



WOMEN AND GIRLS IN SPORTS: Research on Gender Stereotypes and Barriers to Equal Access in Sports



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Introduction and Motivation

Women empowerment through sports is a long-debated topic that has gained momentum in the last few years. Inclusive participation of women in sports is seen as crucial in achieving gender equality and defying social norms embedded in cultures around the world [1]. In Kosovo too, participation of women in sports is expected to help bridge the gender inequality gap and empower women of all backgrounds [2]. In fact, Kosovo has already made progress toward tackling gender inequality through inclusive sport participation, with renowned women athletes participating in different international competitions including the Olympic games.

Inclusive sport participation is in fact a “fundamental right for all” as per UNESCO’s definition of rights to sport and physical education [3]. It is indisputable however that generally, women’s participation in sports is historically less pronounced and less popular than the participation of their men counterparts. In Kosovo too, there are significantly fewer professional women athletes and certified trainers in contrast to men in almost every sport category. According to the latest sport statistics published by Kosovo’s Agency of Statistics, out of the total number of athletes across all sport categories, around 25% are women (3,775 out of 15,253) and out of employed individuals for all sport categories, 16.2% are women (273 out of 1,684) [4]. Though the data is almost ten years old, it’s the only publicly available one from the Agency of Statistics and is still relevant in painting the picture for women’s lack of participation in sports.

The legal framework of Kosovo foresees women’s right to equal participation in sport and highlights the importance of providing equal opportunities regardless of gender or ethnic background. For example, the Law on Gender Equality calls for equality on employment and fair pay regardless of the individual’s gender [5]. Moreover, the Law on Sport points out the importance of symmetry in gender inclusivity in sport federation memberships and highlights that the respective clubs that hire professional athletes should respect the latter’s rights and duties as dictated by the Law on Labor [6]. The Law on Labor under Article 55 furthermore stipulates on the importance of equal remuneration.

[1] UN Women. In focus: Women and Girls in Sports. <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2016/2/lakshmi-puri-speech-at-value-of-hosting-mega-sport-event>

[2] Kosovo Promotes Sport as a Powerful Vehicle to Drive Social Change. UN Women. <https://eca.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2019/04/kosovo-promotes-sport-as-a-powerful-vehicle-to-drive-social-change>

[3] International Charter of Physical Education, Physical Activity and Sport. UNESCO. https://en.unesco.org/sites/default/files/sport_e.pdf

[4] Sports’ Statistics for 2013. Kosovo Agency of Statistics. <https://ask.rks-gov.net/media/2039/statistikat-e-sportit-2013.pdf>

[5] Kosovo’s Law on Gender Equality (Law Nr. 2004/2), Article 12. <https://gzk.rks-gov.net/ActDetail.aspx?ActID=10923>

[6] Kosovo’s Law in Sport (LAW Nr. 2003/24), Article 28 and 39 respectively. <https://gzk.rks-gov.net/ActDocumentDetail.aspx?ActID=2735>

-ation of men and women for work of equal value [7]. Yet, for the same sport, it is postulated that women get paid less than their men counterparts and often cannot make a living solely out of their wage as a full-time professional athlete. Though there aren't any direct statistics on this for Kosovo, the existence of this pay gap elsewhere in the world [8] can lead one to believe that this situation probably prevails in Kosovo as well.

Additionally, the Law on Protection Against Discrimination highlights the importance of fair treatment and strictly prohibits discriminatory treatment in the forms of direct and indirect discrimination, sexual and psychological harassment, segregations, and other related discriminations based on a person's demographic characteristics [9]. Still, sexual harassment is a prevalent topic among Kosovo's society, with around 64.1% of women reporting to have been sexually harassed in general as compared to 32.5% of men [10], and the "blaming the victim" mentality prevails in the society to this day. Though there aren't any statistics available on sexual harassment of women athletes, one could expect the situation to be more or less the same in this sphere as well.

To fulfill the law on Gender Equality, the Agency for Gender Equality/Office of the Prime Minister drafted Kosovo's Program for Gender Equality 2020-2024 [11]. This program is built on three pillars/objectives including a) economic empowerment and social welfare, b) human development, roles, and gender relations, and c) women's rights, access to justice, and security. The second pillar focuses on increasing women inclusivity in sports among other disciplines and foresees that by 2024, 6 sport clubs to be run by women and 50% of the sports' budget to be dedicated to women's sports activities [12]. This objective also aims to increase public awareness of women participation in sports and improve the infrastructure tied to it (objective II.2.3 in Kosovo's Program for Gender Equality Action Plan), with the premise that currently women do not have access to appropriate and safe infrastructure to develop themselves as women athletes.

This Program furthermore highlights the lack of media coverage of women in general. It points out for example that on average, stories covering women as the key focus ranged from 5.21% to 7.72% in national TVs. In print media similarly, "women in politics" and "violence against women" were the two categories that dedicated significant media attention to women protagonists [13]. Though sports came third as a category, it is postulated that this was due to Kosovo's women athletes recent flourishing in the sport Judo but not necessarily due to a holistic coverage of different sport categories and wo-

[7] Kosovo's Law on Labor (Law No.03/L -212), Article 55. <https://gzk.rks-gov.net/ActDocumentDetail.aspx?ActID=2735>

[8] Morgan, Sh. Working Twice as Hard for Less Than Half as Much: A Sociolegal Critique of the Gendered Justifications Perpetuating Unequal Pay in Sport. <https://journals.library.columbia.edu/index.php/lawandarts/article/view/8956>

[9] Kosovo's Law on Discrimination (Law Nr. 05/L -02-1), Article 4. <https://gzk.rks-gov.net/ActDocumentDetail.aspx?ActID=10924>

[10] Sexual Harassment in Kosovo. Kosovo's Women Network and Austrian Development Agency. <https://womensnetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/20160223185243349.pdf>

[11] Kosovo's Programme for Gender Equality 2020-2024. Office of the Prime Minister and Agency for Gender Equality. <https://abgj.rks-gov.net/assets/cms/uploads/files/Programi%20i%20Kosov%C3%ABs%20p%C3%ABr%20Barazi%20Gjinore%202020-2024%20-%20SHQIP%20-%20FINAL.pdf>

[12] Ibid.

[13] Ibid.

-mens' successes in each respective one. This fact can lead to problems regarding women's recognition in the sport industry and create difficulties in establishing of a fanbase for each woman athlete.

Lastly, Kosovo's Olympic Committee recognizes the country's shortfalls in inadequate representation of women in sports. They organize annual workshops on "Gender Equality and Diversity" [14], with the main aim being the promotion of women participation in sports and breaking away from community beliefs that sport participation is synonymous to men.

In light of the legal framework and current social environment for women athletes, the Agency for Gender Equality has supported the Kosovar Gender Studies Center which in turn has contracted IDRA Research and Consulting to conduct a study to shed light on the challenges and opportunities of women athletes in Kosovo.

In particular, this study attempted to understand the challenges women athletes face in a myriad of spheres including:

- General understanding on type of sport played and federation membership
- Main challenges of women's athletes
- Family's influence on the decision to pursue a sport professionally and community beliefs, both for oneself as well as colleagues
- Income generated from pursuing a sport professionally and whether being a professional athlete can suffice as a full-time job, both for oneself as well as colleagues
- Understating the degree of access to facilities and sports infrastructure, both for oneself as well as colleagues
- Understanding the degree of sexual harassment exposure of the individual and colleagues as well as reporting policies (if any) in place in case of a sexual harassment incident, and
- Extent to which they receive media coverage and their fan base.

The following sections lay out the methodology used to collect the data, the results from the surveys in each of the aforementioned spheres/themes, as well as a conclusion and recommendation section resulting from the findings in the results portion.

[14] Olympic Committee of Kosovo. <https://noc-kosovo.org/sq/ngjarjet>

Methodology

This study has employed a combination of Focus Group Discussions (FGD) and surveys to understand professional and non-professional women athletes' challenges and opportunities in their sport pursuit. 150 women over the age of 18 were contacted to learn more about their experiences, perceptions, and stance on being a woman athlete in Kosovo.

Additionally, five focus group discussions were organized with the following breakdown:

- 2 FG with women athletes and trainers that live in different regions of Kosovo
- 1 FG with municipality representatives of Culture, Art, and Sport
- 1 FG with representatives of different public institutions/sport federations/others
- 1 FG with representatives of NGOs in women rights' movements and sport

Though surveys could have potentially sufficed to retrieve the necessary information for the scope of this study, focus groups in addition served to reinforce the findings and challenges. Moreover, due to the nature of focus groups lasting longer, ideas and thoughts could bounce around easier in order to provide better insight on the matter at hand. Additionally, the organization of focus groups with different representatives introduced different perspectives on women athletes from several relevant actors. With focus groups, the study was able to capture answer variability on the role of institutions, federations, and NGOs in promoting women athletes and the degree of subventions available and received.

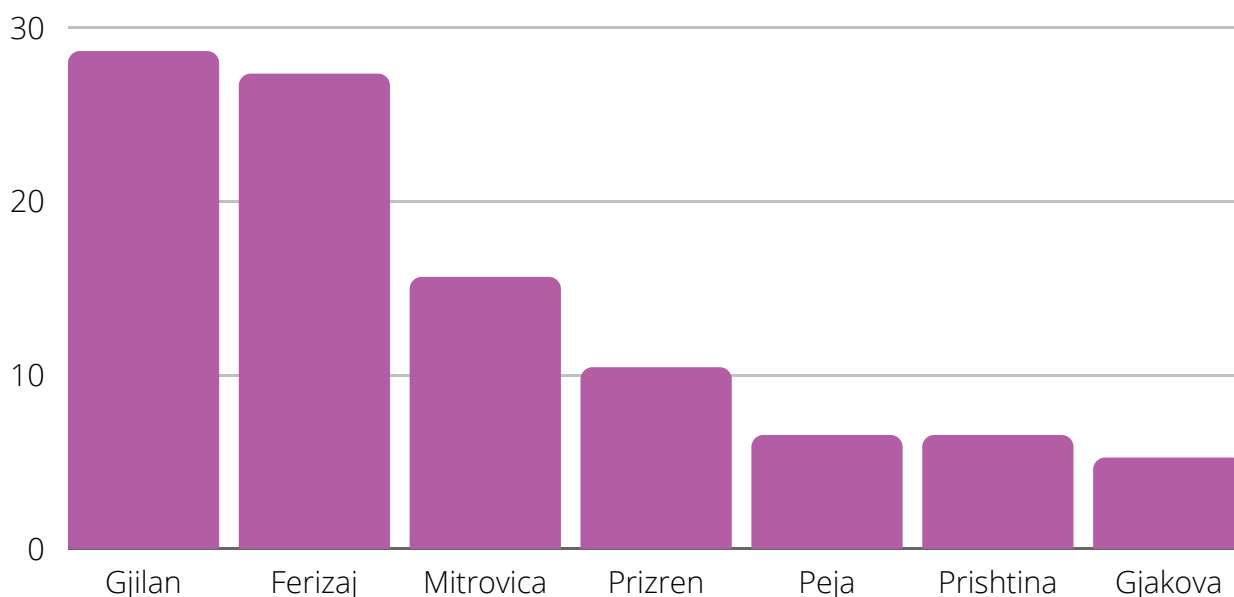
The section below will present a detailed breakdown on the demographic characteristics of the surveyed individuals and focus group participants.

Demographic Profile of Surveyed Individuals

The surveyed women athletes came from different regions of Kosovo. Most of them were located in Gjilan, Ferizaj, and Mitrovicë respectively, with less coming from Pejë,

Prizren, Gjakovë, and Prishtinë. Figure 1 below shows a percentage distribution of regional spread.

Figure 1: Regional Distribution



Moreover, 88.3% of the surveyed women come from urban areas and 11.7% from rural ones. Additionally, as Figure 2 shows, the majority of the surveyed athletes were single and never married (81.8%), followed by those in a relationship (13%), married (3.9%) and divorced (1.3%). Other categories also included: cohabitating, separated, and widowed but since no responses were collected for these categories, they're omitted from the bar chart below.

Figure 2: Marital Status

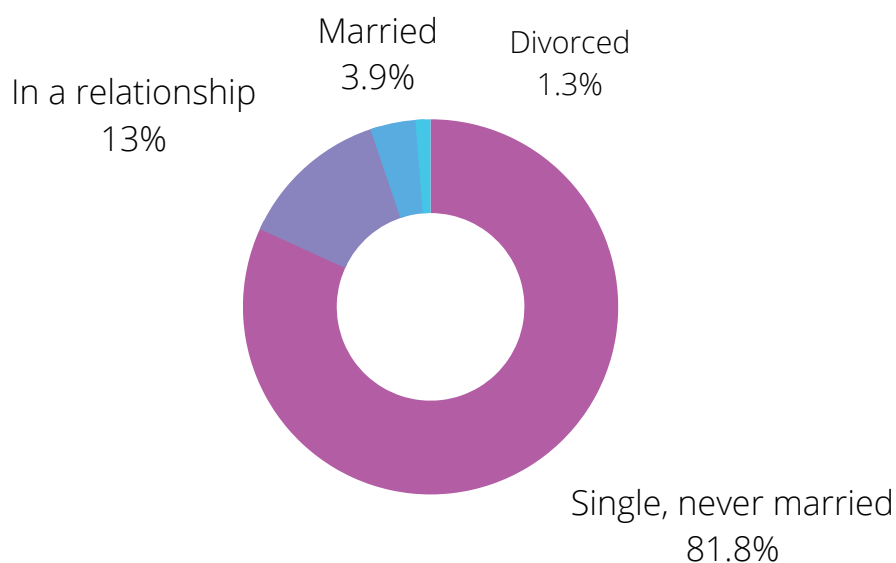


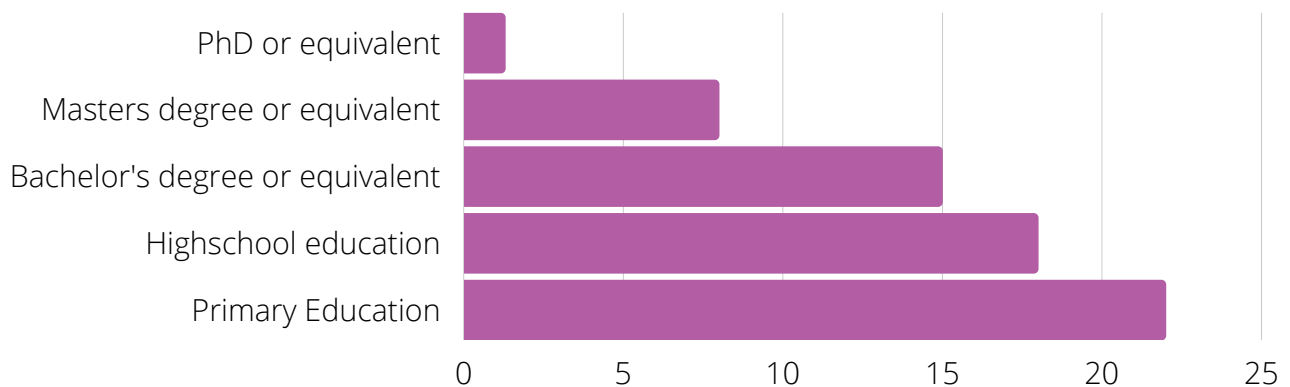
Table 1 furthermore shows the gender breakdown of the surveyed individuals. It can be seen that the majority of the respondents are younger, belonging to the 18-25 age group category.

Age category	Percentages
18-25	87%
26-35	11.7%
36-45	1.3%

Table 1: Age Distribution of Respondents

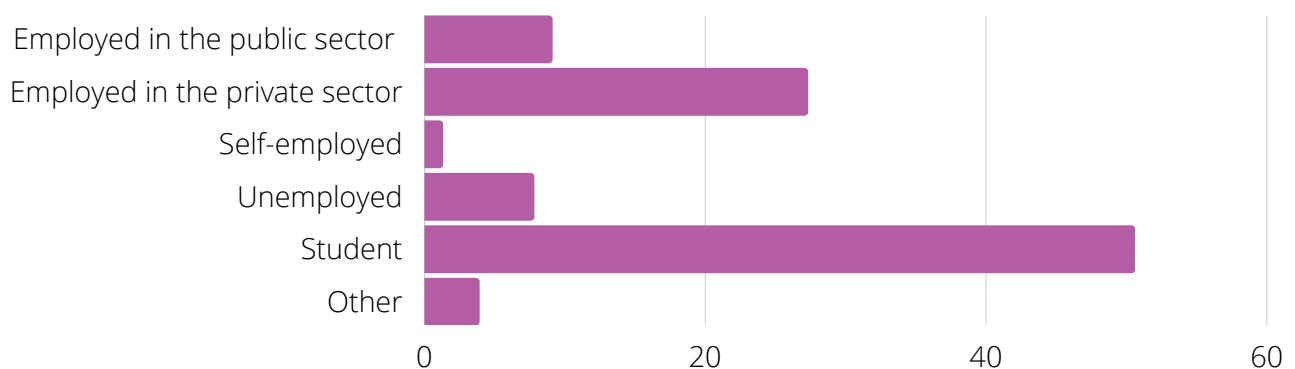
As far as their educational level goes, the vast majority of women surveyed had completed a high school education (58.4%), followed by those with a bachelor degree (32.5%), master degree (5.2%), primary education (2.6%) and PhD (1.3%). Figure 3 below presents a breakdown of the educational level attainment. We can thus say that the sample consists of fairly educated women, with 39% attaining at least a bachelor level.

Figure 3: Educational Level



As per their employment status, as Figure 4 below details, most of the surveyed individuals consisted of students (50.6%) and only 37.7% resulting as employed either by the public sector, the private sector, or self-employed.

Figure 4: Employment Status



Lastly, we can say that most of the individuals interviewed have monthly incomes that fall below Kosovo's average wage [15], respectively almost 52% of the individuals interviewed had salaries falling between 0-249 EUR per month (Figure 5). The situation is similar when considering family income in total. As Figure 6 shows, a combined 72.8% of surveyed individuals reported that their monthly family income falls below 1,200 EUR/month. Considering this income and vulnerability, it is important to understand that money generated from sports (or lack of money thereof) is a crucial determination/hinderance for these women to pursue a sport professionally.

Figure 5: Personal Monthly Income

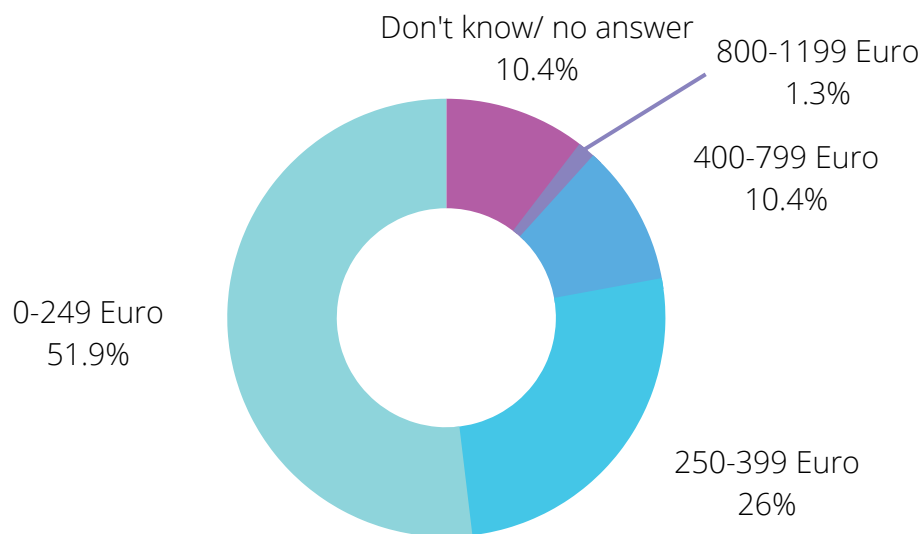
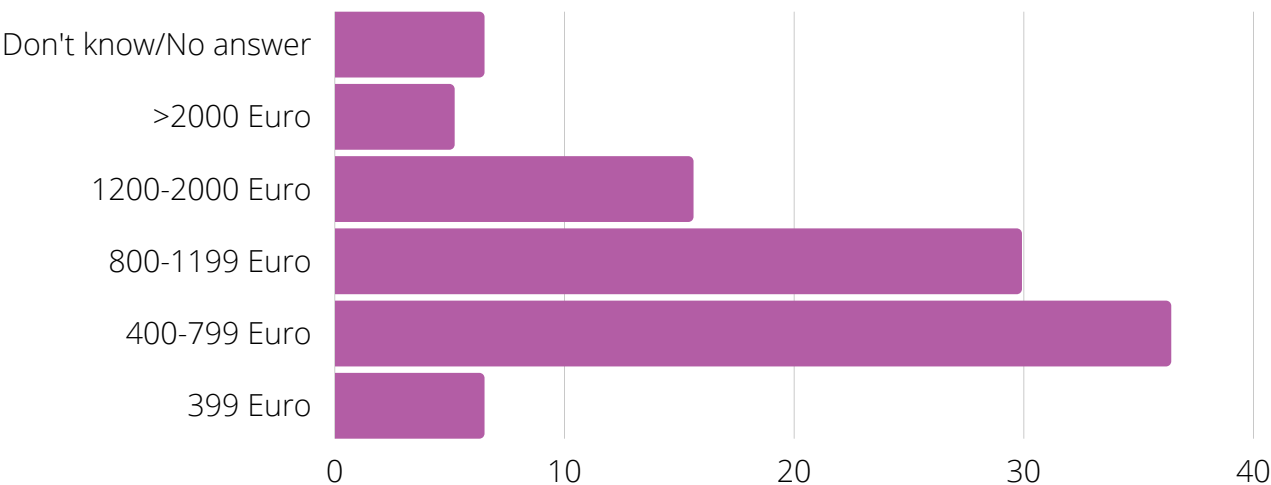


Figure 6: Family's Monthly Income



[15]Wage Level in Kosovo, 2021. ASK: <https://ask.rks-gov.net/en/kosovo-agency-of-statistics/add-news/wage-level-in-kosovo-2021>

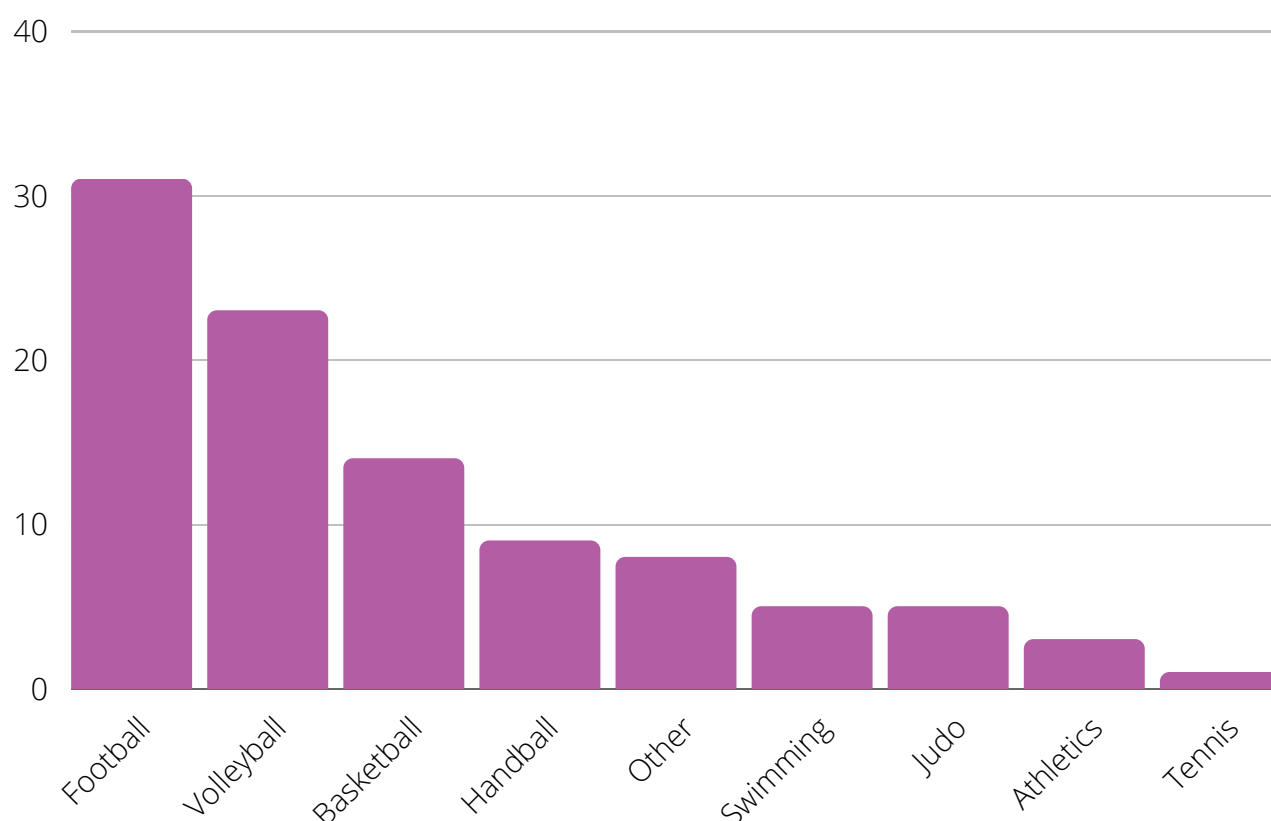
Results

This part presents a descriptive analysis review of individuals' responses on the challenges and opportunities they have in pursuing a sport in Kosovo. The subsections below present the responses of individuals first in general terms regarding the sport they play and the number of years of involvement in this sport. It then considers the main challenges women athletes in Kosovo consider to be a big hinderance toward them becoming a professional athlete, their family's and community's influence on the pursuit of sport, income generated from the sport pursuit, degree of access to facilities and general sport infrastructure, sexual harassment exposure, and degree of media coverage and established fan base.

Type of Sport and Federation Membership

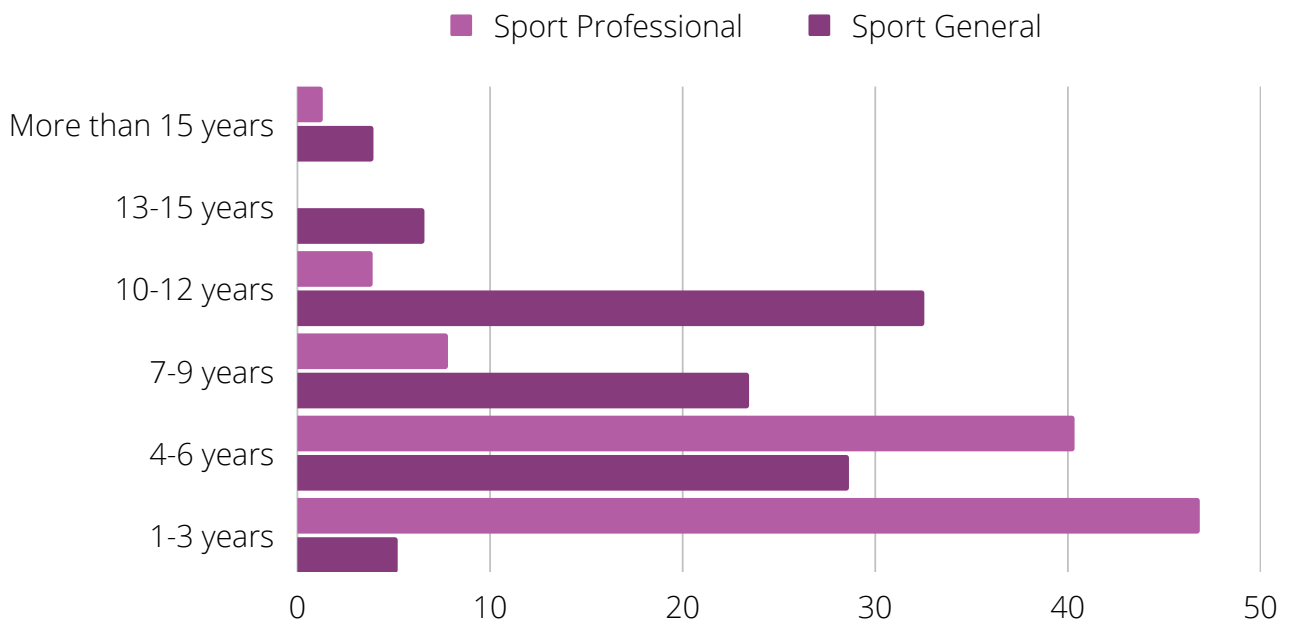
Initially, it is important to note that 97.4% of surveyed individuals reported to be professional athletes. Furthermore, the chart below shows a breakdown of type of sport played by the respondents, presented in descending order. The three most popular categories here included football, volleyball, and basketball, with other sport categories resulting in less popular in terms of pursuit.

Figure 7: Sport involvement



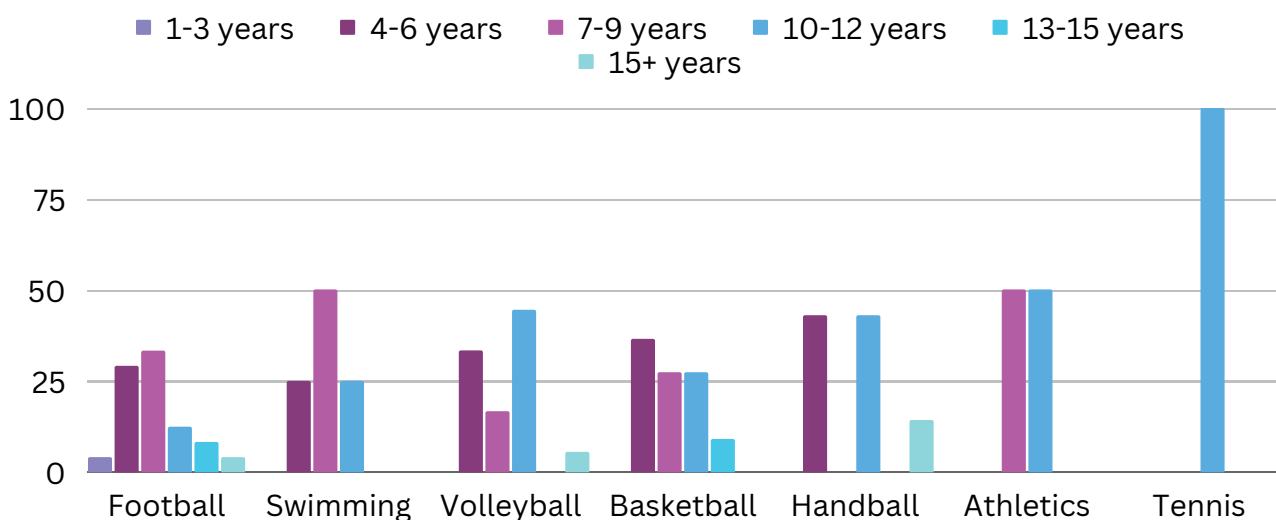
Moreover, respondents were also prompted to respond on the number of years they have pursued the sport listed above, both professionally as well as non-professionally. Figure 8 below shows that while playing for leisure is quite widespread among our sample respondents (i.e., 23.4% and 32.5% have responded to play this sport for fun for 7-9 years and 10-12 years respectively), as the number of years goes by, professional sport playing decreases (i.e. 7.8% and 3.9% have responded to play this sport professionally for 7-9 years and 10-12 years, respectively).

Figure 8: Years in this sport professionally vs. non-professionally



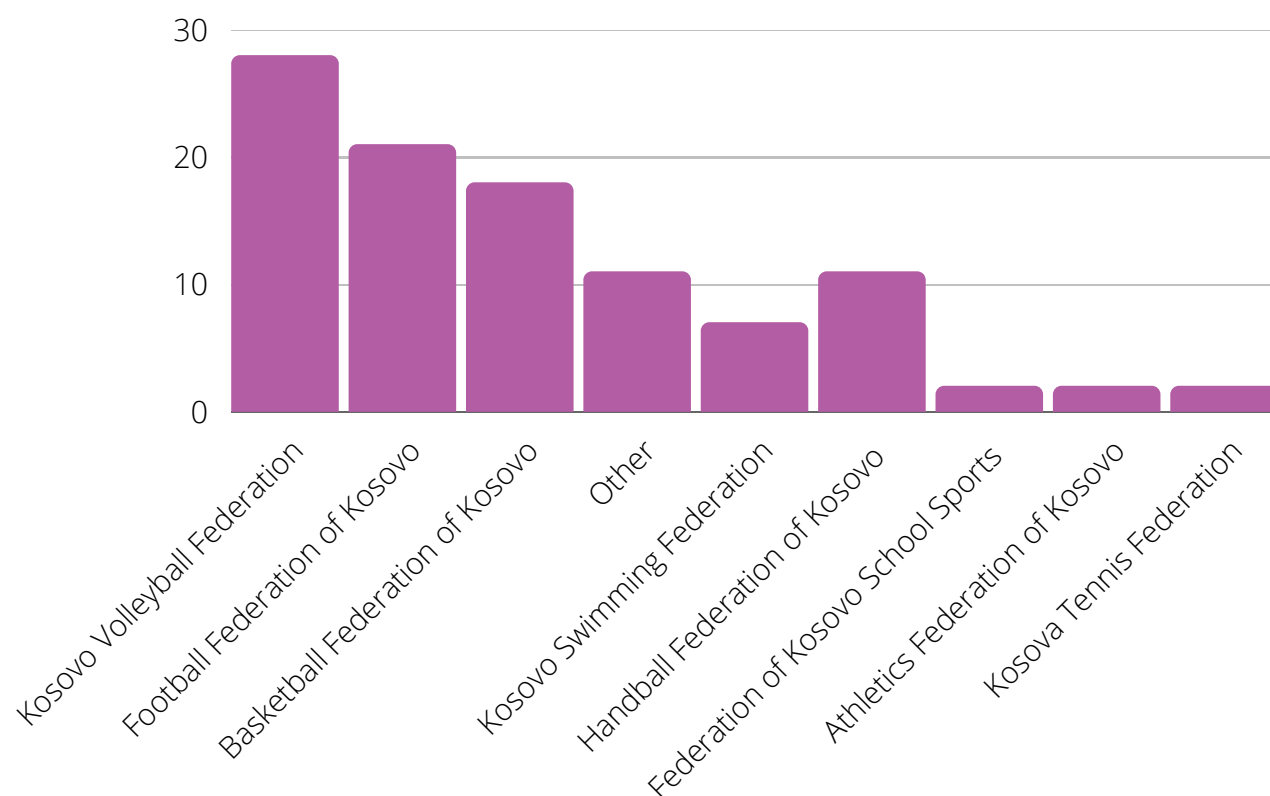
Additionally, Figure 9 below shows a breakdown of number of years played (non-professionally) cross-tabulated with the sport type. As it can be seen, football appears to have the biggest variability in terms of number of years of experience of the surveyed individuals, followed by basketball, volleyball and so on.

Figure 9: Number of years played and type of sport



Generally, 74% of surveyed women athletes reported to have been part of an official sports' federation in Kosovo. Out of those that responded to be part of a sports' federation, the most popular federation appeared to be the Kosovo Volleyball Federation (28.1%), followed by Football Federation (21.1%), Basketball Federation (17.5%) and so on.

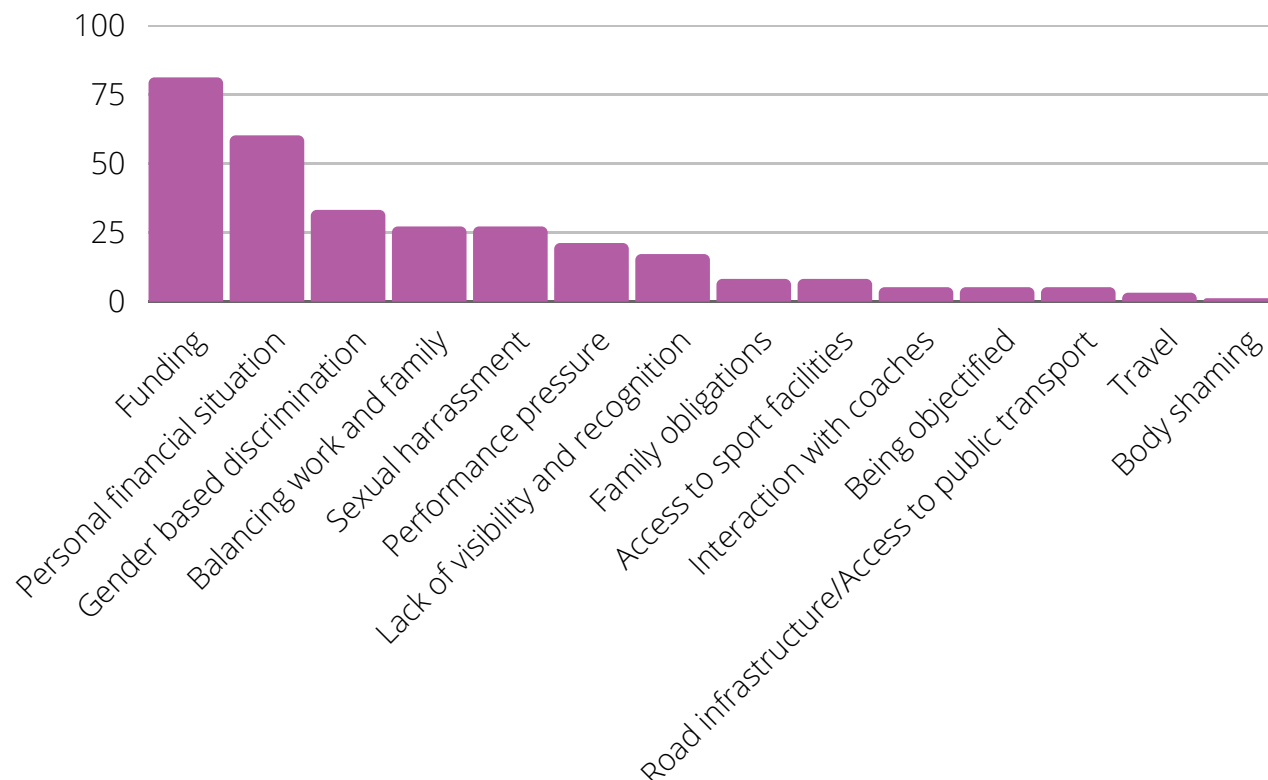
Figure 10: Federation Membership Kosovo



Main Challenges of Women Athletes

As part of the survey, women athletes were prompted to respond on their perception regarding the three biggest challenges they face toward becoming a professional athlete as well as highlighting the biggest challenge. It is important to understand here that this is merely their perception and might not portray an adequate picture of the reality. On the question on highlighting three biggest challenges faced by women, in 80.5% of the cases, lack of funding was mentioned as a key challenge, followed by personal financial situation (59.7%) and gender-based discrimination (32.5%). Figure 11 below shows a breakdown of each challenge and the percentage of times it was chosen as one of the three challenges among respondents. The cumulative percentage adds up to more than 100% given the nature of the question where respondents could select more than one response.

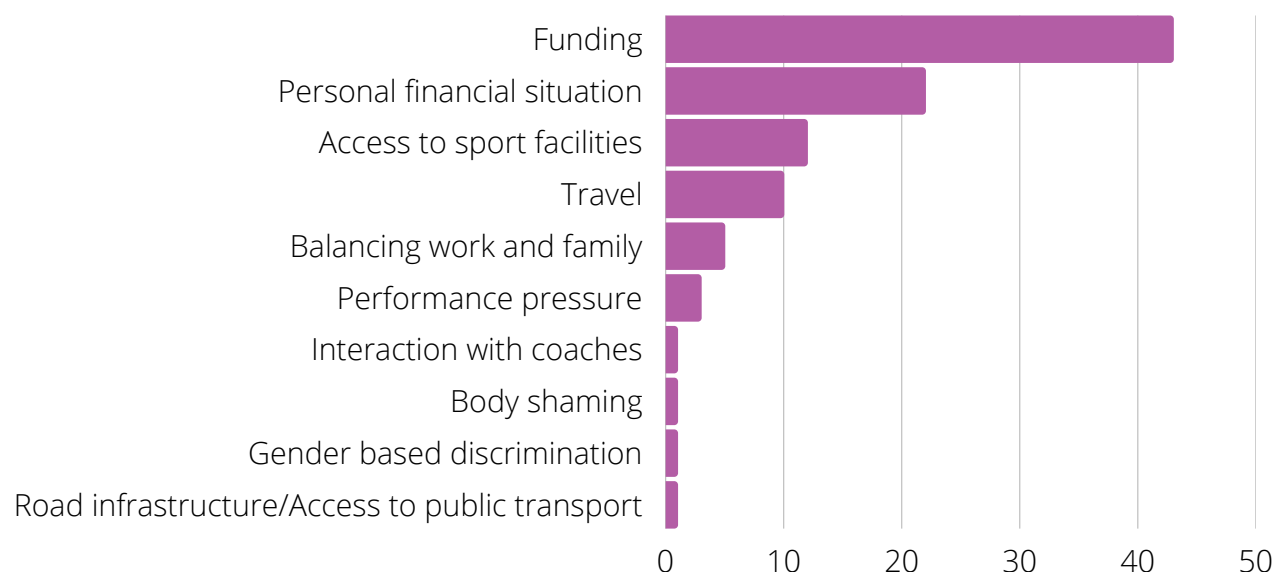
Figure 11: Top Three Challenges of Becoming a Professional Woman Athlete



**Note: Percentages do not add up to 100% as this was a multiple-response question*

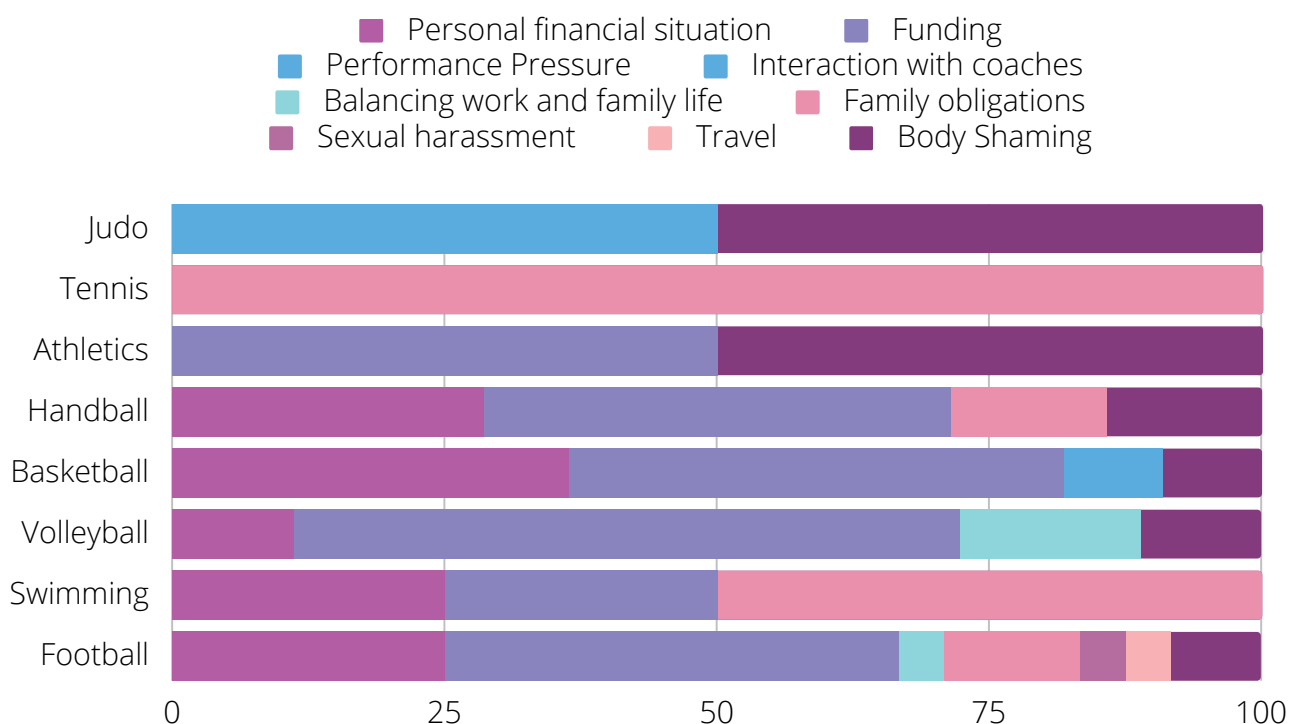
Next, respondents were prompted to choose one challenge as the biggest among the three they selected in the previous question. Again (Figure 12), the biggest identified challenge was lack of funding (42.9%) followed by personal financial situation (22.1%) and lack of access to sports facilities (11.7%). Given the two most frequently mentioned challenges are also quite similar in nature in the sense that they both concern funding problems, one can conclude that funding emerges as the top hindering factor to allow women athletes to pursue any sport of their choice professionally.

Figure 12: Main Challenge of Becoming a Professional Woman Athlete



Furthermore, Figure 13 below highlights the main challenge partitioned by sport played. Again, in the majority of the sports, funding and personal financial situation emerge as key challenges faced. Tennis and Judo were the only two sports where these two challenges were not identified as the main ones.

Figure 13: Top Challenge Faced by Sport Played



It is also worth pointing out here that from focus group discussions, women athletes claimed that another challenge they face pertained to the fact that past a certain age, they had to quit playing sports due to societal expectations of creating a family. As per the words of one of the participants:

"Our participation in sports ends by the time we reach 35 years of age. We are expected by that point to create our own families and there simply isn't any time to pursue sports anymore"

Participant in Focus Group Discussion with Women Athletes and Trainers

Additionally, discussions in focus groups revealed that the number of years one is involved in being active in playing a sport is directly related to the type of sport they play. Women reported that if they played a solo sport (i.e. swimming), their professional sport career spanned over a number of years. However, if they instead played a group sport (i.e., volleyball), their career ended the moment they decided to dedicate themselves to the creation of their family.

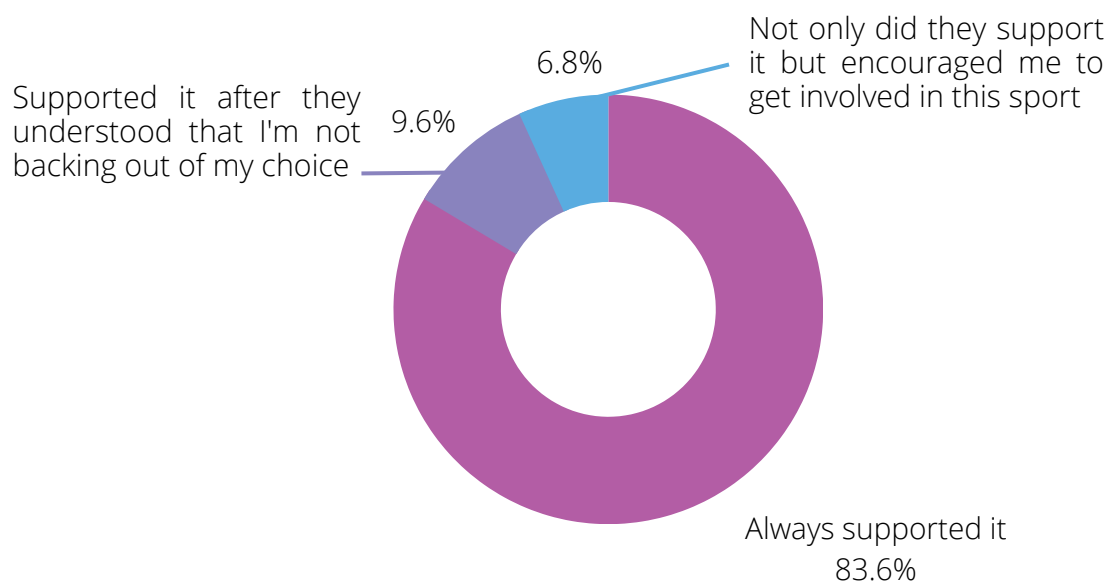
As per the findings above, funding and personal financial situations emerged as the key challenges among women athletes, for almost all of the sport they play (apart from Judo and Tennis). Other key identified factors included lack of access to appropriate sports facilities and gender discrimination.

Family's and community's influence to pursue sports

Next, this survey aimed to capture how much family and community have an influence on the sport played by these women. Given Kosovo's collectivist culture, the hypothesis was that these two variables are considered as quite important in making a decision to pursue a sport, professionally or non-professionally. The survey therefore asked participants to evaluate how much their family has supported their decision to pursue sports as well as evaluate their general perception on family and community influence on women's decision in general to play sports.

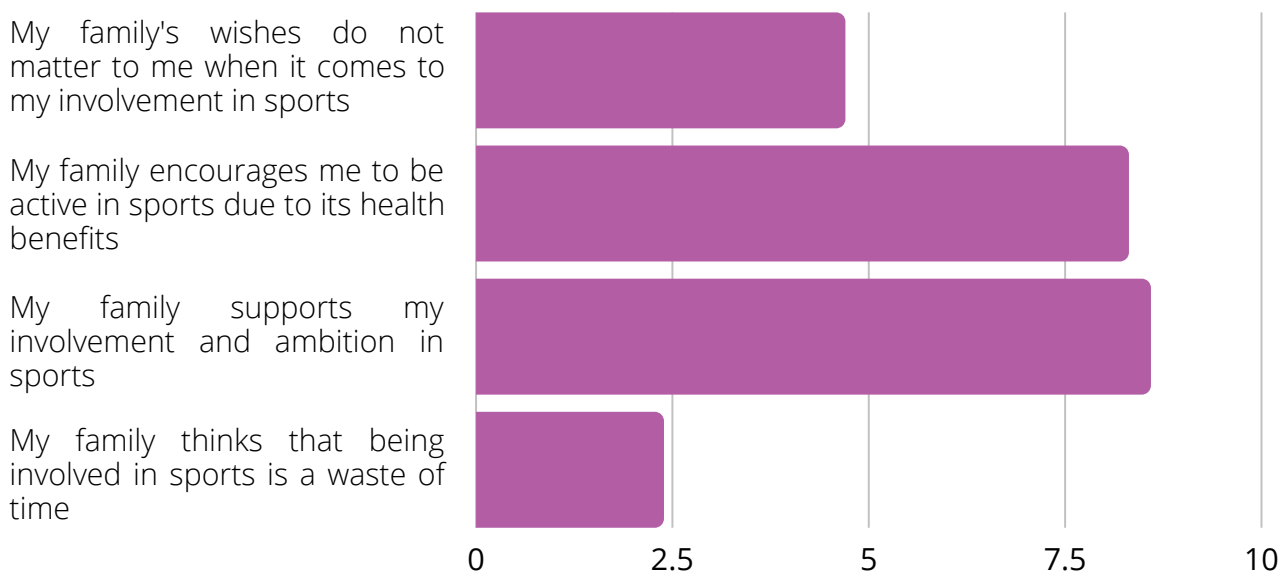
As per the responses received, 94.8% claimed that they have always had family support in professional sport involvement, with only 5.2% claiming they were not necessarily supported. Furthermore, as Figure 13 below illustrates, 83.6% of respondents claimed that their families have always supported their decision to engage in sports followed by 9.6% claiming that they got family support after they understood that the individual is not backing off from their choice, and 6.8% stating that their family was actually a major factor of encouragement behind their involvement to pursue this sport.

Figure 14: Family's Support in Sport Involvement



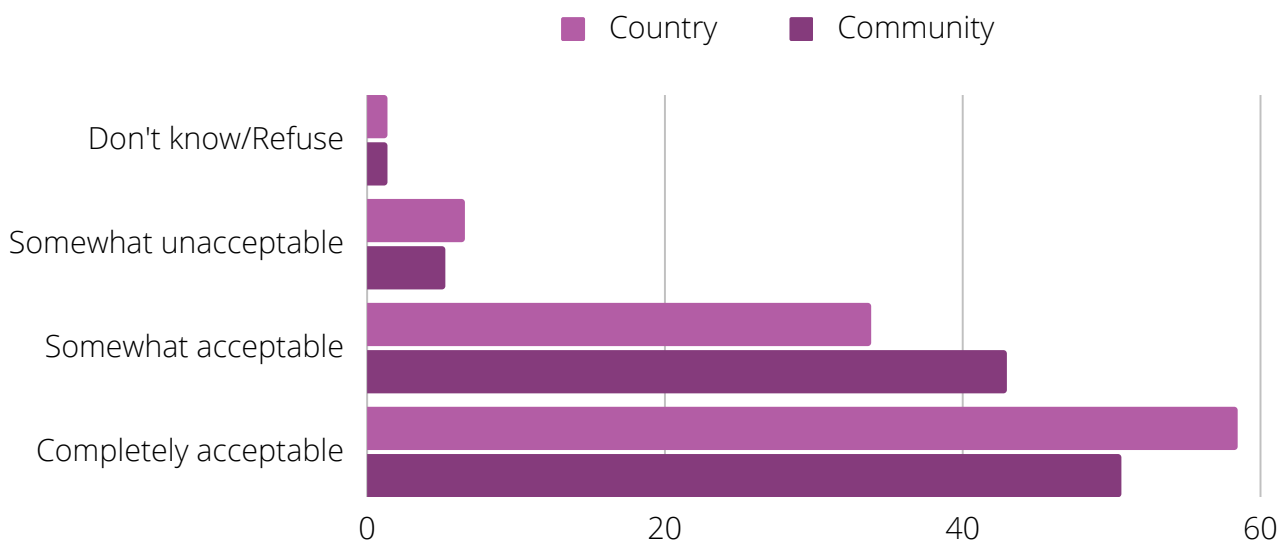
When it comes to general perceptions regarding family influence on sports, respondents were prompted to rate the responses on Figure 15 on a scale from 1-10 with 1 being "completely disagree" and 10 "completely agree". Figure 15 displays responses using arithmetic means to aggregate the data responses. As it turns out, respondents generally disagreed with the statement that their family believes involvement of sports to be a waste of time. Additionally, there was general agreement with the statement on family's support on involvement and ambition in sports.

Figure 15: Statements on Family Influence



Furthermore, when considering community's influence, this report also asked respondents to give their opinion on whether they think playing sports is generally acceptable in their community as well as generally in Kosovo. Figure 16 lays out the responses. Generally, the majority of respondents believe that it is totally acceptable both at the community (50.6%) as well as country (58.4%) level for one to be engaged with sports.

Figure 16: Community and Country Acceptance of Sport Involvement



Lastly, when it comes to family/community influence, 40.3% of individuals claimed that they believe that there are certain sports that are appropriate to men as well as to women but the majority—59.7% claimed to not believe in gender assignments when it comes to sports.

However, qualitative findings through focus groups revealed a more detailed discussion and a different lens of reality. Many women claimed that their families were bothered to

have their children play a sport led by a man trainer. As per the words of a participant in a focus group discussion:

"My extended family was against me playing a sport professionally and even less so traveling abroad. Because my trainer was a man, they argued that there is no need for me as a woman to travel to international sports competitions with a man."

Participant in Focus Group Discussion with Women Athletes and Trainers

On a similar note, others argued that their families were against them pursuing sports because of potential body dysmorphia and the fact that sports are usually synonymous to men. As two participants claimed:

"My extended family was against me pursuing any type of sport. According to them, if I play a sport, I will have a man-like figure later in life and my body won't look good anymore."

Participant in Focus Group Discussion with Women Athletes and Trainers

"When I told my family I am thinking of pursuing a sport, they were against it, claiming that sports are a man's thing and women shouldn't play sports. We even got comments from men players that we are to cook and take care of our homes so we should not be out in the fields playing."

Participant in Focus Group Discussion with Women Athletes and Trainers

In contrast to the quantitative data collection portion where women were generally younger than 25, focus groups had older participants too which revealed that sport mentality and gender assignments are changing in today's society. As an older woman explains:

"Back in my day, my family locked me up just to prevent me from going to practice. They actually locked me up in the house just to prevent me from leaving. Actually, I faced more resistance from my husband's family than my own until they too saw that I was determined in playing sports"

Participant in Focus Group Discussion with Women Athletes and Trainers

However, even among focus group participants, there was a general belief that times are changing and sport is now generally accepted as an activity for women. As per the statement of a focus group participant:

"I believe that the mentality change has happened also due to the media attention that is being given to successful and internationally renowned Kosovar women athletes"

Participant in Focus Group Discussion with Women Athletes and Trainers

From the findings above, there is room to say that as per the descriptive analysis portion, family support seems to be present among those that play sports and even if there wasn't support in the beginning, it grew with time. However, focus groups through discussions revealed that there is still stigma and shame associated with practicing a sport as a woman, especially from the community's perspective rather than the nuclear family's perceptions.

Income generated from sport pursuit

Because a main challenge highlighted from sport pursuit resulted to be lack of financing, it is important to understand where these athletes stand regarding income generated from sport pursuit. In general, out of all respondents, 36% said to get an official salary for the sport involved in and 64% stated to have never gotten an official salary.

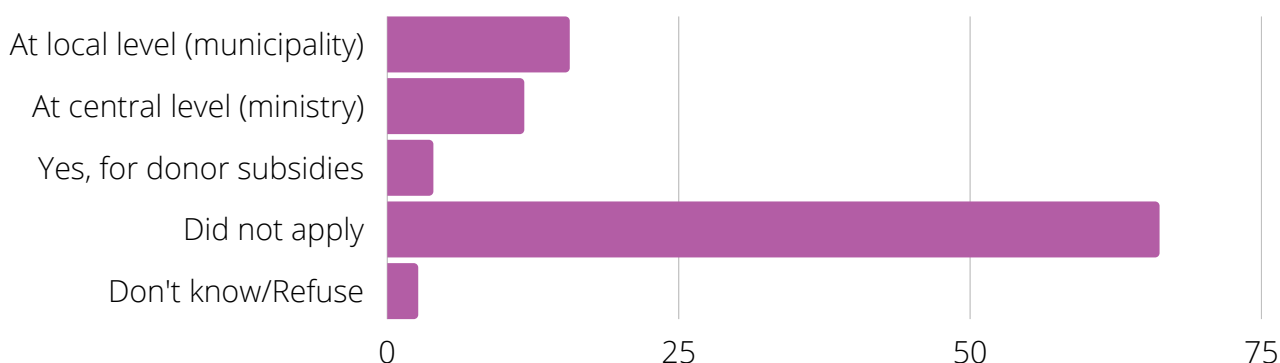
Out of those responding to receive a salary, the breakdown in Table 2 shows that the majority of funds come from the private owner of the team (53.6%) followed by Donations (21.4%), Other sources (17.9%) and Kosovo's government (7.1%).

Payment source	Percentages
Kosovo Government	7.1%
Private Owner of the Team	53.6%
Donations	21.4%
Other sources	17.9%

Table 2: Source of Payment

Furthermore, respondents were also asked to provide their responses on whether they have ever applied for official subvention schemes to play sports professionally. As Figure 17 below points out, the vast majority have never applied for a subvention (66.2%) and those that have applied have mostly done so at the local level (15.6%) followed by the central level (11.7%).

Figure 17: Application for Official Sport Subsidy



Additionally, out of those that have applied, 58.3% responded to have never received any funding/subvention and 41.7% said to have received such funding.

Focus Group discussions furthermore revealed that access to sponsorships was not publicly available information. As a participant stated:

"We do not have a lot of information about existing grants. This is because this information is exclusive to the trainer and federation representatives and there is not much transparency in sharing this information with us too."

Participant in Focus Group Discussion with Women Athletes and Trainers

Similarly, participants in focus groups also pointed out that there are discrepancies between official contractual payment obligations and practical ones. As per the statements of a participant:

"In official contracts there are different payment terms than what we're paid in reality. In actuality, we are paid much less than what our contracts state."

Participant in Focus Group Discussion with Women Athletes and Trainers

On that note, there were participants who also claimed to have received discouraging words from sponsors. As one participant claims:

"Sponsors don't want to finance us because they claim we are costing them more than the profit we are bringing in."

Participant in Focus Group Discussion with Women Athletes and Trainers

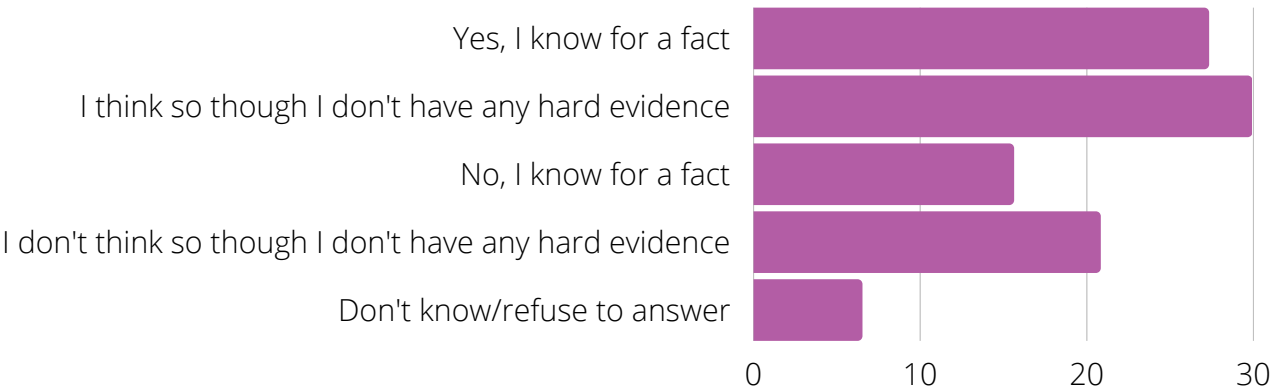
Some others also said that not only do they receive low payments (if any at all) for the sport they play, but they also are never supported financially in case of a medical injury during training times. As a participant states:

"Not only do we not get paid but also when we're in need of a medical treatment caused on-the-job, nobody helps us. In fact, if the injury lasts a considerable amount of time, it's hard to get back on the training again."

Participant in Focus Group Discussion with Women Athletes and Trainers

This survey also tried to capture these women's perception on whether they believe their men counterparts to be paid more than them for the same sport they play. As Figure 18 displays, 29.9% claim that they generally think that men do get paid more though they have no concrete evidence for this, followed by 27.3% claiming that they know for a fact that men do get higher payments for the same sport they play. All in all then, 57.2% of respondents claim to believe/think that men do get paid more in contrast to 36.4% claiming that they do not.

Figure 18: Perceptions of Women on Men's Payment for the Same Sport



From focus group discussions, women athletes also claimed that it is generally believed that for the same sport played, there are huge pay gaps between men and women. As per the statements of one participant:

“For the same sport played, our maximum payment as women athletes is the minimum starting salary of our men counterparts.”

Participant in Focus Group Discussion with Women Athletes and Trainers

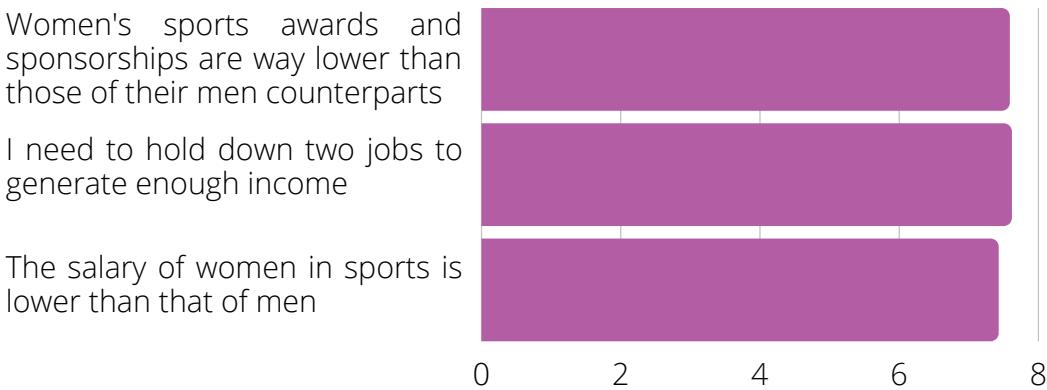
Another one stated:

“There are big pay discrepancies between men and women for the same sport. Men get paid four to five times more than their women equivalent.”

Participant in Focus Group Discussion with Women Athletes and Trainers

Lastly, women were also prompted to rate their responses on general perceptions regarding payment terms on a scale from 1-10 with 1 being “completely disagree” and 10 “completely agree”. Figure 19 displays responses using arithmetic means to aggregate the data response. Generally, women tended to agree that they have to hold on two jobs to generate enough income and they agreed that their men counterparts generally get paid more as well as receive more awards/sponsorships.

Figure 19: Statements on Payment Terms



From these findings in this section, it is evident that there is lack of funding opportunities and knowledge regarding the existence of such opportunities for women to apply to. Only 36% of women reported to have received an official salary from the sport they pursue. There is also widespread belief that women believe their men counterparts to be paid more for the same job performed.

Access to facilities, sports infrastructure, and training times

Next, as part of this report, of interest was also the understanding of how much women athletes in Kosovo have access to appropriate facilities and sports infrastructure as well as these women's perception on whether current facilities serve as an encouragement to continue pursuit of sport.

To start with, out of all respondents, 71.4% responded that they have a designated sports hall to pursue this sport/train, whereas 28.6% said to not have access to such facilities. When prompted to respond on the location they usually trained in, Table 3 lists out the percentage breakdown of the responses. It appears that out of those that have access to a designated sports hall, the majority of them train in the same hall boys/men train too (63.6%).

Training locations	Percentages
High school sports hall	13.6%
Same sports hall as boys'/men team	63.6%
Elsewhere	22.7%

Table 3: Places Women Athletes Train

From focus group discussions too, it was revealed that when women and men share a practicing venue, men get to decide first on what time suits them best for practicing. As per the words of a participant:

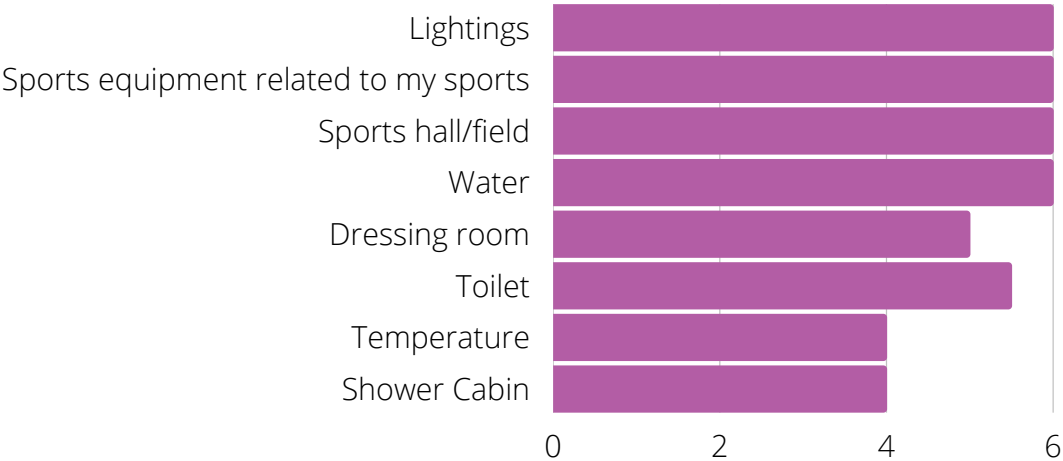
*"Men get to choose first what time suits them for practice.
Women then get the leftover times that were not suitable to the men."*

Participant in Focus Group Discussion with Women Athletes and Trainers

This is clearly a worrisome fact as women athletes are on the mercy of their men counterparts in picking a training schedule. This is an additional barrier for them as leftover training times might not be ideal.

When concerning locker rooms, 89.6% said to have access to a locker room and 10.4% said to not have access to such a room. Furthermore, individuals were prompted to respond how satisfied they were with different facilities offered at their sports hall. Answers could range from 1 being “not satisfied at all” and 10 being “very satisfied”. Out of those that provided a response on a scale of 1-10, Figure 20 below presents an arithmetic mean of findings. As it can be seen, shower cabins, the temperature inside the sports hall and the condition of the toilet rated as three of the categories with the lowest satisfaction rate.

Figure 20: Satisfaction With Sports Facility Conditions.



The survey furthermore also prompted women to respond on whether there is anything that prevents them from feeling at ease/free to use the changing rooms and the shower cabins. 18.2% of respondents claimed that there was something bothering them, 68.8% stated that there was nothing bothering them, 9.1% said that this was not an applicable question and 3.9% refused to answer.

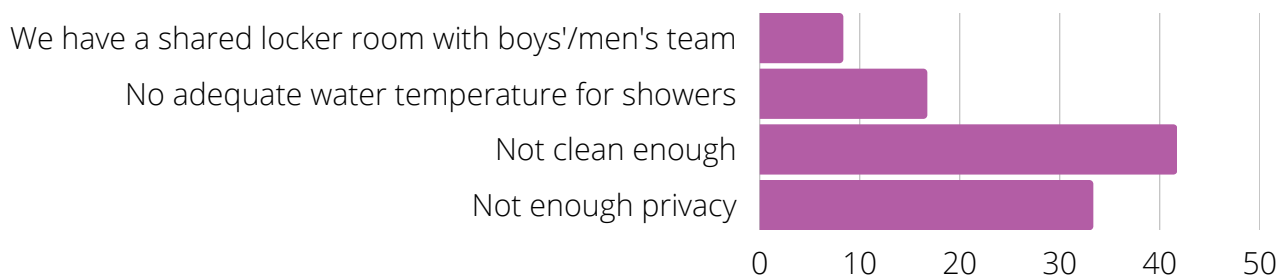
Discussions in Focus Groups also showed that some women athletes do not have access to basic necessities in the locker rooms. As per the statements of a participant:

*“We do not have access to shower rooms.
The shower rooms are only available to be used by men”.*

Participant in Focus Group Discussion with Women Athletes and Trainers

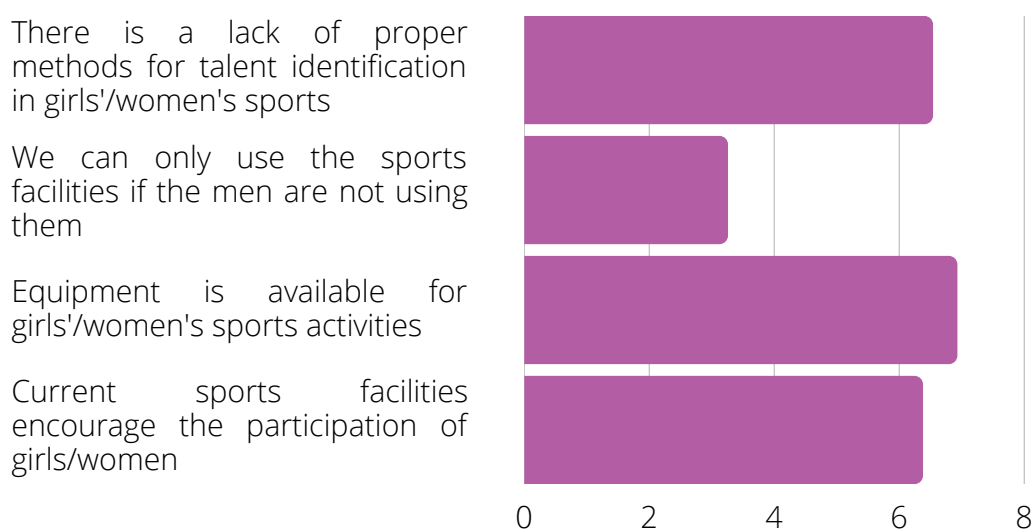
Out of those that responded to have not felt at ease, Figure 21 below shows the reasoning behind why this might be. 41.7% claim that this was due to non-cleanliness of the facility followed by lack of privacy (33.3%), no adequate temperature to take a shower (16.7%) and the sharing of locker rooms with boys (8.3%).

Figure 21: What Prevents Women From Feeling At Ease In Changing Rooms



Furthermore, women were also prompted to rate their responses on general perceptions regarding sport facility conditions on a scale from 1-10 with 1 being “completely disagree” and 10 “completely agree”. Figure 22 displays responses using arithmetic means to aggregate the data response. There was for example general agreeance among the surveyed individuals that there is a lack of proper methods for talent identification in women’s sports. On the other hand, despite the lack of privacy identified above, women do not generally agree that there is a hinderance toward using sports facilities when men are using them.

Figure 22: Statements on Sports Facilities



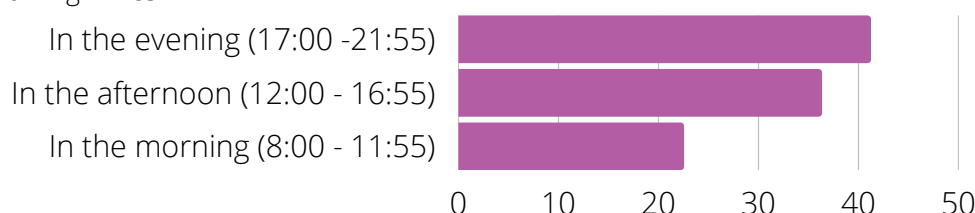
Lastly, this subsection also considers the training schedule of women athletes and tries to capture the degree of happiness with the training these women receive. Firstly, Table 4 lists out the frequencies of training time during a week. It appears that the most frequent response corresponded to 3-4 times a week (45.5%) followed by 5-6 times (37.7%) and so on. There were only 7.8% responding to train all days of week. Regardless, the training frequency indicates that being a women athlete requires time and dedication- something that might not be present for those maintaining more than one job to get by.

Frequency of trainings	Percentages
1-2 times a week	9.1%
3-4 times a week	45.5%
5-6 times a week	37.7%
7 times a week	7.8%

Table 4: Frequency of Training

When concerning the time during which these women train, it appears that 41.2% train in the evening and only 22.5% claim to do so in the morning. There is room of evidence here to hypothesize that this is due to the fact that some of these women maintain a job and/or other obligations that prevent them from training at a different time. The unsuitable training times are thus yet another hinderance toward sport dedication and active pursuit.

Figure 23: Training Times



81.8% of these women responded to be happy with the time they train with others either claiming that they aren't happy (16.9%) or refused to answer (1.3%).

From focus groups, another issue that came up was also the training times and lack of transportation. As per the words of a participant:

"When we have nightly training sessions it becomes really difficult for us to ensure transportation means. Thus, sometimes we might not make it for the training because of lack of transport."

Participant in Focus Group Discussion with Women Athletes and Trainers

From this section, one can conclude that access to sports infrastructure is wanting and perceived as a challenge to these women. They highlight the condition of the toilets, showers, and low temperatures as key hinderances in training. Some even claimed to not have a designated training facility and others claimed to share them with men. Lack of privacy was also highlighted as an issue which might make them feel uneasy when changing/using the locker rooms.

Sexual harassment exposure

This report has also tried to capture women athletes' perception and experience with sexual harassment. Because sexual harassment is a sensitive topic and is often underreported[16], the report through surveys and focus group discussions tried to ask questions pertaining to sexual harassment from different angles, namely one's own experience, one's perception of how much their colleagues are exposed to harassment, and perceptions regarding community's exposure.

Firstly, these women were asked whether they themselves had been sexually harassed but all 100% of the respondents chose to answer that they have never once experienced harassment from their trainer. When asked about whether a colleague has had a similar experience, 94.8% responded no, however 2.6% said that their colleagues were sexually harassed by the trainer. This evidence shows that while reluctant to talk about oneself, women feel freer to discuss these issues if they're talking for a third person not present in the room.

This hesitation or complete refusal might also be attributed to the fact that while surveys attempted to maintain complete anonymity, women athletes were asked to provide responses in their training facilities. Sometimes however, the trainer also wanted to oversee the surveying process which invertedly hindered honest responses. Additionally,

it's worth pointing out that refusal to answer or answering "no" might be due to the fact that these women might not even be aware that they're being exposed to comments of sexual nature and take it as given that these comments are natural in the area of sport.

Similarly, when prompted to respond whether they had ever been sexually harassed by other individuals such as a referee, another coach, a sports' doctor or a donor, there were inconclusive findings, with only 2.5% of respondents claiming with certainty to have been exposed to sexual harassment from a referee or another coach.

The qualitative portion of the study revealed a slightly different reality when it came to sexual harassment. From a focus group discussion with representatives from sports' federations for example, when the topic of sexual harassment came up, a participant claimed:

"We never had any complaints for sexual harassment in our sports clubs; the only sexual harassment issues are those that happen on the streets. However, boys will always pick at women on the streets but we cannot take this seriously as women in general are very pretty and men love women's beauty. Therefore, I do not think it's a big issue that should be addressed."

Participant in Focus Group Discussion with Women Athletes and Trainers

[16] Gordon B. Dahl and Matthew Knepper. Why is Workplace Sexual Harassment Underreported? The Value of Outside Options Amid the Threat of Retaliation. <https://econweb.ucsd.edu/~gdahl/papers/sexual-harassment-underreporting.pdf>

Clearly, there is evidence from the qualitative portion of the study that sexual harassment is the norm in our society. From another focus group, a participant also claimed the following:

"I have been commented and praised on my body shape many times"

Participant in Focus Group Discussion with Women Athletes and Trainers

Another one pointed out:

"As a child, our trainer touched us in inappropriate ways but we did not realize it at the time. Later on, while discussing with friends, we realized that he sexually harassed us."

Participant in Focus Group Discussion with Women Athletes and Trainers

In the same discussion group, another woman also claimed:

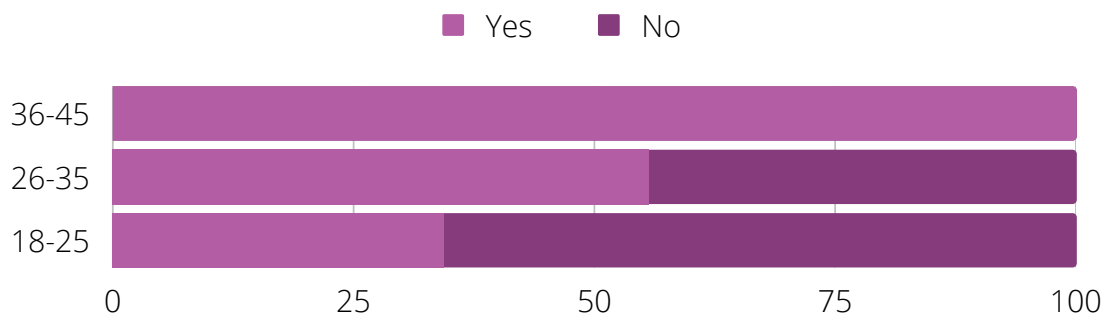
"The problem here is the fact that girls start training young and they see their trainer as a father figure but the trainer does not reciprocate this feeling".

Participant in Focus Group Discussion with Women Athletes and Trainers

As it can be seen, sexual harassment incidents are not only present among adult women athletes but minor ones as well. This is clearly concerning as at this point the discussion does not revolve only around sexual harassment anymore as there are simultaneous criminal offenses at play, which is extremely concerning and constitutes a criminal offense according to the Criminal Code of Kosovo.

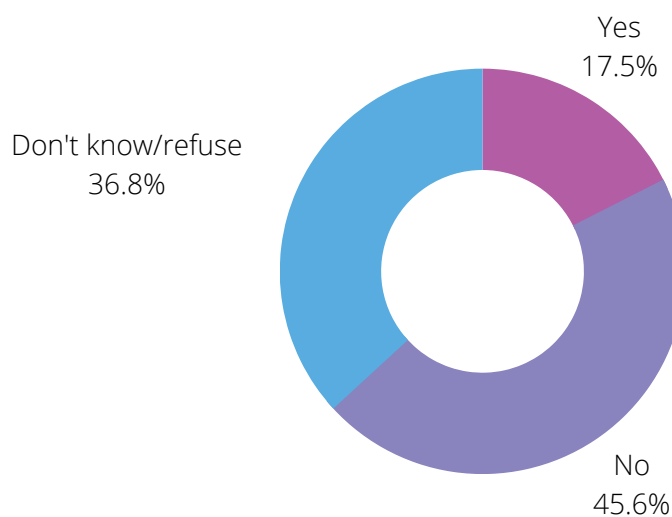
Next, this report aimed to understand how much information women athletes have when it comes to reporting sexual harassment incidents when they happen. In this question, 62.3% of respondents in general reported to have never been informed about where to report sexual harassment issues. What is interesting to point out however is that as Figure 24 shows, older women have higher chances of knowing where to report sexual harassment incidents. For example, women belonging to the 36-45 age group in 100% of the cases knew where to report such incidents, with only 55.6% and 34.3% knowing this information in the 26-35 and 18-25 age groups respectively.

Figure 24: Sexual harassment reporting knowledge and age groups



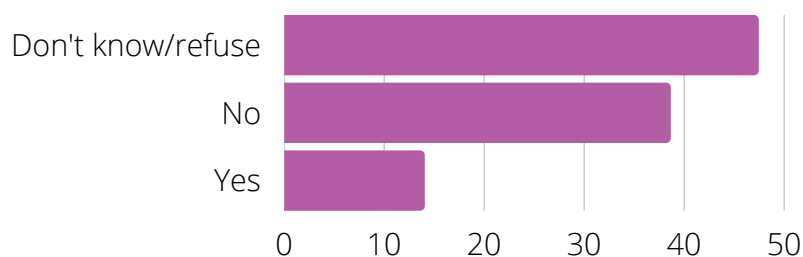
When asked on whether their federation had clear guidelines that address sexual harassment, 17.5% said they knew, and the rest either answered that they weren't aware of such policies, or that there were no such policies in place.

Figure 25: Clear Guidelines of Federation in Reporting Sexual Harassment



Furthermore, they were asked to respond on whether there is any one particular person responsible for reporting sexual harassment related to sports. As Figure 26 shows, 38.6% of respondents said that there wasn't anyone responsible to report issues of sexual harassment to, 14% claimed that there was someone responsible, and 47.4% said they didn't know or simply refused to answer.

Figure 26: Person Responsible For Reporting Sexual Harassment



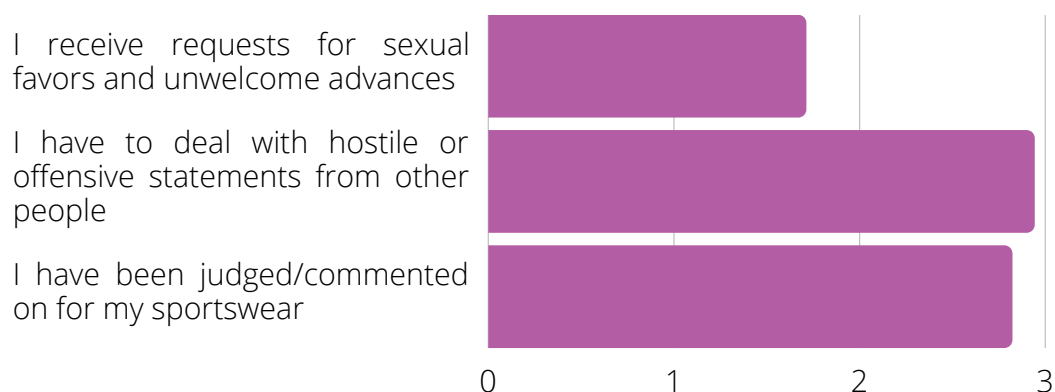
From focus group discussions, some women agreed that even if they are aware of protocols that must be followed in case of a sexual harassment incident, they often refrain from reporting it because they fear repercussions. As per the statement of a participant:

“Even if we do complain, there is nothing that is done to address this issue. The only thing that happens is that if we do report such incidents, we can be penalized in terms of not playing in a game”

Participant in Focus Group Discussion with Women Athletes and Trainers

Lastly, women were also prompted to rate responses on different sexual harassment perception statements on a scale from 1-10 with 1 being “completely disagree” and 10 “completely agree”. Figure 27 displays responses using arithmetic means to aggregate the data response. It is evident that across all statements, women generally tended to sway toward “completely disagree”. This can again be due to the fact that sexual harassment is an often-taboo topic that goes unreported for a myriad of reasons.

Figure 27: Sexual Harassment Statements

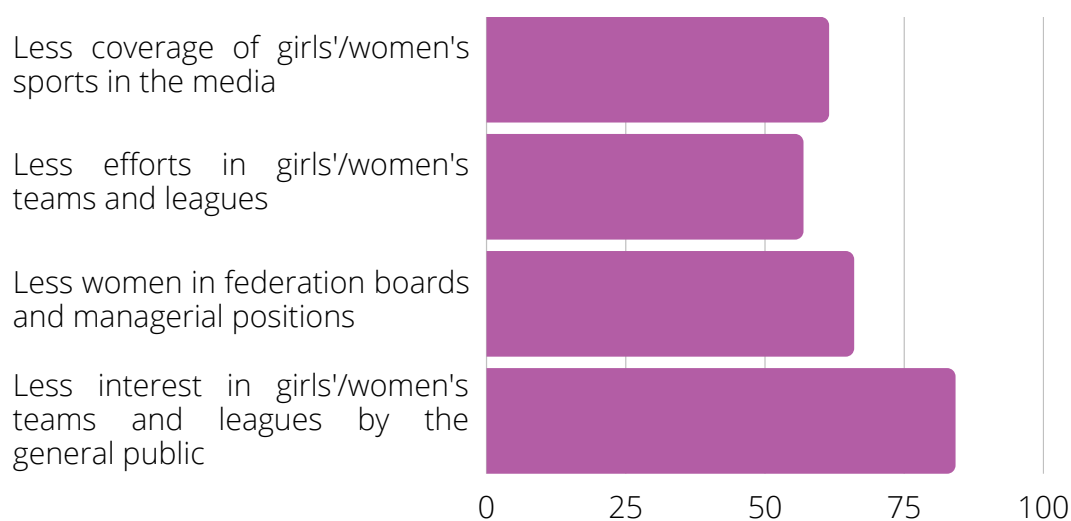


To conclude this section, women athletes generally do not report sexual harassment as an issue in the quantitative portion of the study. Focus group discussions however pointed out that there is sexual harassment present among women athletes. Some women athletes too reported to have known that their colleagues had been subject to sexual harassment. Lastly, there was evidence that women belonging to older age groups knew where to report sexual harassment to as compared to their younger women counterparts.

Media coverage and fan base

The report was also concerned with understanding media coverage and fan base of women athletes in Kosovo. Firstly, women were asked to give out reasonings as to why they think (if they do) that men get paid more than them for the same job performed/sport played. Respondents could select as many responses as applicable. Figure 28 shows, 61.4% of times, women reported that this might be due to less media coverage of women's sports. On a similar note, 84.1% of women responded that higher payment of men might be due to less interest in girls' women's teams and leagues by the general public. This is also an indirect indication of insufficient media coverage.

Figure 28: Perceptions Of Reasons Why Men Get Paid More For The Same Sport



**Note: Percentages do not add up to 100% as this was a multiple-response question*

Additionally, women were also prompted to rate responses on different media coverage and sports fan base on a scale from 1-10 with 1 being "completely disagree" and 10 "completely agree". Responses were aggregated using arithmetic means. Figures 29 and 30 below reveal responses of respondents. For example, as Figure 29 shows, women on average tend to agree (6.95 out of 10) with the fact that media fails to attract right sponsors for the women in sports. Given that financial difficulties were one of the main challenges of women to pursue a sport professionally, this finding is quite important as it goes to show the need to improve on the media coverage of women athletes in Kosovo.

Moreover, there is also general agreement (5.72 out of 10) on women's perception that they have limited media coverage.

Figure 29: Media Coverage Statements

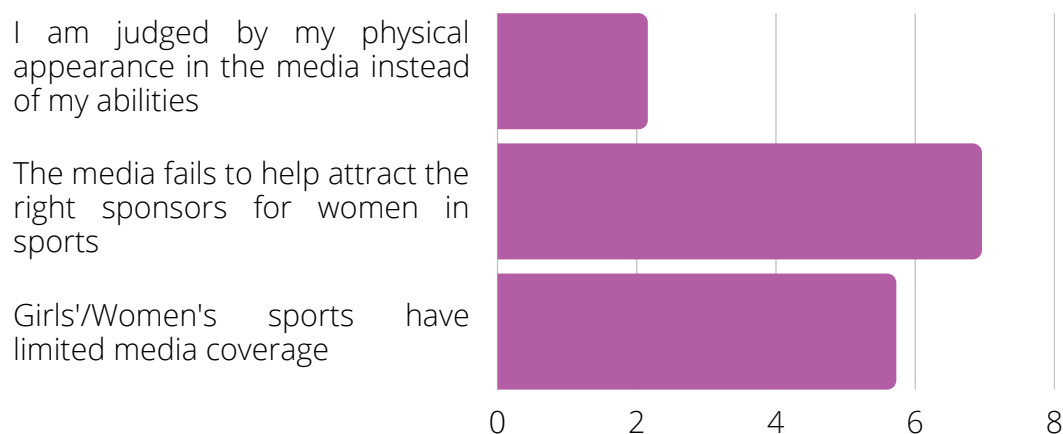
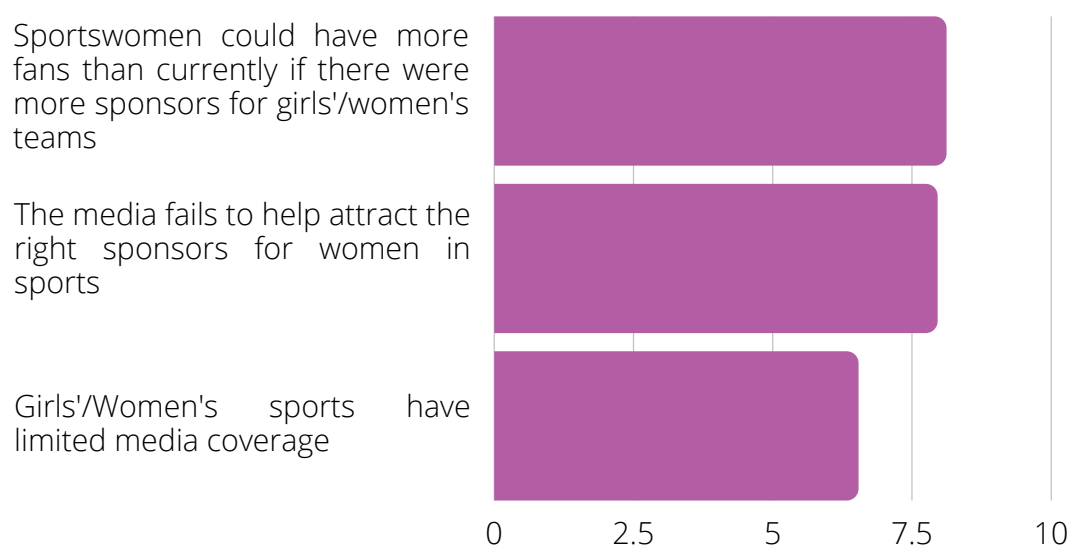


Figure 30 moreover touches upon women's perception regarding their fan base. For example, there is strong agreement (8.11 out of 10) that women could have more fans if there were more sponsors for women's teams. Similarly, there is strong agreeance that they could have more fans if the media covered them as much as they cover boys'/men's sports (7.95 out of 10).

Figure 30: Fan Base Statements



Similarly, discussions in focus group also pointed out that lack of media coverage and lack of knowledge of the general public about women athletes is a problematic issue. As per the statements of a participant:

"I believe our media coverage is really low and we are rarely covered by the media in a game we play. Our only fan base to come us watch when we play are our families and close friends"

Participant in Focus Group Discussion with Women Athletes and Trainers

Lastly, through these discussions in focus groups, it was pointed out that there is an immense need for more media coverage in the form of posters, radio exposure, online media, and alike.

Limitations

Though the report includes both a qualitative and a quantitative portion, it is worth highlighting a set of limitations mainly stemming from the field work portion. Some of the limitations are outlined below:

- In some instances, women athletes had little privacy in conducting the survey given that trainers also wanted to be part of the survey. This directly might have affected their responses and degree of freedom in providing honest feedback.
- Perhaps due to the length of the questionnaire, there were many women (48.6% of the sample) athletes that refused to respond and as such their answer variability remains uncaptured and cannot be analyzed.

Conclusions and Recommendations

This report aimed to capture a holistic picture of women's access to sports and challenges they face in playing a sport. It tried to understand firstly the type of sport played and whether these women were part of any sport federation. Then, it tried to comprehend women athletes' main challenges faced, followed by whether their family had any influence on their decision to play a sport, their financial situation and prospects of payment by playing a sport, access to appropriate sport infrastructure and how happy they were with the sport facilities, degree of exposure to sexual harassment, and lastly degree to which they believe to receive enough media coverage and have a diverse fan base. Additionally, the qualitative portion through focus group discussions tried to get different perspectives on challenges and opportunities of women athletes from the lens of all relevant stakeholders. Main findings of this report can be summarized as follows:

- Lack of financing and the necessity to work multiple jobs in order to allow them to actively pursue sports as well
- Lack of access to appropriate state-of-the-art sport facilities and outdated sport infrastructure

- Lack of availability of training spaces for women that are not shared also by men- an issue that additionally leads to privacy issues and clashes in schedule between men's and women's training times, with the formers' times always being prioritized
- Lack of fundamental assets to provide basic training opportunities and personal hygiene post-training
- Community's stereotypes in regards to expectations of bodies women should have and how engaging in sports might lead to body dysmorphia
- Lack of knowledge about how sexual harassment is defined and what can be considered as sexual harassment
- Lack of uniformity of existing federation protocols that appropriately address consequences of sexual harassment
- Lack of disciplinary committees to address issues of sexual harassment
- Fear of stigmatisation tied to reporting sexual harassment
- Insufficient media coverage of women in sports
- Insufficient existing policies to identify new women talents in the field of sport

As per the results generated above, the following recommendations follow:

- Increase of media coverage for women athletes in order to promote their sports and give them access to tap into the sponsorship potential and access a wider fan base.
- Increase of knowledge about existing subventions to pursue a sport and the undertaking of affirmative action to encourage women to pursue sports. As it resulted from the survey, not many women applied for grants even though one of the main challenges they faced pertained to lack of finances and lack of funding.
- Increase of governmental sponsorships for women athletes. As the survey responses pointed out, only around 7% of women received governmental sponsorships as the majority were financed privately from the club they play at.
- Increase of knowledge/training opportunities for women to understand where to report sexual harassment behaviours happening within their sport club. As it turned out from the responses, the majority of women, especially younger ones, were completely unaware of both policies in place to report such issues as well as any person responsible to report to.
- Increasing capacities and the forming of disciplinary committees to address issues of sexual harassment.
- Creation of designated protocols that specifically address sexual harassment for women athletes
- Creation of adequate, gender-separated training conditions to enable women's privacy while training and a wider range of time availability to practice.
- Infrastructural investments in state-of-the-art sports facilities including here investment in gender-separated locker rooms, appropriate access to hot water for showers, and a designated sport hall to practice.
- Creation of a task force led by the Agency for Gender Equality to address issues resulting from this report.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Guide to Moderating Focus Groups For Women Athletes

Guide to Moderating Focus Groups ***"Challenges of girls and professional sportswomen in Kosovo"***

Duration: 1 – 1.5 hours

Number of participants: 6-8 per focus group

Demographic characteristics for all FG:

- **FG 1:** female athletes and coaches living in urban areas
- **FG 2:** athletes and coaches living in rural areas

Part I: Introduction (10 minutes)

- Presentation of the participants
- Explanation of working methods and purpose of discussion
- Creating a relaxing and pleasant atmosphere
- Warming up - asking questions about profession, age, hobbies, etc.

Part II: Challenges of Professional Athletes (60-70 minutes)

1. How did you decide to do sports? What made you choose the sport you play?
2. Does your family support you in this profession?
3. Do you also do any other profession? Do you have another job?
4. Do you think there are enough female athletes in Kosovo?
5. What are the main challenges faced by you and in general professional sportsmen in Kosovo? **Stimulate discussion by mentioning personal financial circumstances, donor funding, small fan base, family obligations, limited media coverage, etc. – to spend a lot of time on this question*
6. If there are female coaches among us, how do your challenges differ from those of female players?
7. Do you get paid as a professional athlete? Who are you paid by? **Stimulate discussion by mentioning government, private team owners, donors, etc.*
8. What about subsidies? Have you ever received?
 - a. If so, by whom?
 - b. Do you have enough information on how to apply for them?
 - c. Are the criteria clear?

- d. If you applied for or received a subsidy, for what specific activity did you receive it?
9. How do you see the role of directorates at the municipal level? What about the federations? What about NGOs? – in relation to the inclusion and promotion of participation in sports for women. Please elaborate on each.
 - a. Do you think you have enough support from any of them?
 - b. What more can they do?
10. How do you see women's sports coverage in the media?
 - a. Is it covered enough?
 - b. How much does the media support women in sports? Are there specific times when you feel this support the most?
 - c. What do you think they can do and wish the media would do more for women athletes?
11. Do you think there has been progress in the perception of sportswomen as well as the assessment of their participation in sports?
 - a. If so, why?
 - b. If not, why?
12. Have you ever experienced teasing/bullying or other harassment, such as sexual, do you or do you think any of your female colleagues have ever experienced from sports actors (coaches, sports doctors, donors, etc.?) **Stimulate the discussion by mentioning unwanted touches/caresses, suggestive looks, comments about the body, questions about life personal/private, etc.*
 - a. Is it easy or difficult to understand each situation of sexual harassment which may be indirect? How would you describe these situations?
 - b. Do you know if there is a mechanism where you can report such situations?
 - i. If so, did you ever report and how did the procedure go?
 - ii. If not, have you heard of any similar cases? Can you outline the course of the case?
13. What about sports facilities? What gyms/fields do you exercise/train in?
 - a. Do you have the right conditions? **Stimulate the discussion by mentioning the changing room, the shower cabin, the temperature of the room and the shower water, etc.*
 - b. Do you have special ones or do you share them with sports men?
 - i. If yes? Do you happen to train at the same time?
 - ii. Are you comfortable or not? **Stimulate the discussion by mentioning the changing room, the shower cabin, etc. Elaborate.*
14. Is there anything else you'd like to share from your experience as an athlete that hasn't been mentioned so far?

Part III: Conclusion (5 minutes)

- Thank you for participating
- Anything to add
- Confirm the value of the participants' opinions

Appendix 2: Guide to Moderating Focus Groups For Institutional and NGO representatives

Guide to Moderating Focus Groups ***"Challenges of girls and professional sportswomen in Kosovo"***

Duration: 1 – 1.5 hours

Number of participants: 6-8 per focus group

Demographic characteristics for all FG:

- **FG 3:** municipal representatives
- **FG 4:** representatives of public institutions/federations/etc.
- **FG 5:** representatives of sports NGOs or similar

Part I: Introduction (10 minutes)

- Presentation of the participants
- Explanation of working methods and purpose of discussion
- Creating a relaxing and pleasant atmosphere
- Warming up - asking questions about profession, age, hobbies, etc.

Part II: Challenges of Professional Athletes (60-70 minutes)

1. Can you tell us your opinion about the decision of women in Kosovo to play sports?
2. Are they supported enough by the family to play sports?
3. Do you know if there are any professional sportswomen who are only involved in sports, or do you think they also practice some other profession?
4. Approximately, how many years does the career of a sportswoman in Kosovo last?
5. Do you think there are enough female athletes in Kosovo?
6. What are the main challenges faced by professional athletes in Kosovo? **Stimulate discussion by mentioning personal financial circumstances, donor funding, small fan base, family obligations, limited media coverage, etc. – to spend a lot of time on this question*
7. Do professional athletes get paid? Who are they paid by? **Stimulate discussion by mentioning government, private team owners, donors, etc.*
8. professional sportswomen?
 - a. Who do they usually break up with?
 - b. How is the information about these subsidies announced? Are there clear criteria?
 - c. For what specific activity are subsidies offered?
9. What is the role of directorates at the municipal level? What about the federations? What about NGOs? – in relation to the inclusion and promotion of participation in sports for women. Please elaborate on each.
 - a. Do you think they support women in sports enough?
 - b. What can you do/do more?

10. How do you see women's sports coverage in the media?
 - a. Is it covered enough?
 - b. How much does the media support women in sports? Are there specific times when you feel this support the most?
 - c. What do you think they can do and wish the media would do more for women athletes?
11. Do you think there has been progress in the perception of sportswomen as well as the assessment of their participation in sports?
 - a. If so, why?
 - b. If not, why?
12. Do you think that women athletes experience ridicule/ bullying or sexual harassment from sports actors (coaches, sports doctors, donors, etc.?) **Stimulate the discussion by mentioning unwanted touches/caresses, suggestive looks, comments about the body, questions about personal life/ private, etc.*
 - a. Is it easy or difficult to understand each situation of sexual harassment which may be indirect? How would you describe these situations?
 - b. Do you know if there is a mechanism where you can report such situations?
 - i. If so, did they report enough?
 - ii. How do these cases end?
 - iii. Are there mechanisms in your institution (if municipality, or central institution) that deals with these issues?
 - iv. Do NGOs have any programs/activities for such cases?
13. What about sports facilities? Do you think there are enough sports facilities for women?
 - a. Do they have the right conditions? **Stimulate the discussion by mentioning the changing room, the shower cabin, the temperature of the room and the shower water, etc.*
 - b. Do you know whether they have special ones or do they share them with sports men? Elaborate
14. Is there anything else you'd like to share from your experience as an athlete that hasn't been mentioned so far?

Part III: Conclusion (5 minutes)

- Thank you for participating
- Anything to add
- Confirm the value of the participants' opinions

