199</sup> Ibid.

<sup>200</sup> Ibid.

(WEPs)<sup>201</sup>. These companies<sup>202</sup> span sectors such as retail, media, banking, private education, tax and advisory services. Informed by international labour and human rights standards, WEPs emphasise the business stake and responsibility in gender equality and complement EU Directives on work-life balance and pay transparency, as highlighted in a 2021 global study supported by the European Union.<sup>203</sup>

Unemployment and poverty remain high for national minorities as well, particularly Roma, Ashkali, and Egyptians, albeit gender-disaggregated data on this is unavailable. In 2020, almost half (48 per cent) of the economically active working-age Roma, Ashkali and Egyptians in Kosovo were unemployed.<sup>204</sup> Another significant issue is informality. Informal work is the most common form of employment for Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian people, accounting for 70 per cent of their workforce, which is significantly more than the 46 per cent of the majority population.<sup>205</sup> Discrimination also plays a role, as 40 per cent of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptians have reported discrimination during the hiring process.<sup>206</sup> Unemployment among Serbs in Kosovo is also high. According to the European Commission, unemployment among the Kosovo Serb population was estimated at 30.5 per cent in 2018, compared to a rate of 15.9 per cent among ethnic Albanians in Kosovo. Moreover, the labour market participation of Serbs in Kosovo is much lower than that of ethnic Albanians.

According to the World Bank, in 2017, the labour force participation rate for the Kosovo Serb population was around 39 per cent, compared to 63.9 per cent among ethnic Albanians in Kosovo. Additionally, despite legal requirements for the employment of persons with disabilities, they remain severely underrepresented in both the private and public sectors.<sup>207</sup>

Official data on the gender pay gap in Kosovo is unavailable. However, research indicates that women in Kosovo earn about €0.74 for every €1.00 men earn.<sup>208</sup> This pay disparity persists because men tend to occupy higher-paying positions across all sectors. The gap is more pronounced in sectors dominated by men but remains in fields such as healthcare and education, where women are more prevalent, but men still hold better-paid roles.<sup>209</sup>

201 [Women Empowerment Principles \(WEPs\)](#)

202 [WEPs Signatories in Kosovo](#)

203 [A snapshot of 350 companies in G7 countries \(2021\) United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women funded by European Union](#)

204 Commission Staff Working Document (2019), [Roma inclusion measures reported under the EU Framework for NRIS](#).

205 World Bank (2019). [Breaking the Cycle of Roma Exclusion in the Western Balkans](#).

206 Ibid.

207 Farnsworth, Morina, and Nuhiu (2018), [Gender, LGBTI, and Persons with Disabilities Assessment](#).

208 Gashi et. al. (2022). [Are women really paid more than men in Kosovo? Unpicking the Evidence](#), South East European Journal of Economics and Business.

209 Ibid.

## Vocational Training

### Brief Policy Analysis

Laws on Vocational Training and Education in Kosovo are designed to be non-discriminatory, ensuring equal access for all women, men, girls and boys from different backgrounds. The Law on Adult Education and Training<sup>210</sup> guarantees that both men and women can participate in all adult education and training programs. Additionally, the Law on Vocational Education and Training<sup>211</sup> is based on the principle of inclusion.

### Current Situation

In 2022, 2,797 individuals enrolled in programs hosted by Vocational Training Centers (VTCs) to improve their professional skills and boost their employability. Of these, 35.4 per cent were women and 64.6 per cent were men.<sup>212</sup> These programs were designed to enhance employability by providing relevant and marketable skills across various sectors. They included areas such as information technology, construction, healthcare, agriculture, hospitality and customer service industries. The goal was to closely align the training with market demands, increasing participants' likelihood of securing employment.<sup>213</sup>

The skills taught spanned from technical areas, such as programming and construction techniques, to soft skills, such as communication and teamwork, to cater to a comprehensive approach to workforce development. The data indicate that although women and men are proportionally registered as unemployed, women remain underrepresented in VTC participation. Several reasons for this underrepresentation have been noted, including societal perceptions that these institutions primarily serve for “professions associated with men”, a lack of awareness of the vocational education option, and the perception that they are inferior to tertiary education.<sup>214</sup> Moreover, VTC programs are more available in the cities, making them difficult to access by women and minorities living in remote areas. For instance, VTCs are located in seven main cities in Kosovo, posing access challenges for people living in rural areas. This issue mainly affects women due to safety concerns.<sup>215</sup> There is no available data on the attendance of women and men from different minority backgrounds in VTCs Kosovo. Institutions have undertaken several actions and implemented policies to address and improve this situation. Among them is Administrative Instruction No. 18/2023, which outlines the roles and responsibilities of career advisors within vocational education institutions. It aims to ensure that career advisors guide girls and boys in choosing their career paths by providing relevant information and support that aligns with labour market demands and the aspirations of individual students. Additionally, since 2021, MESTI has offered targeted scholarships to improve women's representation in technical fields and support their professional development. These scholarships are designed to encourage women's participation in vocational programs within the underrepresented sectors or technical fields (STEM), aiming to reduce

210 Assembly of the Republic of Kosovo (2005). [Law No.02/L-24 for Adult Education and Training](#).

211 Assembly of the Republic of Kosovo (2013). [Law No.04/L-138 for Vocational Education and Training](#).

212 Ibid.

213 Assembly of the Republic of Kosovo (2013). [Law No.04/L-138 for Vocational Education and Training](#).

214 Ibid.

215 Kosovo Agency for Gender Equality (2020). Kosovo Programme for Gender Equality 2020–2024

gender disparities and meet the current labour market demands. A total of 90 scholarships are awarded annually, each valued at €500, as part of a broader initiative to equip women with essential skills for technical professions where they are typically underrepresented. In 2023, MESTI awarded 1,882 scholarships, valued at €1000 each, for women and girls attending STEM studies.<sup>216</sup>

## Entrepreneurship

Women in Kosovo are underrepresented as enterprise owners. In 2022, women owned 21.9 per cent of all enterprises in Kosovo.<sup>217</sup> However, women own approximately 30 per cent of all new enterprises registering annually in Kosovo.<sup>218</sup> In 2021, 70 per cent of women-led enterprises were micro-businesses with fewer than nine employees, 24 per cent were small businesses, 5 per cent were medium-sized, and less than 1 per cent were large businesses.<sup>219</sup> Small businesses constituted roughly 24 per cent of all women-owned businesses, medium-sized businesses comprised about 5 per cent, and large businesses comprised less than 1 per cent. Wholesale and retail trade is the primary focus of the majority (32 per cent) of women-owned enterprises, followed by “other” services (20 per cent) and manufacturing (11 per cent).<sup>220</sup> The sectors with the lowest number of women’s enterprises include electricity, gas, steam, air conditioning services and construction.<sup>221</sup> Mainly because of a lack of collateral due to property and inheritance issues, over 88 per cent of women entrepreneurs open businesses with self-financing, without loans or other external support.<sup>222</sup> In total, 5,253 (15,8 per cent) individuals of ethnic minority communities in Kosovo own businesses.<sup>223</sup> Out of the total number of minority-owned businesses, 79 per cent are owned by men, and 21 per cent are owned by women. However, there seems to be a trend of increasing women-owned businesses. The proportion of women owning newly registered businesses stood at 30 per cent in 2018, rising to 32 per cent in 2021.<sup>224</sup> Since 2018, only 19 per cent of beneficiaries of subsidies from the Kosovo Investment and Enterprise Support Agency (KIESA) have been enterprises owned by women, while 81 per cent have been owned by men.<sup>225</sup>

216 <https://masht.rks-gov.net/lista-e-perfituesve-te-bursave-ne-drejtmet-deficitare-dhe-drejtmet-teknike-per-vajza-ne-iaap-per-vitin-2023-2024/>

217 Kosovo Agency of Statistics (2022). [Statistical Repertoire of Enterprises](#).

218 Kosovo Agency for Business Registration, [Basic Performance Indicator Reports](#).

219 Cooperation Council (2021). Women in Entrepreneurship in Kosovo.

220 Cooperation Council (2021). Women in Entrepreneurship in Kosovo.

221 Ibid.

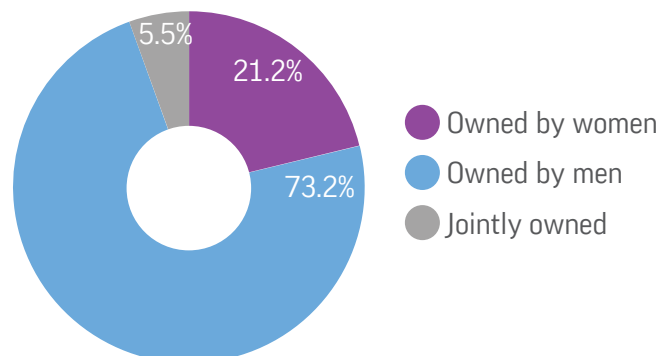
222 Kosovo Women’s Network (2018). Kosovo Gender Analysis.

223 GAP Institute (2023). Business profiles: [Women and Minority Entrepreneurship in Kosovo](#).

224 Kosova Business Registration Agency (2021), [BASIC PERFORMANCE INDICATORS REPORT ON BUSINESS REGISTRATION IN KOSOVO FOR 2021](#).

225 Kosovo Women’s Network (2024), [Gender Equality: At the Centre of IT... and Beyond A Gender Analysis of Digitalisation in Kosovo](#).

Graph 7 Enterprise ownership in Kosovo 2022



The Kosovo Government has substantially supported women's businesses through the Economic Recovery Fund. In 2021, the Agency for Gender Equality allocated €2 million, aiding 108 women-led daycare centres and 273 small women-owned businesses.<sup>226</sup> The Ministry of Trade and Industry supported 32 women-led businesses with €470,000. The Credit Guarantee Fund also offered collateral guarantees for women-owned businesses, supporting 269 businesses with €8.6 million by the end of 2021.

## Informal Economy

The informal economy in Kosovo includes unregulated economic activities, employment, and workers that lack state regulation or protection. This segment contains various activities, from small-scale agricultural production to unregistered businesses and service providers. The informal sector is characterised by a lack of formal contracts, job security, and social benefits, contributing to economic vulnerabilities for those involved. However, it also provides essential household income, serving as a safety net during financial hardship. In 2022, an estimated 42 per cent of Kosovars were involved in informal work. The participation of women in informal activities within this group was almost double that of men, constituting 65 per cent of the informal workforce.<sup>227</sup> In the informal sector of Kosovo, women often work low-paying, unstable jobs lacking social protection. This imbalance is rooted in traditional gender roles and the burden of unpaid care work, which confines many women to part-time or seasonal jobs, predominantly in agriculture and service industries. Rural areas and the age group 46–64 show higher participation of women in informal work, highlighting the need for targeted support to integrate these women into the formal economy.<sup>228</sup>

The high informality rate in Kosovo stems from tax evasion, the pursuit of social assistance benefits, and family pressures. Many individuals, especially women, enter informal work due to limited formal job opportunities and societal expectations. Challenges such as poor public transport and rigid gender roles further restrict access to formal jobs, pushing a significant portion of the population, particularly women, into the informal sector.<sup>229</sup>

226 Kosovo Agency for Gender Equality (2023), [Monitoring and evaluation report on the achievement of the objectives for the indicators and the implementation of the activities of KPGE Action Plan 2020–2022](#)

227 Kosovo Women's Network (2024). [In the Shadows: A gender Analysis of Informal Work in Kosovo](#).

228 Kosovo Women's Network (2024). [In the Shadows: A gender Analysis of Informal Work in Kosovo](#).

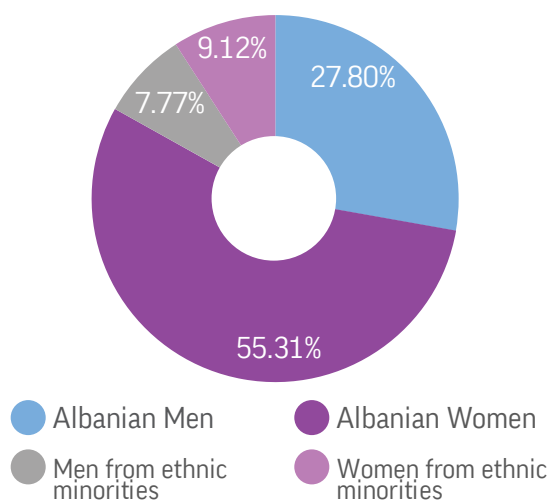
229 Ibid.



# SOCIAL PROTECTION AND SOCIAL VULNERABILITY

Kosovo has an elaborate social protection system regulated by several laws and administrative instructions. The social protection system in Kosovo serves as a safety net for both women and men in need. It includes pensions, targeted social assistance, and other smaller programs to support vulnerable groups, such as veterans and persons with disabilities.

*Graph 8 Recipients of Basic Pension in Kosovo, 2024*



As mentioned above, the **Constitution of the Republic of Kosovo** provides the legal framework for protecting human rights and promoting social welfare in Kosovo, outlining the rights of citizens, including the right to social protection. The **Law on Social and Family Services**<sup>230</sup> governs the provision

of social and family services, establishing the roles and responsibilities of relevant institutions. It defines the roles and responsibilities of public institutions, private entities and NGOs involved in delivering services to ensure the well-being and dignity of all individuals in need. Services are classified into primary, secondary and tertiary categories under the law, catering to different levels of need and offering support such as housing assistance, emergency interventions, foster care and residential care. The law specifies the rights and services available to vulnerable groups, including children without parental care, victims of abuse, persons with disabilities, the elderly and victims of human trafficking. Furthermore, it expounds upon service provision principles, with emphasis on respecting human dignity, non-discrimination and transparency. It mandates the licensing and continuous professional development of service providers in addition to provisions for regular supervision and inspection to ensure compliance with established standards. Funding for these services primarily comes from the state budget, with provisions for public-private partnerships to enhance service delivery. Additionally, the Law on Pension Funds of Kosovo regulates the establishment, management and operation of pension funds to ensure financial security for retirees.<sup>231</sup> The Law on Disability Pensions in Kosovo provides financial support to individuals with disabilities who cannot work.<sup>232</sup> The Law for Blind Persons ensures specific

<sup>230</sup> Assembly of the Republic of Kosovo (2024), Law No 08/L-255 on Social and Family Services.

<sup>231</sup> Assembly of the Republic of Kosovo (2012), Law No.04/L-101 on Pension Funds of Kosovo.

<sup>232</sup> Assembly of the Republic of Kosovo (2003). [Law No 2003/23 on Disability Pensions in Kosovo](#).



financial and social support for individuals with visual impairments.<sup>233</sup> The Law on Pensions of Members of the Kosovo Security Force provides pension benefits to security force members upon retirement.<sup>234</sup> The law on veteran pensions ensures financial support and benefits to individuals who served in the Kosovo Liberation Army.<sup>235</sup>

## Social Assistance Schemes

Social Assistance in Kosovo is regulated by the Law on the Social Assistance Scheme in Kosovo.<sup>236</sup> The law defines two types of assistance: SAS Category 1 and SAS Category 2. To qualify for SAS Category 1, all family members must be dependents, and none can be employed.<sup>237</sup> SAS Category 2 is for families where at least one member can work, and there is either a child under five or an orphan under fifteen.<sup>238</sup> Additionally, applicants for both categories cannot own property larger than five hectares, livestock, equipment for personal or business use or vehicles. Family members receiving a basic pension or disability pension are omitted when calculating the family's social assistance benefit.<sup>239</sup>

*Table 2: SAS beneficiaries in Kosovo, disaggregated by category and Gender, 2024*

SAS Category 1			
Gender	Women	Men	Total
Direct Recipients	47.0%	52.9%	14173
Family Members	53.9%	46.0%	34826

SAS Category 2			
Gender	Women	Men	Total
Direct Recipients	11.4%	88.5%	5063
Family Members	39.0%	60.9%	20563

In 2024, the breakdown of SAS beneficiaries in Kosovo by gender shows that men are the majority of direct recipients, especially in SAS Category 2, where 88.5 per cent of direct recipients are men compared to 11.4 per cent who are women. In SAS Category 1, 52.9 per cent of direct recipients are men, while 47.0 per cent are women. However, when considering family members, women constitute a higher percentage of those in need. In SAS Category 1, 53.9 per cent of family members are women,

<sup>233</sup> Assembly of the Republic of Kosovo (2012). [Law No 04/L-092 for Blind Persons](#).

<sup>234</sup> Assembly of the Republic of Kosovo (2012). [Law No.04/L-084 on Pensions of Members of the Kosovo Security Force](#).

<sup>235</sup> Assembly of the Republic of Kosovo (2012). [Law No.04/L-2611 on Kosovo Liberation Army War Veterans](#).

<sup>236</sup> Assembly of the Republic of Kosovo(2003). [Law No. 2003/15 on the Social Assistance Scheme in Kosovo](#).

<sup>237</sup> Ibid. Section 4.a

<sup>238</sup> Ibid. Section 4.b

<sup>239</sup> Ibid

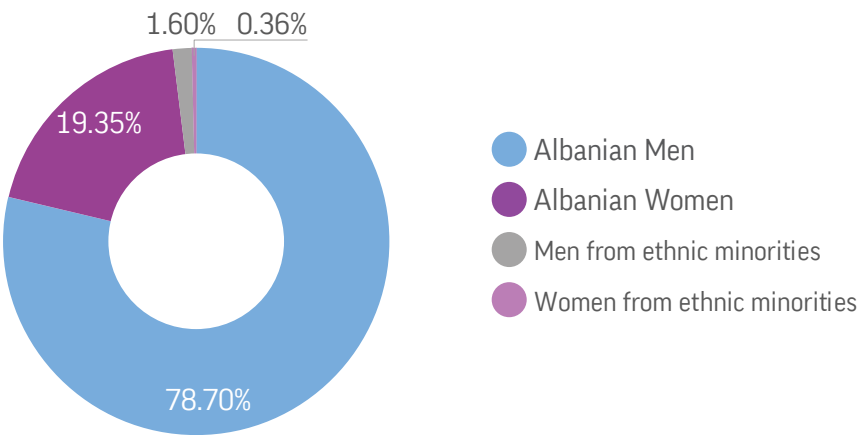
and in SAS Category 2, 39.0 per cent are women. This highlights that even though men are more likely to be the direct recipients of social assistance, women constitute a significant portion of those who rely on this support.

## Pension Schemes

Table 3. Beneficiaries of various pension schemes, disaggregated by gender, 2024.

	Men	Women	Total
Disability Pensions	47.9%	52.0%	19,654
Veteran Pensions	90.52%	9.4%	36,972
Martyr's families	49.7%	50.2%	12 859

Graph 9 Recipients of Contributory Pensions, 2024



In Kosovo, two main types of pensions are available for individuals over the age of 65: the Basic Pension, which all elderly citizens universally receive, and the Contributory Pension, which is available to those who have made contributions through their employment. In 2024, 145,901 individuals in Kosovo received Basic Pensions, most of whom were women.<sup>240</sup> Since women comprise the vast majority of the labour market-inactive population, they are more likely to receive the Basic Pension than the Contributory Pension. Conversely, 48,215 individuals received Contributory Pensions,<sup>241</sup> with men comprising the majority due to their higher participation in the labour market.

This table highlights the gender distribution of pension beneficiaries in Kosovo for 2024. For disability pensions, 47.9 per cent are men and 52.0 per cent are women, totalling 19.654 recipients. Veteran pensions show a marked gender imbalance, with 90.52 per cent of the 36,972 recipients being men and only 9.4 per cent being women. In contrast, pensions for martyrs' families are more evenly distributed, with men comprising 49.7 per cent and women comprising 50.2 per cent of the 12.859 beneficiaries.

240 Agency of Statistics of Kosovo (2024), Social Welfare Statistics.

241 Ibid.

# Education

## Brief Policy Analysis

The legal framework in Kosovo ensures equal rights for individuals of all genders and ages, regardless of their backgrounds, to access and benefit from educational opportunities. Kosovo has included various conventions in its constitution that enforce gender equality in Education, rendering them directly applicable. This consists of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which guarantees the right to education for all girls and boys<sup>242</sup> as well as CEDAW General Recommendation No.3, which calls for the elimination of practices and prejudices that hinder the equal participation of girls in education.<sup>243</sup> The recently adopted Law on Early Childhood Education, guarantees equal opportunities in preschool education, ensuring that all children, regardless of gender, ethnicity or other backgrounds, have access to early educational programs. This law emphasises the need for an inclusive educational environment that supports gender equality, thus allowing both boys and girls to benefit equally from educational opportunities.<sup>244</sup> Additionally, the Law on Education in the Municipalities of Kosovo aims to “promote a non-discriminatory educational system in which each individual’s right to education is respected and quality learning opportunities are available to all”.<sup>245</sup> Furthermore, the Law on Pre-University Education highlights that all girls and boys should be equally included in the education system and ensures no discrimination based on sex, marital status or other grounds in accessing pre-university education.<sup>246</sup> This law also stipulates that pre-university education must foster a spirit of gender equality and incorporate the promotion of gender equality into the planning, management and delivery of education.<sup>247</sup> Lastly, the Law on Higher Education ensures equal opportunities and non-discriminatory access for all students and staff within higher education institutions.<sup>248</sup> It emphasises diversity in educational programs, lifelong learning opportunities and equality in employment and research opportunities.<sup>249</sup>

242 United Nations (1989). [Convention on the Rights of the Child](#).

243 Division for the Advancement of Women, Department of Economic and Social Affairs (1987). [CEDAW General Recommendation No. 3: Education and Public Information Campaigns](#)

244 Assembly of the Republic of Kosovo (2023). [Law No.08/L-153 on Early Childhood Education](#).

245 Assembly of the Republic of Kosovo (2008). [Law No. 03/L-068 on Education in the Municipalities of Kosovo](#).

246 Assembly of the Republic of Kosovo (2011). [Law No. 04/L-32 on Pre-University Education](#).

247 Ibid.

248 Assembly of the Republic of Kosovo (2011), [Law No. 04/L-037 on Higher Education in the Republic of Kosovo](#).

249 Ibid.

## Current Situation

Table 4: Number of teachers disaggregated by gender and education level

Education Level	No. of Teachers	Men (%)	Women (%)
Pre-school	649	0.3%	99.7%
Pre-primary, Primary, and Lower Secondary	27699	38.3%	61.7%
Upper Secondary	8018	64.2%	35.8%

The overall illiteracy rate in Kosovo is approximately 3.5 per cent. There is a notable disparity in this rate between genders. For women, the illiteracy rate is around 5 per cent, while for men, it is lower at about 2 per cent.<sup>250</sup> Kosovo has a higher illiteracy level than neighbouring countries, particularly among women. For comparison, the illiteracy rate for women in Albania is around 2.2 per cent, while for men it is approximately 0.3 per cent.<sup>251</sup> In Serbia, the overall illiteracy rate is approximately 0.3 per cent, with 0.4 per cent for women and 0.2 per cent for men. In North Macedonia, the overall illiteracy rate is about 1.6 per cent, with women at 2.4 per cent and men at 0.9 per cent.

Gender equality in textbooks and school curricula in Kosovo remains an area with significant room for improvement. Studies indicate that school textbooks continue to perpetuate traditional gender roles and stereotypes, reinforcing biases and hindering gender equality. Textbooks often depict men in dominant roles and women in passive, supportive positions, which contributes to the reinforcement of gender stereotypes among students.<sup>252</sup> These portrayals can play a role in the perpetuation of gender stereotypes, shaping students' perceptions and limiting their understanding of gender roles and opportunities. Such imbalanced representations in textbooks and school curricula can reflect and reinforce societal biases, limiting the potential for both boys and girls to envision themselves in diverse roles.

Men are significantly underrepresented as pre-school teachers, constituting only 0.3 per cent, compared to women's 99.7 per cent.<sup>253</sup> Similarly, at the pre-primary, primary and lower secondary levels, men constitute 38.3 per cent of the teachers, with women accounting for 61.7 per cent.<sup>254</sup> In contrast, women are underrepresented at the upper secondary level, at 35.8 per cent. Women are also underrepresented as university professors across all public universities in Kosovo, constituting only 32.8 per cent of 405 regular professors and 38.3 per cent of 349 part-time professors. Representation is more balanced when looking at private universities, where women comprise 42.6 per cent of regular professors and 36.2 per cent of part-time professors.

250 World Bank (2024). [Literacy in Kosovo](#).

251 World Bank (2024). Literacy in Albania.

252 Agency for Gender Equality in Kosovo (2019). [Preventing Gender Stereotypes and Promoting Gender Equality in School Textbooks and Materials](#).

253 Kosovo Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation, Education (2023). [Statistics 2022/2023](#).

254 Ibid.

## Pre-University Education

*Table 5: Number of students disaggregated by gender and education level*

Education Level	Total Students	Boys (%)	Girls (%)
Pre-school	5,420	51.9%	48.8%
Pre-primary	18,946	51.3%	48.7%
Primary and lower Secondary	212,967	51.4%	48.5%
Upper Secondary	63,029	50.5%	49.5%

The pre-university education sector is key in advancing gender equality by empowering women and challenging existing stereotypes among all students. Overall, there are no prominent gender inequalities in pre-university attendance in Kosovo. In 2022, pre-school (before official education begins, typically for children under 5) is attended by 5,420 children, with 48 per cent girls and 51.9 per cent boys.<sup>255</sup> Pre-primary education for children aged 5–6 is attended by 48.7 per cent girls and 51.3 per cent boys. Similarly, in primary and lower secondary education, there are 212,967 students, 48.5 per cent girls and 51.4 per cent boys. Lastly, upper secondary education comprises 49.5 per cent girls and 50.4 per cent boys.<sup>256</sup>

*Table 6 Gender disaggregated data on upper secondary school*

Type of School	Girls	Boys	Total
Vocational School	42%	58%	34006
Gymnasium	50%	50%	63029

Kosovo has two types of secondary education: vocational schools and gymnasiums. Vocational schools aim to equip future workers with practical skills and knowledge tailored to specific careers, while gymnasiums provide comprehensive academic education to prepare students for university and higher education. Boys and girls are equally represented in gymnasiums, at 50 per cent each. However, boys are overrepresented in vocational schools at 58 per cent. This disparity can be linked to multiple factors, including higher academic achievements by girls in both primary and secondary education, a lack of career guidance in institutions, prevailing gender stereotypes regarding traditional roles, as well as programs that are misaligned with labour market needs.<sup>257</sup> Stereotypical notions regarding suitable careers for women and men persist in shaping educational choices in Kosovo.<sup>258</sup> Moreover, the transition from vocational schools to university education remains significantly high, showing the inadequacy of the vocational school system to provide faster access to the job market for its students. In addition, university completion rates remain low, revealing inefficiencies in the public skills formation system.

<sup>255</sup> Kosovo Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation, Education (2023). [Statistics 2022/2023](#).

<sup>256</sup> Ibid.

<sup>257</sup> Council of Europe (2020). Intersectional Gender Analysis of Pre-University Education.

<sup>258</sup> Center for Social Studies and Sustainable Development (2019). [Gender Stereotypes and Educational Choices in Kosovo](#).

The majority of vocational education profiles do not adhere to occupational standards, resulting in a lack of alignment with labour market demands. The development of a core curriculum for vocational education has begun, but work-based learning is not yet a systematic part of curricula. Although partnerships between vocational schools and businesses have been initiated in recent years, they need to be enhanced. The Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation (MESTI) introduced dual vocational education for 12 profiles in 2023, with plans to expand the number of profiles beyond 2024 depending on business demand. Opportunities for lifelong learning and recognition of adult education qualifications (or prior learning) remain limited.

*Table 7: Dropout Rates, disaggregated by education level and gender 2022/2023*

Education Level	Total	Boys	Girls	% Boys	% Girls
Primary and Lower Secondary (Gr. 1-9)	191	102	89	53.4%	46.6%
Upper Secondary (Gr. 10-12)	1,005	792	213	78.8%	21.1%
Total	1,196	894	302	74.7%	25.2%

In the 2022/23 school year, the dropout rate in primary and lower secondary education was 53.40 per cent for boys and 46.60 per cent for girls. In upper secondary education, 78.81 per cent of dropouts were boys while 21.19 per cent were girls. In general, the proportion of boys who dropped out was 74.75 per cent, while girls accounted for 25.25 per cent, suggesting a higher likelihood of dropout among boys.<sup>259</sup> Similar trends were observed in 2021 and previous years.<sup>260</sup> Evidence suggests that dropout rates are influenced by gender norms and societal expectations, with boys being expected to financially support their families as early as possible.<sup>261</sup> Overall, children with Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian backgrounds continue to be underrepresented in pre-university education. Roma and Ashkali girls are significantly underrepresented in upper secondary education while Egyptian girls are underrepresented throughout all pre-university levels.<sup>262</sup> Early marriages appear to contribute significantly to the dropout rates of girls within these three communities.<sup>263</sup> Girls with special educational needs are underrepresented in pre-university education. In the 2022/23 academic year, out of 313 students with disabilities attending pre-university education, only 33 per cent were girls.<sup>264</sup> However, there is no data indicating that there are more boys with disabilities than girls, suggesting that girls with disabilities may not be brought to school as frequently as boys.

<sup>259</sup> Data provided by MESTI, March 2024

<sup>260</sup> Ibid.

<sup>261</sup> Council of Europe (2020), [Intersectional Analysis of Pre-University Education](#).

<sup>262</sup> Ibid.

<sup>263</sup> Insights from UN Women focus group on marginalized groups held on February 27, 2024.

<sup>264</sup> Kosovo Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation, Education (2023). [Statistics 2022/2023](#).

## Tertiary Education

Table 8: Number of graduates in the public universities, disaggregated by gender

University	Bachelor Degrees			Master Degrees		
	No of Graduates	Men (%)	Women (%)	No of Graduates	Men (%)	Women (%)
Universiteti i Prishtinës “Hasan Prishtina”	3,543	32.0%	68.0%	1057	35.4%	64.6%
Universiteti i Prizrenit “Ukshin Hoti”	724	17.7%	82.3%	84	36.9%	63.1%
Universiteti i Gjilanit “Kadri Zeka”	308	22.1%	77.9%	38	55.3%	44.7%
Universiteti i Pejës “Haxhi Zeka”	272	28.3%	71.7%	124	32.3%	67.7%
Universiteti i Shkencave të Aplikuara Ferizaj	180	33.3%	66.7%	19	47.4%	52.6%
Universiteti i Mitrovicës “Isa Boletini”	336	26.5%	73.5%	57	29.8%	70.2%
Universiteti i Gjakovës “Fehmi Agani”	66	24.2%	75.8%	0	0	0
Fakulteti i Studimeve Islame	37	54.1%	45.9%	10		
Akademia e Kosovës për Siguri Publike	38	89.5%	10.5%	0	30%	70%
Total	5,504	29.5%	70.5%	1389	36%	64%

Over the course of the last decade, women have consistently outperformed men in attaining bachelor's degrees. In the 2021/22 academic year, women constituted 70.5 per cent of all bachelor's degree graduates from public universities in Kosovo, outnumbering men in nearly all institutions. The only exceptions were the University of Islamic Studies and the Academy for Public Security, where men represented 54.1 per cent and 89.5 per cent of graduates, respectively. Similarly, women surpass men in the attainment of master's degrees, with women accounting for 64 per cent of all master's degrees obtained in the 2022/23 academic year. In the 2022/23 academic year, slightly more women than men acquired PhDs, with women comprising 56 per cent of the total, thereby continuing the trend observed in previous years. Lastly, the overwhelming majority of students graduating from private universities in Kosovo are women. Specifically, in the 2021/22 academic year, women constituted 72.1 per cent of the total 6,881 graduates. Unfortunately, women's higher success in tertiary education does not translate into a successful entrance into the labour market, as was seen above. Additionally, gender segregation continues to persist in tertiary education, with men being significantly underrepresented in education and women underrepresented in computer science, agriculture, business and geosciences. However, MESTI has not collected or published data disaggregated by field of study since 2018.

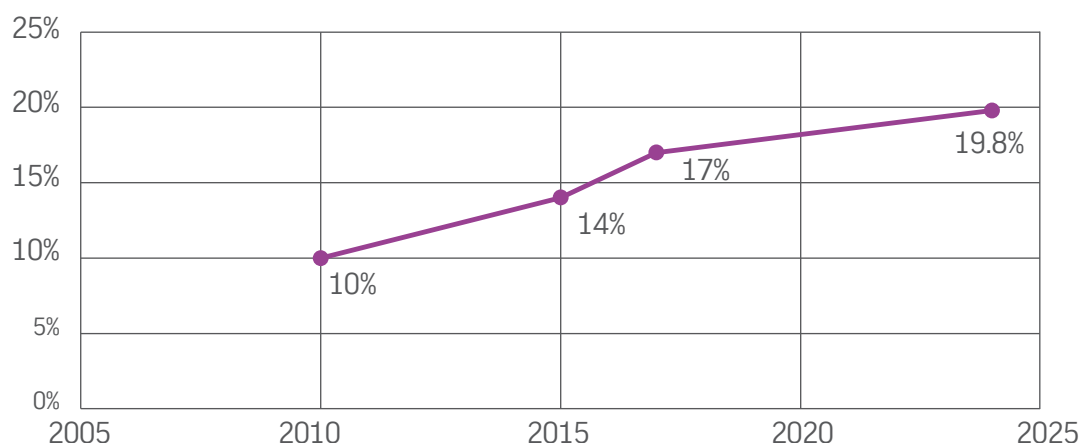
## Property and Inheritance Rights

Kosovo has a robust legal framework in place that guarantees equal property and inheritance rights to women and men. Article 46 of the Constitution states that the right to property is guaranteed for all citizens of Kosovo and that no one should be arbitrarily deprived of it.<sup>265</sup> The Law on Inheritance emphasises that everyone is equally entitled to inherit property under the same conditions.<sup>266</sup> The law states that the right to renounce inheritance is an option as long as it does not happen under coercion.<sup>267</sup> The Law on Family mentions that one spouse's property remains separately owned when entering the marriage. However, property acquired during the marriage is owned jointly.<sup>268</sup>

### Current situation

However, despite this solid legal framework granting equal property rights to men and women, women in Kosovo continue to face significant challenges regarding property rights. Although there has been a slow but steady increase in women's property ownership in Kosovo, it continues to remain a widespread challenge for women and girls. Out of all 612,482 registered properties in Kosovo in 2024, only 19.8 per cent are owned by women, which includes property that women and men jointly own.<sup>269</sup>

*Graph 10 Women's property ownership 2010-2024*



This has increased from 10 per cent in 2010, 14 per cent in 2015, and 17 per cent in 2018.<sup>270</sup> Several factors have contributed to this increase, including public awareness campaigns by AGE, women's organisations, and other actors. However, affirmative measures integrated into existing legislation also contribute to this rise. Perhaps the most successful has been 2016 Administrative Instruction NO. 3/2016, "On Special Measures for Registration of Joint Immovable Property on Behalf of both Spouses", developed by AGE in close cooperation with the Kosovo Cadastral Agency. The Instruction introduced a

<sup>265</sup> Assembly of the Republic of Kosovo (2015). [Constitution of the Republic of Kosovo](#), Article 46.

<sup>266</sup> Assembly of the Republic of Kosovo (2004), [Law No.2004/26 on Inheritance](#).

<sup>267</sup> Assembly of the Republic of Kosovo (2004), [Law No.2004/26 on Inheritance](#), Article 130

<sup>268</sup> Assembly of the Republic of Kosovo (2004), [Law Nr.2004/32 Family Law of Kosovo](#).

<sup>269</sup> [Cadastral Agency of Kosovo](#), accessed in February 2024.

<sup>270</sup> Kosovo Women's Network (2018). [Kosovo Gender Analysis](#).



set of measures to enable mandatory registration of joint immovable property in the name of both the husband and the wife and it is reinstated every year.<sup>271</sup>

Several factors contribute to the low rate of property ownership among women in Kosovo. The first factor consists of deeply ingrained gender norms, roles and patriarchal traditions, which often favour men over women. Quantitative studies on awareness and opinions have not been conducted recently. The last one, conducted in 2017, shows that 80 per cent of Kosovars (75 per cent of men and 85 per cent of women) believe that men and women should have equal rights regarding property and inheritance.<sup>272</sup> It also showed that only 27 per cent of Kosovars believe their sons and daughters should **not** inherit property equally.

Research shows that the number of women renouncing property is very high despite laws and policies in place to guarantee equal rights in inheritance. Approximately 45 per cent of women who have gone through formalised inheritance processes have renounced their share of inheritance.<sup>273</sup> This renouncement often comes from societal pressures stemming from traditional values and family expectations. Fear of creating family discord or being ostracised can lead many women to give up their legal rights. Additionally, a lack of awareness or misunderstanding about their legal rights and the benefits of property ownership contributes to this high rate of renouncement.

Women's lack of property and inheritance is not an isolated problem, as it affects various aspects of women's lives and their ability to achieve economic and personal security. One of the challenges faced by women who lack property is the limited options for seeking refuge in cases of gender-based violence, as they are unable to access a secure space. Additionally, women who do not have property cannot provide collateral for loans, thus restricting their opportunities for entrepreneurship and financial independence.

## Agriculture

In Kosovo, 62 per cent of the population lives in rural areas, including 61.6 per cent of women and 62.3 per cent of men. Hence, agriculture is important, accounting for 6.9 per cent of the GDP of Kosovo.<sup>274</sup> The agricultural sector employs 2.23 per cent of the formal workforce, with men comprising 88.6 per cent of the labour force and women 11.3 per cent.<sup>275</sup> Nevertheless, as previously discussed in the chapter on Informality, the engagement of both women and men in agriculture exceeds the official statistics. Most agricultural work is carried out by family members, with women contributing significantly but having less ownership.<sup>276</sup>

Overall, women face several barriers in agriculture. Firstly, grants and subsidies in agriculture have historically been disproportionately allocated to men, with women receiving significantly less funding. In 2022, out of 28,981 farmers applying for government subsidies, 95 per cent were men and 5 per cent

271 The number of cases benefited from such Administrative Instruction was increased from 105 in 2016 to 5400 in 2019.

272 USAID Kosovo (2017). [Midterm National Survey on Property Rights in Kosovo](#).

273 USAID Kosovo (2017). [Midterm National Survey on Property Rights in Kosovo](#).

274 Kosovo Agency of Statistics (2022). [Labour Force Survey](#).

275 Kosovo Agency of Statistics (2022). [Labour Force Survey](#).

276 [Kosovo Women's Network \(2024\). In the Shadows: A gender Analysis of Informal Work in Kosovo](#).

were women.<sup>277</sup> Of the women who applied, 97 per cent were granted support compared to 98 per cent of all men applicants.<sup>278</sup>

Nearly a third of rural women consider insufficient information a significant challenge in using modern agricultural technologies. This lack of knowledge and resources hinders their productivity and limits their opportunities for development within the sector.<sup>279</sup> The participation of rural women in political activities concerning agriculture is considerably lower than that of men, with 91 per cent of women not participating compared to 79 per cent of rural men.<sup>280</sup> Traditional gender roles and migration patterns compound these challenges, reducing labour availability and altering rural life's dynamics. Women in agriculture frequently work without salaries and do not qualify for social protection systems like pensions. Additionally, women face restricted access to agricultural machinery and inputs, typically needing family approval or encountering outright rejection, further limiting their ability to contribute to and benefit from the agricultural sector.<sup>281</sup>

## Licensing System

Understanding the inclusiveness of the licensing system in Kosovo is key to promoting gender equality, as it identifies barriers that hinder women and girls from accessing professional, economic and social opportunities.

Women and youth in Kosovo face high administrative barriers in obtaining different kinds of licenses due to lengthy and convoluted application processes, unclear guidelines, and high costs associated with licensing and renewals.<sup>282</sup> There is a significant gender difference in the fields that are traditionally dominated by men such as the legal and surveying sectors. Women's representation in practising lawyer registrations increased from 43 per cent in 2012 to 64 per cent in 2022, but other areas still show low participation of women.<sup>283</sup> The health sector shows a high number of licenses issued to women, especially in nursing and psychology, where women held 80 per cent of the licenses in 2022, and youth held 88 per cent of nursing and psychology licenses issued in 2022.<sup>284</sup> Lastly, women are highly represented in the education and health sectors, which require professional licensing. However, there has been no significant change in the percentage of women employed in these sectors from 2012 to 2022, remaining at about 56 per cent.<sup>285</sup> IDs and driver's licenses are the most common services for youth, reflecting mandatory age-related requirements. Financial constraints significantly impact women and youth, with high costs for applications, renewals and associated training presenting barriers to entering licensed professions.

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277 Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Development (2023). [Green Report 2023](#).

278 Ibid.

279 Kosovo Women's Network, Gender Profile in Agriculture, Forthcoming 2024.

280 Ibid.

281 Ibid.

282 International Finance Corporation and Office of the Prime Minister (2024), Inclusiveness of the Licensing System in Kosovo for Women and Youth, Hard Copy.

283 Ibid.

284 Ibid.

285 Ibid.



# PROMOTING EQUAL PARTICIPATION AND LEADERSHIP

The Law on General Elections and the Law on Local Elections include a gender quota, where at least 30 per cent of the political entity's candidate list must include candidates from the underrepresented gender, and 30 per cent of those elected within the list should be from the underrepresented gender.<sup>286</sup> The Central Election Commission (CEC) ensures that the political entities comply with this requirement. After introducing the Law on Gender Equality, setting a 50 per cent gender quota, the two laws were seen as conflicting, but the CEC continued implementing the election legislation.

The quota's purpose was to increase women's representation and thus ensure the gender perspective throughout all decision-making levels. However, in many cases, women are solely included in "women's issues" discussions instead of a broader spectrum of matters.<sup>287</sup>

## Representation at the central level

Kosovo elected its second woman president, joining a limited number of countries with multiple women serving as heads of state.<sup>288</sup> Furthermore, in the 2021 national elections, Dr Vjosa Osmani Sadriu, President of Kosovo, broke the record for the most-voted candidate for Kosovo Assembly.<sup>289</sup>

The positive effects of the gender quota are particularly pronounced at the central level. In 2007, 37 women were elected Members of the Kosovo Assembly, 26 of whom needed the support of the quota to obtain a seat.<sup>290</sup> By comparison, in 2021, 44 women were elected members of parliament, and only 9 took advantage of the quota. While the gender quota within the laws on elections has contributed to the increased representation of women at the legislative level, the current representation of women in both legislative and executive units is not in line with the requirements set by the Law on Gender Equality. Furthermore, women have been continuously underrepresented in executive entities. The current government, headed by

286 Official Gazette of the Republic of Kosovo (2023). [Law No.08/L-228 on General Elections in the Republic of Kosovo](#). Article 28.

287 National Democratic Institute (2021) [Kosovo's Vibrant Democracy: Closing the deficit in women's full participation](#). Page 7.

288 Ibid. Page 16.

289 Information provided by the Kosovo Central Election Commission.

290 Kosovo Brief Gender Profile (2021). Kosovo Women's Network.

Prime Minister Albin Kurti and established in 2021, boasts the highest number of women in the Cabinet: two as deputy prime ministers and five as ministers (with one woman holding two positions).<sup>291</sup>

## Representation at the local level

The representation of women at the local level is less satisfactory and even further from the requirements derived from the Law on Gender Equality and CEDAW. Before the 2021 municipal elections, Kosovo had only one woman mayor, making this position the most unattainable. In these elections, only 14 women were candidates for mayor, representing 8 per cent of all candidates.<sup>292</sup> Two of them were elected, one in Gracanica and one in Ranillug.<sup>293</sup> Women represented 37 per cent of the candidates for municipal assembly members and headed 12 per cent of the political entity lists. Overall, 61 per cent of women were elected to the municipal assembly without relying on the quota, whereas 39 per cent were elected thanks to it.<sup>294</sup> By comparison, in the 2017 municipal elections, 33 per cent of women did not need the quota to get elected, and 67 per cent did.

Engaging in politics is inherently challenging, but women involved in local politics encounter even greater opposition and discouragement. These challenges range from limited resources and inadequate support from their political parties to family obligations and societal pressure to avoid such involvement.<sup>295</sup> Additionally, women deal with unequal capacity-building opportunities, which undermines their confidence to assume various roles. Social norms significantly hinder women's political participation, particularly at the local level, and political parties maintain these challenges by failing to address gender inequalities within their programs and statutes.<sup>296</sup>

The representation of women in leading positions at the executive and legislative levels of local governments is notably low. To be precise, 15 women hold such positions in Kosovo, including two mayors, six deputy mayors, and seven chairwomen of municipal assemblies.<sup>297</sup> This graph shows the representation of women and men in the highest levels of local governance. Aside from the Mayor of Gracanica and Ranillug, the six deputy mayors serve in Prishtina, Gjiilan, Suhareka, Klina, Podujeva and Gracanica. The municipal assemblies led by women are in South Mitrovica, Prizren, Obiliq, Vushtrri, Novobërda, Skenderaj and Gjakova.<sup>298</sup>

291 National Democratic Institute (2021). [Kosovo's Vibrant Democracy: Closing the deficit in women's full participation](#). Page 17.

292 European Union Election Observation Mission (2021). [Kosovo 2021 Municipal Elections Final Report](#). Page 32.

293 Central Election Commission (2021). [Local Elections 2021 Final Results from the Count and Results Center](#). Page 35 and 36.

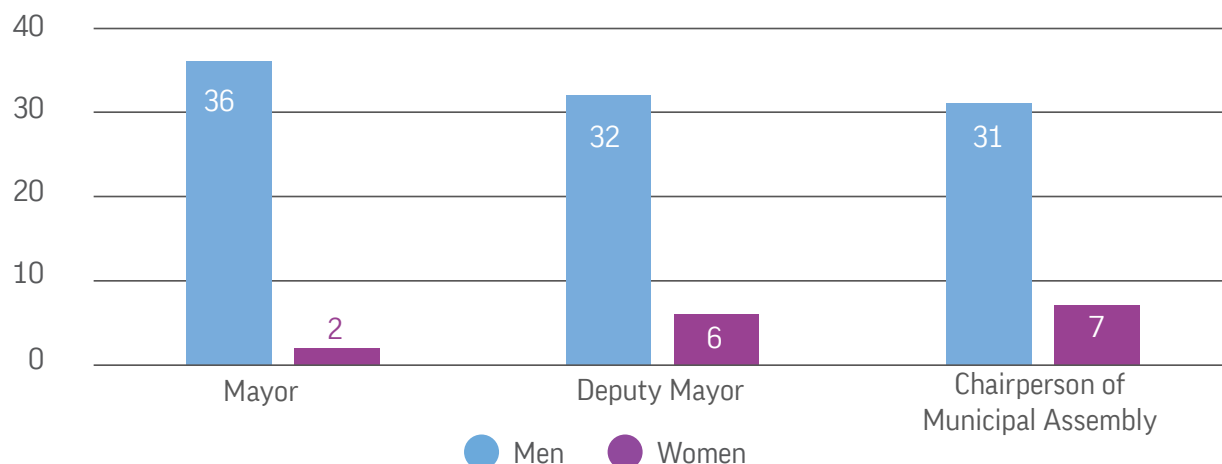
294 European Union Election Observation Mission (2021). [Kosovo 2021 Municipal Elections Final Report](#). Page 32.

295 National Democratic Institute (2021). [Kosovo's Vibrant Democracy: Closing the deficit in women's full participation](#). Page 43.

296 European Union Election Observation Mission (2021). [Kosovo 2021 Municipal Elections Final Report](#). Page 32.

297 Information provided by representatives of the Ministry of Local Government Administration.

298 Ibid.

*Graph 11 Representation in highest levels of local governance*

In 2023, the overall representation of women in directorates across 30 municipalities was 23.5 per cent. Specifically, there were 101 women and 328 men leading different directorates.<sup>299</sup> Ranillug, Partesh and Novoberda do not have any women directors, whereas the data for Mamusha, North Mitrovica, Leposavic, Zubin Potok and Zvecan is unavailable. Overall, the data provided by the Ministry of Local Governance Administration for the overall representation in directorates shows a positive trend in the representation of women in local governance between 2017 and 2022, as shown by this graph.<sup>300</sup>

*Graph 12 Overall representation of women in local governance*

<sup>299</sup> Ibid.

<sup>300</sup> Ibid.

## Women in public administration

Women comprise 43.88 per cent of the central level of public administration and 33.34 per cent of the local level.<sup>301</sup> Overall, in 2022, they comprised 22.5 per cent of positions at decision-making levels.<sup>302</sup> Representation of women in public enterprises stands at 45.9 per cent, with 30 per cent serving as Chairpersons of Boards, 22.2 per cent as Chief Executive Officers, and 30 per cent as Chief Financial Officers.<sup>303</sup> A survey of women in public administration showed that 32.2 per cent are interested in decision-making positions in the future, but 56.3 per cent of them believe that it is unlikely for that to happen.<sup>304</sup> The lack of support and lack of faith in women's ability to take on such positions are the main challenges to the advancement of women in public administration.<sup>305</sup> Changes in the legal framework related to public servants also contribute to added insecurities about decision-making positions. When asked about potential actions to increase gender diversity in this sector, women respondents mentioned the promotion of success stories of women in decision-making, training for women in management and leadership fields, affirmative actions that encourage them to serve in these positions, and changes in the law that do not limit a term but enable its continuation based on performance.<sup>306</sup> In 2024, the Network for Empowerment of Women in Decision-Making in the Public Sector was established through a collaboration between the Agency for Gender Equality and the British Embassy in Kosovo.<sup>307</sup> The Network aims to promote role models and mentor and guide women in the public sector toward decision-making positions.

301 Balkan Policy Group Research (2020) [Public Administration Reform in Kosovo, an ongoing effort](#). Page 52.

302 Equal Future (n.d) [Women's representation in politics and public administration: Kosovo](#). United Nations Development Programme.

303 Riinvest Institute (2022). Women in Decision-Making in the Public and Private Sector in Kosovo. Agency for Gender Equality. Page 26.

304 Riinvest Institute (2022). Women in Decision-Making in the Public and Private Sector in Kosovo. Agency for Gender Equality. Page 16–17.

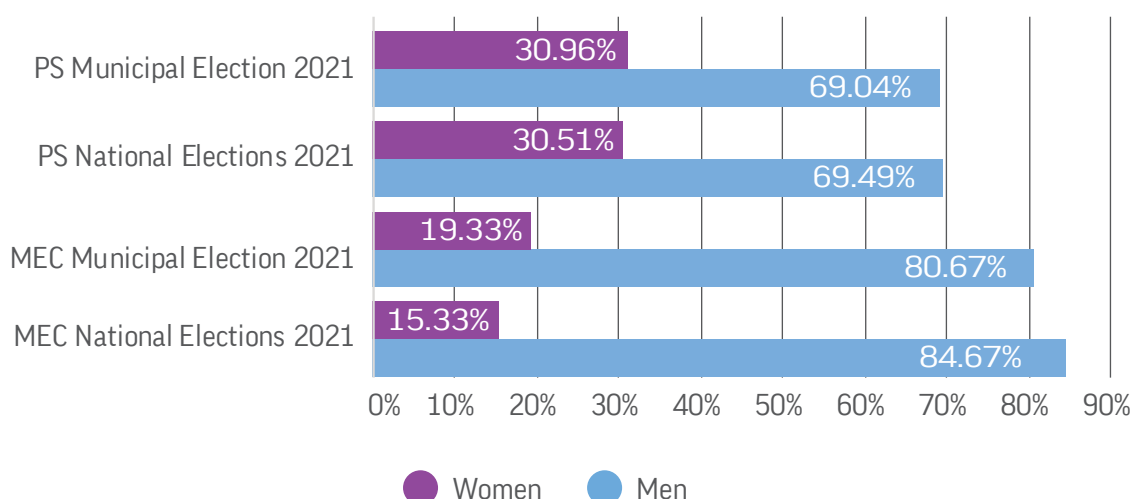
305 Ibid. Page 20.

306 Ibid. Page 21.

307 Information provided by the Agency for Gender Equality, June 2024.

## Participation in electoral processes

Graph 13 Representation of women and men in Municipal Election Commissions and Polling Stations



Women are significantly underrepresented in electoral administration. Out of 11 members of the CEC, only one is a woman. In the 2021 municipal elections, the Municipal Election Commissions (MEC) composition included a mere 19 per cent of women, with only five women serving as MEC Chairs.<sup>308</sup> For the first time, 16 MECs were nominated by civil society in places where political parties failed to nominate women as per the Declaration signed in 2015, in which they committed to do so. In addition to election staff, women were also underrepresented in election observation, with only 22.39 per cent of the 25,810 election observers nominated by political entities being women.<sup>309</sup> The following graph shows the representation of women and men in MECs and Polling Stations (PS) in the 2021 national and municipal elections.<sup>310</sup> Municipal Election Councils remain dominated by men, with only 15.33 per cent of women in the 2021 national elections and 19.33 per cent in the 2021 municipal elections. In both elections, Zubin Potok had the highest representation of women in MECs (77.8 per cent), followed by Partesh (60 per cent), Leposavic (45 per cent), and Drenas (33.3 per cent).<sup>311</sup> On the other hand, there were no women members of MECs in Dragash, Klina, Kamenica, Mitrovica South, Obiliq, Rahovec, Skenderaj, Suhareka, Vushtrri, Graçanica and Ranillug. Inclusion of women in polling stations is higher, with 30.51 per cent and 30.96 per cent in the 2021 national and municipal elections, respectively. This does not reflect representation in all municipalities. In the 2021 national elections, 18 municipalities had over 30 per cent women in polling stations, whereas in the 2021 municipal elections, this was the case in 15 municipalities.<sup>312</sup> While women are still significantly underrepresented in election staff, there

308 European Union Election Observation Mission (2021). [Kosovo 2021 Municipal Elections Final Report](#), Page 32.

309 Central Election Commission (2021). "Analysis of gender and age of observers of political entities in 2021 elections." Page 7.

310 Central Election Commission (2023). "Analysis of gender representation in Election Management Bodies in previous elections." Page 5 and 7.

311 Ibid. Page 7.

312 Central Election Commission (2023). "Analysis of gender representation in Election Management Bodies in previous elections." Page 5 and 9.



has been an increase compared to ten years ago. In the 2013 municipal elections, the representation of women in election staff was 17 per cent, whereas in the 2014 national elections, it was 20 per cent.<sup>313</sup>

## Media, social media and hate language

The media industry is generally demanding, particularly for women. The survey data collected from women journalists highlights the prevalence of discrimination, adverse effects on their personal lives and inadequate pay. Approximately 50 per cent of them earn below the national average, while 21.5 per cent maintain that a gender pay gap exists, with men receiving higher pay.<sup>314</sup> Regarding representation, four of the nine newly appointed members of the Board of the Association of Journalists in Kosovo are women.<sup>315</sup> Additionally, women constitute two of the seven members of the Independent Media Commission.<sup>316</sup> Women continued to be underrepresented in the media throughout the 2021 elections, where men comprised up to 90 per cent of candidates, political pundits and journalists in television debates.<sup>317</sup> That is why these panels became known as “man-nels”. Survey data collected from women journalists shows that this is not necessarily due to limited resources, as over 40 per cent of those surveyed cover politics.<sup>318</sup> In addition to a lack of equal access to opportunities, working in the media involves numerous security concerns for women. Among the surveyed women journalists, 26.4 per cent reported instances of sexual harassment, with a few also enduring sexual assault.<sup>319</sup>

Women, mainly those active in the public domain, are targets of disinformation more than men.<sup>320</sup> Furthermore, analysis of gendered disinformation content showed that the online violence and harassment experienced by women came from men in 89.6 per cent of the cases and from women in 10.4 per cent of them.<sup>321</sup> Social media has amplified violence against women in politics, particularly in the form of harsh language and misogynistic attacks.<sup>322</sup> This became more evident during post-COVID-19 elections, which shifted campaigning to online platforms. Specifically, women politicians have experienced sexist and superficial descriptions, often moving the attention from what they do to how they look or act, which can discourage women from engaging in politics.<sup>323</sup> Both President Jahjaga and President Osmani experienced such attacks, along with numerous other women politicians in various roles. The enduring lack of judicial action against gendered disinformation and online violence, mainly targeting women in politics, preserves a culture of impunity and discourages women’s participation in politics and the public domain.

313 International Foundation for Electoral Systems (2015). “Election staff in 2014 National Elections in Kosovo disaggregated by gender” Page 3.

314 Peaceful Change Initiative (2023). [Women in Media: Kosovo Survey](#). Page 4.

315 Association of Journalists of Kosovo (2024). [New Chairperson and Members of the Board of the Association of Journalists of Kosovo](#).

316 Independent Media Commission (2023). [Annual Report for 2022](#).

317 National Democratic Institute (2021). [Kosovo's 2021 Local Elections: Analysis of Inclusion and Information Integrity](#). Page 3.

318 Peaceful Change Initiative (2023). [Women in Media: Kosovo Survey](#). Page 4.

319 Ibid.

320 Democracy for Development (2023). [Unsocial media: Tracing and exposing gendered disinformation in Kosovo](#). Page 5.

321 Ibid.

322 National Democratic Institute (2021). [Kosovo's 2021 Local Elections: Analysis of Inclusion and Information Integrity](#). Page 9.

323 Kosovo Women’s Network (2024) [Gender Equality: At the Centre of IT... and Beyond A Gender Analysis of Digitalisation in Kosovo](#). Page 434.

Social media has been extensively utilised as a platform to incite hate speech, particularly in sensitive instances of gender-based violence. Victim-blaming, particularly in cases of sexual violence, and justification of the men's aggression toward women are common, which can deter victims from reporting and potentially receiving media attention.<sup>324</sup> Social media has also exacerbated hate speech toward LGBT+ communities, and sometimes that also comes from politicians and even representatives of the Kosovo Assembly, who have a lot of supporters in their channels.<sup>325</sup>

## Culture, cultural heritage, and sports

Culture and cultural institutions are under the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports (MCYS) umbrella. In contrast, the entities related to sports are federations with NGO status. 80.4 per cent of employees in the field of culture are men.<sup>326</sup> The extent of such disparity is not reflected at the decision-making levels, where 44.4 per cent of cultural institutions and 36.4 per cent of cultural heritage institutions are led by women.<sup>327</sup>

The data below shows the gender disaggregation of beneficiaries of financial support from MCYS in different categories over the past three years. As can be seen, more men than women have benefited from these support schemes, and the gap has widened in the favour of men in the past three years. In 2021, 60.7 per cent of beneficiaries were men, and 39.3 per cent were women; in 2022, it was 66.7 per cent men and 33.3 per cent women, while in 2023, 64.7 per cent of beneficiaries were men and 35.3 per cent were women.<sup>328</sup>

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324 Ibid. Page 436.

325 Insights from UN Women focus group on marginalized groups held on February 27, 2024.

326 Agency of Statistics (2022). [Statistics of Culture](#).

327 Data provided by representatives of Ministry of Culture, Youth, and Sports, April 2024.

328 Analysis of data provided by representatives of Ministry of Culture, Youth, and Sports, April 2024.

Table 9: Beneficiaries of financial support from MCYS, disaggregated by gender

2021			2022		
Category	Men	Women	Category	Men	Women
Music	12	8	Sport	22	19
Literary meetings	12	10	Art and cultural heritage	46	20
Theatre	4	4	Culture	1	1
Promotion	8	5	Artwork	17	3
Film	8	2			
Diversity and cultural dialogue	7	4	2023		
Visual arts	12	3	Category	Men	Women
Creative industry	6	12	Art and culture	147	86
Cultural diplomacy	3	1	Cultural heritage	85	66
Libraries	12	5	Sport	78	28
Culture and cultural heritage*	142	108	Book publishing	36	7
Sport*	82	37	Artwork	25	15

\* These categories also include economic recovery schemes.

In addition to providing financial support for specific projects and initiatives, MCYS has supported seven women and three men with scholarships in master's, PhD and other post-graduate programs in cultural heritage.<sup>329</sup>

In terms of sports, there is gender balance in the Kosovo Olympic Committee (KOC), with three men and two women on the Executive Board, two men and one woman representing the Olympic Federations, one man and one woman representing the Non-Olympic Federation and three women in administrative positions who represent secretary generals of their federations.<sup>330</sup> Although Kosovo has attained three gold medals in the Olympics, research shows that women athletes encounter multiple challenges in their professional careers, encompassing financial support, individual financial means and gender-based discrimination.<sup>331</sup>

329 Data provided by representatives of Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports, April 2024.

330 Data provided by representatives of the Kosovo Olympic Committee, April 2024.

331 Kosovo Gender Studies Center (2022). [Women and girls in the field of sports: Research on gender stereotypes and barriers toward equal access in sports](#). Page 14.

# INTEGRATING THE WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY AGENDA

## Brief Policy Analysis

In 2000, the UN Security Council adopted United Nations Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (UNSCR 1325). The Resolution addresses the impact of war on women and the importance of women's full and equal participation in peacebuilding and conflict resolution. It calls for increased representation of women at all decision-making levels in national, regional, and international institutions and mechanisms for conflict prevention, management and resolution. The Resolution emphasises the need for all conflict parties to take special measures to protect women and girls from gender-based violence, particularly rape and other forms of sexual abuse, in armed conflict and post-conflict situations. Since Kosovo is not a UN Member, it is not automatically obliged to implement UNSCR 1325. Moreover, this Resolution has never been explicitly incorporated into the national legislative framework, unlike the CEDAW and the Istanbul

Convention. Nevertheless, all aspects of UNSCR have been included in Law No.05/L-020 on Gender Equality and the Kosovo Programme for Gender Equality.

Kosovo adopted its first National Action Plan (NAP) in 2012 for the 2013–2015 period.<sup>332</sup> AGE developed the NAP in close cooperation with other central institutions and civil society organisations. The main objectives of the NAP were the promotion and protection of women's human rights and the recognition of Kosovo War victims. Additionally, the NAP identified three desired outcomes: increased participation of women in decision-making and peacekeeping and peacebuilding processes; the integration of gender perspectives in security affairs and increased women's involvement in the security structures; and improved access to protection, justice, rehabilitation and reintegration for survivors of sexual violence, torture, and other war-related or conflict-related violence.<sup>333</sup> In total, 79 per cent of the NAP was implemented: 89 per cent of the first objective, 64 per cent of the second and 84 per cent of the third.<sup>334</sup> No new NAP has been developed, as elements of UNSCR 1325 have been incorporated into other policies.

332 Kosovo Agency for Gender Equality (2014). Action Plan for the Implementation of Resolution 1325 "Women, Peace, and Security" 2013–2015.

333 Ibid.

334 Kosovo Agency for Gender Equality (2016). [The second monitoring report on the Implementation Progress of the Action Plan for the Implementation of the Resolution 1325 "Women, Peace and Security" 2013–2015.](#)

Additionally, several institutions, such as the Kosovo Security Force (KSF) and Kosovo Police (KP), have internal policies related to Women, Peace and Security.<sup>335</sup> Moreover, the Kosovo Program for Gender Equality (2015–2019) incorporates what can be considered a second NAP, encompassing numerous Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) elements within its aims, initiatives and performance indicators. These aspects have been integrated into Pillar III of the KPGE.

## Women's Representation in Diplomatic Missions

*Table 10: Gender Disaggregated data on diplomatic missions in Kosovo*

Year	Women (%)	Men (%)	Total
2020	32.0%	68.0%	150
2021	29.7%	70.3%	148
2022	29.7%	70.3%	148
2023	36.0%	64.0%	139

Law No.05/L-020 on Gender Equality requires an equal representation of women and men at all decision-making levels, including in diplomatic missions. UNSCR 1325 also advocates for equal representation of women at all decision-making levels, including in peace and security. The WPS agenda further emphasises the importance of integrating women's perspectives to enhance the effectiveness and sustainability of peace initiatives.

*Table 11: Representation at decision-making levels in diplomatic missions*

Year	Total	Women(%)	Men (%)
2020	52	25%	75%
2021	52	21.1%	78.8%
2022	45	24.4%	75.5%
2023	45	24.4%	75.6%

Overall, equal representation ensures the consideration of diverse viewpoints, leading to more nuanced and robust diplomatic engagement. Women remain underrepresented in diplomatic missions, both in general and at the decision-making level. Despite slight fluctuations, women's representation has consistently remained below one-third of the total in diplomatic missions, with percentages ranging from 29.7 per cent to 35.9 per cent from 2020 to 2023. The situation is even more pronounced at the decision-making levels, with women's representation never exceeding 25 per cent and experiencing a decline in 2021 to 21.1 per cent.

<sup>335</sup> [Kosovo Women's Network \(2022\). 1325 Facts and Fables: A collection of stories about the implementation of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace, and Security in Kosovo, Second Edition.](#)

## Women's Representation in Police and Security Forces

Table 12: Representation in Kosovo Police, disaggregated by rank and gender, 2024

Rank	Men (%)	Women (%)	Total
General Director	100%	0	1
Deputy General Director	100%	0	2
Department Director	85.7%	14.3%	7
Colonel	86.4%	13.6%	22
Lieutenant Colonel	92.3%	7.7%	39
Major	90.4%	9.6%	83
Captain	89.9%	10.1%	149
Lieutenant	91.4%	8.6%	314
Sergeant	89.1%	10.9%	869
High Police Officer	86.1%	13.9%	5385
Police Officer	92.0%	8.0%	224

Gender equality in the Kosovo Police is essential for creating a diverse and inclusive environment that mirrors the needs and perspectives of society. Incorporating diverse experiences and perspectives through equal representation improves decision-making processes and operational effectiveness. However, the table on women's representation in the Kosovo Police reveals a significant gender disparity across various ranks. The participation of women in high-ranking positions and operational roles, such as general directors and police officers, is notably low, with percentages ranging from 0 to 13.9 per cent.

Women are also underrepresented in the Kosovo Security Force, particularly at higher ranks. Among officer ranks, no woman currently occupies the position of General Lieutenant (OF-8), while only one-third of Major General (OF-7) positions are held by women. Women are entirely absent from the Major General (OF-6) rank, and their representation at the Colonel (OF-5) and Lieutenant Colonel (OF-4) ranks is limited, constituting only 2.9 per cent and 3.6 per cent, respectively.

*Table 13: Officers at the Kosovo Security Force, disaggregated by rank and gender*

Rank	Women (%)	Men (%)	Total
General Lieutenant / OF-8	0.0%	100.0%	1
Major General / OF-7	33.3%	66.7%	3
Major General / OF-6	0.0%	100.0%	5
Colonel / OF-5	2.9%	97.1%	34
Lieutenant Colonel / OF-4	3.6%	96.4%	83
Major / OF-3	10.3%	89.7%	68
Captain / OF-2	3.7%	96.3%	81
Lieutenant / OF-1	11.1%	88.9%	45
Second Lieutenant / OF-0	11.1%	88.9%	99

Representation slightly increases in the lower officer ranks, with women comprising 10.3 per cent of Majors (OF-3) and around 11.1 per cent in both Lieutenant (OF-1) and Second Lieutenant (OF-0) positions.

In contrast, non-officer ranks exhibit a marginal improvement in the representation of women, though it remains limited. Women's representation in the top ranks, including Sergeant Major (OR-9) and Master Sergeant (OR-8), is notably low, with percentages standing at 5.1 per cent and 7 per cent, respectively. The disparity is stark at the First Class Sergeant (OR-7) level, with only 1.7 per cent of women. However, a relative increase can be observed in lower ranks, where women constitute 15.6 per cent of Sergeants (OR-5) and 15.4 per cent of Corporal-Specialists (OR-4), demonstrating a slightly more balanced gender ratio compared to higher ranks, although significant underrepresentation remains evident.

*Table 14: Non-officer staff at the Kosovo Security Force, disaggregated by rank and gender*

Rank	Women (%)	Men (%)	Total
Sergeant Major / OR-9	5.1%	94.9%	39
Master Sergeant / OR-8	7.0%	93.0%	128
First Class Sergeant / OR-7	1.7%	98.3%	172
Staff Sergeant / OR-6	7.3%	92.7%	273
Sergeant / OR-5	15.6%	84.4%	591
Corporal-Specialist / OR-4	15.4%	84.6%	182
Private First Class / OR-3	11.4%	88.6%	953
Private / OR-2	5.5%	94.5%	1381

## Women's Representation in the Kosovo–Serbia Dialogue

The Kosovo–Serbia Dialogue, aimed at resolving conflicts and promoting stability, has seen minimal involvement of women at all levels. Women have been largely excluded from formal negotiation tracks, limiting their influence on critical decisions.<sup>336</sup> This exclusion reflects a broader issue of gender inequality in peace processes, where women's voices and perspectives are often neglected. Without their participation, the dialogue lacks the comprehensive approach needed for sustainable peace. The Kosovo–Serbia Dialogue has also overlooked women's priorities and concerns. Issues such as gender-based violence, economic empowerment and social inclusion have not been adequately addressed in the negotiations.<sup>337</sup>

## Conflict-Related Sexual Violence

The aftermath of the 1998–99 war brought to light the systematic sexual violence perpetrated against individuals, which remained an unaddressed issue for years. Recognising the severity and impact of conflict-related sexual violence, the Kosovo Assembly took significant steps toward legal acknowledgement and support for the survivors. In March 2014, the Assembly approved amendments to the existing laws concerning war victims, which, for the first time, extended legal recognition to victims of sexual violence during the conflict. Specifically, the amendments were made to Law No. 04/L-054, which originally addressed the status and rights of martyrs, invalids, veterans and civilian victims of the war.<sup>338</sup> These amendments were included in the new Law No. 04/L-172 and aimed to provide survivors with a legal framework for recognition and reparation.<sup>339</sup>

Following these legislative amendments, further steps were taken to operationalise the legal provisions through the establishment of a specialised body, the Government Commission on Recognition and Verification of the Status of Sexual Violence Victims During the Kosovo Liberation War.<sup>340</sup> This commission was designed to verify the status of victims and survivors, facilitating their access to the benefits provided under the new legal framework. Initially, the commission had a five-year mandate, which was extended to another five years in 2025.<sup>341</sup> The commission is tasked with a detailed verification process, which involves reviewing applications, assessing evidence, and conducting hearings, if necessary, to determine the validity of each claim.<sup>342</sup> Applicants must provide documentation or evidence supporting

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336 [Kosovo Women's Network \(2022\). 1325 Facts and Fables: A collection of stories about the implementation of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace, and Security in Kosovo, Second Edition.](#)

337 Ibid.

338 [https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Headquarters/Attachments/Sections/Library/Publications/2016/The-Conflict-DId-Not-Bring-Us-Flowers\\_ENG.pdf](https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Headquarters/Attachments/Sections/Library/Publications/2016/The-Conflict-DId-Not-Bring-Us-Flowers_ENG.pdf)

339 Ibid.

340 Government of Kosovo (2015). [Regulation No.22/2015 on Defining the Procedures for Recognition and Verification of the Status of Sexual Violence Victims During the Kosovo Liberation War.](#)

341 There have been calls for the commission to have an indefinite mandate and not have time constraints.

342 Ibid and Kosovo Government Commission Working with CRSV Survivors and Kosovo Rehabilitation Centre for Torture Victims (2018). [Guideline on the Process of Recognizing and Verifying the Status of Sexual Violence Victims of the Kosovo Liberation War.](#)



their status as victims, which the commission evaluates according to predefined criteria and guidelines established under the legal framework. To aid the application process and ensure survivors receive the necessary support, the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare has licensed and financed four non-governmental organisations (NGOs) that specialise in working with survivors of conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV). These non-governmental organisations are crucial in supporting survivors throughout the application process and beyond, offering them the necessary guidance, emotional support and advocacy. Once verified, survivors receive a monthly payment of €230 as a symbolic recognition for their loss and suffering, addressing their psychological and economic hardships.

*Table 15: Number of Applications Received by the Commission 2018-2024*

Year	Number of Applications
2018	921
2019	268
2020	204
2021	229
2022	241
2023	131
2024	16

The Commission for Recognition and Verification of Sexual Violence Victims in Kosovo received a total of 2,018 applications from 2018 to 2024. The highest number of applications was in 2018, with 921 submissions, followed by a decline in the subsequent years, reaching the lowest count in 2024, with only 16 applications. The data reflects an initial surge in applications, decreasing steadily over the years.

Data obtained by the commission reveals that 2,002 cases have been treated, comprising 1,859 women and 143 men. Of these, 1,624 cases have been approved, including 1,535 women and 89 men. Meanwhile, 318 cases were rejected, with 272 involving women and 46 concerning men.

*Table 16: Cases Treated, Approved, and Refused by the Commission, disaggregated by gender*

	Women	Men	Total
Cases Treated	92.8%	7.1%	2002
Approved	94.5%	5.4%	1624
Refused	85.5%	14.4%	318

# ADDRESSING THE CHALLENGES AND HARNESSING THE OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED BY THE GREEN TRANSITION AND THE DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION

## Climate change and environment

### Policy Analysis

Generally, the legal framework on environment and climate change in Kosovo lacks a gender perspective. The legislation, ranging from environmental protection to energy strategies, consistently fails to incorporate gender impact assessments or integrate a gender perspective to acknowledge the distinct effects on women and men.

Key Laws and Policies, such as *Law No. 03 / L-025, on Environmental Protection* in Kosovo,<sup>343</sup> *Law No. 03 / L-214, on Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)*<sup>344</sup>, and *Law No. 03 / L-043, on*

*Integrated Pollution Prevention and Control*<sup>345</sup>, serve as the cornerstone for environmental preservation. Moreover, *Law No. 03 / L-160, on Air Protection from Pollution*,<sup>346</sup> lacks a gender perspective. Key environmental strategies also generally lack a gender perspective. The *Climate Change Strategy 2019–2028* mentions that it aims to enhance the capacity of vulnerable groups, including women, for climate change adaptation but fails to include concrete measures toward this goal.<sup>347</sup> Nevertheless, there have been a few positive developments lately. The *2022 Energy Strategy* incorporates a gender perspective and establishes the objective of achieving a 25 per cent representation of women in the energy sector in Kosovo by 2025.<sup>348</sup> Additionally, *2024 Law 08/L-250 on Climate Change* states that MESPI will develop guidelines on integrating a gender perspective in climate change mitigation and adaptation programmes.<sup>349</sup>

343 Assembly of the Republic of Kosovo (2009). [Law No.03/L-020 on Environmental Protection](#).

344 Assembly of the Republic of Kosovo (2010). [Law No. 03/L-214 on Environmental Impact Assessment](#).

345 Assembly of the Republic of Kosovo (2009). [Law No. 03/L-043 on Integrated Prevention Pollution Control](#)

346 Assembly of the Republic of Kosovo (2010). [Law No.03/L-160 on Air Protection from Pollution](#).

347 Kosovo Ministry of Environment, Spatial Planning, and Infrastructure (2018), [Climate Change Strategy 2018–2028](#).

348 Kosovo Ministry of Economic Development (2022), [Energy Strategy of the Republic of Kosovo](#), 2022–2031.

349 Assembly of the Republic of Kosovo (2024), [Law No 08/L-250 on Climate Change](#).

## Current Situation

Climate change impacts everyone, but not in the same way. Marginalised communities and socially excluded groups, including women, often face the most severe consequences due to existing inequalities and limited access to resources.<sup>350</sup> This heightened vulnerability arises primarily from existing education, information, resources, training, and healthcare access inequalities. This makes women and other groups less likely to adapt to climate change successfully.<sup>351</sup> Women and other vulnerable groups, such as youth and ethnic minorities, are generally more susceptible to the negative impacts of climate change. Research shows that women's mortality from climate-related disasters tends to be higher than that of men; girls are more likely to drop out of school during prolonged drought; and forced displacement and natural disasters place women and girls at increased risk of Gender-Based Violence, such as sexual exploitation and abuse.<sup>352</sup> Additional research shows that all vulnerable groups are less able to adapt to the negative impacts of climate change compared to men, often due to socio-cultural and economic barriers.<sup>353</sup> Moreover, youth, as well as ethnic minorities, face unique adaptation challenges to climate change, mainly due to socio-economic and cultural disparities.

## Representation and Decision-Making

Table 17: Gender Disaggregated data on representation in institutions working in environment and climate change

Institution	Overall			Decision-Making Level		
	Women	Men	Total	Women	Men	Total
Ministry of Environment and Spatial Planning	46.9%	53.3%	164	45.9%	54.1%	37
Environmental Protection Agency	12.6%	87.3%	103	11.7%	88.2%	17
Hydrometeorological Institute	11.1%	88.8%	18	0	100%	1
Nature Protection Agency	16.6%	83.3%	6	0	100%	2

Women are underrepresented in institutions working on environment and climate change. In the Ministry of Environment and Spatial Planning, women constitute 46.95 per cent of the workforce and 45.95 per cent of decision-making roles. In the Environmental Protection Agency, these figures drop to 12.62 per cent and 11.76 per cent, respectively. The representation of women in the Hydrometeorological Institute and Nature Protection Agency is significantly lower, with women constituting only 11.11 per cent and 16.67 per cent of the workforce, respectively, and no women occupying decision-making positions.

350 International Institute for Sustainable Development (2019), [Why Gender Matters in Climate Change Adaptation](#).

351 Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (2022). [Climate Change 2022: Impacts, Adaptation, and Vulnerability](#).

352 Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery (2021). [Gender Dimensions of Disaster Risk and Resilience](#).

353 Carbon Brief (2021). [Tackling gender inequality is 'crucial' for climate adaptation](#).

Unfortunately, MESPI does not collect and process data disaggregated by gender on participants in public meetings or budget hearings.<sup>354</sup> However, firsthand accounts from women activists involved in the environment and climate change reveal that women rarely participate in these hearings.<sup>355</sup> The significant obstacles that consistently hinder women's full participation in climate change policy and action, both as citizens and within institutions, include cultural norms, societal expectations, a lack of confidence and limited access to information.<sup>356</sup> This underrepresentation extends to managing climate-related projects and policies, where men predominantly occupy decision-making positions.

A direct analysis of the differentiated impacts of climate change on various social groups, including women, men and marginalised groups such as youth and minorities in Kosovo, has not been conducted. A lack of data disaggregated by gender and other factors makes such analyses challenging. Kosovo lacks gender-disaggregated data related to the environment, climate change and pollution.<sup>357</sup> For instance, there is no data on environmental disease incidence by gender, age or ethnicity, no data on access to clean water and sanitation facilities disaggregated by gender and ethnicity, and no quantitative data on differentiated impacts of air pollution or employment rates in green jobs by gender, among others. There seems to be a consensus among activists and practitioners that Kosovo is no different from the rest of the world and that climate change impacts women and girls more severely due to socio-economic disparities and limited access to essential resources, including water, healthcare and property.<sup>358</sup> For instance, floods, which are a direct consequence of climate change, disproportionately affect women, particularly those responsible for household management and care duties. Women activists noticed this during the recent floods in 2023<sup>359</sup>. Additionally, as women in many communities typically spend more time at home, they are more likely to be exposed to environmental hazards in their immediate surroundings. Living close to polluted areas, such as Obiliq, can lead to direct health issues, ranging from respiratory problems to diseases related to water and sanitation hygiene, which affects their well-being and ability to care for their families.<sup>360</sup> Moreover, the economic impacts of climate change, such as reduced agricultural productivity and loss of livelihoods, hit women harder, who, as noted above, comprise the majority of agrarian family workers in the informal economy.

Many factors contribute to women's underrepresentation in public consultations related to climate change and environmental protection. The burden of unpaid care responsibilities significantly hinders women's capacity to engage in activities outside of the home. Another factor includes a lack of awareness combined with inadequate advertising. Numerous women, especially those residing in rural regions with limited social media and internet usage, lack access to information regarding public consultations.<sup>361</sup> This lack of awareness persists because public institutions do not use gender-sensitive outreach and communication measures.<sup>362</sup> For example, while most information on public consultations is posted on social media, international research indicates that men use social media more for obtaining information.

354 Data provided by MESPI, March 2024.

355 Insights from UN Women focus group on climate change and environment held on February 27, 2024.

356 Ibid.

357 European Commission (2021). [Action Document for "EU for the Environment"](#).

358 Insights from UN Women focus group on climate change and environment held on February 27, 2024.

359 European Commission (2023). [EMSR646: Floods in Kosovo](#).

360 Insights from UN Women focus group on climate change and environment held on February 27, 2024.

361 Ibid.

362 Ibid

In contrast, women use it to connect with friends and family.<sup>363</sup> An in-depth analysis of how women and men receive information and which are the best channels to reach and inform women has not been conducted in Kosovo.

## Digitalisation

Overall, laws, policies, and strategies on digitalisation and ICT in Kosovo lack a gender perspective. This includes the Digital Agenda 2030<sup>364</sup> and the E-Government Strategy for Kosovo 2023–2027<sup>365</sup>, which focuses on digitalising the public sector. Digitalisation in Kosovo has seen significant development in recent years, concentrating on exporting IT services and enhancing government services, education and business sectors through technology. The approach of Kosovo to digitalisation is part of its broader strategy for economic growth and integration into European structures. Efforts include improving internet infrastructure, promoting digital literacy and supporting start-ups. The government has launched various e-services to enhance transparency and efficiency in public services. In 2021, ICT service exports totalled €99 million, accounting for 5.1 per cent of Kosovo's total services exports.<sup>366</sup>

Women remain underrepresented in digitalisation in the public sector in Kosovo. The Agency for Information Society (AIS), a key institution for internet services and cybersecurity, consists entirely of employees who are men.<sup>367</sup> At the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA), there is almost equal representation, with 156 women (49 per cent) and 164 men (51 per cent).<sup>368</sup> However, women are less represented in decision-making roles, holding only 38 per cent of these positions. IT departments across various ministries are predominantly led by men, with 92 per cent of head roles occupied by men, indicating a significant gender gap in IT leadership positions.<sup>369</sup> Women are also underrepresented in the private sector related to ICT and digitalisation. Men constitute about 85 per cent of the total number of entrepreneurs in ICT, which is 5.5 times higher than women, who constitute 15.24 per cent of entrepreneurs.<sup>370</sup>

Overall, 99 per cent of citizens in Kosovo have internet access and are connected to the electrical grid in terms of connectivity infrastructure.<sup>371</sup> Men and women connect to Wi-Fi at the same rate of 97 per cent; women and men connect to LTE/3G/4G at 48 per cent and 50 per cent, respectively, and women and men connect to cable internet at 41 per cent and 47 per cent, respectively. Among the devices used, most households use digital cable television (99 per cent), followed by smartphones (98 per cent) and laptops (65 per cent). Most frequently, people use a smartphone to connect to the internet at home (95 per cent of women and 96 per cent of men), while 31 per cent of women and 39 per cent of men use

363 Social Media Today (2016). [Gender-Specific Behaviours on Social Media and What They Mean for Online Communications](#).

364 Kosovo Ministry of Economic Development (2024). [Information Technology and Telecommunications](#).

365 Kosovo Ministry of Public Administration (2023). [E-Government Strategy Kosovo 2023–2027](#).

366 German Economic Forum (2022). [Kosovo's ICT and BPO sector: developments and outlook](#).

367 Kosovo Women's Network (2024). [Gender Equality: At the Centre of IT... and Beyond A Gender Analysis of Digitalisation in Kosovo](#).

368 Ibid.

369 Ibid.

370 Innovation Center Kosovo (2020), Startup Ecosystem Kosovo, [Needs Evaluation Report](#).

371 UNDP (2022). [Digital Household Survey](#).

a tablet.<sup>372</sup> Around 14 per cent of citizens (14 per cent of women and 11 per cent of men) stated that they had never heard of the e-Kosova platform.<sup>373</sup> Additionally, 31 per cent of women and men report avoiding online government services because they do not know how to use them.<sup>374</sup>

The main barriers to digital participation for women and girls include affordability issues, such as the lack of income for purchasing internet data or devices (71 per cent) and limited access to digital services (29 per cent). In Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities, the cost was unanimously seen as the only obstacle (100 per cent) for both genders. Bosnian women identified affordability as their primary concern (100 per cent). For Serbian women, the significant barriers were affordability (55 per cent) and service availability (45 per cent).<sup>375</sup>

A gender disparity also exists in terms of ICT education. Among public and private university students in the 2021/22 academic year, 205 women (36 per cent) and 370 men (64 per cent) graduated with bachelor's degrees in ICT.<sup>376</sup> The difference is even higher in vocational education enrolment. In 2021, 73 per cent of students enrolled in ICT VET programmes were boys, compared to 27 per cent who were girls.<sup>377</sup> This may indicate that the general idea that the ICT field is better suited for boys is prevalent and reflected in the education choices from early on.

Almost two-thirds of women in Kosovo believe that violence against women is frequent, and more than half have experienced physical, psychological or sexual abuse from a close relationship since they were fifteen years old.<sup>378</sup> Similarly, the proportion of women who experienced at least one form of technology-facilitated violence in Kosovo is notably high, standing at 43.3 per cent.<sup>379</sup> An overview of national legislation and strategies that directly address technology-facilitated violence, conducted by UN Women, found that in Kosovo, the Criminal Code, Specialised Law on Gender Equality, Violence against Women/Domestic Violence, and Gender Equality Strategy at best, only indirectly address some forms of TF VAW. However, the Criminal Code addresses sexual harassment, stalking, bribery and domestic violence. Article 186, Paragraph 1<sup>380</sup> specifically defines harassment, including digital harassment through phone calls, messages and emails, as actions that instill fear of harm, property damage or severe distress in victims.

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372 Ibid.

373 Ibid.

374 Ibid.

375 Ibid.

376 Kosovo Women's Network (2024). [Gender Equality: At the Centre of IT... and Beyond A Gender Analysis of Digitalisation in Kosovo](#).

377 KEC (2021). [Evaluation of the Implementation of the Kosovo Education Strategic Plan 2017-2021: Insufficient achievement](#). Top of Form

378 OSCE (2019). [OSCE survey on violence against women in Kosovo](#).

379 UN Women (2023). [THE DARK SIDE OF DIGITALIZATION: Technology-facilitated violence against women in Eastern Europe and Central Asia](#).

380 Assembly of the Republic of Kosovo (2019). [Code No. 06/L-074 Criminal Code of the Republic of Kosovo](#).





# MAPPING OF SUPPORT

## European Union

**The European Union Office in Kosovo (EUOK) and the European Union Special Representative (EUSR)** support the overall development of Kosovo. The EUOK implements EU policies, facilitates dialogue, manages development financial aid, and supports reforms to align Kosovo with European norms. Additionally, the EUOK administers financial assistance through instruments like the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA), which supports various sectors such as public administration, justice and civil society. Between 2007 and 2020, the EU allocated over €1.5 billion in public administration reform, economic reform, education, agriculture, rule of law, reconstruction, civil society and media.<sup>381</sup> The EUSR guides the Kosovo government in political processes, facilitates coordination of EU activities, and advocates for human rights and fundamental freedoms, such as gender equality.<sup>382</sup> Support for gender equality and women's empowerment has consistently been a cornerstone of EU support for Kosovo. In terms of financial support, these efforts were primarily carried out through three programs: the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR), the Civil Society and Media Facility (CSF), and the Gender Equality Facility (GEF). However, with the approval of the GAP III, all EU-funded projects should be based on a gender analysis and include at least one gender-sensitive objective.

**The European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX)** is the EU Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) mission to Kosovo. It supports the Kosovo rule of law institutions in enhancing their effectiveness, sustainability and accountability. EULEX also monitors and advises local judicial and law enforcement authorities concerning CRSV, aiming to improve their management of these delicate cases.

## International organisations

**The United Nations Kosovo Team (UNKT)** is a collective of UN agencies working together in Kosovo to support the country's development goals in alignment with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).<sup>383</sup> Under the leadership of the United Nations Development Coordinator, the UNKT works across various sectors, such as governance, social services and economic development, aiming for inclusive, sustainable growth and resilience in Kosovo. They focus on ensuring effective governance, advancing human rights, fostering economic development and enhancing social cohesion. The work of UNKT is organised under the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework that collaborates with Kosovo institutions, and aims for transformative and inclusive development by

381 The European Union in Kosovo (n.d) [“The European Union and Kosovo”](#)

382 Ibid.

383 United Nations Kosovo Team (n.d), [“The UN in Kosovo”](#)



2025. Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment is one of the top-priorities of UNKT, in line with SDG 5.

**UN Women is the** United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. UN Women has operated in Kosovo since 1999, focusing on gender equality and women's empowerment in different sectors. Their work has mainly focused on Gender-Based Violence, Gender-Responsive Budgeting, Women's Economic Empowerment, Capacity Building, and Technical Assistance to Local Institutions.<sup>384</sup> UN Women also chairs the Security and Gender Group (SGG), a collective of stakeholders in gender equality that has coordinated activities and projects since 2007. As of 2023, UN Women has been implementing the EU-funded "Gender Equality Facility," a project aiming to mainstream gender equality across various sectors in Kosovo at both central and local levels.

**The United Nations Development Programme** (UNDP) works toward sustainable development in Kosovo through four main work areas. The mission of this organisation is to eliminate poverty and diminish inequalities and exclusion through the development of policies, leadership skills, partnering abilities, institutional capabilities and the fostering of resilience. Their work is carried out through four main areas, namely Governance and Peacebuilding, Inclusive Growth and Climate Resilience, Digitalisation and Gender Equality.<sup>385</sup>

**The United Nations Population Fund in Kosovo** (UNFPA) focuses on advancing sexual and reproductive health and rights, improving access to quality reproductive health care, promoting sexual education, and enhancing the capacity of institutions to develop and implement rights-based policies.<sup>386</sup> A crucial part of the mission of UNFPA involves addressing issues such as cervical cancer prevention, which has been a significant focus of their efforts in recent years. Their work focuses on gender equality, integrating it into broader health and rights-based programs.<sup>387</sup> This includes efforts to empower women and girls through education and health services, ensuring they can lead healthier and more informed lives. Additionally, UNFPA supports including vulnerable groups in surveys like the Population and Housing Census to ensure that no one is left behind during data collection that informs policy-making and programme development.

The **United Nations Children's Fund** (UNICEF) in Kosovo promotes and protects children's rights. Their work ensures that children, adolescents, and youth are healthy, protected and have opportunities to reach their full potential.<sup>388</sup> UNICEF's programs in Kosovo for the 2021–2025 period focus on three main areas: the first Decade of Life, the Second Decade of Life, and Social Inclusion and Rights Monitoring. UNICEF promotes gender equality throughout its work, ensuring that girls and boys have equal opportunities to grow, learn, and develop their potential.

The **Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe** (OSCE) **Mission in Kosovo** focuses on several programmes, projects and activities aimed at supporting the development of democratic institutions and promoting human rights and the rule of law. Their focus encompasses various sectors, including

384 UN Women Europe and Asia (n.d) [Kosovo](#)

385 UNDP Kosovo (n.d) [Our Focus](#)

386 UNFPA Kosovo (n.d) [Who we are](#)

387 Stakeholder Survey implemented in 2024

388 UNICEF Kosovo Programme (n.d) [What we Do](#)

human rights monitoring, democratisation, public safety, and the protection of minority rights. The OSCE Mission in Kosovo is actively involved in combating domestic violence through various initiatives and training programs, with a particular focus on improving the institutional responses to domestic violence.

The **Council of Europe** (CoE) has been active in Kosovo since 1999. Key focus areas include improving the efficiency and quality of justice and education, combating discrimination based on ethnicity and gender, and enhancing media freedom.<sup>389</sup> The CoE has focused substantially on domestic violence in Kosovo and has implemented three phases of the programme “Reinforcing the fight against violence against women and domestic violence in Kosovo”. Currently, it is implementing the Programme “Aligning laws and policies with the Istanbul Convention,” which aims to strengthen institutional capacities to prevent and counter domestic violence in line with IC standards.

The **National Democratic Institute** (NDI) is an international non-profit organisation supporting democracy and democratic governance. NDI has been active in Kosovo since 1999 and focuses on different aspects of governance, including improving legislation and political responsiveness, promoting openness and transparency in the national assembly, strengthening parliamentary capacity, and supporting the political participation of women, ethnic minorities and youth.<sup>390</sup> Since 2012, NDI has hosted the annual event “Week of Women,” which focuses on women’s political participation and leadership.

## Bilateral donors

**Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit/German Agency for International Cooperation** (GIZ) primarily focuses on supporting the transition of Kosovo to political stability, democracy, and economic development under the oversight of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ).<sup>391</sup> The current priority areas of GIZ in Kosovo include sustainable economic development, public administration, democracy, civil society, and energy.<sup>392</sup>

The **Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency** (SIDA) focuses on strengthening human rights, democracy, and sustainable development in Kosovo.<sup>393</sup> Sida’s development cooperation strengthens human rights, democracy and sustainable development in Kosovo. Currently, SIDA has four thematic areas: 1) Human Rights, Democracy, a developed rule of law and gender equality; 2) Peaceful and Inclusive Societies; 3) Environment and Climate; and 4) Economic Development for all. SIDA places significant emphasis on gender equality in Kosovo, actively endorsing initiatives that promote gender equality. This includes addressing discrimination against women in the labour market, combatting workplace sexual harassment, and tackling other forms of gender-based violence.<sup>394</sup>

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389 Council of Europe, Directorate of Programme Coordination, (n.d) [Kosovo](#)

390 National Democratic Institute, (n.d), [Kosovo](#)

391 GIZ, (n.d), [Kosovo](#)

392 Ibid.

393 The Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, (n.d), [SIDA's work in Kosovo](#).

394 Ibid.

The **Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands** works toward social transformation and strengthening democracy and the rule of law through the MATRA & Human Rights Fund.<sup>395</sup> This fund supports Kosovo NGO initiatives in various fields, including women's rights and LGBTI+ communities.

**Austrian Development Cooperation** (ADC) has been in Kosovo since 2003 through a liaison office and with a coordination office of the Austrian Development Agency (ADA) since 2008.<sup>396</sup> The overarching goals of ADC are poverty reduction, peace, human security, and support for the European and regional integration of Kosovo. Women, national minorities and socially disadvantaged individuals are cross-cutting matters in their work. Among others, ADA has supported initiatives for including women in agriculture, capacity-building activities for WCSOs and beyond, awareness-raising initiatives for gender-based violence and more.<sup>397</sup>

**United States Agency for International Development** (USAID) has been working in Kosovo since 1999, investing more than \$1 billion in projects in various fields contributing to the development of Kosovo.<sup>398</sup> The 2022–2025 USAID Kosovo Country Development Cooperation Strategy has two development objectives: 1) accountable and effective governance institutions better serve citizens and 2) increased opportunities for inclusive democratic and economic participation.<sup>399</sup> While women, youth, and minorities intersect with the two objectives, there is mainly a gender focus on the second objective, which aims to close the gender gap in various sectors, including the labour market, political participation and access to productive capital.<sup>400</sup> USAID works to achieve these objectives by supporting projects implemented by numerous local and international organisations.

## Civil society

Kosovo has a robust civil society, with numerous Women Civil Society Organisations (WCSOs) that monitor the work of the government and public institutions and also work directly with women and men to empower them and advance the gender equality agenda. In addition, many civil society organisations operating in different fields include gender equality components or integrate it as a cross-cutting matter.

The **Kosovo Women's Network** (KWN), established in 1996, has the largest network of women's organisations, which includes 140 members of all ethnic groups.<sup>401</sup> It consists of four programmatic areas: 1) improving gender equality through the rule of law; 2) a life free from gender-based violence; 3) women's economic empowerment; and 4) gender transformative education.<sup>402</sup> To implement projects within these areas, which focus on research and advocacy, KWN has received support from many donors, including ADA, SIDA, the EU Office in Kosovo, Kvinna till Kvinna Foundation, UN Women and more.<sup>403</sup>

395 The Netherlands and Kosovo. (2023). [MATRA and Human Rights Fund – 2024](#).

396 Austrian Development Cooperation (2013). [Kosovo Country Strategy 2013–2020 \(extended until the end of 2021\)](#). Page 2.

397 Austrian Development Agency (2024). [All Projects: Kosovo](#).

398 United States Agency for International Development. (n.d) [Kosovo Country Overview](#).

399 United States Agency for International Development Kosovo. (2022) [USAID Kosovo Country Development Cooperation Strategy 2022–2025](#). Page 7.

400 Ibid. Page 25.

401 Kosovo Women's Network (n.d). [About us](#).

402 Ibid.

403 Kosovo Women's Network (2022). [Annual Report 2022](#). Pages 88–92.

Women 4 Women Kosovo (W4W) is another WCSO supporting marginalised women across Kosovo since 1999.<sup>404</sup> They work at grass-roots levels in projects that aim for women's economic empowerment, increased participation in their communities and beyond, and improved well-being. W4W has been supported by GIZ, the Cartier Foundation, European Entrepreneurs Everywhere, USAID, and other donors in its efforts to improve women's economic and social position.<sup>405</sup>

Kosovo Gender Studies Center (KGSC) is another WCSO that has been active in research and advocacy for gender equality since 2004.<sup>406</sup> Working in areas of gender-based violence, participation in the labour market and political processes, and more, KGSC has been supported by MATRA and the Human Rights Fund of the Embassy of Netherlands, UN Women, Kvinna till Kvinna Foundation, Save the Children and other local and international stakeholders.<sup>407</sup>

In addition, numerous other organisations are working in the field of gender equality. The Network of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian Women's Organisations of Kosovo works to empower women and girls of the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities.<sup>408</sup> QIKA, the Center for Information, Critique, and Action, is a relatively new organisation that significantly addresses gender inequality through research, advocacy and actionable efforts.<sup>409</sup> Women in Tech is also a new WCSO contributing to closing the digital gender gap.<sup>410</sup> Action for Mothers and Children (AMC) works to improve the lives of mothers, infants and children through advocacy, collaboration with healthcare institutions, research, and implementation of projects.<sup>411</sup> The Center for Counseling, Social Services, and Research – SIT contributes to an equal society by working with men and youth in areas of gender-based violence, sexual and reproductive health and promoting healthy behaviours.<sup>412</sup>

Four WCSOs are working directly with survivors of conflict-related sexual violence, which the Kosovo government has also licensed to support the survivors in their application for recognition of their status. This includes the Kosovo Rehabilitation Center for Torture Victims (KRCT), Medica Kosova, Medica Gjakova and the Centre for the Promotion of Women's Rights.<sup>413</sup> These organisations work in advocacy and direct support for survivors through psycho-social support, economic empowerment activities, and more.

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404 Stakeholder Survey implemented in March 2024.

405 Ibid.

406 Kosovo Gender Studies Center (n.d). [Background, vision and mission.](#)

407 Kosovo Gender Studies Center (n.d). [Current projects](#) and [Past projects.](#)

408 Kosovo Women's Network (n.d). [Members: Network of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian Women's Organizations of Kosovo](#)

409 Center for Information, Critique, and Action (n.d) [Who are we?](#)

410 Stakeholder Survey implemented in March 2024.

411 Action for Mothers and Children (n.d). [Who are we?](#)

412 Center for Counseling, Social Services, and Research (n.d). [About us.](#)

413 UN Women (2016). [Conflict did not bring us flowers: The need for Comprehensive Reparations for Survivors of Conflict Related Sexual Violence in Kosovo.](#) Page 14.



# CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

## Ensuring freedom from all forms of gender-based violence

### Conclusions and Key Findings

- There have been significant improvements in the legal framework related to gender-based violence, with the inclusion of the Istanbul Convention in the Kosovo Constitution, the new Criminal Code, the Law for Prevention and Protection from Domestic Violence, Violence against Women, and Gender-Based Violence, and the National Strategy on Protection Against Domestic Violence and Violence Against Women 2022–2026.
- Surveys indicate that 54 per cent of all women in Kosovo have experienced psychological, physical or sexual violence from an intimate partner since the age of 15.
- The incidence of domestic violence in Kosovo was reported at 1.56 cases per 1,000 residents in 2022.
- In 2022, women constituted 81.5 per cent of domestic violence victims, with 47 per cent of these victims experiencing violence from their spouses.
- Kosovo Police reported an average response time of 19.2 minutes to domestic violence cases in 2022.
- The Victim's Advocacy and Assistance Office received between 90 per cent and 93 per cent of cases related to gender-based violence from 2019 to 2023.
- Between 2019 and 2023, shelters in Kosovo accommodated 2,516 women and children victims of domestic violence.
- Between 2020 and 2023, Kosovo Police received 84 reports of sexual harassment.
- The National Program for Treatment of Perpetrators of Violence against Women, launched in the Correctional Center in Dubrava as a pilot in 2022, includes 10 modules implemented over 24 sessions.
- There is inadequate handling, particularly by the Kosovo justice system, of gender-based violence cases, including online and domestic violence.

## Recommendations

1. *Support the implementation of the legal framework related to gender-based violence, particularly the National Strategy on Protection Against Domestic Violence and Violence Against Women and the Kosovo Program for Gender Equality.*
2. *Continue funding women's civil society organisations to raise awareness about gender-based violence and provide services and support.*
3. *Support the local and central government in providing essential services for the reintegration of victims, including longer-term shelter, employment and daycare services.*
4. *Encourage the government to conduct awareness campaigns about various available services, including but not limited to free legal aid, victim compensation, salary subsidies for survivors of domestic violence and other relevant services.*
5. *Support the government in establishing and functionalising a digital monitoring system for properly implementing protective orders through electronic tags to prevent the continuation and escalation of violence.*
6. *Call upon the government to ensure sufficient trained human resources in all entities working with victims of gender-based violence, particularly in the Victim's Advocacy and Assistance Office and Centers for Social Work.*
7. *Promote the inclusion of gender equality and gender-based violence topics and access to various resources and rights throughout the education system.*
8. *Support the adaptation of protocols to prevent and manage sexual harassment in the public and private sector, as well as in universities, along with extensive capacity-building activities and awareness-raising campaigns to ensure that sexual harassment is effectively prevented and managed in workplaces or educational environments.*
9. *Call upon the Kosovo justice system to promptly and effectively address all forms of gender-based violence and domestic violence cases, and prevent impunity for perpetrators.*

## Promoting sexual and reproductive health and rights

### Conclusions and Key Findings

- Sexual and reproductive health remains a taboo topic, leading to hesitation in including sexual education in formal education. As a result, there is limited information about contraceptives and sexually transmitted diseases and infections among youth.
- Only 40 per cent of Kosovo youth use contraceptives, significantly lower than the 71 per cent usage rate among their European peers. Moreover, 33.3 per cent of women in Kosovo who are of reproductive age report not using any contraceptive methods.
- The rate of women aged 15–49 in Kosovo who have their family planning needs fulfilled with modern methods is notably low, at 12.5 per cent.
- The majority of women do not undergo regular PAP tests, as indicated by 44 per cent of respondents who reported never having done one, while 37 per cent reported having done so.

### Recommendations

1. *Promote inclusion of sexual and reproductive health in formal education at both the primary and secondary levels, alongside providing information about available resources and services at the secondary level.*
2. *Encourage the government to expand efforts to prevent cervical and breast cancer by increasing the supply and distribution of HPV vaccines and raising awareness about PAP tests and mammogram screenings available.*
3. *Support the government in collecting and analysing data related to sexual and reproductive health, disaggregated by gender, as there is limited information that would enable effective solutions to different issues.*
4. *Encourage the government to conduct periodic assessments to identify potential discrimination and undignified treatment in accessing services related to sexual and reproductive health in the public sector.*
5. *Encourage the strengthening of family planning services and outreach efforts to fully meet the needs of women in Kosovo for modern contraceptive methods.*



## Promoting economic and social rights and empowering girls and women

### Conclusions and Key Findings

- Poverty is widespread, with 18 per cent of the population living below the poverty line and 5.1 per cent living in extreme poverty. It is more prevalent in rural areas, where 64.4 per cent of people experiencing poverty and 63.7 per cent of the extremely poor reside. Poverty affects women more than men, with 19 per cent of women and 17 per cent of men living below the poverty line.
- Women and girls experience higher unemployment rates and lower labour force participation than men. For instance, 44.5 per cent of men are inactive (not working nor looking for work), compared to 78 per cent of women.
- Women and men cite different reasons for inactivity in the labour market. Men attribute their inactivity to their participation in education and training, while women cite unpaid care responsibilities, including childcare, as the primary reason.
- Women in Kosovo spend 277 per cent more time on unpaid care responsibilities than men, while men dedicate 400 per cent more time to their work outside the home compared to women.
- Gender-based discrimination in the labour market is prevalent yet underreported.
- Women are underrepresented as students in Vocational Training Centers (35.4 per cent).
- Women own only 21.9 per cent of all enterprises in Kosovo, predominantly operating small and micro businesses, with a notable presence in wholesale, retail trade and services. Women face significant barriers, such as a lack of collateral for financing.
- In 2022, an estimated 42 per cent of Kosovars were involved in informal work. Within this group, women were almost twice as likely as men to engage in informal activities, comprising 65 per cent of the informal workforce. Women in the informal sector in Kosovo often work low-paying, unstable jobs that lack social protection.
- Boys drop out of mandatory education at higher rates than girls. Overall, 74.75 per cent of all dropouts were boys, and 25.25 per cent were girls, indicating that boys are more likely to drop out.
- Evidence suggests that gender norms and societal expectations influence dropout rates, with boys being expected to financially support their families as early as possible.
- Despite Kosovo having a solid legal framework ensuring equal property and inheritance rights, only 19.8 per cent of registered properties were owned by women in 2024.
- There has been a gradual increase in property registered in women's names, supported by affirmative actions such as Administrative Instruction No. 3/2016 for joint property registration. However, the high rate of women renouncing their inheritance rights underlines persistent societal and cultural barriers preventing women from fully benefiting from legal protections.

## Recommendations

1. *Encourage the Kosovo Government to include more explicit references to gender equality obligations and provide technical assistance in amending the Labour Law to include provisions from the 2019/1158 EU Directive on work-life balance. Specific aspects to consider include:*
  - a. Recognising the concept of “parental leave,” in addition to paternity and maternity leave.
  - b. Providing at least ten days of paid leave for fathers upon the birth or adoption of a child.
  - c. Providing non-transferrable parental leave as an individual right for each parent for a minimum of four months.
  - d. Ensuring the right for all parents with children under the age of 8 to request flexible working hours.
  - e. Providing paid leave for employees who care for family members other than children.
2. *Support the Kosovo Government, particularly the Labour Inspectorate, in institutionalising regular training for all inspectors on gender-based discrimination in the workplace, showing a thorough consideration for the principles of diversity at every stage of the risk assessment process and its oversight.*
3. *Support the expansion of VTCs to rural and minority-populated areas, improving access for women and ethnic minorities, potentially through EU-funded infrastructure projects or mobile training units.*
4. *Increase funding, grants and low-interest loans to women-owned start-ups and small businesses, especially in underrepresented sectors such as manufacturing and technology. Include financial literacy training and support in business plan development.*
5. *Launch targeted programs that encourage women to enter and thrive in industries where they are currently underrepresented, such as construction and the energy sector. These programs could include partnerships with existing businesses, vocational training and mentorship opportunities.*
6. *Develop initiatives to assist women in the informal sector transition to the formal economy. This could include simplifying registration processes, providing tax incentives and offering legal and financial advice to ensure their businesses are fully compliant and sustainable.*
7. *Advocate for the continuation and expansion of affirmative measures such as Administrative Instruction No. 3/2016, which mandates the joint registration of immovable property in the names of both spouses. Engage in political dialogue with the government to reinforce the importance of these measures and explore additional policies that further enhance women’s property rights.*
8. *Initiate awareness campaigns targeted at women to educate them about the importance of not renouncing their property rights. These campaigns should include information on the legal and economic benefits of retaining property ownership and guide the legal recourse available to women who face pressure to renounce their rights.*

## Promoting equal participation and leadership

### Conclusions and Key Findings

- Despite legal requirements for women's and men's equal participation in all public institutions, women remain underrepresented, particularly at decision-making levels.
- As of 2021, 44 women were elected as Members of the Kosovo Assembly, with only 9 requiring the gender quota to secure seats, compared to 26 out of 37 in 2007.
- At the local level, only 14 women (8 per cent of all candidates) ran for mayor in the 2021 municipal elections, with only two being elected.
- The representation of women in municipal assemblies was 37 per cent, with 61 per cent of elected women not requiring quota support.
- Overall, women's representation in local government directorates was 23.5 per cent, with 101 women and 328 men leading various directorates as of 2023.
- In election administrative roles, women comprised only 19 per cent of Municipal Election Commissions and 22.39 per cent of election observers in 2021.

### Recommendations

1. *Local and central government should uphold the Law on Gender Equality at the executive levels and in the candidate lists for elections by ensuring full gender parity, thus going beyond the 30 per cent quota foreseen in the law for general and local elections.*
2. *Support civil society and the media in diversifying public debate with more women on panels and different platforms, as well as increasing awareness against violence toward women in the public domain and women politicians in particular.*
3. *Encourage political parties to increase their capacities and honour their commitments to increase the representation of women in electoral processes, as well as provide space for and empower women to cover a wide range of topics beyond "women's issues," including funding political campaigns.*
4. *Support the government in mainstreaming gender in culture, cultural heritage and sports, ensuring that women and men have equal opportunities.*
5. *Encourage the government to enforce the role of Gender Equality Officers in line with the Law on Gender Equality and the Regulation on Duties and Responsibilities of Relevant Officials for Gender Equality in Ministries and Municipalities.*
6. *Support and encourage the Assembly of Kosovo to ensure that the gender perspective is mainstreamed throughout their work, thus resulting in inclusive laws.*

## Integrating the women, peace and security agenda

### Conclusions and Key Findings

- Despite advocacy for equal representation under UNSCR 1325 and national laws, women's participation in diplomatic missions of Kosovo and decision-making levels remains low, constituting only 24.4 per cent of decision-making positions in 2023.
- Women are significantly underrepresented in Kosovo security forces, particularly in higher ranks. The absence of women in the highest officer rank and the low representation in other officer and non-officer ranks, highlights a critical area for gender parity improvement.

### Recommendations

1. *Support the Ministry of Foreign Affairs toward*
  - a. establishing training and development programs specifically tailored for women in Kosovo, aimed at enhancing skills relevant to diplomacy, peace negotiations and leadership in security forces.
  - b. Implementing mentorship schemes pairing women in lower or mid-level positions with experienced leaders in diplomacy and security sectors.
2. *Advocate for and support the implementation of gender quotas within diplomatic missions and security forces to ensure a minimum percentage of women in all ranks, especially in decision-making positions. Monitor and publicly report on progress to ensure accountability and transparency.*
3. *Work closely with Kosovo institutions to review and strengthen policies related to gender equality within the national frameworks for peace and security. This includes supporting legislative and policy reforms that explicitly incorporate gender perspectives and requirements from UNSCR 1325.*
4. *Facilitate the inclusion of women survivors of conflict-related sexual violence in peacebuilding processes. This should acknowledge their experiences and leverage their unique perspectives to inform and shape reconciliation and peace efforts.*

## Climate change and environment

### Conclusions and Key Findings

- Kosovo environmental and climate change legislation lacks a gender perspective, with crucial policies failing to integrate gender impact assessments or acknowledge the distinct effects on women and men.
- Women and other marginalised groups in Kosovo are disproportionately affected by climate change due to existing inequalities, with women experiencing higher mortality rates in climate-related disasters and facing increased risks of gender-based violence during such events.

### Recommendations

1. *Consider commissioning an in-depth gender analysis of the environment and climate change in Kosovo. This analysis should assess the differential impacts of climate change on various social groups, mainly focusing on women, youth and ethnic minorities. Its findings and recommendations should be used to inform future policy adjustments and program designs.*
2. *Based on the analysis, support MESPI in drafting and implementing gender equality guidelines as required by the 2024 Law on Climate Change.*
3. *Support MESPI in including a gender perspective in all activities, projects and programmes related to climate change.*
4. *Support initiatives to educate the public on the disproportionate impacts of climate change on women and other vulnerable groups, enhancing community understanding and response strategies.*

## Digitalisation

### Conclusions and Key Findings

- Women are significantly underrepresented in the digital and ICT sectors of Kosovo, holding only 38 per cent of decision-making roles in the Ministry of Internal Affairs and constituting a smaller fraction of entrepreneurs in ICT.
- Despite high overall connectivity, women in Kosovo face substantial barriers to digital participation, including the affordability of internet services and devices, with significant disparities in digital literacy and access between genders.

### Recommendations

1. *Fund scholarships and create targeted programs for women and girls in ICT education, particularly in vocational training and higher education. Encourage partnerships between educational institutions and tech companies to provide internships and mentorships for women students.*
2. *Launch initiatives to improve digital literacy among women, focusing on overcoming barriers such as affordability and access.*
3. *Implement specialised programs that focus on cyber security awareness and protection measures for women, addressing issues like online harassment and technology-facilitated violence. Provide training and resources to help women safeguard their privacy and security online.*

