











### **Edited by**

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### **About FES Youth Studies**

What are young people afraid of or hopeful about? In a rapidly changing world that is challenged by the climate crisis and inequalities, and in many parts aging societies and democratic decline, **FES Youth Studies** investigate how young generations perceive the development of their societies and their personal future. Our aim is to foster informed debate about young people's views on politics and democracy against the background of their life circumstances and values. This includes key issues such as education, employment and mobility, family and friends, and their overall attitudes and perceptions. We focus on young people aged 14 to 29 to understand their perspectives on these critical topics.

**FES** has conducted numerous youth studies around the world since 2009. In 2024, young people in Kosovo were surveyed along with youth in other Southeastern Europe and Central Eastern Europe countries.

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# Executive Summary

**The Youth Study 2024 is a continuation of the series of Youth Studies that the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung has been conducting in Kosovo and the region. The study aims to explain the main attitudes of the young Kosovar population related to social norms and values, education, employment, mobility, and politics. By simultaneously conducting youth studies in all southeastern European countries, and through rigorous data collection, analyses and interpretation processes, we aim to shed light on the perceptions of youth, values and attitudes, as well as their expectations of current and future developments.**

Youth hold a unique position as the bridge between the present and the future. Their active participation in political and social spheres is crucial not only for their personal development but also for the advancement of their communities and the broader society. The engagement of young people in political activities and social initiatives fosters a dynamic environment conducive to progressive change.

When young people vote, run for office, or engage in political debates, they bring issues pertinent to their age group into the spotlight. In Kosovo, these issues include a wide range of topics from qualitative education and employment to the need for environmental action, influencing policies and raising awareness. However, in Kosovo, the values that have the lowest importance among young people are being active in politics and participating in civic actions or initiatives. For a young democracy, such as Kosovo, this political indifference of the youth is a matter of great concern.

Young people in Kosovo continue to be fairly traditional. Our study shows that they are very dependent on their parents, particularly in moral terms, and they would still prefer to be part of large families in the future. The quality of education remains a matter of concern for young Kosovars due to persistent challenges in preparing students for future success and meeting the evolving demands of the modern workforce and society. Although the concept of education goes beyond its mere connection with the labour market, in the current socio-economic structures, aligning education with labour market needs is an urgent necessity for young Kosovars.

The social indifference and lack of interest to be an active part of socio-political life is a common denominator for the young generations across the Western Balkans. Beyond politics, social engagement is equally important for youth. However, the drive for social engagement and change is at its lowest level. This can be best understood by individual life choices which usually take place within the framework of an existing social structure and both socioeconomic and sociocultural defaults which determine the opportunities and resources available to young people.

The Youth Study 2024 is a tool to reflect on the level of young people's political views, as experience shows that young people are powerful actors who bring about change and accelerate political processes. Meanwhile, their political engagement or apathy is closely related to the quality of politics itself and the institutions it produces. Particularly, apathy, disappointment, and lack of trust are drivers of youth migration, which is also explored through this national survey. Although the values and beliefs of young Kosovars are gradually changing under the influence of globalization and social media, most social norms remain rooted in the traditional approach, strongly linked to the socio-economic context and family legacy.

# Key Facts



## Main Challenges for the Next Decade

Unemployment: 70%

Corruption: 53%

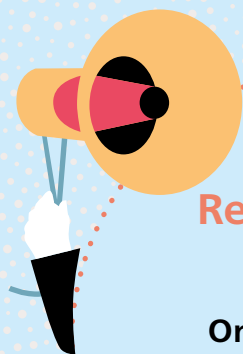
Immigration: 50%



**83%**  
of youth in Kosovo have never had any experience of training or studying abroad.

**Education and Study Habits**  
Around 66% of young Kosovars spend less than one hour studying daily.





### Representation in Politics

Only around 2% of respondents believe that youth interests are "well" represented in national politics.

**70%**  
of youth spend from one to more than five hours on social networks daily.

**86%**  
of Kosovo youth prefer to live with their parents.

**Future Outlook**  
Personal: 87% of young people perceive their personal future as better than the present. General: 77% perceive the future in general as better than now.

**Perceptions of Social Structure**  
72% of young Kosovars believe that connections with people in power translate into an individual's position in the social structure.

**50%**  
of young people in Kosovo do not work in their trained profession.

# 1 ■ Introduction

The Kosovo Youth Study 2024 provides an in-depth analysis of the current state of youth in Kosovo, focusing on critical areas such as education, employment, and social engagement. This comprehensive study offers valuable insights into the challenges and opportunities faced by young people in Kosovo, highlighting the interplay between politics, education quality, labor market needs, and socio-economic conditions.

As this study shows, political engagement among the youth is notably low, with only 2% feeling their interests are well-represented in national politics. Distrust in domestic political institutions is widespread, while young Kosovars struggle to identify their political positioning.

The quality of education remains one of the biggest concerns for young Kosovars. Despite efforts to improve the education system, significant challenges persist, particularly in aligning educational outcomes with labor market demands. The study underscores the importance of this alignment, as it is crucial for enhancing the employability of young graduates. Notably, while there has been a slight increase in youth satisfaction with the quality of education, as evidenced by improved perceptions since the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES) Youth Study Kosovo 2018/19, the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) test results still rank Kosovo among the lowest participating countries, indicating a need for continued educational reforms.

A key focus of the study is the discrepancy between the fields of study pursued by students and the labor market's demands. While Information Technology, Healthcare, and STEM fields are identified as the most demanded by the labor market, a significant number of students continue to enroll in Business Administration and Law programs. This misalignment points to a broader issue within the educational system and societal influences, such as implicit gender biases that steer women towards traditionally female-dominated fields, despite the evident demand in male-dominated sectors.

The study also explores the socio-economic activities of Kosovo's youth, revealing a concerning trend of minimal engagement in work-related activities and studying, coupled with extensive time spent on social media. This behavior pattern raises questions about the effectiveness of the current educational framework and the need for curriculum enhancements to foster greater academic and professional engagement.

Employment remains a critical issue, with high youth unemployment rates and significant gender disparities in labor market participation. The findings indicate that social and political connections are often viewed as more crucial than expertise for securing employment, reflecting a deep-seated mistrust in meritocratic principles. This perception underscores the necessity for comprehensive policy interventions that not only address economic factors but also institutional trust and transparency.

The Kosovo Youth Study 2024 aims to provide a robust foundation for policymakers, educators, and stakeholders to develop targeted strategies that address these multifaceted challenges. By aligning educational programs with labor market needs, promoting gender equity, and enhancing institutional trust, Kosovo can better harness the potential of its youth, driving forward socio-economic development and fostering a more inclusive and dynamic society. This study not only highlights the pressing issues but also offers a roadmap for future interventions to support the aspirations and capabilities of young Kosovars.



# 2. Methodology

This study presents the findings of the FES Youth Studies Southeast Europe 2024 empirical research for Kosovo. It aims to provide insights into how adolescents and young adults from Kosovo perceive politics, democracy, and their role in it as agents of change. Specifically, the survey conducted aims to determine the contribution of young people to the democratic development in the country. The study also aims to establish tendencies and dynamics of youth attitudes in comparison with the 2018/19 study carried out by FES. The study, which is part of a broader project by FES, employs a similar methodology across all participating countries, including Kosovo, although it is not identical.

A standardized questionnaire was used for data collection, with the option of including up to ten questions specific to youth in individual countries included in the study.

The questionnaire was prepared in consultation with the FES Office in Prishtina, a segment was also included where the country authors had the opportunity to offer their contribution. The target population was all residents aged 14 to 29 in Kosovo, while the Computer Assisted Personal Interviewing (CAPI) was the single mode of data collection in Kosovo. For the interviews, households were selected using a defined starting point (buildings with a public importance) and equal steps of HH choice (urban and rural). Eight respondents per each Primary Sampling Unit that were interviewed. Respondents within the households were selected according to the quotas given. If there were 14 to 17-year-olds in a family, as required for the kids' module, participation consent from the parent or legal guardian of the teenager was required for the interview. A nationally representative sample of 530 respondents aged 14–29 was interviewed, while the fieldwork of the quantitative study was administered between 9 February 2024 to 25 March 2024.



When analyzing and evaluating data, one must be aware of the data limitations of the respective method. In the case of Computer-Assisted Web Interviewing (CAWI) surveys, it is first of all the limited target group: Online surveys only reach people that have internet access. Furthermore, the target group is limited to people who have registered in advance in an online access panel and most of them regularly participate in surveys. Beyond that, online surveys usually suffer from an education bias (by mainly reaching medium or highly educated respondents). This is why quotas were used to ensure a representative sample. After fieldwork, weights were calculated in the dataset to compensate for any deviations from the quotas.

The CAWI sample was drawn from the Ipsos Online Panels by quota selection according to the characteristics of age, gender, and region. These central sociodemographics had been pre-defined so that we could directly target respondents via invitation email to achieve a representative distribution of these features. All offline interviews were also based on a quota selection of respondents. One of the major rationales for choosing a quota sampling approach was the low incidence of the target group (young people) in each of the survey countries – which limited the feasibility of a pure random sampling.

The following table summarizes the quotas that were reached compared to the actual distribution of the target population in Kosovo. Possible deviations from 100 % are due to rounding errors. All deviations between net and gross sample were corrected through weighting (with a total weighting efficiency of 88.6 %)

To ensure that respondents are real, unique, fresh, and engaged, the company engaged to conduct the survey used several quality measures. Upon registering for the panel, prospective panelists needed to pass several quality measures such as a double opt-in approach, geographical validation, anonymous proxy server recognition, captcha codes, and duplicate detection (digital fingerprint technology). This way it was ensured that respondents were real and unique. Once registered, respondents had to adhere to strict panel rules that prevented them from being surveyed too often and being over-surveyed on specific topics and product categories. This was done to ensure that respondents were fresh.

Kosovo (Source: Ipsos Country Expert; 14–29, in %)		Target	Net
Gender	Male	52.0	51.6
	Female	48.0	48.4
Age	14–18	36.4	34.5
	19–24	34.0	38.2
	25–29	29.6	27.3
Region (NUTS 2)	Pristina	22.0	26.5
	Prizren	18.4	18.3
	Peja	11.2	9.4
	Gjakova	11.0	11.0
	Ferizaji	12.4	10.4
	Gjilani	12.2	10.2
	Mitrovica	12.8	14.1

# 3 Basic demographic characteristics and trends

Several demographic variables have been used for categorizing the respondents in different segments, such as age group, gender, region of residence, ethnicity, and education. As with the other countries included in the study, the population from which the sample was drawn are people aged 14 to 29, where in the case of Kosovo the response levels regarding each group are as follows: 14–18 (29.5%), 19–24 (43.1%) and 25–29 (27.3%). When it comes to responsiveness of respondents divided by gender, the results of the sample show a roughly equal distribution, through the following figures: male (51.6%) and female (48.4%). The data collection process includes the seven main regional centers of Kosovo – more concretely, the division of the respondents in municipalities in terms of percentage of total respondents was as follows: Prishtinë (26.5%), Mitrovicë (14.1%), Pejë (9.4%), Prizren (18.3%), Ferizaj (10.4%), Gjilan (10.2%) and Gjakovë (11.0%).

The study sample was designed to include both Kosovo-Albanian (90.7%) and Kosovo-Serbian (9.3%) respondents. The sample did not include quotas for other minority communities – this was the choice of the designers of the sample. Nonetheless, the division is on the basis of language (Albanian and Serbian) which does not exclude the possibility of presence of other Kosovar non-majority community youngsters in the study, via communicating in one of these languages. In respect to education level, 30.3% of the respondents were grouped in the category ‘low’ education, around 57.1% were grouped in the category ‘medium’, while 12.6% claimed that they possess ‘high’ education. In general, these variables have been utilized both in analyzing and interpreting the data, therefore they will be encountered throughout the chapters of the report.



# 4. Young people and education

- 33.9% of high school students in 2024 are mostly satisfied with the quality of education compared to only 14% in 2018.
- 27.2% of higher education students in 2024 are mostly satisfied compared to only 14% in 2018.
- Information Technology and Computer Science (28.8%) is the most demanded field, followed by Healthcare and Medical Sciences (24.9%) and STEM (22.3%).

The quality of education in Kosovo remains a concern due to persistent challenges in preparing students for future success and meeting the evolving demands of the modern workforce and society. While the PISA test results rank Kosovo low, there's a slight increase in youth satisfaction with the quality of education.

Aligning education with labor market needs is a top priority in Kosovo, reflected in education policies, donor organizations' focus, and media attention. The Education Strategy 2022–2026 emphasizes the importance of connecting higher education with the labor market through various initiatives.



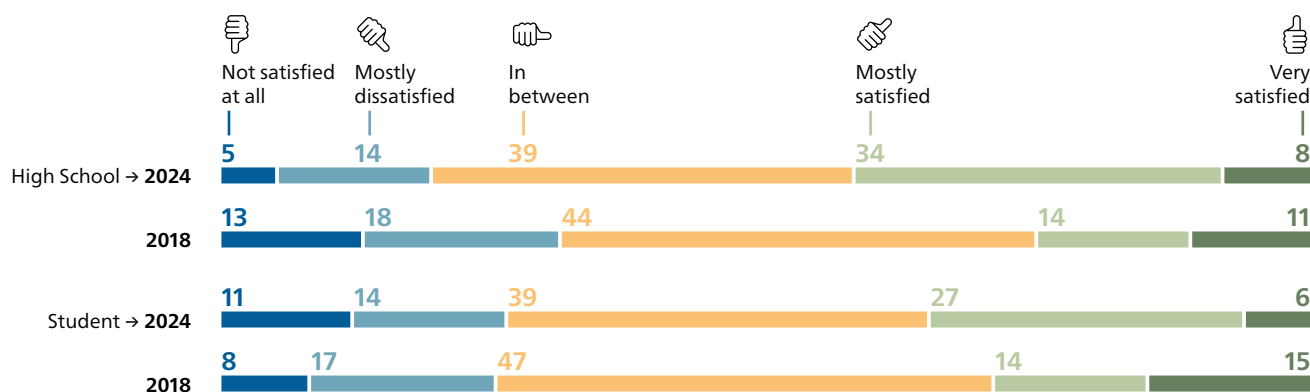
However, the Kosovo Report 2023 by the European Commission highlights a discrepancy between educational offerings and labor market demands, indicating a need for further alignment. To understand youth perceptions, the respondents reveal Information Technology and Computer Science as the most demanded field, followed by Healthcare and Medical Sciences, and STEM. Implicit bias influences women's choices, directing them towards traditionally female-dominated fields despite perceived demand in male-dominated sectors. Although the education system focuses on aligning programs with labor market needs, the majority of students enroll in Business, Administration, and Law programs rather than in-demand fields like Information Technology and Healthcare. Surprisingly, many youth have not considered changing their education paths to match labor market demands, indicating a need for enhanced promotion and appeal of these fields.

## Quality of education

The quality of education in Kosovo is not yet at the desired level. The main evidence for the lack of quality in education at pre-university level are the PISA test results in 2018 which rank Kosovo among the last three participating countries (OECD, 2019). As per the quality of higher education institutions, European Commission's Kosovo Report 2023 underscores the importance of strengthening quality assurance mechanisms in higher education to ensure educational standards and enhance graduate employability (European Commission, 2023). Despite these findings, the youth in Kosovo feel more positive regarding the quality of education in Kosovo.

Fig. 1 **Level of Satisfaction with the Quality of Education (in %)**

*How satisfied are you generally with the quality of education in Kosovo?*



Comparing the results from FES Youth Study Kosovo 2018/19, there is a slight increase in satisfaction among youth in regard to the quality of education.

**34 % of high school students in 2024 are mostly satisfied with the quality of education compared to only 14 % in 2018. Similarly, 27 % of higher education students in 2024 are mostly satisfied compared to only 14 % in 2018.**

To further understand the perception of the youth towards the quality of education in Kosovo, they were asked to evaluate whether the isolation from visa restrictions and the inability to travel has impacted their level of academic development. Surprisingly, only 22 % have claimed that their academic development and education opportunities have been negatively impacted by the inability to travel abroad. This level of response shows that the youth feel comfortable with their education development and hence the quality of education in Kosovo.

## Education and labour market needs

Aligning education with labor market needs is currently one of the top priorities in Kosovo and it is manifested through education policies, donor organizations' focus and media attention. Based on the Education Strategy 2022–2026, one of the objectives for Higher Education is to create “better connection of higher education with the labour market through harmonization of study programs, increase of opportunities for practical work of students, cooperation with enterprises and increase of interdisciplinary programs and STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) programs” (MESTI, 2022). In addition, the Kosovo Report 2023 by the European Commission concludes that “the education system does not sufficiently teach the necessary key skills and is not adequately aligned with labour market needs” (European Commission, 2023). To better understand Kosovo’s youth perceptions regarding education and labor market, they were asked to identify the most demanded education fields in the labour market in Kosovo. They responded that Information Technology and Computer Science (28.8 %) is the most demanded, followed by Healthcare and Medical Sciences (24.9 %) and Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) (22.3 %).

Fig. 2 **Views on the most demanded education field among youth in Kosovo (in %)**

*In your opinion, which education field do you believe is currently the most demanded in the labor market in Kosovo?*

	Total	Male	Female
Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM)	22.3	24.0	20.4
Healthcare and Medical Sciences	24.9	18.7	31.5
Business and Finance	13.4	18.1	8.4
Information Technology and Computer Science	28.8	32.1	25.2
Creative Arts and Design	3.8	2.2	5.4
Education and Teaching	5.3	3.0	7.9

## Women's implicit bias towards labour market needs

Implicit bias refers to unconscious attitudes or stereotypes that influence understanding, actions, and decisions towards certain groups of people. In the case of women's choices towards their selected education fields, implicit bias can play a significant role in shaping their decisions about what to study and pursue academically (Drydakis et al., 2018). In addition, implicit biases often lead to gender stereotypes and expectations, influencing women's perceptions of their abilities and interests in certain fields of study (Moss-Racusin et al., 2012). In Kosovo, "girls tend to be oriented (over 90 %) to programs in education, natural sciences, social sciences, medicine, communication and linguistics" (MESTI, 2023).

As seen in Figure 2, the largest percentage of women (31.5 % compared to 18.7 % men) have claimed that Healthcare and Medical Sciences is the most demanded education field in the labour market in Kosovo.

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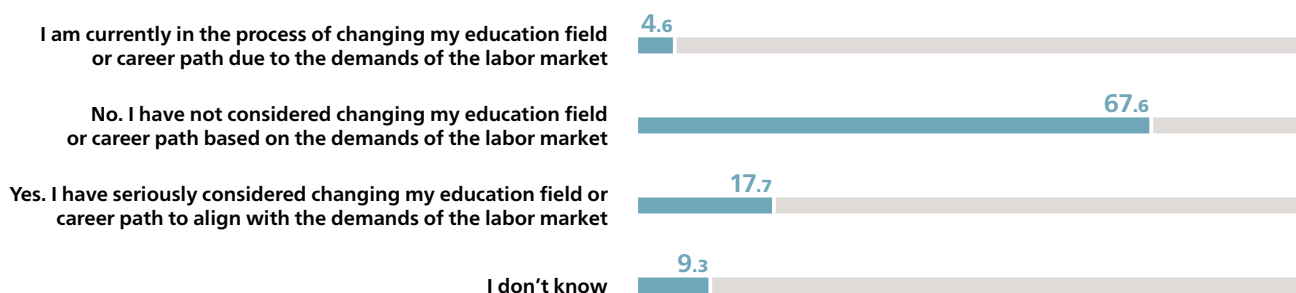
**Unsurprisingly, 74.9% of the students enrolled for the first time at the Bachelor's level in the field of Health and Welfare are women (KAS, 2023).**

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In order for women in Kosovo to be able to become more competitive in the male dominated fields, efforts to challenge gender stereotypes can help counteract implicit biases and create a more equitable learning environment for women. By addressing implicit bias in women's education, it can be ensured that all individuals have the opportunity to pursue their interests and talents without being constrained by societal expectations or stereotypes (Llorens A, et al., 2021).

Fig. 3 Career path change considerations among youth in Kosovo (in %)

*Have you considered changing your education field or career path based on the demands of the labor market in Kosovo?*



## Youth (un)aligning education with labour market needs

Although the respondents have identified Information Technology and Computer Science, Healthcare and Medical Sciences and STEM as three most demanded education fields in the labour market, Kosovo’s youth does not exclusively pursue studies in these education fields. The Kosovo Agency of Statistics (KAS) in the report “Higher Education Statistics by fields of study, 2022/2023” reveals that the largest number of students enrolled are in the field of Business, Administration and Law (25%). Also, the total number of students at the Bachelor’s level is the highest in Business, Administration and Law (16,877), much higher than the number of students enrolled in Information and Communication Technology (7,243), Health and Welfare (9,555), and Natural Sciences, Mathematics and Statistics (2,288) (KAS, 2023). The discrepancy between what students perceive as the most demanded education fields in the labor market and the education fields they pursue requires further analysis. To rule out the possibility of the youth lacking opportunities to pursue the demanded education fields, they were asked whether they would change their education field to meet the labour market demand. 67.6% of the respondents claimed that they have not considered changing their education field or career path based on the demands of the labour market.

It can be stated that although a significant focus is given to harmonize the most requested study programs with the labour market demand, the youth is not highly interested to pursue these study programs. Therefore, policymakers and stakeholders should prioritize promoting and enhancing the appeal of these fields of study to Kosovo’s youth to align their educational background with labor market demands.

## Youth and their time

The majority of youth in Kosovo spends most of their daily time on social media. When asked about how they spend their time daily, the responses as shown in the table are:

- The majority of respondents spend no time at all on work-related activities (51.3%) and reading internet newspapers (23.2%).
- For activities related to schooling/ education, the largest percentage of respondents spend 1–2 hours (14.0%), followed by 30 minutes to 1 hour (12.7%).
- Time spent on social networks shows a significant percentage of respondents spending 1–2 hours (31.4%) and more than 5 hours (6.1%).

It is surprising that 83.4% of youth aged between 19–29 years old spend no time at all on things related to work. This either shows that their jobs are not serving them for further professional development, that the youth are significantly unemployed or they are not employed in their desired professional setting. On another note, **53.7% of high school students aged between 14–18 and 66.2% of university students aged between 19–24 spend less than one hour studying.**

These percentages might imply that the youth is not satisfyingly engaged in their educational development and/or that the education system is not challenging and demanding enough for them to spend more time studying. To increase the time spent by the youth in educational development, stakeholders should focus on improving the curriculum to include more extracurricular activities and educational activities for the youth to be engaged on. Kosovo youth spend most of their daily time on social networks: **70.4% of the youth spend from one to more than five hours on social networks.**

Consequently, stakeholders should focus their efforts to include more educational opportunities through the social networks to maximize the productivity of the time spent from youth on social networks.

## Main takeaways

**1. Quality Concerns:** The quality of education in Kosovo faces persistent challenges, hindering its efficacy in preparing students for future endeavors and addressing contemporary societal and workforce needs. Despite recent improvements, Kosovo's performance in the PISA tests remains low, underscoring ongoing concerns regarding the quality of education.

**2. Youth Perceptions and Choices:** The study reveals that Information Technology and Computer Science, Healthcare and Medical Sciences, and STEM fields are perceived as the most demanded by Kosovo's youth. However, enrollment patterns show a preference for Business, Administration, and Law programs, suggesting a gap between perceived demand and actual choices.

**3. Youth Engagement and Time Allocation:** Kosovo's youth allocate substantial time to social networks, potentially impacting their educational and professional engagement. Concerningly, a significant proportion spend minimal time on work-related activities and studying, highlighting potential areas for intervention to enhance educational engagement and productivity.

**5. Implicit Bias and Gender Disparities:** Implicit biases influence women's educational choices, directing them towards traditionally female-dominated fields despite perceived demand in male-dominated sectors. Efforts to challenge gender stereotypes and promote diversity are essential to creating a more inclusive learning environment.



# 5. Employment

- The trend of young people in Kosovo frequently working at jobs that do not align with the profession they are trained in continues to persist (48 %)
- Connections with people in power is considered to be very important by respondents in order to gain an individual's position in the social structure
- 83.4 % of youth in Kosovo have never had an experience of training or studying abroad

## Employment

While Kosovo has one of the youngest populations in Europe, youth unemployment continues to remain one of the key problems the country faces. According to a report published by KAS, in the second quarter of 2023 the unemployment rate for the population age group 15–24 (16.2 %) was higher in comparison to the unemployment rate for the age group 15–64 (10.7 %).<sup>1</sup> At the same time, within the youth unemployment figure, there is a gendered dimension that stands out in a consistent fashion – for instance, according to the same KAS report the unemployment rate for young females in 2023 stood at 23.4 %, compared to 12.6 % for young males.<sup>2</sup>



Similar results are confirmed by this survey. In addition, previous reports have also highlighted that the NEET (youngsters that are Not in Education, Employment or Training) category is amongst the highest in the region.<sup>3</sup> Yet, the data of this survey also revealed a positive note, namely that the overall trend appears to be on a decrease – albeit a slow one.

These problems have been pervasive, and do not represent new challenges. Finding solutions to unleash the youth potential and integrate it into the domestic labour market will continue to represent one of the key challenges for Kosovo's development on the way forward. The current Kosovo Government, led by Vetëvendosje, which took power in February 2021 has reiterated consistently that "jobs and justice" comprise the main priorities.<sup>4</sup> In 2023, the Kosovo Government opened the Platform Superpuna, initially meant to be utilized for youngsters between the ages of 18–25. The Superpuna Platform was created with the aim to serve as an "employment platform to facilitate the access of youth to the labour market, and at the same time help businesses in engaging new employees"<sup>5</sup> and in 2024 the platform was expanded to include participants between ages of 18–29. According to Kosovo officials, until February 2024 over 67 % of youngsters that underwent the program, continued to remain active after the termination date.<sup>6</sup> Generally, this platform represents a positive step, and the wider impact of the program must continue to be assessed in the way forward, which should then be followed-up with further policy-adjustments.

Nonetheless, the survey results indicate persistent problems pertaining to the skills mismatch, overeducation, and also low trust by youngsters in meritocratic standards as the path to land jobs. The impressions that social and political ties are more important than expertise, are predominant amongst Kosovar youngsters.

To this end, although the prevailing youth unemployment problem is centered in the economy, it also stands in intersection with other policy-areas, such as quality of education and policy-implementation, and institutional trust. As such, tackling the issue of youth unemployment, therefore, requires a multi-faceted approach. In the following, this chapter presents results of the survey regarding the current situation on the ground, also drawing comparisons with the results of the FES Youth Study Kosovo 2018–2019. In order to project continuity between the two studies, the chapter also applies a rather similar structure.

## Employment status

When Kosovo declared independence in 2008, the youth unemployment lied at a stark figure at around 45%<sup>7</sup> – almost half of the overall Kosovo youngsters were unemployed. Around a decade and a half later, the overall youth unemployment rate appears on a decreasing trend, however, the results of the survey still do not paint a positive picture. Within the unemployment segment, around 41% consist of an inactive labour force by responding that “I am currently not looking for a job,” compared to a figure of around 15% who declared the opposite. The survey does not shed light onto the factors behind this choice by the youngsters. About 8% youngsters in total currently have “a permanent contract for a full-time job,” out of which around 10% are male compared to around 5% female. About 4% have a permanent part-time job, out of which about 6% are male, and about 3% are female. Around 12%

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**41%** of young unemployed people in Kosovo are currently not looking for a job

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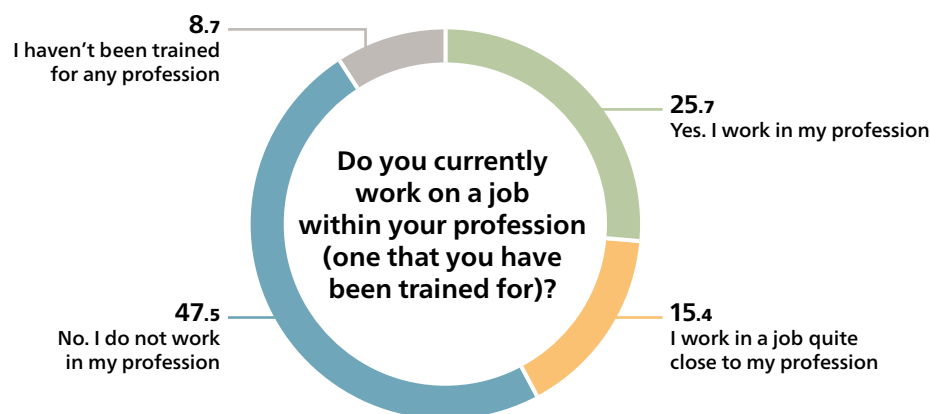
have temporary contracts for full-time jobs, out of which 16% are male and 8% female. Further, about 5% noted that they have occasional jobs, around 7% are self-employed, and around 3% are in occupational training. It must also be taken into account that according to the World Bank the informality in Kosovo remains in high levels<sup>8</sup>, therefore this underlying element could still have played a part in the answers.

In essence, the findings largely fail to reveal new insights, rather they solely confirm findings and expectations that derive from previous reports. Such expectations are that youth unemployment in Kosovo remains a cause of concern; that the labour market is composed of a large portion of youngsters who are inactive; and also, that amongst the employed category there is a disbalance between males and females. The gendered segmentation indicates that young women have a weak attachment to the labour market, however, the result of the question “I have no job, but I am actively looking for a job” stands at 21% for females in comparison to 11% for males. To this end, while it is clear that women face difficulties to access the labour market, this question shows that they are not content with this situation, and a large portion are ready to join the market if opportunities arise. It is up to the Kosovo Government and business community to make this a more accessible and conducive path for young Kosovo females. As mentioned, a positive note is that the overall trend of these dynamics appears to be on a decrease, compared to the findings of the FES Youth Study Kosovo 2018–2019.

## Skills mismatch and overeducation

The trend of young people in Kosovo frequently working at jobs that do not align with the profession they are trained in continues to persist. Compared to the previous FES Youth Study Kosovo 2018–2019, the figure underwent a decrease of 6%, thus falling from 54% to around 48%. On the other hand, around 26% of youngsters claimed that they are working in jobs that match their profession. A total of around 15% of youngsters responded that they work in a job “quite close” to their profession, out of which about 15% are males and 17% are females. This reveals a slightly higher tendency for women to work in their profession. Therefore, not only are there limited job opportunities for Kosovo youngsters, but there is also an overall mismatch between their professions (training) and jobs, which often leads individuals to work in fields unrelated to their professions (Figure 4).

Fig. 4 Education/training and professional alignment among youth in Kosovo (in %)



All this appears intertwined with another factor that comes out are disparities between job places and education. The job places of the majority of youngsters, that is around 58 %, are currently “in line with achieved level of formal education”. About 7 % of youngsters perform jobs that require a higher level of formal education compared to the job, whilst around one third of the respondents (that is 30 %) are currently working jobs that require a “lower level of formal education”. This process has been discussed in the FES Youth Study Kosovo 2018–2019, as linked to “over-education” (in that study the figure was 44 %), as an outcome indicated by the disparity between offered education and skills, and labour market. A total of around 9 % of youngsters admitted that they have not been trained in any profession – the rather high figure of young people that have not received training represents another challenge for the labour market in Kosovo. On the whole, the profession mismatch and overeducation as to separate but intertwined dynamics, demonstrate a misfit between the youngsters education and training, skills, and labour market demands.

## Important factors in finding a job

There are several factors that are considered to have a similar impact in finding a job. The prevailing perception, namely that connections with people in power translate into an individual’s position in the social structure – is considered to be very important by respondents. Around 42 % have considered it as “very important” and 30 % as “mostly important”. The second factor is believed to derive from “membership into a political party”, selected by 36 % of the respondents as “very important”, and 25 % of the respondents as “mostly important”. The fact that “membership into a political party” is regarded as a determining factor in young people gaining access to jobs is an indication of the low trust in institutions – a result that is further confirmed in the chapter discussing ‘Political Attitudes and Participation’. The third factor – that is experience from abroad – was regarded by 31 % of the respondents as “very important” and by 30 % of the youngsters as “mostly important”.

Finally, expertise is considered to be the least important out of these factors – with 27% that saw it as “very important” and 30 as “mostly important”. Interestingly, Kosovar young female respondents showed a slightly higher level of trust (circa 4–5%) in factors such as expertise and experience from abroad to help them in the process of landing jobs. What this shows is that young Kosovar females have a slightly higher trust than males in features of meritocracy to achieve a job, in comparison to party membership, and acquaintances and connections, which are regarded as stronger factors by Kosovar males.

## Main takeaways

**1.** Figures for Kosovo youngsters that are inactive in the market continue to remain high, with about 41% of the unemployed claiming that they are not looking for a job (35% male and 48% female). In the unemployed inactive segment, around 21% of female respondents noted that they are looking for a job, compared to 11% of males.

**2.** Gender disparities with regard to social status and access to the labor market and jobs continue to remain pronounced. Male respondents continue to have a higher employment rate, across different job categories.

**3.** Generally, Kosovo youngsters believe that expertise is less important for finding a job compared to connections with people in power, membership in a political party and experience from abroad. The fact that ‘expertise’ fared worse than the other three factors represents a cause of concern, and one possible broader explanation could be related to the overall low levels of trust in institutions across society.

**4.** Young people in Kosovo frequently work at jobs which do not align with their occupation – about 48% responded that they do not work in their profession. This demonstrates a high degree of mismatch between workforce qualifications and needs and demands that exist in the labour market. On the other hand, around 9% of youngsters admitted that they never received any training, a portion which is expected to continue to face difficulties in accessing the labour market.

**5.** The report finds that overeducation continues to be present amongst Kosovo youngsters. About 30% of young people’s actual jobs require a lower level of formal education compared to the existing level of youth employed in those jobs. Efforts to achieve a more ‘fine-tuning’ between the education system and labour market must increase in intensity in order to address this shortcoming.

# 6. Mobility

The migration of youth poses a significant challenge in Kosovo, as it does in other countries within the Western Balkans region (Leitner, 2021). An even bigger challenge is that highly skilled and educated workers are leaving the country causing 'brain drain' (Icoski, 2022) and the situation is expected to intensify with the visa liberalization for Kosovo citizens (Lavrič, 2020). Kosovo citizens are traveling visa free from January 2024 (European Commission, 2024) and there is a public debate whether there will be a higher percentage of youth emigrating in the rest of Europe.

This can be considered a clear indication of the Kosovo youth's optimism towards their professional and academic opportunities in Kosovo.

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**In addition, when asked whether they feel less professionally developed in comparison to the youth in the region because of the inability to travel freely, 49.1 % claimed that they do not feel less professionally developed.**

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## Studying abroad

83.4 % of youth in Kosovo have never had an experience of training or studying abroad, and half of them do not even intend to do so in the future; women are more reluctant to study abroad compared to men. Despite the assumption that Kosovo youth are unsatisfied with the education in Kosovo, and they lack opportunities to develop academically abroad, the Kosovo youth does not show as much interest in doing so. The students in lower education are less likely to engage in learning or training abroad compared to the students in higher education.

## Youth and migration

To better understand the experiences of the youth living abroad, they were asked whether they stayed abroad for more than six months and a majority of them (89.3 %) claimed that they have not. To comprehend whether not staying abroad for more than six months was a personal choice or due to lack of opportunities because of visa restrictions, the youth were asked about their desire level to emigrate. The graph below shows the responses.

There certainly is a miscellaneous approach among the youth when it comes to emigration. **While 28.4 % of the respondents claimed that they do not intend to emigrate, 26.8 % have a strong to very strong desire to emigrate.**

Women tend to have less desire to emigrate compared to men. The biggest percentage of youth (31.1 %) have a moderate desire to emigrate. These statistics can be used by policymakers to target youth emigration. Since the greater percentage of the youth either do not wish to emigrate or have moderate desire to emigrate, the stakeholders should adopt policies that keep the youth's desire to emigrate at the bare minimum. Also, focus should be given to women through providing them with opportunities while in Kosovo as they have the least desire to emigrate compared to men. Whereas, for the youth that have a strong desire to emigrate, a deeper analysis should be done to understand the motive and details behind the motivation to emigrate in order to decrease the number of youth leaving Kosovo.



Fig. 5 International mobility of youth in Kosovo (in %)

*Have you ever been away from your native country for more than six months?*



## Why emigrate, when and for how long?

Majority of the youth who wish to emigrate will emigrate within the next two years (45.1%). This is a clear indicator that the youth who have a desire to emigrate will most probably do so in the nearest future and the policymakers should react fast if they want to keep this percentage of youth from emigrating. Among them, ages between 19–24 are the ones most likely to emigrate. There might be three reasons why this group is more willing to emigrate: (1) they become eligible to work; (2) they want to pursue their higher education studies and (3) they have recently become adults. Another concerning response is that: **21.5% of the youth who wish to emigrate claimed that they want to emigrate 'for good' to another country.**

There is clearly a level of dissatisfaction among this group and understanding the reasoning behind the wish to emigrate is crucial for policymakers. Although this percentage is high, there is still some room for policy action as 50.5% of the youth who wish to emigrate have done nothing to start this process. Meanwhile, 26.5% contacted their friends and relatives, 15.7% contacted potential employers, and 12.4% contacted universities or schools.

Conclusively, friends and family, employers and universities/schools are the main go-to categories of people where youth who wish to emigrate reach out to. **The main reason why the youth wish to emigrate is to improve the standard of living (31.8%), followed by higher salaries (16.3%) and better employment opportunities (16.5%).**

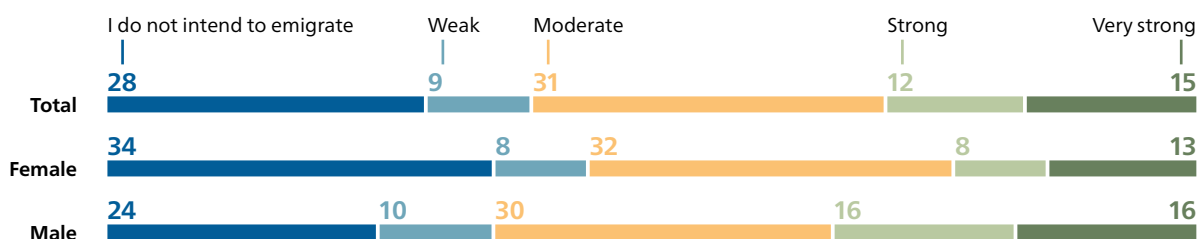
It is worth noting that the youth do not seek migration for better education, higher cultural diversity or to start their own business. Evidently, the policymakers should focus their attention on improving the standard of living. The standard of living encompasses various factors such as income, employment, access to healthcare, education, housing, and other essential services, as well as factors like environmental quality and social well-being (OECD, n.d.). From these factors, employment and income seem to be the driving forces of the youth to seek migration.

## The “don’t knows”

The “don’t knows” represent a significant portion of the youth surveyed, indicating uncertainty about their desire to emigrate or the duration of such a move, or that they have not taken any action toward emigration. One key aspect that policymakers could focus on is creating more employment opportunities within Kosovo. By boosting the local economy and job market, young people may feel more inclined to stay and contribute to their communities rather than seeking opportunities abroad.

Fig. 6 **Desire to emigrate among youth in Kosovo (in %)**

*How strong is your desire to move to another country for more than six months (emigrate)?*



Moreover, policymakers could implement initiatives aimed at providing guidance and information to youth who are undecided about emigration. This could involve educational programs, career counseling services, or mentorship opportunities that help young people explore their options and make informed decisions about their future paths.

Overall, addressing the needs of the “don’t knows” segment requires a multifaceted approach that considers economic, social, and personal factors influencing their decision-making. By providing opportunities, support, and guidance, policymakers can empower young people to make choices that align with their aspirations and contribute to the development of Kosovo.

## Main takeaways

**1. Desire for Emigration:** A diverse range of attitudes towards emigration exists among Kosovo’s youth. While some express no intention to emigrate (28.4%), others have a strong desire to do so (26.8%). Women tend to exhibit lower desire levels compared to men.

**2. Reasons for Emigration:** The desire to improve the standard of living (31.8%), higher salaries (16.3%), and better employment opportunities (16.5%) are the primary drivers for youth considering emigration. Employment and income emerge as key factors influencing migration decisions.

**3. Immediate Action Required:** The majority of youth intending to emigrate plan to do so within the next two years, indicating a pressing need for policymakers to act swiftly to retain this demographic.

**4. Supporting the Undecided:** Initiatives aimed at providing guidance and information to undecided youth to emigrate are crucial. These could include educational programs, career counseling services, and mentorship opportunities to help youth explore their options and make informed decisions about their future paths.

**5. Limited Interest in Studying Abroad:** A significant majority (83.4%) of Kosovo’s youth have never pursued training or studying experiences abroad, with half of them showing no intention to do so in the future. Women exhibit a higher reluctance compared to men, and students in higher education are more inclined towards studying abroad.

# 7. Family and plans for the future

- 86.3% among Kosovo youth prefer to live with their parents
- Only 11.5% of respondents reported that they would live alone if financial circumstances allowed it

Family is an extremely important aspect of living in Kosovo. As a collectivistic culture, social security and care work is mainly provided within the family. In this context, family is characterized by cohabitation of two or three generations. Therefore, most young people of different ages live with their parents. This cultural aspect influences the preferences of young people in terms of practical aspects of organizing their living. The values they adhere to are very relevant to their living style and choosing a partner.

The survey results indicate that the majority of young people live with their parents. The percentage differs between male and female participants: 89.9% of male participants and 77.3% of female participants live with their mother, and 85.2% of male participants and 72.9% of female participants live with their father. On the other hand, female participants have a higher rate of living with their partner or spouse (20.6%) compared to male participants (13.3%).

Higher rate of living with children is present among female participants (15.9%) compared to male participants (8.3%). These gender differences could be due to the higher rate of marriage among female participants (20.2%) compared to male participants (13.3%) as indicated by the results of this survey and to the younger age of marriage/coronation among young women (28 years old) compared to young men (31 years old).<sup>9</sup>

Regarding living with extended family, the results indicate that a percentage of young people live with three generations of family. Living with grandparents is prevalent among 19.3% of male participants and 15.8% of female participants. Again, similar to the differences of living with parents, a higher percentage is among male participants compared to female participants.

It seems living with parents is the most preferred option. 86.3% of respondents reported that they preferred to live with their parents because it is the simplest and the most convenient option. This preference is more prevalent among content minimalists (93.7%) and among Eastern European young conservative women (91.3 percent), followed by educated urban progressives (80.1%), active traditionalist (75.4%), and complex urban youth (59.8%). Complex urban youth have the highest percentage (37.4%) compared to other groups regarding the preference to live alone if financial circumstances allowed it. However, this group has the lowest rate of willingness to take on responsibilities (52.4 percent) and being independent (51.8%).

On the other hand, only 11.5% of respondents reported that they would live alone if financial circumstances allowed it, and only 1.9% of respondents reported that their parents would not agree to allow them to live alone. More than 90% of respondents reported that they either get along with their parents very well or have minor differences in opinions.

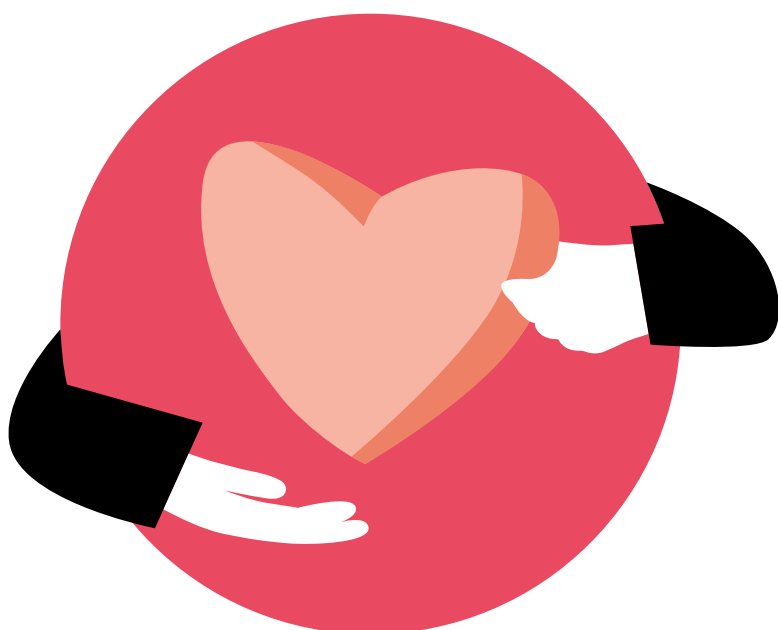
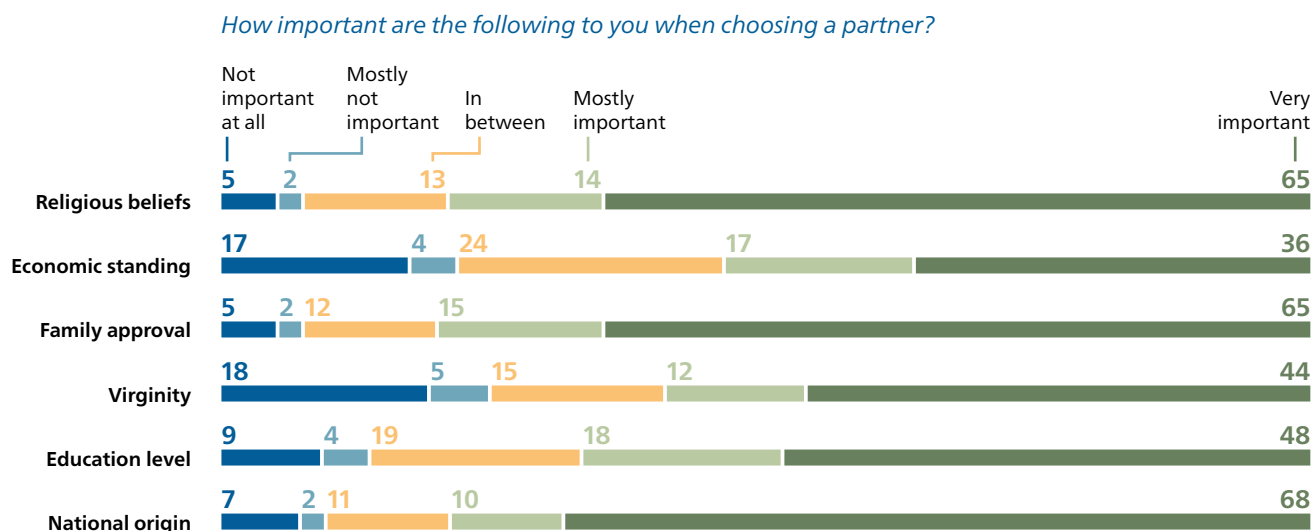




Fig. 7 Important factors for choosing a partner for youth in Kosovo (in %)



These findings indicate the reluctance of the majority of young people to change their way of living which could be partially due to the transmission of family values through generations and to the hesitance to take on responsibilities as independent adults.

It is obvious that the values mentioned above that have more importance on choosing a partner are interconnected. For example, family approval is related to religious beliefs ( $r=.46$ ) and national origin ( $r=.51$ ), and national origin is related to religious beliefs ( $r=.52$ ). Those who value education level tend to value economic standing too ( $r=.47$ ).

**78%** of young people in Kosovo find national origin important when choosing a partner

Regarding the importance of values for choosing a partner, young people underscore the importance of family approval (79.8%), religious beliefs (79.3%), and national origin (78.0%). However, they underscore the importance of education level, virginity, and economic standing too, but at a lower level compared to the abovementioned values. Regarding the demographic differences on such values, active traditionalists and the 25–29 year olds rank education level and economic standing at lower importance compared to other values. Educated urban progressives rank all other listed values as of lower importance, except national origin.

Family structure reflects cultural aspects of society. Young adults still live with their parents. It is a preferred option by both parents and their children even above the age of 18 years old. Even more, there is evidence that there are families where three generations live together: grandparents, parents and young adults. For most young people, living with parents is the only choice. Regardless of the lack of other living options, young people prefer to live with their parents because they consider it a simpler and more convenient option. On the other hand, parents still prefer to live with their children even in adulthood. Therefore, it is a mutual preference to live together. It is a traditional aspect of the family structure. Parents provide support to their adult children and share household tasks with them.

This practice may prevent young people from taking responsibilities and living independently. In other words, this creates a comfort zone for young people because they have the advantage of living with less responsibilities with their parents. However, there is a tendency of complex urban youth to diverge from traditions. They declared that they would live alone if financial circumstances would allow it. However, it is paradoxical that they have less willingness to take on responsibilities and be independent.

Living in extended families means that more compliance is needed. Compliance is needed for both traditional and practical reasons. Based on tradition, young adults must get parents' consent for their important decisions. One of them is the decision for their future spouse. The majority of them agreed that family approval is important when they choose their partner/spouse. Family approval is important for practical reasons regarding family cohesion. It is interesting that religious beliefs and national origin are important in choosing a partner. This may reflect the traditional values and nationalism which dominate the whole of society.

## Main takeaways

- 1.** The majority of young people live with their parents. This is more prevalent among male young people compared to female young people.
- 2.** There is a portion of young people who live with their grandparents. Living in multigenerational families is more prevalent among male young people compared to female young people.
- 3.** Majority of young people prefer to live with their parents because they consider it as the simplest and convenient option. They declare that they get along well with their parents.
- 4.** Complex urban youth have the highest percentage of willingness to live alone if financial circumstances allow it.
- 5.** When it comes to choosing a partner, young people consider the three most important values which dominate in making their choice: family approval, religious beliefs, and national origin.

# 8 ■ General values, attitudes and perceptions

- Young people are mostly afraid of a bad healthcare system (53.1%), having no job (49.4%), and getting seriously ill (46.4%).
- Female respondents are more afraid of being a victim of physical violence (36.6%) compared to male respondents (31.0%).
- The overall average of life satisfaction among young people is 7.49 on a scale from 0 (very dissatisfied) to 10 (very satisfied).

## Opinions and attitudes

Different values were measured, such as: taking responsibilities, being independent, graduating from university, having a successful career, being active in politics, participating in civic actions/initiatives, getting/being married, getting/being rich, looking good, wearing branded clothes, healthy eating, doing sports, and having children. Among these values, the lowest importance was given to being active in politics with 19.3% followed by the value of participating in civic actions/initiatives with 37.6%. Although the majority of young people prefer to live with their parents, they highly value being independent (87.3%).

Those who aspire to have a successful career tend to prefer being independent ( $r=.41$ ), taking responsibilities ( $r=.33$ ), graduating from university ( $r=.41$ ), and eating healthy ( $r=.38$ ). Those who prefer to take responsibilities tend to prefer being independent ( $r=.34$ ), eating healthy ( $r=.33$ ) and getting married ( $r=.31$ ). On the other hand, those who prefer branded clothes value economic standing ( $r=.32$ ), getting rich ( $r=.42$ ), and looking good ( $r=.47$ ).

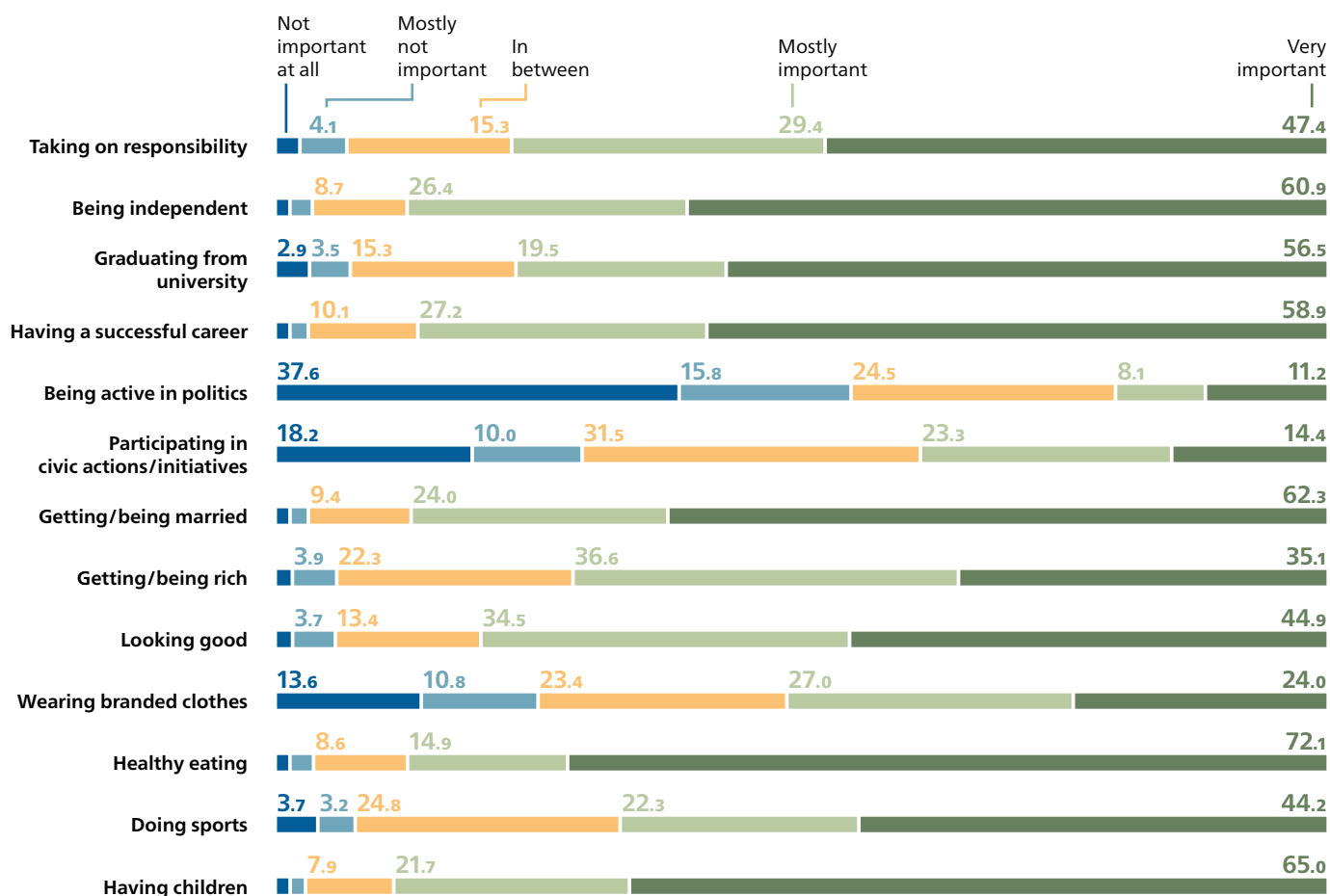
Age groups have some differences in relation to the abovementioned values. Some of them lose importance with age, such as: taking responsibilities, graduating from university, having a successful career, getting/being rich, looking good, wearing branded clothes, and doing sports. On the other hand, values about creating a family gain importance with age, such as getting/being married and having children. The values about contributing to the community, such as being active in politics and participating in civic actions or initiatives have more importance among 19–24 year olds, whereas being independent slightly loses importance for this age.

Gender differences are evident in perception of these values. Male participants tend to value the following more: taking responsibilities, having a successful career, being active in politics, participating in civic actions/initiatives, getting/being married, getting/being rich, looking good, wearing branded clothes, and doing sports, whereas female participants value graduation from university more. This is in accordance with the data which shows that the percentage of female students is higher. The gender parity index in higher education in Kosovo is 1.41.<sup>10</sup>



Fig. 8 Opinions and attitudes among youth in Kosovo (in %)

How much are the following items important to you?



There is a mixed picture of perception of values among different segments of young people. Educated urban progressives have the highest rate in the following values: taking responsibilities (85.3%), being independent (97.5%), graduating from university (94.2%), and having success in career (97.3%). Struggling youth with materialistic aspirations have highest rates regarding the participation in civic actions/initiatives (57.0%), being active in politics (41.9%), and wearing branded clothes (66.1%). Content minimalists have the highest rates regarding getting/being married (94.8%), healthy eating (95.2%), having children (96.5%), and doing sports (70.2%). Eastern European young conservative women have the highest rates for looking good (87.3%) and getting/being rich (76.2%).

### Satisfaction and perception of future

Life satisfaction was measured on a scale from 0 (very dissatisfied) to 10 (very satisfied). The overall average of life satisfaction among young people is 7.49. 87.3% of young people perceive the personal future better than now, 7.2% the same as now, and 0.8% worse than now. Complex urban youth seem to be less optimistic compared to other segments because only 60.0% of them perceive their personal future as better than now, 22.7% the same as now, and 15.0% do not know.

More pessimistic are perceptions regarding the future in general compared to personal futures. 76.5 % perceive the future in general as better than now, 14.0 % the same as now, and 4.3 % worse than now. Active traditionalists appear to be the most pessimistic segment compared to other segments. 18.0 % of them perceive it to be worse than now, 17.2 % the same as now, and 57.0 % better than now.

## Fears and concerns

The survey measured the perceptions of a variety of fears and concerns, such as: being a victim of physical violence, a victim of sexual violence, getting robbed by someone, getting seriously ill, having no job, terrorist attack, pollution and climate change, too many immigrants and refugees, global pandemic, victim of domestic violence, war, bad healthcare system, negative effects of AI, not having a decent pension, and housing problems. Young people are mostly afraid of a bad health care system (53.1 %), having no job (49.4 %), and getting seriously ill (46.4 %). It seems that health and employment are the biggest concerns among young people. On the other hand, young people are the least concerned about being victims of domestic violence.

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**53 %** are afraid of a bad health care system, making it the biggest concern for youth in Kosovo

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As far as being a victim of physical violence is concerned, female young people are more afraid compared to male young people. 36.6 % of female young people are significantly afraid of being a victim of physical violence, 26.2 % are somewhat afraid, and 33.3 % not at all. On the other hand, 31.0 % of male young people are significantly afraid of physical violence, 21.7 % somewhat afraid, and 42.2 % not at all. Regarding the segments, Eastern European young conservative women have the highest rate of fear of being victim of physical violence (71.4 %), whereas least afraid are content minimalists (65.1 %) and active traditionalists (60.6 %).

Similarly, gender differences exist concerning the fear of being victim of sexual violence. Female young people reported that they are significantly afraid of being a victim of sexual violence (38.6 %) compared to male young people (21.8 %). 32.6 % of female young people and 51.5 % of male young people are not afraid at all of being a victim of sexual violence. This fear is mostly prevalent among Eastern European young conservative women (69.5 %). 81.1 % of active traditionalists, 74.2 % of content minimalists, and 42.1 % of educated urban progressives are not afraid at all of being a victim of sexual violence.

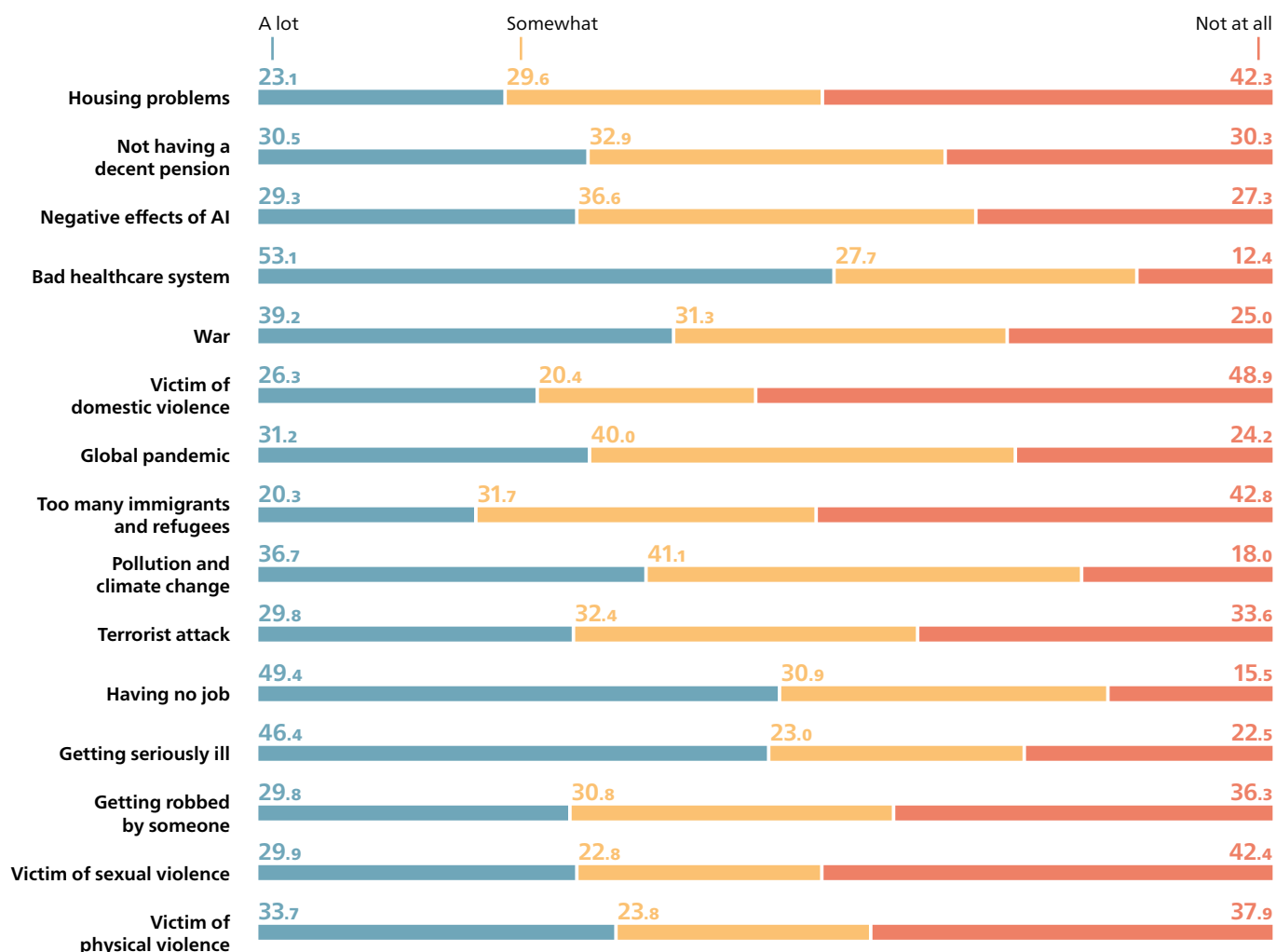
Female young people are more afraid of getting robbed by someone compared to male young people. 31.5 % of female young people and 28.3 % of male young people are very afraid of getting robbed by someone, 36.4 % of female young people and 25.6 % of male young people are somewhat afraid of getting robbed by someone, and more male young people (42.9 %) compared to female young people (29.3 %) are not afraid at all of getting robbed by someone. Eastern European young conservative women are the group of young people with the highest percentage (63.9 %) of being afraid of getting robbed by someone and content minimalists are the least afraid of getting robbed by someone.

Concerning the fear of getting seriously ill, gender differences amongst age groups are less evident. However, Eastern European young conservative women are more afraid of getting seriously ill (80.9 %) compared to other segments. On the other hand, content minimalists are the least afraid of getting seriously ill (34.7 %).

Similarly, gender differences and age group differences are less evident regarding the fear of having no job. The highest rate of fear of having no job is among Eastern European young conservative women (64.5 %), whereas content minimalists have the lowest rate (26.2 %).

Fig. 9 Fears and concerns among youth in Kosovo (in %)

To what extent are you frightened or concerned in relation to the following things?



## Justified behaviors

The survey measured how much young people justify a presented list of behaviors and orientations, such as: abortion, homosexuality, cheating on taxes if you have the chance, accepting/giving a bribe, and using connections to 'get things done' (e.g., in a hospital, at different offices, etc.). A ten-point scale ranging from one to ten: 'one' meaning the certain behavior/orientation is never justified and 'ten' meaning always justified.

The results indicate that around half of young people never justify the above-mentioned behaviors/orientations. There are no significant gender differences and age group differences on the justification of such behaviors/orientations. However, there are differences among the segments. Educated urban progressives have more liberal views. They have the highest mean (5.77) on justifying abortion (5.77) and homosexuality (5.55) compared to other segments. In contrast, this segment has less tolerance for cheating on taxes if they had the chance (1.89) and accepting/giving bribes (1.46). Using connections to 'get things done' (e.g., in a hospital, at different offices, etc.) is mostly justified by active traditionalists (5.06).

Fig. 10 Views among youth in Kosovo of justified behaviors (in %)

Please indicate whether, in your opinion, the following behaviours/orientation can always be justified, never, or something in between.

	Never 1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Always 10	I don't know
Abortion	47.5	4.1	4.9	3.3	12.6	6.0	4.9	1.7	1.1	6.1	6.6
Homosexuality	58.7	3.6	4.2	2.8	8.1	3.9	4.0	0.6	–	4.3	7.9
Cheating on taxes if you have a chance	55.8	3.4	4.2	2.5	10.3	5.4	3.2	1.0	0.2	2.6	10.3
Accepting/giving a bribe	58.5	5.3	3.9	3.2	9.4	4.4	4.0	2.2	0.2	3.5	5.1
Using connections to 'get things done' (e.g., in a hospital, at different offices, etc.)	47.7	4.1	5.2	4.8	14.3	7.3	4.3	2.0	1.0	5.2	3.6

## Opinions on neighbors

The survey included the exploration of perceptions of young people towards different communities as neighbors. These communities were: LGBTQIA+ people, Roma people, drug addicts, Jewish people, Christian people, and Muslim people. Young people were asked how they would feel if members of these communities would move to live in their neighborhoods.

Most negatively perceived are LGBTQIA+ people and drug addicts. 44.1% of young people declared that they would feel very bad if LGBTQIA+ people lived in their neighborhood. Even more negatively are perceived drug addicts. 66.6% of young people declared that they would feel very bad if drug addicts lived in their neighborhood.

88.5% of respondents are Muslims. Most positive view has received the Muslim community as a neighbor. 58.1% of respondents declared that they feel very good and 19.3% of respondents declared that they would feel good to live with Muslim people in their neighborhood. The Christian community, Jewish community, and Roma community received more neutral views. Young people declared that they would feel neither good nor bad living with members of Christian community (44.5%), with members of Jewish community (36.7%), and with members of the Roma community (48.5%).

Educated urban progressives is the segment that perceives all the above-mentioned communities most positively except drug addicts. The two other segments that have positive views towards members of these communities as neighbors are complex urban youth and active traditionalists.

## Discrimination

The survey explored the experiences of young people regarding discrimination. Several attributes were included in the survey as potential motives for discrimination such as: gender, economic background, religious beliefs, ethnic background, political convictions, sexual orientation, and spoken language. The majority of respondents declared that they were never discriminated against based on these attributions. However, those who experienced discrimination were more discriminated based on economic background (often: 9.3%; sometimes: 16.6%) followed by political convictions (often: 6.6%; sometimes: 14.0%) and religious beliefs (often: 7.3%; sometimes: 11.1%).

Slight gender differences were found in different kinds of discrimination. Compared to male respondents, female respondents reported higher rates of discrimination based on spoken language, gender, ethnic origin, and sexual orientation, whereas they reported lower rates of discrimination based on economic background, religious beliefs, and political convictions.

Fig. 11 **Opinions on neighbors among youth in Kosovo (in %)**

*How would you feel if one of the following families or persons moved into your neighbourhood?*  
By youth subgroups, combined answers 'very good' and 'good'

	Total	Eastern European/ Middle Eastern Young Conserva- tive Women	Content Minimalists	Struggling Youth with Materialistic Aspirations	Active Traditionalists	Complex Urban Youth	Educated Urban Progressives
<b>LGBTQIA+ people</b>	<b>9.0</b>	<b>6.9</b>	<b>8.1</b>	<b>1.4</b>	<b>9.3</b>	<b>11.6</b>	<b>40.4</b>
<b>Roma people</b>	<b>27.6</b>	<b>21.5</b>	<b>31.9</b>	<b>12.3</b>	<b>34.6</b>	<b>35.0</b>	<b>43.1</b>
<b>Drug addicts</b>	<b>3.5</b>	<b>4.3</b>	<b>1.5</b>	<b>–</b>	<b>–</b>	<b>22.0</b>	<b>–</b>
<b>Jewish people</b>	<b>19.0</b>	<b>12.8</b>	<b>20.7</b>	<b>10.9</b>	<b>22.2</b>	<b>24.2</b>	<b>44.3</b>
<b>Christian people</b>	<b>40.4</b>	<b>27.7</b>	<b>48.0</b>	<b>20.5</b>	<b>67.5</b>	<b>34.1</b>	<b>65.8</b>
<b>Muslim people</b>	<b>77.4</b>	<b>81.2</b>	<b>87.3</b>	<b>65.9</b>	<b>74.1</b>	<b>48.8</b>	<b>68.8</b>

Gender disparities are more evident in discrimination based on gender. Female respondents reported higher rates of gender discrimination (often: 5.5%; sometimes: 16.4%) compared to male respondents (often: 3.9%; sometimes: 10.4%).

Differences on reported discrimination are more apparent between segments. More than 85% of Eastern European young conservative women, content minimalists, and struggling youth with materialistic aspirations and 58.5% of educated urban progressives reported that they never experienced gender discrimination. Complex urban is the segment with the highest declared rate of gender discrimination. 42.4% of them declared that they sometimes experienced gender discrimination and 26.9% declared that they often experienced gender discrimination. This segment has the highest rate of reported discrimination based on economic background too. 43.5% of them reported they experienced this kind of discrimination sometimes and 35.1% reported they experienced it often. Around half of active traditionalists reported they experienced discrimination based on economic background either sometimes or often. 75.6% of young conservative women and 89.9% of complex urban youth reported they never experienced this kind of discrimination.

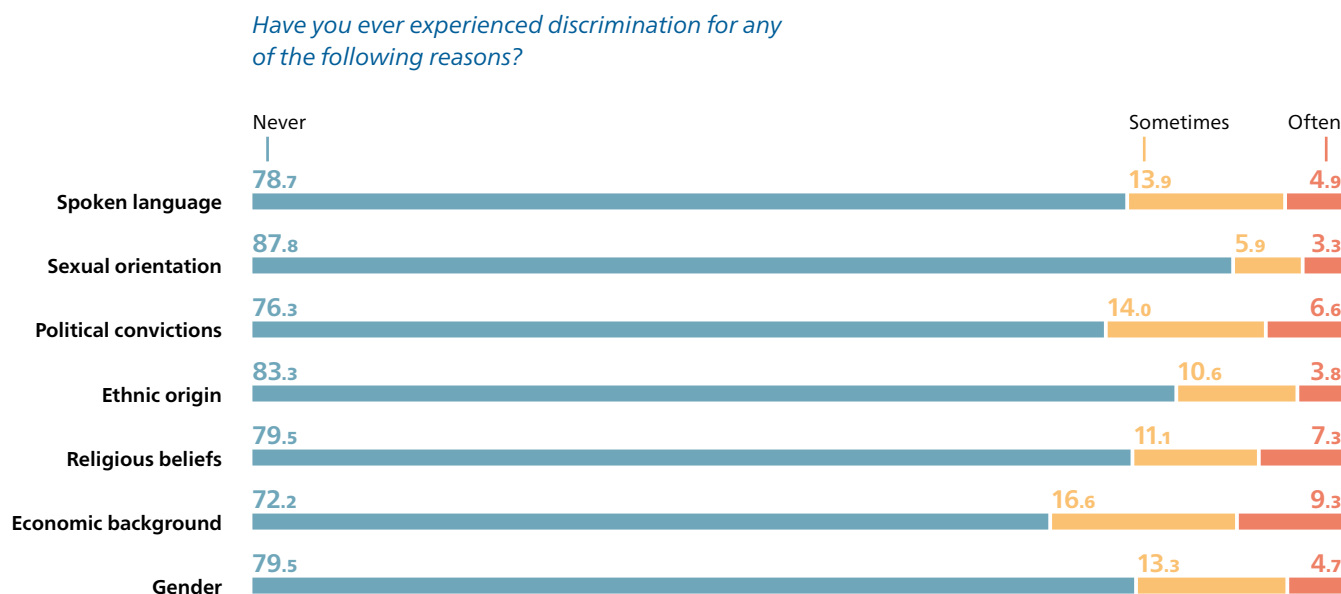
Concerning discrimination based on religious beliefs, complex urban youth is the segment with the highest rate of percentage of reported discrimination. 74.3% of them reported that they were either sometimes or often discriminated against because of their religious beliefs.

Discrimination based on ethnic origin is more prevalent among complex urban youth compared to other segments. 65.7% reported they experienced this kind of discrimination either sometimes or often, whereas young people of other segments reported this kind of discrimination less than 20%.

Discrimination based on political convictions is less common among content minimalists and struggling youth with materialistic aspirations. 89.9% of young people of these two segments reported they never experienced this kind of discrimination. Also, 77.0% of young conservative women, 65.9% of active traditionalists, and 64.5% educated urban progressives reported they never experienced this kind of discrimination. However, complex urban youth reported the highest rates; 65.5% reported they either sometimes or often experienced such discrimination.



Fig. 12 Experiences of discrimination among youth in Kosovo (in %)



More than 90 % of respondents reported that they have never experienced discrimination based on sexual orientation. However, 70.7 % of complex urban youth reported they experienced this kind of discrimination either sometimes or often. They also reported the highest rates (69.0 %) of discrimination based on the language they speak. Other segments reported much lower rates of such discrimination.

## Views on women and minority rights

Young people were surveyed regarding the rights of different groups, such as women, ethnic minorities, members of the LGBTQIA+ community, poor people, and young people. The majority of respondents (62.6 %) think that poor people have not enough rights, but majority of them think that (54.9 %) women, (51.4 %) ethnic minorities, and (51.9 %) young people have enough rights. 33.0 % of respondents think that members of the LGBTQIA+ community have too many rights or (38.7 %) think that they have enough rights.

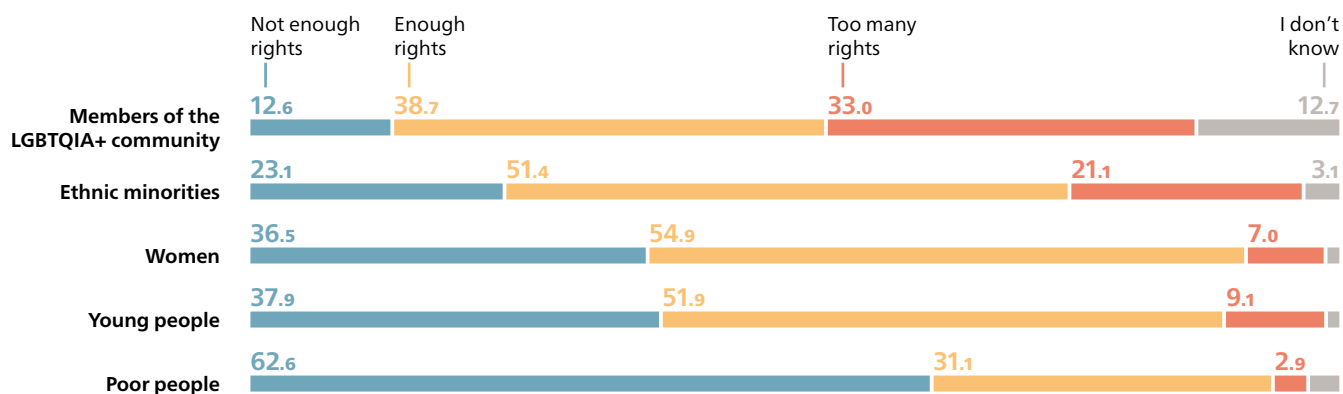
There is a gender disparity in perceptions of women’s rights. 48.6 % of female respondents think that women do not have enough rights compared to 25.2 % of male respondents who share the same opinion. In contrast, 64.1 % of male participants think that women have enough rights, compared to 45.0 % of female respondents who share the same opinion.

Regarding ethnic minorities’ rights, the majority of respondents (51.4 %) think that ethnic minorities have enough rights, whereas 23.1 percent think that they do not have enough rights. 21.1 % think that they have too many rights. Complex urban youth differ from all other segments regarding the perception of ethnic minorities’ rights. 60.2 % think that ethnic minorities have enough rights and 19.7 % think that they have too many rights, which are the highest percentages compared to other segments.

Perceptions towards the rights of members of the LGBTQIA+ community do not differ significantly between genders or group ages. Differences are more apparent among the segments of young people. For example, 68.9 % of active traditionalists think this group has too many rights, which is a much higher percentage compared to other segments.

Fig. 13 Views on the status of rights for different groups among youth in Kosovo (in %)

Please say whether, in your view, the following groups, have not enough, enough, or too many rights in your country.



In contrast, 30.2% of educated urban progressives think that this group does not have enough rights. This percentage is much higher compared to the percentage of other segments who share the same opinion.

There are slight gender differences concerning the rights of poor people. 66.2% of female respondents showed the tendency to think that poor people do not have enough rights compared to 59.3% of male respondents. In contrast, 33.9% of male respondents think that poor people have enough rights compared to 28.1% of female respondents who share the same opinion. 80.5% of active traditionalists and 87.3% of educated urban progressives think that poor people do not have enough rights. In contrast, 56.2% of struggling youth with materialistic aspirations think that they have enough rights, 38.8% of complex urban youth share the same opinion, and 21.8% think that they have too many rights.

Segments of young people differ significantly regarding the perceptions towards the rights of young people. 61.1% of educated urban progressives think that young people do not have enough rights. In contrast, 66.8% of struggling youth with materialistic aspirations and 60.2% of complex urban youth think that young people have enough rights. 25% of complex urban youth think that young people have too many rights.

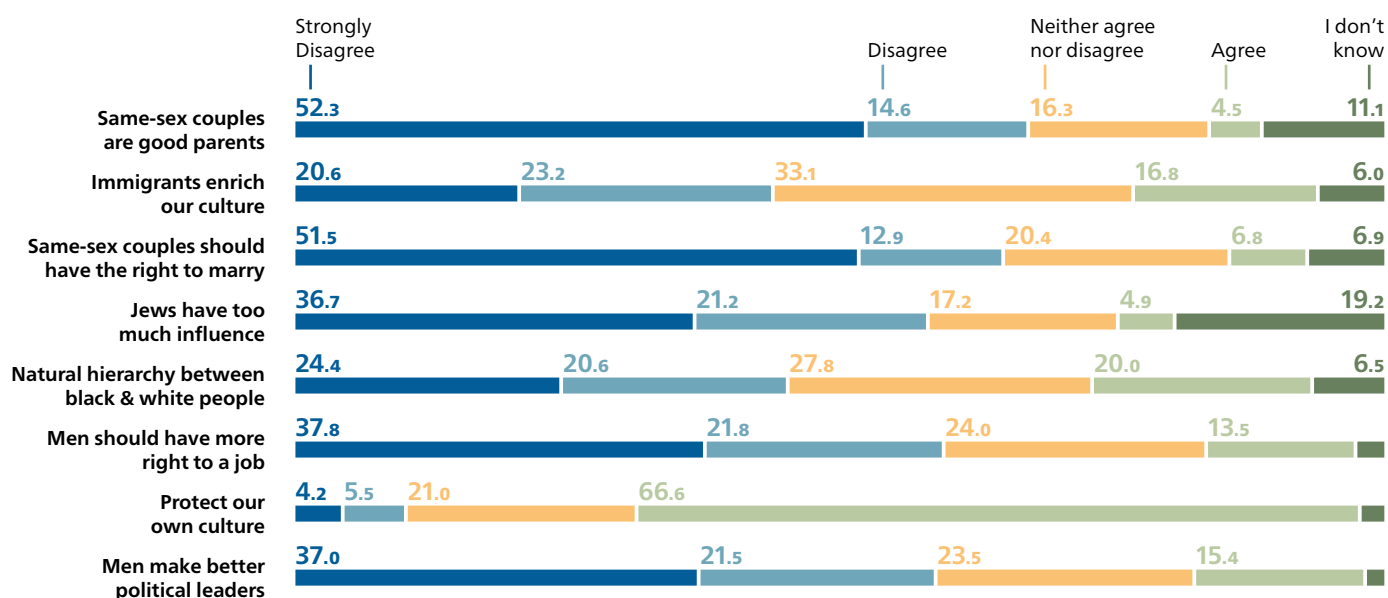
## Societal view

Young people were presented with a list of selected views about different issues, and they were asked to select their level of disagreement/agreement on a five-point scale. The most accepted societal view is protection of one's own culture. However, the lowest percentage of accepting this view is among complex urban youth (58.6%).

The most rejected views are about the right of marriage of same-sex couples and the same-sex couples are good parents. However, female respondents showed more tolerance regarding these two views. For example, 32.9% of female participants agreed that same-sex couples should have the right to marry compared to 22.0% of male respondents. However, the majority of complex urban youth (57.2%) and educated urban progressives (76.1%) agree that same-sex couples should have the right to marry, and they are good parents. 48.3% of complex urban youth and 67.6% of educated urban progressives also agreed with this sentiment.

Fig. 14 Societal views among youth in Kosovo (in %)

How strongly do you agree with the following statements?



Gender differences are evident in perceptions of male leaders and men having more rights to jobs. 48.3% of male participants and 28.9% of female participants agree that men make better political leaders. Educated urban progressives strongly reject this view. Only 9.8% of them accept this view. 46.3% of male respondents and 28.0% of female respondents agree that men should have more rights to jobs. None of the urban progressives accept this view. However, this view is mostly accepted by struggling youth with materialistic aspirations (55.5%) and complex urban youth (59.2%).

Complex urban youth and educated urban progressives mostly agree on enrichment of culture by immigrants. 67.2% of complex urban youth and 70.5% of educated urban progressives agree with such a view. Regarding the Jews' influence, mainly complex urban youth agree that Jews have too much influence in their own country (51.6%). Approximately half of respondents agree on natural hierarchy between black and white people.

Findings indicate major differences regarding the belief that same-sex partners are good parents. More than half of eastern European young conservative women, content minimalists, struggling youth with materialistic aspirations, and active traditionalists strongly disagree on that, whereas complex urban youth and educated urban progressives tend to be more neutral and less either agree or disagree.

Environmental concerns differ among young people of different segments too. For example, for the statement 'the state should limit consumption if it helps to protect the environment. For example, it should be forbidden to use cars that pollute the environment' mostly content minimalists agree. 44.0% of them agree and 35.4% of them strongly agree. Complex urban youth is more neutral concerning the environmental issue; 47.0% neither agree nor disagree with such a statement. Those who prefer environmental protection tend to value the importance of healthy eating highly ( $r=.35$ ) and living in the same neighborhood as Muslims ( $r=.30$ ), but they are against the living in the same neighborhood with drug addicts ( $r=.36$ ) and do not believe that same-sex couples are good parents ( $r=-.31$ ).

## Main takeaways

- 1.** The values that have the lowest importance among the young people are being active in politics and participating in civic actions or initiatives. Whereas the values that are considered most important are: taking responsibilities, being independent, graduating from university, having a successful career, getting/being married, getting/being rich, looking good, wearing branded clothes, healthy eating, doing sports, and having children.
- 2.** Although most young people live with their parents, the majority of them also consider it very important to be independent.
- 3.** Educated urban progressives have the highest rates in the following values: taking responsibilities, being independent, graduating from university, and having a successful career. Struggling youth with materialistic aspirations have highest rates regarding the participation in civic actions/initiatives, being active in politics, and wearing branded clothes. Content minimalists have the highest rates regarding getting/being married, healthy eating, having children, and doing sports. Eastern European young conservative women have highest rates in valuing looking good and getting/being rich.
- 4.** The overall average of life satisfaction among young people is 7.49 on a scale from 0 (very dissatisfied) to 10 (very satisfied). They perceive personal futures as better than future in general.
- 5.** Unemployment and health related issues are the biggest concerns among young people.
- 6.** Around half of young people never justify: abortion, homosexuality, cheating on taxes if you have the chance, accepting/giving a bribe, and using connections to 'get things done' (e.g., in a hospital, at different offices, etc.). Educated urban progressives have more liberal views concerning abortion and homosexuality compared to other segments of young people.
- 7.** The majority of young people would not live in the same neighborhood with LGBTQIA+ people and drug addicts.
- 8.** The majority of respondents declared that they were never discriminated against based on gender, economic background, religious beliefs, ethnic background, political convictions, sexual orientation, and spoken language. Those who declared that they had experienced discrimination declared it was based on economic background followed by political convictions, and religious beliefs.
- 9.** The majority of respondents think that poor people do not have enough rights, but more than half of them think that women, ethnic minorities, and young people have enough rights. More than one third of respondents think that members of LGBTQIA+ have too many rights or think that they have enough rights.
- 10.** The most accepted societal view is protection of one's own culture. The most rejected views are about the right of marriage of same-sex couples and the same-sex couples are good parents.
- 11.** The majority of young people agree that the state should limit consumption to protect the environment.

# 9 Political attitudes and participation

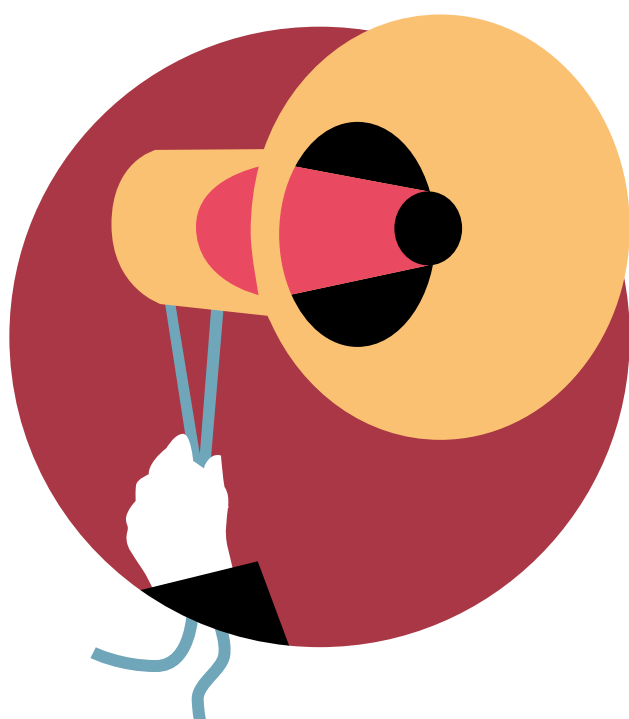
- Around 46 % of young Kosovars are not interested at all in politics.
- 37 % of young Kosovars know 'nothing at all' about politics.
- Only around 14 % would be in favor of taking a political position themselves.

Active and meaningful political participation represents one of the founding pillars for building robust democratic structures and institutions. Kosovo represents an interesting setting to explore the views of the youth in regard to political attitudes and participation, given that in addition to the specificity of the post-communist past, it has specificities in two other dimensions. First, Kosovo represents a post-war context, with an institutional and state architecture that emerged in the post-1999 period following a process of international intervention and governance (UN Mission in Kosovo). In addition, Kosovo has the youngest population average in Europe, which coupled with a modest economy with persistent rates of unemployment, makes the relation of the youth with domestic politics an interesting object of inquiry. Such a broad context presumably serves as a contributing factor to demands for improvement of living standards, which then again are tightly linked to outcomes deriving from political processes.

In the following, this chapter will present the results on Kosovo youngsters' views regarding political participation, representation, engagement, as well as their beliefs regarding ideologies, values, domestic and international institutions. The chapter also draws from the FES Youth Study Kosovo 2018–2019 and FES Youth Study Kosovo 2012, in order to add a comparative temporal angle to the analysis, which should capture instances of change, and provide a potentially better comprehension of the phenomena of interest.

## Interest, knowledge and participation in domestic politics

Young Kosovars appear to be rather disinterested in domestic politics affairs, with a remarkable percentage of around 46 % having declared that they are "not interested at all in politics." In this context of a prevailing disinterest, it is not surprising that most young people, namely 37 %, declared that they know "nothing at all" about politics, and only around 14 % would be in favor of taking a political position themselves. The rather high figures of disinterest in politics could be explained by an overall impression which leans towards the view that the interests of the youth are not properly represented in politics. The results indicate such a pattern, namely around 16 % of Kosovo youngsters believe that youth interests are "not at all" represented in politics, while around 30 % believe that they are "poorly" represented. These results are largely compatible with the study that was conducted in 2018–2019, which also found that the interest of young people in Kosovo was on a trend of decrease. At the same time, this study showed that between the years 2012 and 2018–2019, Kosovo youngsters were less and less interested in politics in general. Not only is this disinterest traced to 2018–2019, but it appears to have set on such a trajectory even earlier.<sup>11</sup> Since then the trend has decreased a bit further, though not as dramatically as in the previous measurements.<sup>12</sup>



Still, in 2018–2019 about 7% declared that they are very interested in domestic politics, compared to a figure of 3% that declared the same in 2024 – above all, the data indicates that the number of Kosovo youngsters with a primary interest in politics is decreasing.

Despite this, young people in Kosovo displayed a high level of participation in the last elections, with only 10% of the respondents claiming that they rejected the opportunity to go to the ballots despite having the right to do so. In general, about 45.6% of young Kosovars with the right to vote did so in the last national elec-

tion. Nonetheless, although election turnout yields positive results, more needs to be done by relevant stakeholders to boost youth political participation and engagement. Regarding media consumption, the results show that the youngsters do not receive their information on politics from televisions and online media. Over half of the respondents declared that they spend “no time” or “less than half an hour” learning about political events from media outlets (Klan Kosova, Dukagjini, Kohavision, Kallzo.com, T7, Nacionale).

## Ideological views

Similar to the findings revealed in the FES Youth Study Kosovo 2018–2019, the majority of Kosovo youngsters continue to struggle when they are asked to characterize themselves as leaning to the “right” or “left” in their political orientation. Asked to position themselves on the left or the right of the political scale from 1–10, young people tended to have problems, both in understanding these categories, and locating their own position along the political spectrum (Figure 15). The results are still intriguing – while the highest percentage around 17% was placed in the middle of the spectrum, the average means was 5.61. This gives the impression of a general ‘centrist’ positioning of Kosovar youth inside the left-right political spectrum. Interestingly, around 15% described themselves as “completely right wing” in their political orientation, compared to around 13% that labeled themselves as “completely left wing.”

Despite the considerable self-declared “completely right wing” youngsters, other questions illustrated that most of the youth’s views on economic and social issues as well on the role of the state in providing social welfare, principally align with “left-wing” ideologies. For example, most young people would be in favor of policies that favor equal income and would prefer an increased governmental role both in ownership of businesses and industries, and expanding social welfare programs. Therefore, most Kosovar youth are not against the expansion of state services and institutions and appear in favor of an increased role of the state within the economy

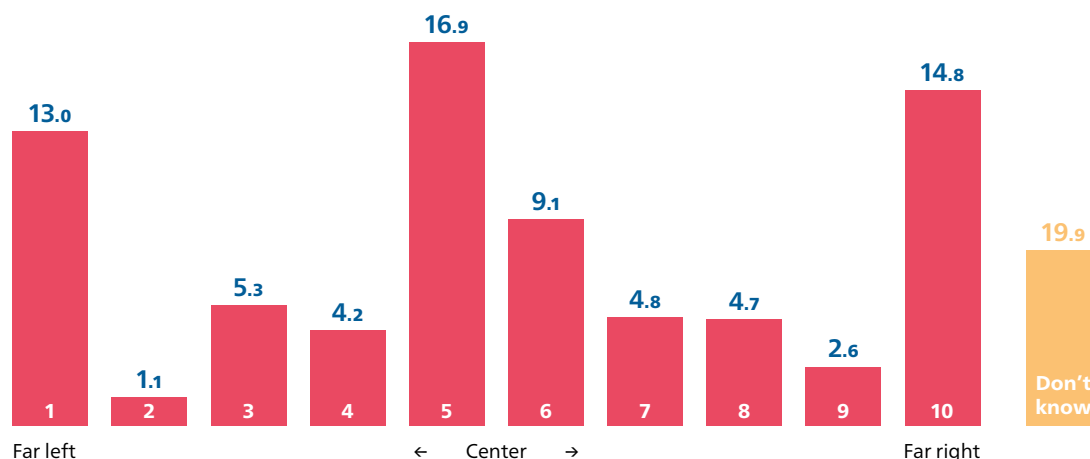
and society. Another interesting finding relates to gender differences regarding the ideological views – young males (18%) expressed more readiness to self-identify as “completely right wing” compared to young females (11%).<sup>13</sup>

The majority of young people admitted that they are likely to cast their votes based on the party’s leader (around 28%), compared to party ideology, electoral program of the party or coordination with family and friends – these three different responses sit at about 19%. Such findings (along with the following subsection on democracy) suggest that Kosovar youngsters are largely disinterested to engage with political activism at the conceptual and ideological level, and this is also reflected in the process of choosing their preferred political party to which they cast their vote. Different formal and informal campaigns tackling awareness-raising could represent a way to mitigate this situation, and to foster the linkage between voter knowledge, party programs and political decisions at the central level. In the long run, such actions carry the potential to improve accountability and policy implementation in regard to political party programs and electoral promises – therefore, improving the voter-government relationship.

**3%** of young people in Kosovo are very interested in domestic politics

Fig. 15 Ideological beliefs among youth in Kosovo (in %)

How would you place your political beliefs on a typical left-to-right scale?  
Scale from '1 – far left' to '10 – far-right'



## Views on democracy

The findings regarding the stance of young Kosovars on democracy yield some interesting patterns. About 44 % of Kosovo youngsters agreed that democracy represents a good form of governance, and about 41 % also regard democracy as “always preferable” in comparison to other political systems. By the same token, the majority of Kosovar youngsters reject the claim that “dictatorship is better than democracy under certain circumstances,” with about 34 % “completely disagreeing” and about 17 % “disagreeing”. On the other hand, around 21 % of youngsters “completely agree” that a strong leader must govern the country, while around 23 % stated that they “mostly agree” with the claim.

Although, in essence, civil liberties are widely considered to be a constitutive element for the notion of democracy, they do not appear to represent a ‘sacred’ notion for young Kosovars. Most respondents declared that they would favor their restriction in exchange for better living standards or combating threats, such as terrorism. The absolute majority of youngsters also link the notion of democracy to “economic security.”

The data, therefore, points that while generally Kosovar youngsters rate the democratic system, other “existential threats” such as security and living standards are of utmost importance. Nonetheless, the data indicates that the overall results on questions related to democracy are positive. There are no significant gender differences that could be identified through the gender segmentation in attitudes towards democracy.

## Political trust

In general, political trust in domestic institutions appears at rather low levels, and this represents a point of concern for the vitality of the democracy in the country. For instance, political trust in institutions such as the government and parliament is lower compared to security institutions such as army and police, and also international institutions such as EU and NATO. Youngsters’ trust in international bodies, therefore, remains high even amongst younger generations categorized in age groups of 14–18 and 19–24, that have spent most, or even their whole life, after the 2008 declaration of independence. One possible explanation behind this is that although the internationally led governance in Kosovo has ended, the role of external partners across different fields continues to remain high to this day.

In addition to the fact that the youngsters have a higher trust level in international institutions (EU) rather than their own government does not paint a positive picture, it also highlights two key points. First, this highlights an overwhelming support and aspirations of Kosovo's younger generation to become part of the 'European family', thus reflecting a desire for alignment with broader European standards and values. Taking these results for granted means that there are no causes for concern for a legitimacy crisis of the EU in the eyes of young Kosovars. Furthermore, support for the EU in Kosovo amongst youngsters appears robust, despite the fact that the Kosovo Government has endured a series of public encounters with EU mediators responsible for the EU-facilitated dialogue. The picture is also complicated by the fact that Kosovo has been placed under the so-called "reversible and temporary measures" by the EU for the first time in June 2023, due to disagreements over the choices related to dialogue process with the government in power.<sup>14</sup> Despite all this, the absolute majority of youngsters share a pro-EU sentiment, and an overwhelming majority of 89 % would prefer Kosovo to become a member of the EU (Figure 16).

On the other hand, such results are also telling for Kosovo's Government which must make it a priority to increase trust levels, not only within the government itself but across all public institutions. The lack of trust in governmental bodies can have far-reaching consequences, affecting governance, policy implementation, and citizen participation – and erode the internal legitimacy of the state and the citizen-state relationship. Political trust ranks fairly weak regarding institutions such as judiciary and municipal level. Trust in political parties measured on general terms appears to be very low – for example, only about 5 % claimed that they fully trust political parties. Another interesting result relates to the low level of trust in civil society organizations, with only 8.7 % of the respondents expressing full trust in the latter. This is another result that merits further consideration, given that the engagement of civil society organizations and 'the third sector' in general is essential for a functioning democracy.

## Political values

When it comes to values, the Kosovar youth believe that unemployment (69.6 %), corruption (52.5 %) and immigration (50.2 %) will be the main challenges that Kosovo will face in the next decade. Whilst unemployment and corruption are expected due to the presence that these issues have on daily debates and even electoral campaigns, it is interesting to see that immigration has climbed the ladder to be considered one of the principal future challenges for Kosovo.

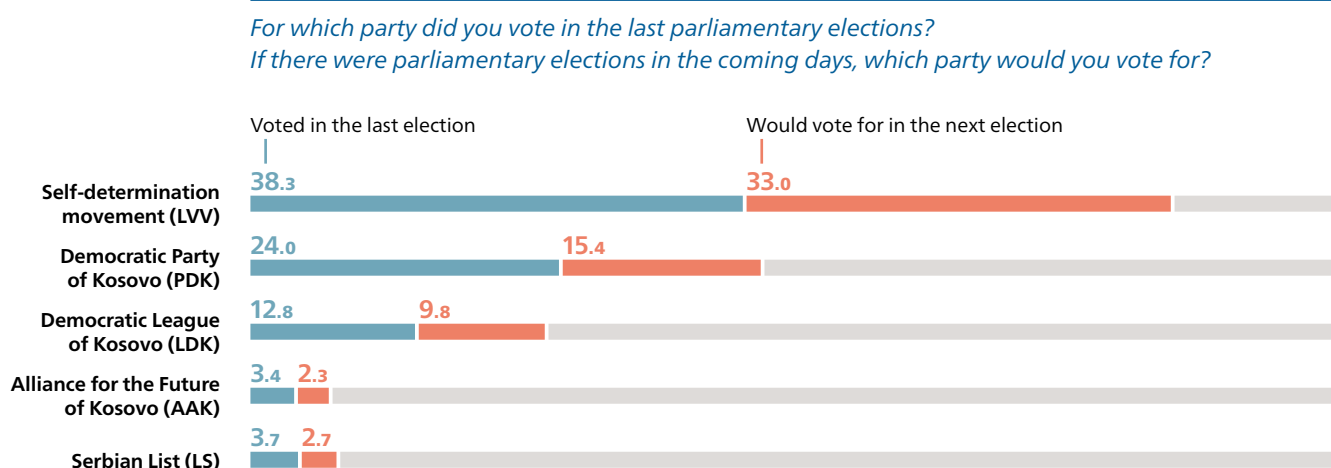
To put it into perspective, this issue ranked higher than several other pressing problems, such as inequalities, skilled workforce leaving the country, quality of public services, and climate change. The three most important values are considered employment, human rights and security (in that order). These results clearly point to the desire to improve basic conditions for a decent life. The main issue in this regard is that some of the goals often appear in contradiction to other views presented in the questionnaires – for the sake of the example, let's take the issue of political trust in national Government. Young Kosovars therefore are mainly interested in seeing more job opportunities, and while the general trust in Government remains low, it is precisely the Government where expectation lies. While these trust levels and expectations sit next to one another, it is to be expected that a significant share of young people will be disenchanted, alienated or even disappointed with politics. When it comes to political values, an interesting finding is that around 51 % of the youngsters claimed that they stopped buying things for political or environmental reasons – this speaks of a change in issues of interest of young voters and a raised awareness on global challenges regarding climate change. With the young voter's demands and interests on the course of change, political parties are expected to respond to such electoral preferences and follow suit.



Fig. 16 Views on Kosovo joining the EU among youth in Kosovo (in %)



Fig. 17 Vote choice in the last and future national elections among youth in Kosovo (in %)

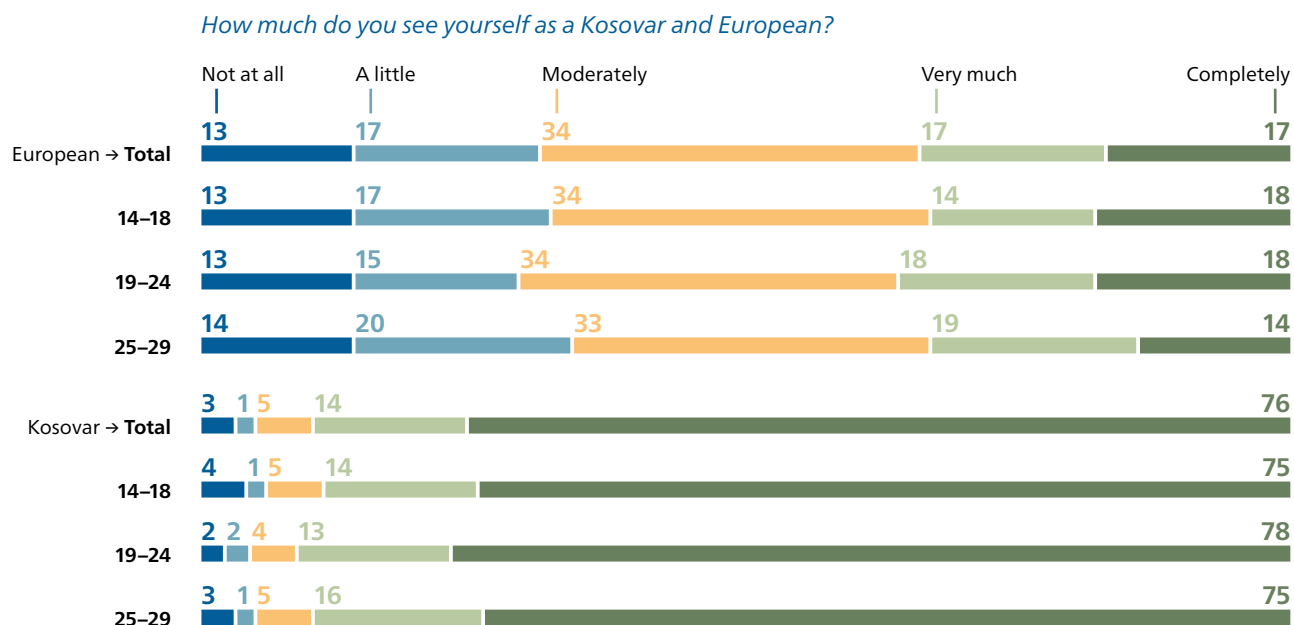


## Political engagement, views on political parties and voting

While the Kosovar youth is generally not satisfied with the political situation and economic conditions, they are not particularly willing to engage and mobilize either. Only around 10% admitted to having membership in a political party, while around 58% would never consider taking such a step. Around 74% claimed that they never signed a list with political requests nor supported an online petition. Around 75% responded that they have never participated in a demonstration, about 70% responded that they never participated in volunteer or civil society organization activities.

Only around 9% responded that they worked in a political party or a political group, and around 20% responded that they participated in political activities online/on social networks compared to about 64% that claimed the opposite. The data also indicates that support for the ruling party in power (Vetëvendosje) remains strong amongst this category of population (Figure 17). For instance, the party ranked last in the “strongly dislike” category and first in the “strongly like” category. While not expressing a strong satisfaction with the situation, the majority of youth, therefore, appears comfortable with the status quo – at least judged in terms of willingness to engage in political mobilization for different public causes.

Fig. 18 Identification as Kosovar and European among youth in Kosovo (in %)



## Nationalistic attitudes

The data indicates that there is pride associated with owning Kosovo citizenship amongst youngsters, with about 65% fully agreeing with the claim “I am proud to be a citizen of the country.”

This points that the internal legitimacy of Kosovo rests on high levels even within the younger generation, though that figure is expected to be

significantly lower amongst Kosovo-Serb youngsters. The response to the claim that the “country should accept/receive more immigrants” is somewhat mixed, as most of respondents, around 30%, lie in between the two poles, which are again distributed fairly evenly.

A similar pattern could be observed in the claim that “it would be the best if country was inhabited only by real Kosovars,” with around 24% standing in the middle, and the claim that “non-Kosovars living in country should adopt Kosovo customs and values,” with around 26% standing in between. Around half of the youngsters agree with the claim “the real Kosovar is only a person who has Kosovar blood.” On the other hand, the majority of youngsters (around 43%) agreed with the claim that churches and religious organizations currently have “the right amount of power” – with an average mean of 2.79, out of a scale of 1–5, where 5 is “far too much power.”<sup>15</sup> Finally, youngsters of all ages appear to have a strong sense of belonging to the Kosovar identity, whilst the figure of youngsters who identify as European is significantly lower (Figure 18).

**34%** of young people in Kosovo see themselves as European

## Main takeaways

**1.** The study's findings reveal a lack of interest from Kosovar youth in domestic politics, with only around 2 percent of respondents believing that youth interests are "well" represented in national politics. This lack of interest appears to be both a contributing factor and a consequence of the perceived underrepresentation. While political participation measured in the form of election turnout appears rather high among people, most young people have not engaged politically in the past and do not think they would do so in the future. Moreover, the youngsters admitted that "the party leader" is the main motivation behind casting their vote, leaving behind factors such as electoral programs and ideology.

**2.** The results of the survey unravel a high level of distrust among Kosovo youth toward domestic political institutions, especially the political parties and national government, and even civil society organizations. Domestic security institutions such as the army and police, exhibit higher levels of trust amongst young people, and at the same time the degree of trust in international institutions such as NATO and EU, is higher than trust expressed towards key domestic institutions such as the Government and Parliament. Nonetheless, there is a wide agreement regarding the preference of youngsters towards the political party which has been leading the Government since 2021. The data indicates the readiness of the majority of respondents to vote again for Vetëvendosje in the next elections.

**3.** Young people in Kosovo have problems positioning themselves politically on a left-right scale, namely 20 % responded with 'I do not know' when asked to self-place in such a spectrum. Such findings are also confirmed elsewhere in the study, proving that political ideologies do not play a significant role in shaping the political views of the youngsters. As noted in one of the responses the majority (around 28 %) declared that the political party leader is the main motivation behind casting their vote.

**4.** Despite a wide agreement that democracy represents a good form of governance, regarded by the majority of youngsters as "always preferable," and dictatorship is not seen as better than democracy under any circumstances, most respondents declared that they would favor a strong leader to govern the country. At the same time, civil liberties are regarded as important, but do not appear to represent a 'sacred' notion for young Kosovars – as most respondents declared that they would favor their restriction in exchange for better living standards or combating threats, namely terrorism.

**5.** A general agreement exists amongst young people that employment represents one of the central challenges for their future. Interestingly, there is a prevailing belief that unemployment represents a challenge that needs to be solved, though the expectations are that this shall occur through government action. In a somewhat paradoxical fashion, Kosovars are neither fully satisfied (they do not prefer the status-quo), nor dissatisfied enough to engage politically in a more active fashion to pursue change. Only 2% of the respondents declared that they have trade union membership. Despite the lack of trust in the national government, there is a general agreement that the government must have an increased role in the economy, through business ownership and more responsibility to ensure care for citizens. Generally, youngsters believe that in addition to unemployment, the main challenges that Kosovo is likely to face in the next decade are corruption and immigration.

# Conclusions

The Kosovo Youth Study reveals several critical findings about the perspectives and experiences of young people in Kosovo. Young people in Kosovo show a lack of interest in domestic politics, with low engagement levels and significant distrust towards political institutions. Distrust in domestic political institutions is widespread, although trust is higher in security institutions and international bodies like NATO and the EU. This indicates a need for initiatives that enhance political literacy and trust in governance among the youth. Young Kosovars also struggle to identify their political positioning, with political ideologies playing a minimal role in shaping their views. While they favor democracy, many prefer strong leadership and are willing to trade some civil liberties for improved living standards and security.

As this study shows, the education system faces challenges in quality and alignment with labour market needs, and there are significant gender disparities in employment. Implicit biases continue to influence women's educational choices, steering them towards traditionally female-dominated fields despite market demand in male-dominated sectors. Addressing these biases is essential for promoting gender equity and diversity in education and the workforce.

There is a notable gap between the fields of study pursued by students and the demands of the labor market. While IT, Healthcare, and STEM fields are in high demand, many students continue to enroll in Business Administration and Law, indicating a need for better alignment between education and employment opportunities. Many youths work in jobs unrelated to their qualifications, highlighting a mismatch between education and market demands. There is also a need to address overeducation and improve the quality of education to better prepare students for the future. Despite slight improvements in youth satisfaction with education quality, Kosovo's performance in international assessments like the PISA tests remains low. This underscores the need for continued reforms to enhance the educational framework and outcomes.

High youth unemployment rates, coupled with significant gender disparities in labor market participation, remain pressing issues among the youth. The perception that social and political connections are more crucial than expertise for securing employment highlights a deep mistrust in meritocratic principles. Despite dissatisfaction with current conditions, political engagement remains low. Values such as independence, career success, and personal achievements are prioritized over political and civic engagement.

Emigration also continues to be a pressing issue. A substantial portion of the youth population expresses a desire to emigrate, driven primarily by the pursuit of better living standards, higher salaries, and improved employment opportunities. This indicates a need for policies aimed at improving domestic conditions to retain young talent.



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- 15 Because of the questionnaire the question was compiled in this form.

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