



KOSOVAR INSTITUTE FOR POLICY RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

Publication series under the Education Program

Capacity building for students and youth

Publication no. 01

PUBLIC OPINION PERCEPTION ON PUBLIC SAFETY AND POLICING IN KOSOVO:

OVERVIEW OF THE PERIOD 2000 - 2011

Prishtina, June 2012

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Published by



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	5
1. Public Opinion Perception on Public Safety	7
1.1. Which year was the most insecure in Kosovo?	7
1.2. From which type of crime you feel mostly threatened?	7
1.3. Which places (city or village) you are afraid to visit?	9
1.4. Do you or any of your family members possess a fire arm?	10
2. Public Opinion Perception on Policing in Kosovo	13
2.1. How do you evaluate the law enforcement and justice institutions in Kosovo? ..	13
2.2. Which are the strengths of the Kosovo Police?	13
2.3. Which are the weaknesses of the Kosovo Police?	14
2.4. How do you assess the police response to your needs and requirements?	15
2.5. In case you are threatened or a victim of a crime, would you inform the police? ..	15
2.6. Do you think that police patrolling is enough for your neighborhoods?	16
2.7. Have you ever been abused by the police?	17
2.8. Is there a case in which the police have asked for gifts in order to perform services for you?	17
3. Conclusions	18

LIST OF FIGURES

Public Opinion Perception on Public Safety in Kosovo

- Figure 1: The most insecure years in Kosovo
- Figure 2: The crimes that bring up concerns in Kosovo
- Figure 3: The number of murders/homicides in Kosovo by year
- Figure 4: The number of registered crimes in Kosovo by year
- Figure 5: The most dangerous places according to public opinion in Kosovo
- Figure 6: Weapon possession in Kosovo
- Figure 7: Grouping of weapon possession based on authorization (with or without authorization) in Kosovo
- Figure 8: Reasons of weapon possession in Kosovo (as a need or as part of tradition?)
- Figure 9: Willingness of citizens to hand in weapons
- Figure 10: Arms control by the authorities (police)

Public Opinion Perception on Policing in Kosovo

- Figure 11: Law enforcement and justice ranking in Kosovo based on credibility
- Figure 12: The strengths of the Kosovo Police according to public opinion
- Figure 13: The weaknesses of the Kosovo Police according to public opinion
- Figure 14: Evaluation of the police performance
- Figure 15: Crime reporting to the police where there is a direct threat
- Figure 16: Crime reporting to the police where there is an implicit threat
- Figure 17: Police patrolling in neighbourhoods
- Figure 18: The level of abuses of citizens by police
- Figure 19: The presence of corruption in the Kosovo Police

INTRODUCTION

This is the first report compiled under the Education Programme of KIPRED in collaboration with students and youth. KIPRED intends that through such collaborative publications, which are related to areas of research of the Institute to directly increase students' and other distinguished young people's skills and capacities. This research paper provides important information which KIPRED has decided to publish under this Programme. The original version of this report was written in Albanian.

The report's object of study is the perception of public opinion on *public safety* and *policing* in Kosovo for the period 2000 until 2011. The main methodology used for compilation of this study was surveying of citizens, where their direct perception was taken into account regarding *the public safety* and *policing* in Kosovo. The survey was conducted with a random sample of 600 people in six regions of Kosovo, including: Gjilan, Ferizaj, Mitrovica, Peja, Prishtina and Prizren. The survey was conducted only in the centers of these regions, 100 per each region. In the city of Mitrovica the survey was conducted only in the southern part; the northern part was not included because of security reasons. In the meanwhile primary data for this study were collected during the first months respectively in February and March 2012.

Respondents were of different age groups which include those 18 and above. In terms of their gender, 343 or 57.16% of the respondents were male and 257 or 42% of them were female. Despite the fact that surveys were conducted only in the city centres, 360 or 60% of respondents come from the urban areas and 240 or 40% come from rural areas. Also most of the respondents are members of Kosovo Albanian community.¹ However during the survey in Mitrovica a number of members of Bosnian community (3) and Turkish community (2) were encountered.

MAIN FINDINGS

- Reliability of law enforcement and justice institutions was measured by public opinion with grading method from 1 to 5. Kosovo Security Force (KSF) is the institution with the highest grade 4.71; Kosovo Force (KFOR) with 4.04; Kosovo Police (KP) with 3.41; Kosovo Customs with 2.71; Courts with 2.55, Prosecutor with 2.46, Kosovo Intelligence Agency (KIA) with 2.11; and EULEX with 1.83 points.
- The northern part of Kosovo is considered by 59 % of respondents as the most insecure place in Kosovo, which is far higher than the second most insecure place – Peja with 6.59 % of the respondents.
- The forms of criminality that respondents found most disturbing were: thefts (44%), corruption (18.33%), organized crime (12%), murders (11%), rape (3%), human trafficking (1.5%), and so forth.

¹ The Albanian community constitutes 92.4% of the total population in Kosovo. Statistical Office of Kosovo, Demographic, Social and Reproductive Health Survey in Kosovo, (Prishtina, 2009)

- Annual data on the total number of crimes, over the period covered by this study, ranges from 87,985 cases of crime in 2002 (highest) down to 45,298 of them in 2010 (lowest). Whereas in 2011 the total number of crime cases was 63,108.
- The assumption that in Kosovo there are about 400,000 fire arms can be confirmed also by the answers of the respondents, where a considerable percentage (33.83%) admit that they possess fire arms, from which 59.11 % are unauthorized. 70.44% of respondents have declared that they possess fire arms as a need for personal security and property protection, and less as a matter of tradition.
- The majority or 47.84% of respondents evaluated the response of police to their needs and requirements for safety and security to be as average, some of them (31.83%) consider it as satisfactory, while 20.33% consider it as unsatisfactory.
- Even though *the community police* was promoted by constant advertisements in the media, 66.83% of respondents stated that police patrols in their neighbourhoods are insufficient, and in some places (rural areas) absent at all. Among other things, 18% of respondents emphasized particularly the delays in response by the Kosovo Police after being called to intervene by the citizens.
- Regarding the cooperation between citizens and police, 96.33% of respondents stated that they are willing to cooperate with the police if they are directly threatened or if they are a victim of any crime. In a similar scale, or 94.83% of them said that they would do the same thing for their neighbour (when they are indirectly threatened), which indicates that the willingness of citizens to cooperate with the police is on high level.
- Whereas, regarding the behaviour of police officers, 21% of respondents specified politeness as a characteristic of the KP, while 14% considers the bad behaviour as a characteristic of this institution.
- Corruption is not considered as a characteristic of the KP, where 88.33% of respondents said that they did not encounter a case when police asked for a bribe.
- Meanwhile 90.66% of respondents said they have not been abused by members of the KP.

1. PUBLIC OPINION PERCEPTION ON PUBLIC SAFETY

1.1. Which year was the most insecure in Kosovo?

The answers to this question have shown which years and events in the past have been the most insecure for citizens in Kosovo. As shown below in figure no.1, there were four main events which have awakened a sense of insecurity in the country: the year 2000, which marks the beginning of freedom period and establishment of Kosovo institutions², then comes the year 2004 with March riots, after that the year 2008 with the declaration of Kosovo's independence and the year 2011 with barricades in northern part of Kosovo which were set by some members of the Serb community and supported by parallel security structures of Serbia.

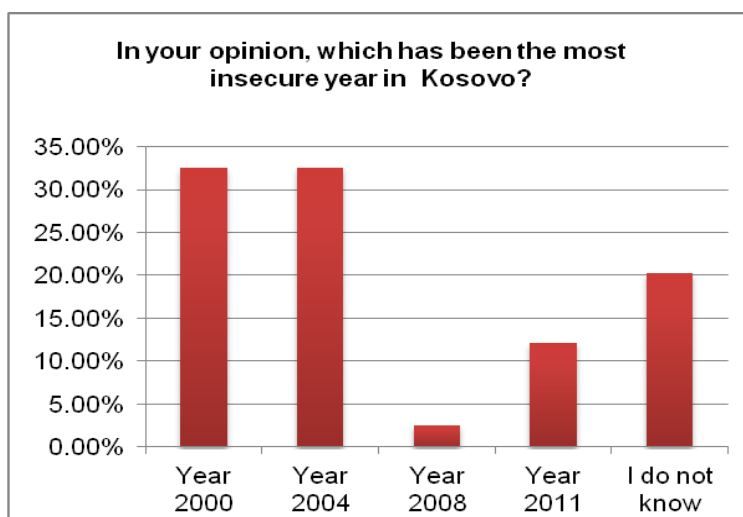


Figure nr. 1: Most insecure years in Kosovo

From the total number of respondents, 32.5% stated that the years 2000 and 2004 were the most insecure. As a reason for insecurity in 2000 they expressed the fear from eventual continuation of war, ethnic divisions, lack of security institutions and the high rate of criminality. As a reason for insecurity in 2004 respondents emphasized the March riots, which were followed by ethnic divisions. As for the year 2008, 2.5% of respondents have called this year as insecure, and the reason for this was the fear from possible war or conflict like that of March 2004 after the declaration of independence. Whereas the year 2011, was rated as insecure by 12.10% of respondents and the reason for this were the barricades, which were set up in northern part of Kosovo by the Serbian parallel security structures. Nevertheless, a small percentage of respondents, or 20.30% could not make up their mind in stating the most insecure year for them.

1.2. From which type of crime you feel mostly threatened?

In response to this question, respondents listed the most threatening types of crime. As shown below in figure no.2, the most threatening crimes to respondents' security were: robberies (44% of them), corruption (18.33% of them), organized crime (12% of them), murders (11.16%), rape (3%) and human trafficking (1.5%).

² Kosovo institutions were established after the war in 2000

The prostitution, kidnapping and terrorism were rated each as a threatening by less than 1% of respondents.

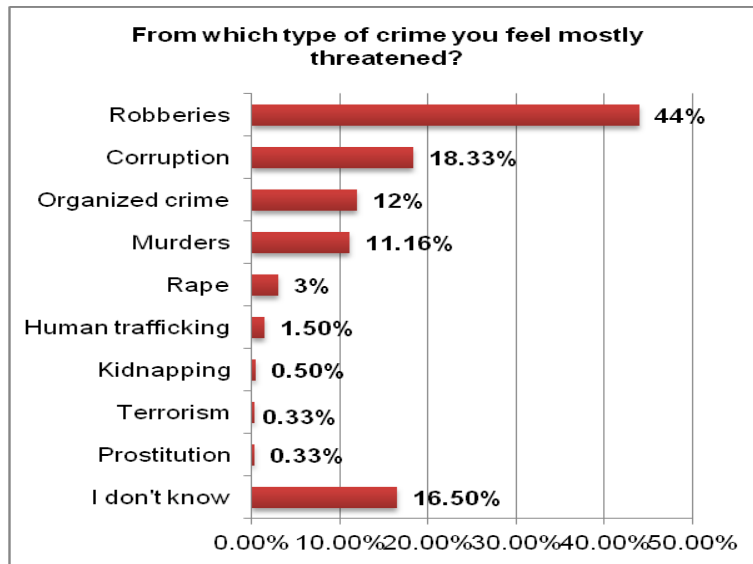


Figure no. 2: the crimes that bring up concerns in Kosovo

Based on data obtained from the KP regarding the murders in Kosovo, from January 2000 until the year 2011, in total there were 1.134 murders registered.³ Due to this statistic Kosovo compared with 12 EU states⁴ until 2006 was ranked on top of the list⁵ for the highest number of murders per 1,000 residents. In the table and figure no.3 below it can be seen that even though the number of murders in Kosovo has steadily declined, in 2004 there was an increase of murders compared to 2003. The murder statistics also fits well with the public perception regarding the most insecure years, where respondents have qualified the years 2000 and 2004.

The number of murders/homicides in Kosovo by year:

Year	'00	'01	'02	'03	'04	'05	'06	'07	'08	'09	'10	'11
Homicides	319	177	129	77	85	77	62	63	49	34	39	23 ⁶

³ Kosovo Police, e-mail message to author, March 30, 2012

⁴ These countries are; Austria, Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Netherlands, Portugal, Spain and England. Comparison of Kosovo with these countries was done by the Kosovo Police Inspectorate. These states were taken into consideration because they are among the most developed countries of Europe.

⁵ Kosovo Police, Annual report of the Kosovo Police Inspectorate, (Prishtina, 2006), 72. <http://ipk.rks-gov.net/Reports/RaportVjetor2006.pdf>

⁶ Kosovo Police, e-mail message to author, March 30, 2012

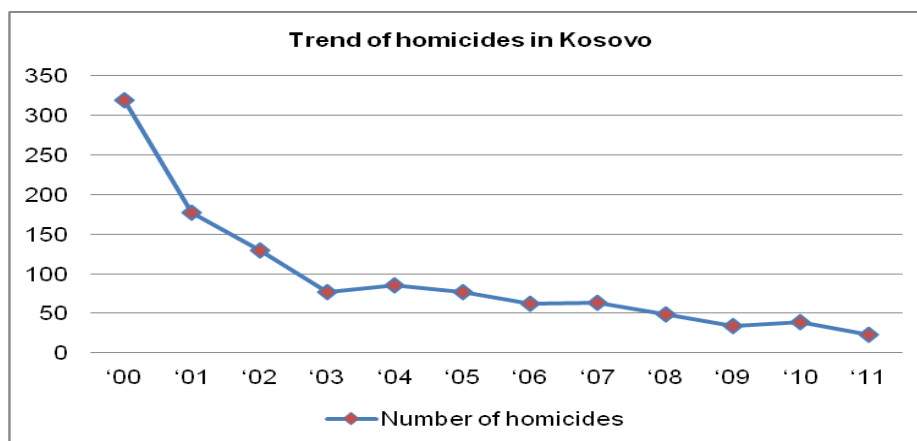


Figure no. 3: The number of murders/homicides in Kosovo by year

As for crimes in general, based on data obtained from the KP, the number of registered crimes in Kosovo do not have any particular trend. The trend of crimes had a significant increase during the post war period until 2002. From 2002 until 2008, the year when Kosovo proclaimed its independence, a slow downward trend was noticed. Since the declaration of independence, there was no decline in number of crimes in Kosovo, on the contrary it had an arbitrary increase year by year until 2011.

The total number of registered crimes in Kosovo by year:

Year	'00	'01	'02	'03	'04	'05	'06	'07	'08	'09	'10	'11
Crime	50,754	78,753	87,985	72,230	72,965	74,550	73,395	67,427	49,583	64,661	45,298	63,108 ⁷

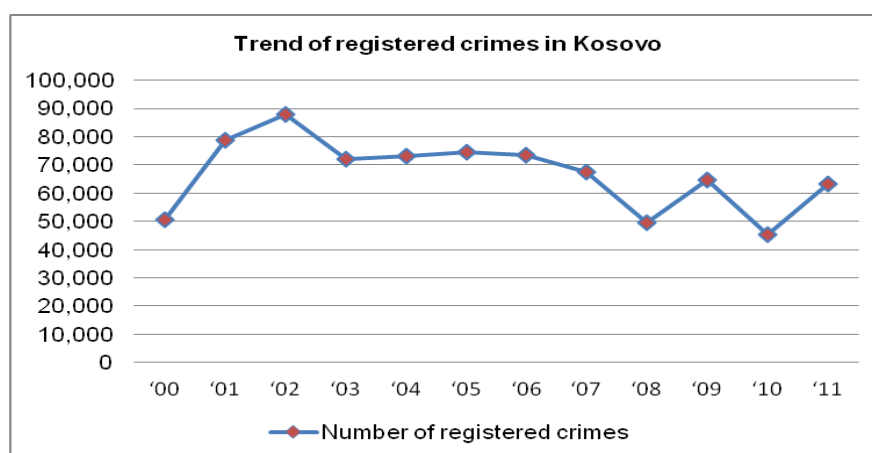


Figure 4: The number of registered crimes in Kosovo by year

1.3. Which places (city or village) you are afraid to visit?

According to the respondents' answers to this question it can be observed that the most dangerous places (or places that people are afraid to visit the most as shown in figure no. 5 below) are: the northern part of Mitrovica (59.66% of respondents). Peja is ranked after Mitrovica (with 6.59 % of respondents) – because of high rate of criminality, respectively murders. Brezovica follows Peja (with 4.33% of respondents) – due to the fear of citizens' from local Serbs. The same reason was mentioned also for Graçanica, where only 3.67% of respondents claimed that they are afraid to visit this place. On the other hand not many respondents are afraid to visit the capital in comparison to other places, where only 2.33 %

⁷ Kosovo Police, e-mail message to author, March 30, 2012

stated such thing. Meanwhile, a lower percentage of respondents, which goes from 2% and below have stated that they are afraid to visit the places like: Deçani, Strpce, Podujevo and Drenica.

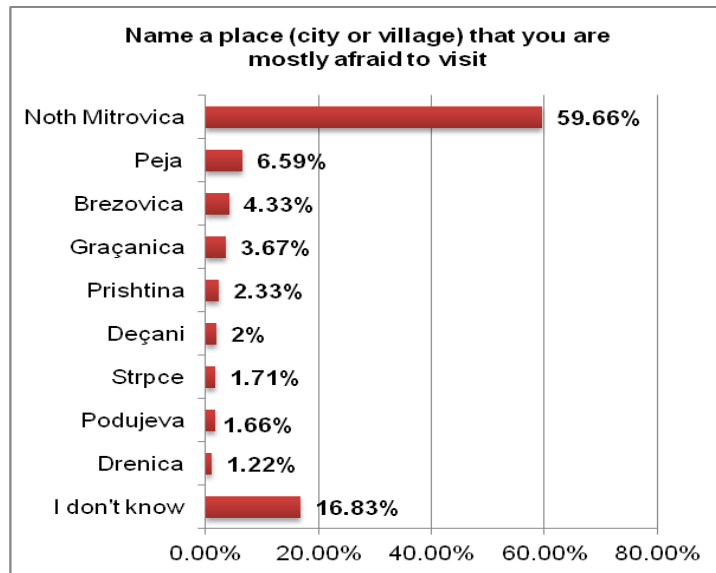


Figure 5: Most dangerous places according to public opinion in Kosovo

1.4. Do you or any of your family members possess a fire arm?

From the respondents' answers to this question it appears that most or 66.16% of them do not possess, while the rest or 33.83% of them possess firearms (see Fig. 6 below). Even though most of respondents stated that they do not possess weapons, however the percentage of those who possess is extremely high, taking into account also the potential reluctance of respondents to answer affirmatively to this question.

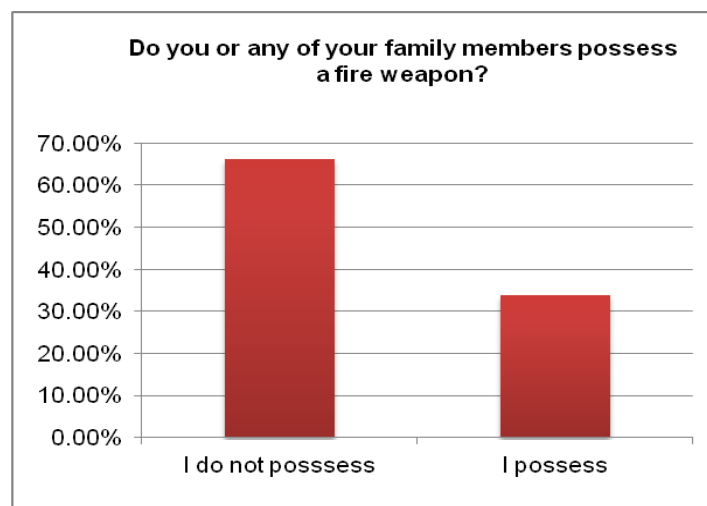


Figure 6: Possession of fire arms in Kosovo

As a result of legal vacuum created by the armed conflict in the late 90s, the possession of fire arms was spread throughout the society in Kosovo adding here also the failure of law enforcement authorities to prevent such a thing. According to an analysis⁸ on the possession of weapons in Kosovo, it is concluded that the weapons are held by four

⁸ Fadil Kajtazi, "Arms away from citizens," Telegrafi, November 08, 2010, <http://www.telegrafi.com/lajme/armet-larg-qytetareve-26-2808.html>

categories of individuals. (1) the war veterans who have emotional connection with weapons, (2) persons who consider the need to carry a weapon for protection from the threat of crime, (3) persons who have had the opportunity to possess a weapon during wartime, and (4) persons who carry weapons for criminal activities.

It is estimated that there are 350,000 to 400,000 illegal firearms⁹ in Kosovo, which means that on average each family owns one or more firearms.¹⁰ As for authorizations most of the respondents or 59.11% of them have stated that they possess unauthorized weapon or arms, while the other part or 48.88% have said that they have authorization for their fire arms.

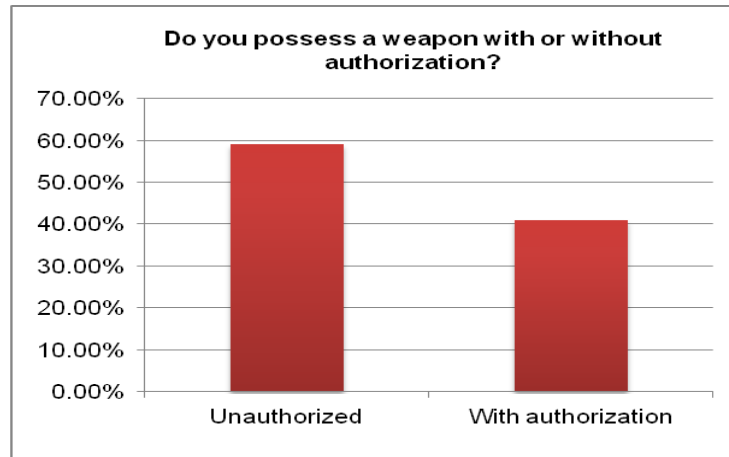


Figure 7: Grouping of weapon possession based on authorization (with or without authorization) in Kosovo

Regarding the reasons for possessing firearms, respondents were asked "do you possess a weapon as a need or as a tradition?", where the majority of them or 70.44% stated that they carry weapons because of a need, while the remaining 29.55% said they possess weapons as part of tradition (see below figure no. 8)



Figure 8: Reasons of weapon possession in Kosovo (as a need or as a part of tradition?)

Besides the three amnesties that have been carried out by UNMIK to surrender all weapons without fear of prosecution, in the first years of post conflict period in Kosovo there were no other amnesties. Regarding this issue, the responses received on the question

⁹ Based on CCK, article 328, paragraph 1, anyone who has "Unauthorized Ownership, Control, Possession or Use of Weapons" is criminally liable.

¹⁰ UNDP, USAID, and Riinvest, Early Warning Report. Report # 12. October-December 2005, http://www.kosovo.undp.org/repository/docs/ewr12_eng.pdf

"are you willing to surrender your weapon?" as seen below in Fig. 9, the majority of the respondents or 63.54% of them responded negatively, while the rest or 36.45% of them responded positively.

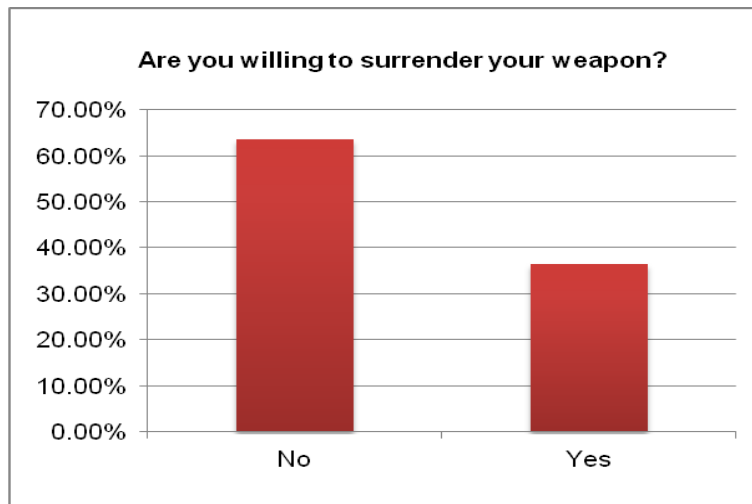


Figure 9: Willingness of citizens to hand in weapons

As for the measures undertaken by law enforcement agencies in tracing and seizing the unauthorized weapons the respondents were asked to answer the question: "have you ever been checked/ searched for the weapons by Police?": where over 94.33% of them stated that they have never been searched for weapons by the police, and only a small number or 5.66% confirmed that they have been searched, which occurred usually in previous years. So, it is clear that not enough measures were taken by law enforcement institutions in seizing such weapons.

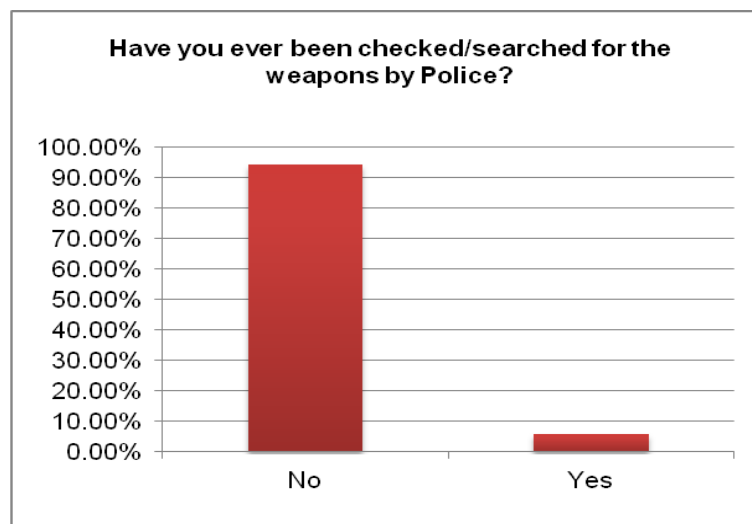


Figure 10: Arms control by the authorities (police)

2. PUBLIC OPINION PERCEPTION ON POLICING IN KOSOVO

2.1. How do you evaluate the law enforcement and justice institutions in Kosovo?

The respondents were asked to assess law enforcement and justice institutions through grading system. Respondents had the opportunity to evaluate each of the institutions listed below in Fig. 11, starting from grade 1 (poor) to 5 (excellent). Based on the evaluation of the respondents the institutions that received positive or above average grades are: Kosovo Security Force (4.71); KFOR (4.04) and Kosovo Police (3.41). While average or below average grades were given to Kosovo Customs (2.71); Courts (2.55), Prosecution (2.46) and Kosovo Intelligence Agency (2.11). Meanwhile the only institution which got a below 2 grade was EULEX, which was evaluated with 1.83 points.

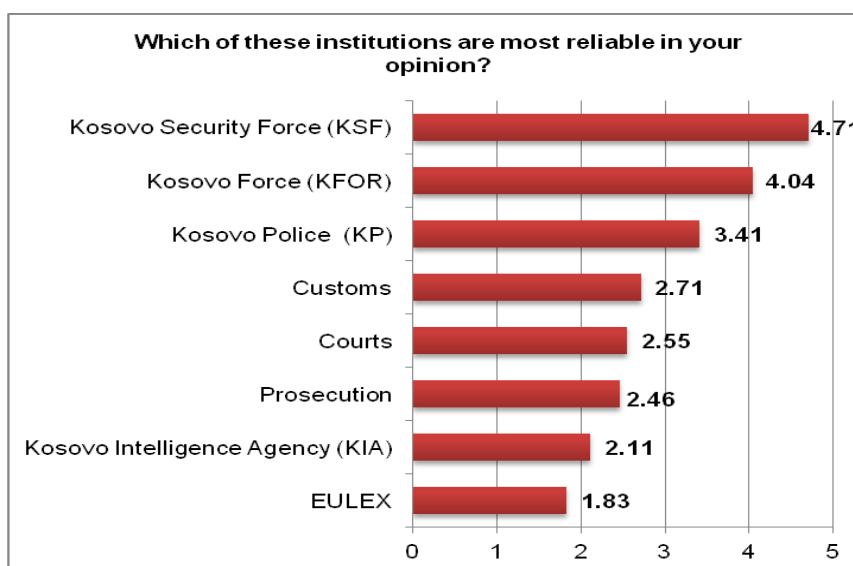


Figure 11: Law enforcement and justice institutions ranking in Kosovo based on credibility

2.2. Which are the strengths of the Kosovo Police?

As shown in Figure no. 12 below, nearly half of respondents, or 46.16% of them did not express their opinions regarding strengths or advantages of the KP, which means that they refused to answer this question. Despite that, 21% of respondents stated that the politeness is one of the strengths of the Kosovo Police. Whereas 14% of them considered as strength the fact that Kosovo has its own police officers, which speak in Albanian language and wear the Kosovo uniform. A smaller percentage of respondents, or 6.33% of them have mentioned the rapid response of police as strength; 4.83% of them stated that modern technical equipment (vehicles, uniforms) are strengths of the KP. Only a small percentage of them or 0.83% have evaluated young age as strength, which means that the absence of youth in the police made only few respondents to consider this as strength. Even smaller percentage of respondents mentioned the absence of corruption or multi-ethnicity as strength.

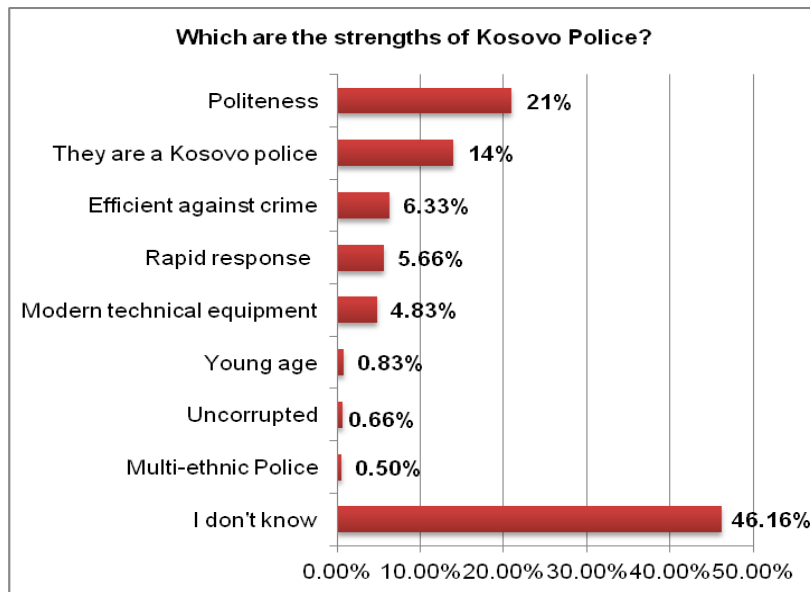


Figure 12: The strengths of Kosovo Police according to public opinion

2.3. Which are the weaknesses of the Kosovo Police?

Similarly to the previous question regarding the strengths, most of the respondents or 41 % of them did not express their opinions regarding the weaknesses of the KP, see fig. no 13 below. However, 18% of them have said that the delayed reaction is a weakness of the KP. Moreover, 14% of respondents indicated that the bad behaviour of police officers towards citizens is another weakness, and if these opinions are compared with data from figure no. 12 above, it appears that more people mentioned politeness rather than the bad behaviour of the police. If we compare figure no. 12 and no. 13 in terms of other elements that are listed, then it can be observed that those are the elements mentioned more as weaknesses rather than the strength of police. To this end, 7% of respondents indicate that the low level of education is a weakness; 6.50% of them emphasize the corruption as a weakness, 5.83% mention non-efficiency in combating crime; while 4.66% emphasized unprofessional police officers as weakness, and so on.

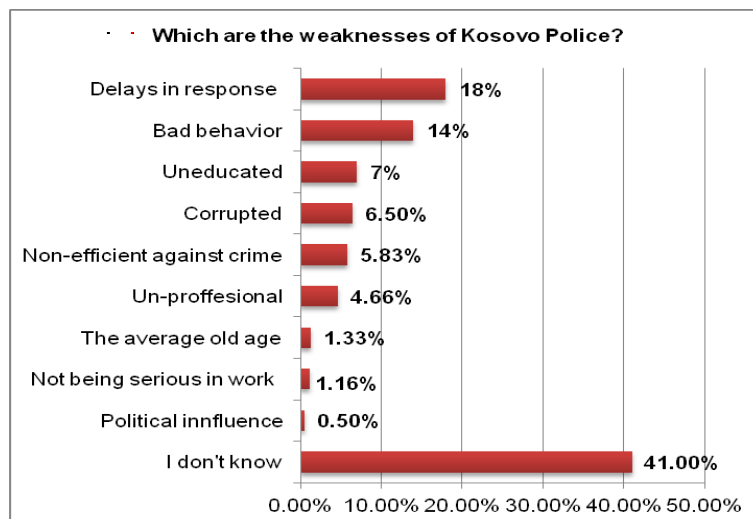


Figure 13: The weaknesses of Kosovo Police according to public opinion

2.4. How do you assess the police response to your needs and requirements?

After explaining to respondents that this question considers the police response in maintaining the law and order, as a need and requirement of the whole society, as presented in the figure no. 14 below, 47.84% of respondents gave average rating. A considerable number or 31.83% of them claimed that they are satisfied, while a smaller number or 20.33% of them were unsatisfied.

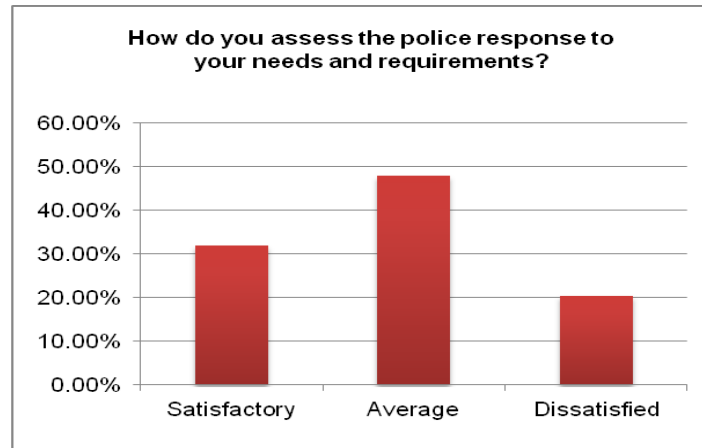


Figure 14: Evaluation of the police performance

2.5. In case you are threatened or a victim of a crime, would you inform the police?

As shown below in figure no.15, most of the respondents or 96.33% of them emphasized that they would inform the police if they are threatened or if they are a victim of any crime. Only a small number of them or 3.66% said that they would not inform the police. Based on this it can be concluded that citizens trust and rely on Kosovo Police when their personal security is threatened.

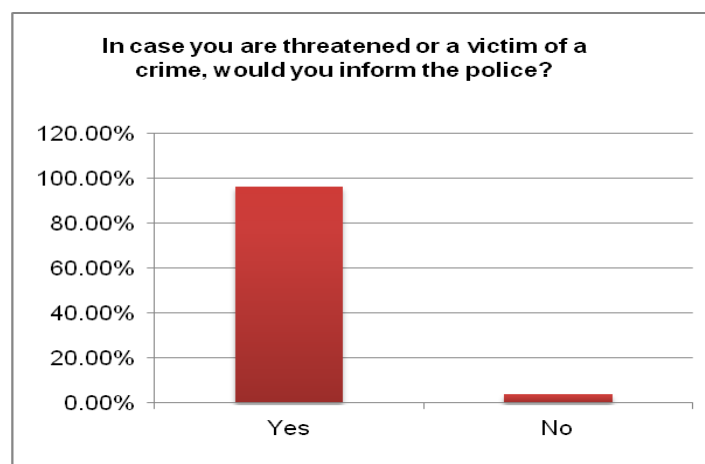


Figure 15: Crime reporting to the police where there is a direct threat

Kosovo's citizens will alert police not only in cases when they are directly threatened or suffer from a crime personally. They would also call the police in cases when their neighbour is a victim of or suffers from a criminal offense. As shown below in figure no. 16, most of the respondents or 94.83% of them stated that they would call the police if a crime is being prepared or perpetrated against someone else (neighbour). And only a small number of them or 5.16% said the opposite. So, a small number of them would not

cooperate with the police for safety reasons, even though the Law on Witness Protection is in force.

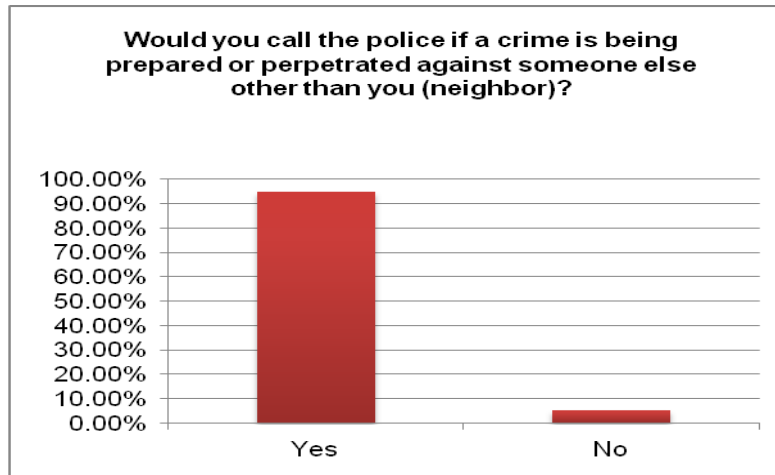


Figure 16: Crime reporting to the police where there is an implicit threat

2.6. Do you think that police patrolling is enough for your neighborhoods?

The aim of this question is to evaluate the concept of *community police* which is being implemented by the Kosovo Police. Despite the introduction of this concept, which implies the presence and frequent police patrols in neighbourhoods, according to respondents it appears that *community police* practice is not well implemented as it is usually proclaimed. As shown below in Fig. 17, most or nearly 66.83% of respondents claim that the police presence in their neighbourhoods is not sufficient, and the rest which is above 33.16% claim that the presence or police patrol in their neighbourhoods is satisfactory. But there are those which claim that they never see police patrols, which occurs in rural areas.

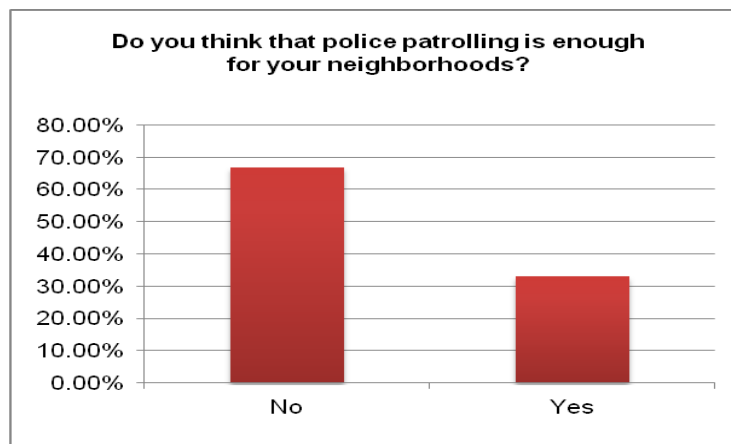


Figure nr. 17: Police patrol in the neighbourhoods

2.7. Have you ever been abused by the police?

This aim of this question was to assess the perception of the citizens whether they have been abused in any way by the police. As shown below in Figure no. 18, a substantial majority or 90.66% of respondents stated that they have not been abused by the Kosovo Police. While the rest or 9.33% of them stated that they were mistreated by the police in the form of beating, swearing, insults and harassment, and so forth.

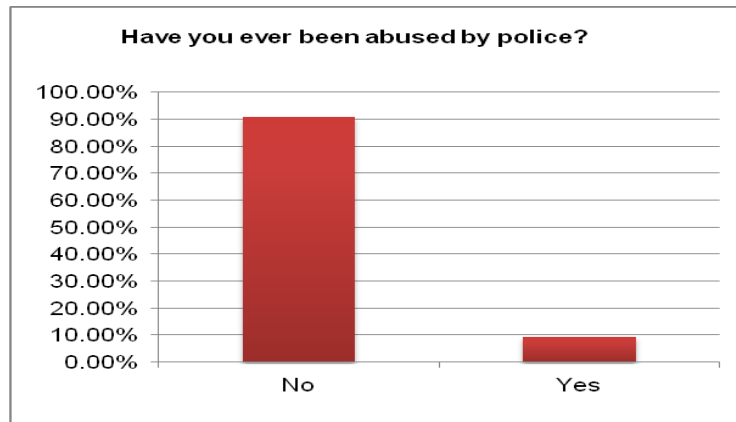


Figure nr. 18: The level of abuses of citizens by police

2.8. Is there a case in which the police have asked for gifts in order to perform services for you?

The phenomenon of corruption as stated above is present in every institution and every level in the Republic of Kosovo. When it comes to the Kosovo Police, as shown below in Figure 19, a substantial majority or 88.33% of respondents said that they did not encounter a case when police asked for a bribe. On the other hand not a small number of them or 11.66% stated that they encountered such cases. For instance, a convicted male from Mitrovica (23 years old) says: "When I was sentenced to prison, after I had committed a crime (counterfeiting money), a policeman requested 10,000 (ten thousand) Euro to acquit me from serving the conviction".¹¹

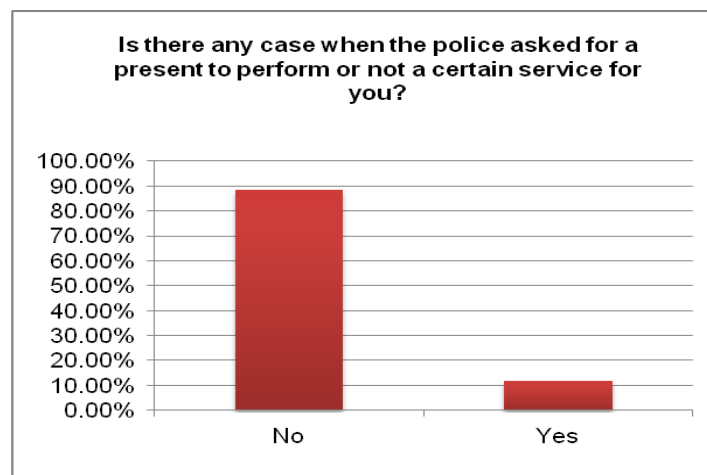


Figure nr. 19: The presence of corruption in Kosovo Police

¹¹ Statement during the survey with 23 years old male in Mitrovica, 2012

3. CONCLUSIONS

Based on public opinion, since the end of the war in 1999, the most insecure years in Kosovo are considered to be the years 2000 and 2004, while in a less extent are mentioned 2008 and 2011.

The results of public opinion survey show a discrepancy between international image of Kosovo and the concerns of the citizens. While the international perception on Kosovo centres around organized crime, corruption and human trafficking, the citizens in Kosovo are mostly concerned with robberies, after which organized crime, corruption and in a very small scale human trafficking are ranked.

Since the summer of 2011 - when the Government of Kosovo sent special police units in the northern part of Kosovo which provoked the erection of barricades in roads by parallel security structures of Serbia - the situation in the northern part of the country is considered as the most serious threat to Kosovo's security according to public opinion. Also, the status quo in this part is seen by citizens as a potential for new inter-ethnic conflict.

The reliability of citizens on law and order institutions continues to have the same trend as in all opinion polls published during the last decade. While KSF, KFOR and Kosovo Police lead with highest reliability and confidence, courts and prosecutors have a lower confidence, while EULEX remains in the end in terms of citizens' reliability and confidence in this institution. This shows that Kosovo's citizens have no expectation that the EU's rule of law mission can help in strengthening the law and order, especially in fighting corruption and organized crime in Kosovo.

Last but not least, this data shows that Kosovo Police continues, since the year 2000, to be permanently one of the most reliable institutions for citizens of Kosovo as well as one of the most uncorrupted and professional security institutions.