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INFOSHEET

2018 PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS OF GENDER EQUALITY AND VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

KOSOVO

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CONTEXT

Domestic violence and gender equality are listed as priority issues in Kosovo¹. Nevertheless, struggles to address violence against women persist due to gaps in the existing legal framework and in its implementation. Among the institutions and organizations working on gender-based violence, the United Nations Mission to Kosovo (UNMIK) has worked to prioritize domestic violence issues, and the Kosovo Police has undertaken specific measures to combat domestic violence and improve officers' interaction with domestic violence victims/survivors. The adoption of the National Strategy for the Protection against Domestic Violence and its Action Plan 2016-2020, in addition to the active participation of civil society, has helped to create awareness towards issues related to violence against women. However, patriarchal attitudes and stereotypical prejudices remain widespread.

Knowledge of the Law

Key finding #1: Almost 1 in 4 respondents (23.6%) were not aware of the existence of a legal framework on violence against women and girls and domestic violence (VAWG and DV) in Kosovo. This percentage has improved significantly from 2008 (when 44.1% were unaware), suggesting increases in public awareness on the issue of domestic violence.

Key finding #2: When asked where they could get assistance in cases of domestic violence, the majority of Kosovars identified the Kosovo Police. Despite various awareness-raising campaigns about alternative service providers and NGOs, only a small proportion of respondents were able to identify institutions other than the police.



23.6% of respondents were not aware of the existence of a legal framework on violence against women and girls and domestic violence

1. All references to Kosovo in this document are in line with the UN Security Council Resolution 1244 (1999).

Perception of gender roles

Key finding #1: Women are expected to behave within traditional gender roles. A notable proportion of both male and female respondents believe women to be better suited for domestic work and men to be better suited for leadership and paid work. More than four in ten (43%) think that, “young brides are supposed to have more responsibility for cleaning and cooking than other family members” (see Figure 1 below).

Key finding #2: Men remain the primary decision-makers in approximately one-third of Kosovo families. A significant proportion of respondents reported an imbalance of power in decision-making within the family,

placing the female partner in a position of subservience. Imbalances of power may increase the risk of all types of domestic violence; economic violence, in particular, can be used when one family member has more control over the family’s finances.

Key finding #3: Female respondents suggest that women have little or no influence in decision-making. A small proportion of respondents, most of whom were women, reported that the decision-maker becomes angry, verbally abusive, or physically abusive when disagreed with (see Figure 2 below).

Figure 1: Young brides are supposed to have more responsibilities for cleaning and cooking than other family members²...

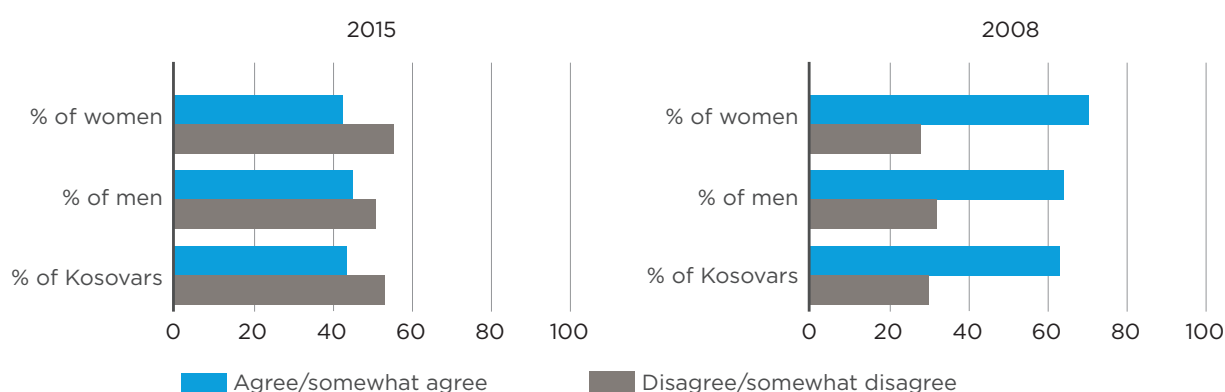
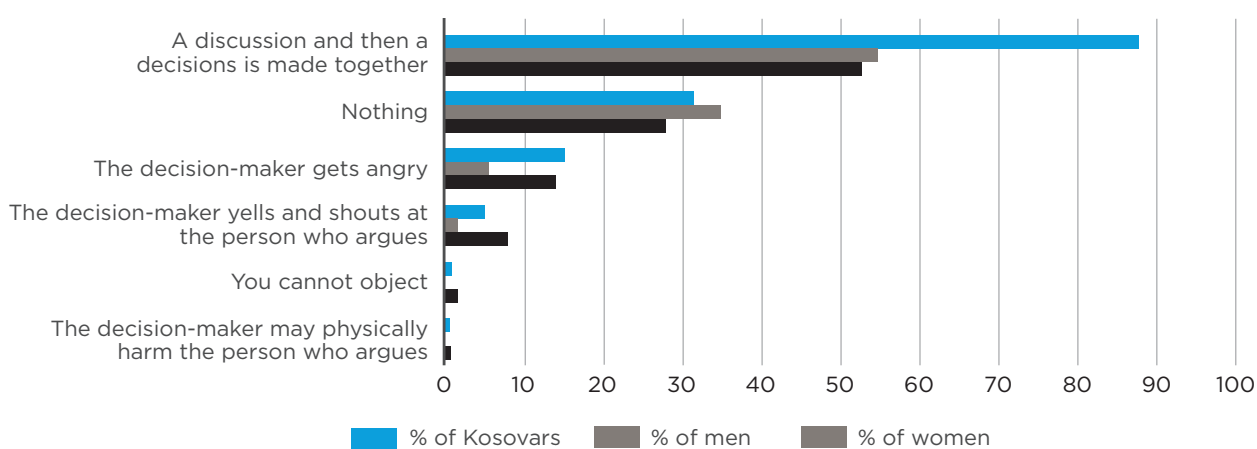


Figure 2: What happens if someone disagrees or argues with the decision maker(s)?³



2. “No more excuses” (2015), Kosovo Women’s Network

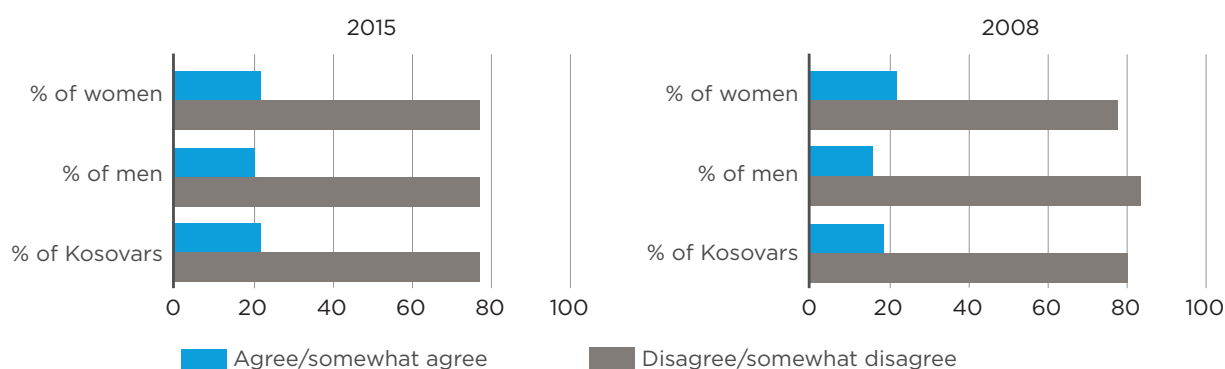
3. Ibid

Attitudes toward violence against women

Key finding #1: A high proportion of Kosovars justify a husband's use of violence against his wife. As seen in Figure 3 below, 1 in 5 Kosovars agree or somewhat agree with a husband's use of violence against his wife. Notably, the percentage of Kosovars who agree or somewhat agree has increased since 2008.

Key finding #2: Nearly one-third of respondents (29.9%) perceive domestic violence as a 'normal' part of any relationship. The normalization of domestic violence can minimize the severity of violence experienced and discourage victims from reporting incidents of violence and leaving violent relationships.

Figure 3: Sometimes it is OK for a husband to hit his wife⁴...



Key finding #3: A large majority of Kosovars (74%) blame women for 'provoking' the sexual harassment they experience. Additionally, 40.5% of respondents believe that women like to be harassed, and 31.1% believe, "People naturally harass others when they are attracted to them and that's OK." These patriarchal victim-blaming attitudes instil shame in victims, which may discourage them from reporting harassment or abuse. These attitudes are also condescending to men, as they imply that men cannot control their own behaviour.

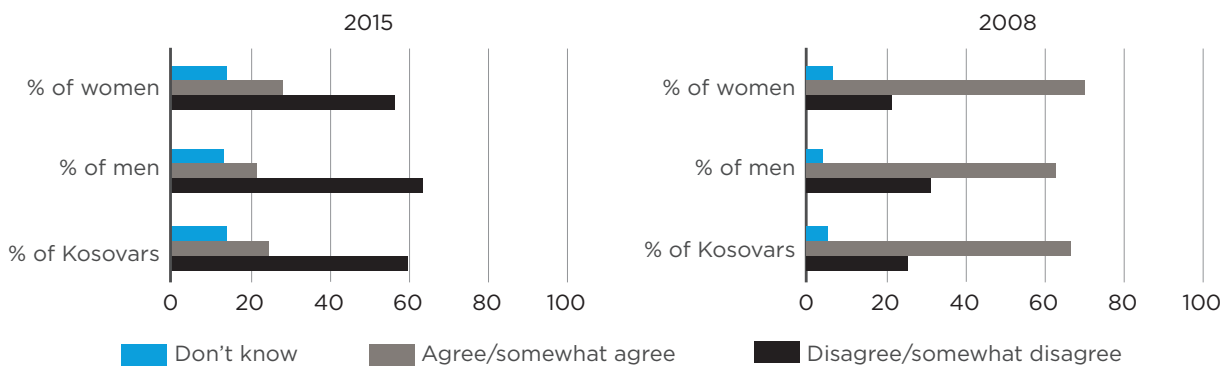
Key finding #4: A significant proportion of Kosovars reject the concept of rape within marriage. One in four (24.6%) respondents believe that sexual intercourse can never be violence if it happens between two adults who are married (see Figure 4 below). However, this percentage has decreased significantly from 2008 (67.1%), demonstrating a major positive shift in public awareness and opinion toward marital rape.



40.5% of respondents believe that women like to be harassed

4. "No more excuses" (2015), Kosovo Women's Network

Figure 4: Sexual intercourse can never be violent if it happens between two adults who are married⁵...

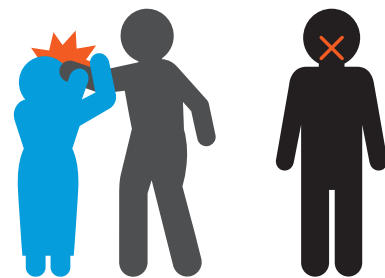


Willingness to prevent or report violence

Key finding #1: Domestic violence is seen as a ‘private matter.’ 31.3% of respondents believe that domestic violence is a “family matter, so neighbours shouldn’t report it to the police.” Keeping domestic violence in the private sphere only serves to empower perpetrators and silence victims, and reaffirms the harmful perception that being a victim of violence is shameful.

Key finding #2: Respondents showed low trust in protective mechanisms and institutions. Only 75.9 % of Kosovars said they would use the law to help them in situations of violence. Other respondents reported fear, shame, and low trust in protective institutions as reasons that would prevent them from seeking legal help.

Key finding #3: A larger proportion of men (80.0%) than women (67.4%) recommended victims of violence to contact the police – possibly indicative of women’s lower level of trust towards the police in handling issues of domestic violence.



31.3% of respondents believe that domestic violence is a “family matter, so neighbours shouldn’t report it to the police.”

5. “No more excuses” (2015), Kosovo Women’s Network

PRACTICAL RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PROGRAMMING

- **Work with women towards recognizing intimate partner violence, particularly non-physical violence (psychological and economic)**, and specifically raise awareness within society about the gravity of any form of violence against women and girls, under any pretext.
- **Work with men and boys to challenge traditional gender norms and address** the concerns, fears and pressures that men face because of harmful gender roles. Violence against women cannot be prevented without the active participation of men and boys and the eradication of patriarchal traditions.
- **Explicitly challenge the perception of domestic violence as a private matter.** Strategic messaging should emphasize that the responsibility and blame for violence lies solely with perpetrators and encourage women to speak openly about their experiences. Public debates and discussions on VAW/G can also help break the silence.
- **Provide more information about existing protection mechanisms to women from marginalized groups.** Ensure that informational materials are available in multiple languages and distributed in communities (including rural communities) with a high proportion of women from minority groups.
- **Engage with professionals who work directly with women victims of domestic violence** (police officers, lawyers, judges, healthcare professionals, social workers, etc.) to challenge patriarchal and victim-blaming attitudes and to train them on working with victims (from all backgrounds) in sensitive and appropriate manners.
- **Organize specific programs to address** issues related to gender-based violence, specifically domestic violence through the media, which plays a key role in raising public awareness regarding violence against women. **Use both national and local TV in both languages Albanian and Serbian.**