

PUBLIC PERCEPTION ON TRUST, CORRUPTION, AND INTEGRITY OF PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS IN KOSOVO



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The data presented in the report derive from the Western Balkans Security Barometer (WBSB) survey. WBSB is a new regional initiative launched by KCSS in 2020, implemented in cooperation with the Belgrade Centre for Security Policy (BCSP) in Serbia and Center for the Study of Democracy and Governance (CSDG) in Albania, supported by the National Endowment for Democracy (NED). WBSB serves as an instrument to measure public perceptions in Albania, Kosovo and Serbia on different security-related issues. The findings demonstrate how citizens percept or are informed about the issues presented in this report. As such, the views presented in this report do not necessarily represent the views of the KCSS, BCSP, CSDG or NED.

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December 2022

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Security institutions in Kosovo are constantly maintaining, and in some cases, increasing their trust among the citizens, thus resulting as the most trustworthy institutions compared to other sectors. Kosovo Security Force is the most trusted institution with 83 percent of trust, followed by Emergency Management Agency with 73 percent, and Kosovo Police, which is trusted by 72 percent of respondents. Two other security institutions have marked significant increase in 2022: around 60 percent of respondents trust the Police Inspectorate of Kosovo and 51 percent trust the Kosovo Intelligence Agency. This is the first time that both institutions gained the confidence of more than 50 percent. The President of Kosovo, with 59 percent, and Municipalities, with 55 percent of trust, are ranked as the most trusted among the central and local institutions followed by Kosovo Customs with 46 percent.

On the contrary, the trend of trust towards justice sector institutions – Courts and Prosecution – is rather negative and remained unchanged compared to previous years. In 2022, only 30 percent of citizens declared their trust in such institutions. The least trusted institution from the list of state institutions is the Kosovo Assembly with 25 percent, followed by the Kosovo Government with 33 percent of trust. Both these central institutions have marked decrease in trust in 2022 when compared to 2021. In terms of Kosovo's non-state institutions, the most trusted are religious communities with 60 percent, and non-governmental organizations with 40 percent of trust. However, it is worrying that media and political parties have the most negative perceptions by respondents – around 23 percent of respondents trust media and only 12 percent political parties – proving to be the least trusted institutions in 2022.

The national security of Kosovo is significantly challenged by organized crime and corruption in the eyes of respondents. 82 percent mentioned organized crime and 80 percent mentioned corruption as two phenomena threatening national security and eroding the rule of law in Kosovo. In addition, respondents were not satisfied with either the Kosovo Government's performance in fighting corruption or organized crime, while only 30 percent rated the latter as good. However, there is positive feedback in regard to reporting corruption cases, as 2/3 of respondents – around 66 percent – would report to the respective institutions if they were to witness corruption.

Integrity practices in public administration in Kosovo are exceptionally harmed based on respondents' perceptions when it comes to employment in the public sector. There is a high degree of skepticism expressed as 86 percent of respondents think that civil servants in public administration are employed based on nepotism (family ties), political ties and bribery or corruption, opposed to only 11 percent perceiving they are employed on skills and merit-based systems. Respondents tend to be less pessimistic about recruitment processes in the security sector when compared to the public administration, yet challenges remain. Around 42 percent shared perceptions that employees of security institutions are most frequently employed based on the merit and skills of applicants, while around 54 percent of respondents perceive they are employed through nepotism, political ties and bribery or corruption.

INTRODUCTION

This quantitative report intends to interpret and indicate the trust of Kosovo citizens towards state and non-state institutions to present public perceptions towards institutions to whom citizens or respondents have had direct or indirect interaction within a 12-month period. In addition to respondents' attitudes towards institutions on the level of trust, respondents' perceptions also show how transparent and accountable targeted institutions are vis-à-vis the public, as well as aiming to increase the quality of services and good governance from the institutional point of view.

The first section of the report deconstructs the trust of respondents in state institutions, which include security and justice institutions, central, local, and independent institutions. Moreover, this section presents perceptions towards non-state institutions. The second section is directly related to what respondents think about the widespread of corruption and organized crime in Kosovo as the main obstacles eroding the rule of law in Kosovo. While the final section consists of perceptions with reference to how civil servants and employees in the public administration and security sector are most frequently employed. It can be stated that this report is mainly targeting integrity issues that institutions are dealing with, and the challenges demanding interventions to improve trust of state / non-state institutions, rule of law, and strengthening integrity practices of employment in the public sector.

Methodology

The survey data for this report was collected within the framework of Western Balkans Security Barometer (WBSB) survey through face-to-face interviews with randomly selected respondents throughout Kosovo. The WBSB is a regional project led by Kosovar Centre for Security Studies (KCSS) and the survey was simultaneously conducted in Albania and Serbia. KCSS is partnering with the Centre for the Study of Democracy and Governance (CSDG) in Albania and the Belgrade Centre for Security Policy (BCSP) in Serbia to implement this project.

Field research was conducted from 25th of September to 2nd of October 2022. The questionnaire for the survey primarily consisted of closed-ended questions in the form of five-point Likert Scale, followed by several open-ended questions without pre-defined options. The national sample for the survey featured 1,136 households.

The first stage of drawing the sample was based in the administrative divisions of the Kosovo Police Regional Directorates, including the following eight districts: Ferizaj, Gjakova, Gjilan, Mitrovica South, Mitrovica North, Peja, Prishtina, and Prizren. The number of surveys conducted in each district was drawn in proportion to the population numbers for each municipality within the respective districts based on Kosovo's 2011 population census. Within the municipalities, the sample was stratified into urban / rural sample based on the number of households in each area.

Random patterns were used to select households within the sampled locations, while

the randomization within the households was based on the next adult birthday method. The data was verified in real time through field coordinators who visited a pre-defined sample of households after the completion of the survey in the respective households, through telephone contact with all respondents to confirm the adherence to the methodology and some of the key answers, and by analyzing the logical consistency of the answers when processing and analyzing the data. The margin of error is 3 percent with a confidence interval of 95 percent.

1. PUBLIC TRUST TOWARDS KOSOVO'S STATE AND NON-STATE INSTITUTIONS

This chapter is composed of two key sections on the trust of Kosovan respondents towards state and non-state institutions in Kosovo and they provide data interpretation on respondents' perceptions behind the given level of trust.

The first section of the chapter shows the WBSB's survey results on the trust towards the following state institutions:

Security institutions: Kosovo Security Force, Kosovo Police, Emergency Management Agency, Police Inspectorate of Kosovo, Kosovo Intelligence Agency, and Kosovo Customs.

Justice institutions: Courts and Prosecutio

Central and local institutions: Kosovo Assembly, President, Government, and Municipalities.

State independent agencies: Ombudsperson Institution and National Audit Office.

The second section measures the trust of respondents towards non-state institutions which have an impact in the public sphere as listed below:

Non-state institutions: Religious communities, political parties, non-governmental organizations, and media.

1.1. Trust in state institutions

Similar to previous surveys conducted within the framework of WBSB, security institutions in Kosovo have been identified as the most trusted institutions by respondents in Kosovo. The Kosovo Security Force is ranked the most trusted institution not only within the security sector, but also when compared to institutions within other sectors. Hence, 83 percent of respondents have trust or complete trust toward Kosovo Security Force compared to 9 percent who have little trust or no trust at all towards this uniformed institution. The Kosovo Security Force has maintained this high level of trust for several years even though its interaction with citizens is less frequent in comparison to other institutions.¹ The next most trusted institution is the Emergency Management Agency, with 73 of surveyed respondents' trust or complete trust. It is worth mentioning that trust towards this emergency body (which operates within the Ministry of Internal Affairs) is rather intended for its Firefighting and Rescue Department which responds to emergency-related cases. The Kosovo Police ranked third place among the most positively perceived institutions by respondents, with 72 percent expressing trust or complete trust towards the police, compared to 11 percent of respondents who have no trust in the Kosovo Police in 2022. This can be attributed to frequent contacts of citizens with the Kosovo Police as it is one of the first institutions to address their concerns.² The Police Inspectorate of Kosovo,

whose role is to investigate and serve as watchdog against the police, has marked a major increase in the trust by respondents comparing to previous years. For instance, in 2020³ around 49 percent of respondents showed trust towards the Police Inspectorate⁴, and in 2022, 60 percent of Kosovo's respondents answered they have trust or complete trust in the Police Inspectorate of Kosovo. Another institution whose public trust has been increased in 2022 is the Kosovo Intelligence Agency – from 45 percent of trust in 2021⁵ to 51 percent in 2022. The intelligence agency is apparently perceived positively by respondents due to its coordinated activities with Kosovo Police and Kosovo's allied countries in terms of national security, especially in the north of Kosovo by avoiding some threats deriving from Russian influence following Russia's unprovoked military invasion against Ukraine.⁶ In regards to Kosovo Customs, around 46 percent of respondents trust the institution, which comparing to 2021⁷, is a slight increase by one percent in 2022.

However, when asked as to how they perceive justice institutions, respondents are rather skeptical on the performance of Courts and Prosecution of Kosovo. Both institutions face challenges in the eyes of respondents and the percentage of respondents who trust the justice sector is significantly lower compared to security institutions. Therefore, 30 percent of respondents showed trust or complete trust towards Courts and Prosecution which is the same level of trust expressed in 2021 as measured by the WBSB survey.⁸ Furthermore, around 40 percent of respondents do not trust or have little trust towards Prosecution and another 38 percent have little trust or not trust at all in the Courts.

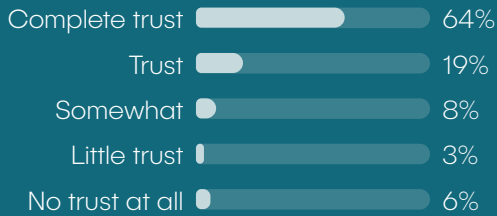
Concerning the central institutions of Kosovo, aside from the President, which survey results show an increase in the trust of respondents from 56 percent in 2021 to 59 percent in 2022, public trust in the Assembly have notably decreased in 2022 in comparison to the previous year (2021). Only 25 percent of respondents trust the Assembly, compared to 33 percent in 2021.⁹ This is one of the indicators that Kosovo's legislature is coping with challenges in confidence by the public, as 47 percent of respondents stated that they do not trust it. There is also a slight decrease in trust towards the Kosovo Government as 34 percent of respondents expressed trust in 2022 compared to 36 percent in 2021 who trusted the executive power. Contrary to central institutions, public trust towards local institutions, especially municipalities, have increased in 2022. Whilst in 2021, around 51 percent of respondents trusted municipalities, in 2022 they gained a four percent increase with 55 percent of respondents in total having responded that they trust municipal institutions.

Besides the aforementioned institutions, the KCSS, through its WBSB survey, has also measured perceptions towards two Kosovo's independent agencies: Ombudsperson Institution and National Audit Office. In this regard, Kosovo's Ombudsperson is trusted by 43 percent of respondents, and around 22 percent of them have little trust or no trust at all. However, the National Audit Office have lower trust given that 37 percent of respondents have answered they have trust or complete trust in this independent agency which audits public finance expenditures. Furthermore, Kosovo citizens have little information or are not familiar with the National Audit Office's mission and mandate¹⁰ due to 10 percent of respondents do not know / have no opinion when asked about their perceptions.

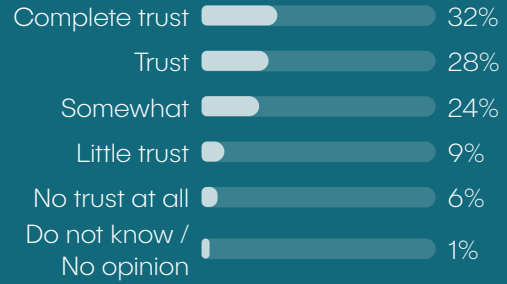
FIGURE 1 TRUST IN SECURITY INSTITUTION



KOSOVO SECURITY FORCE



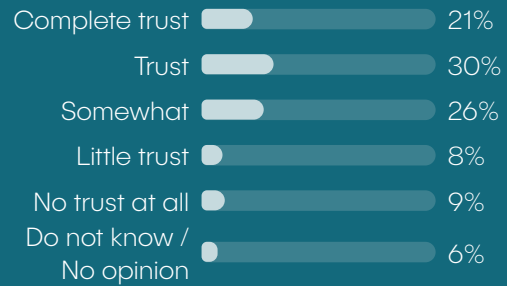
POLICE INSPECTORATE OF KOSOVO



EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY



KOSOVO INTELLIGENCE AGENCY



KOSOVO POLICE



KOSOVO CUSTOMS

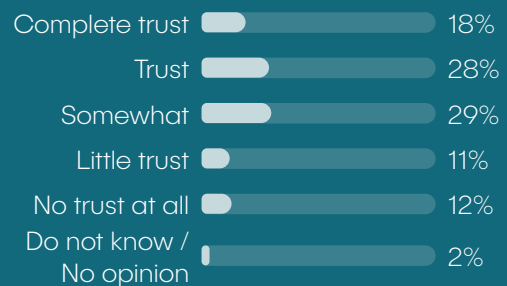


FIGURE 2 TRUST IN JUSTICE INSTITUTIONS



FIGURE 3 TRUST IN CENTRAL AND LOCAL INSTITUTIONS

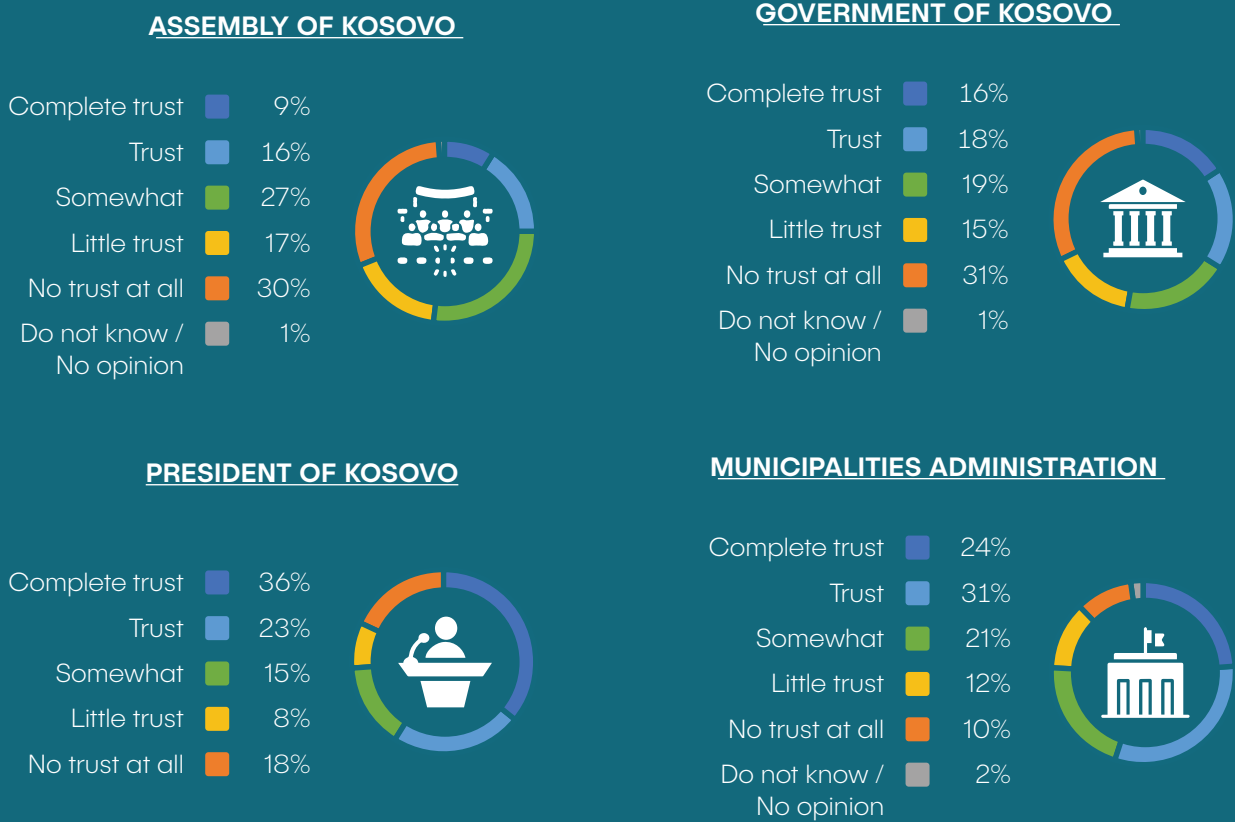


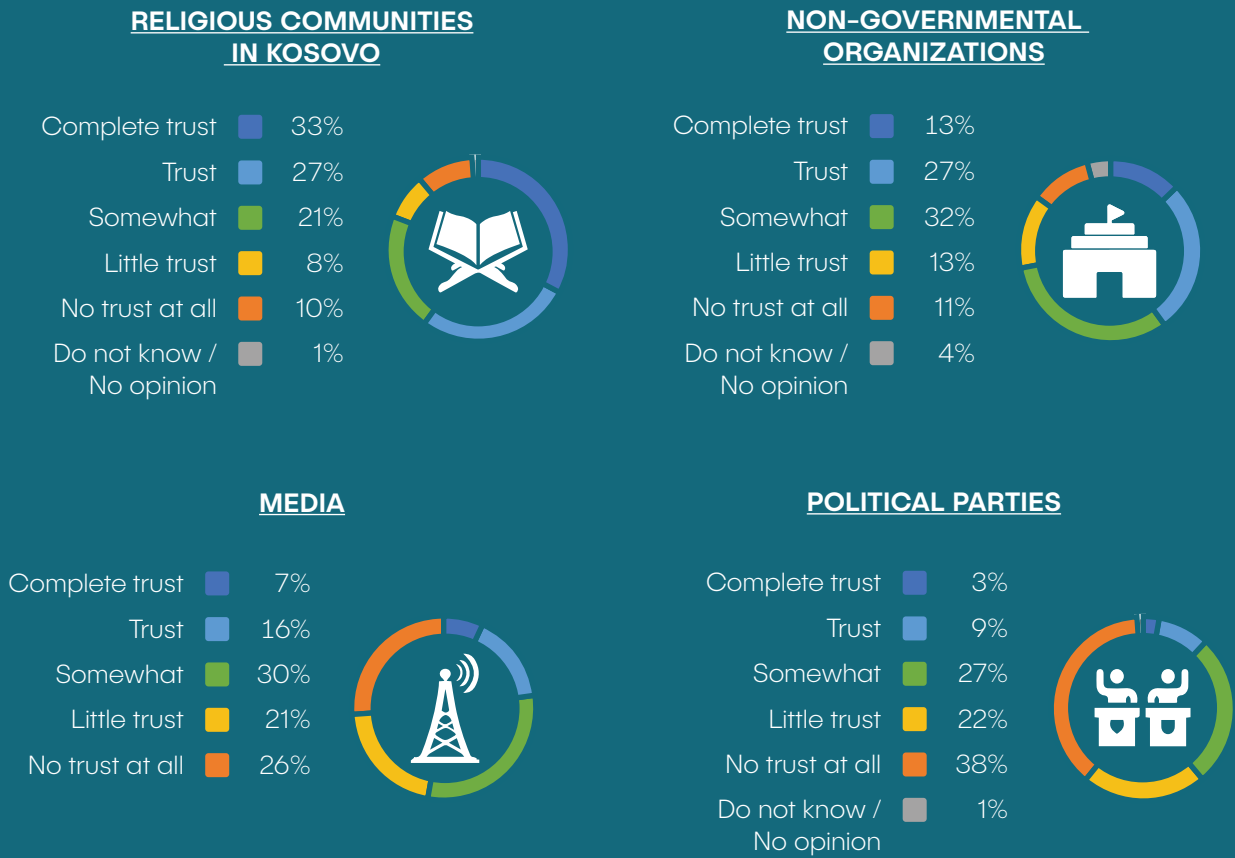
FIGURE 4 TRUST IN STATE INDEPENDENT AGENCIES

1.2. Trust in non-state institutions

KCSS has also measured the perceptions of respondents towards some of the non-state institutions and bodies to which they have some direct or indirect interaction. It has resulted that religious communities in Kosovo have the highest positive perceptions as 60 percent of respondents trust them. However, around 18 percent of respondents answered they have no trust or little trust, whilst another 21 percent have somewhat trust in the religious communities of Kosovo. The latter is followed by non-governmental organizations – including civil society organizations, think tanks, research institutes, etc. – which enjoy the trust of 40 percent of respondents. Furthermore, around 32 percent have somewhat trust towards non-governmental organizations and another 24 percent have little trust or not trust at all.

The WBSB survey data indicates that media and political parties are the least trusted institutions in Kosovo, not only within the non-state institutions, but also in comparison to state institutions. Therefore, only 23 percent of respondents have trust or complete trust in Kosovan media and 47 percent have no trust or little trust towards mainstream media (e.g., TV channels) and online-based media operating in Kosovo. This is a significant difference due to in 2021 around 28 percent of citizens trusted media and 40 percent of them had no trust¹¹ showing 5 percent decrease in trust of respondents towards media in 2022. On the other hand, political parties are perceived mostly negative and in lower percentages than media in terms of trust. No more than 12 percent of respondents trust Kosovo's existing political parties. The number of respondents who do not trust political parties is high, with 60 percent having little or no trust at all, and another 27 percent of respondents having somewhat trust. The WBSB survey has not asked respondents to specifically show perceptions on individual political parties and instead, this question was generalized to the political parties in Kosovo as a whole.

FIGURE 5 TRUST IN NON-STATE INSTITUTIONS



2. RESPONDENTS' PERCEPTIONS ON CORRUPTION IN KOSOVO

Trends of perceiving organized crime activities and corruption as one of the highest threats towards Kosovo's national security is present in the 2022 WBSB survey. In this context, organized crime is eroding rule of law within the country based on the survey responses. Drug trafficking is first on the list threatening national security when it comes to risks posed by organized crime. Hence, 86 percent of respondents shared their views that drug trafficking is a threat or high threat towards national security, followed by organized crime itself with 82 percent perceiving it as a threat. Furthermore, more than 80 percent of respondents think that corruption is a threat or high threat, followed by arms trafficking, with 77 percent of respondents perceiving this as a threat to national security.

This survey had two questions asking whether respondents would report corruption if they were to witness it – the first question was a closed-ended one and the second was an open-ended question to precisely measure perceptions when it comes to corruption reporting. It is highly positive that around two thirds of respondents in both questions would be willing to report corruption in the relevant institutions. In the case of closed-ended question, 64 percent of respondents would report corruption to the state institutions compared to 24 percent who would not report due to the perception that nothing would change or that the institutions would not react, whilst another 11 percent would hesitate due to the prospect of facing negative consequences, such as retaliation, discrimination, dismissal from work, arrest, etc. When it comes to the second, open-ended question, respondents were asked to name an institution to which they would most trust to report corruption. Consequently, 67 percent of them listed the Kosovo Police to whom they would report corruption first. Other institutions are listed in very negligible percentages which directly / indirectly reflects the public towards them, such as Courts, Prosecution, etc.

Despite these results, it is alarming for the respective state institutions in Kosovo that vast majority of respondents, 81 percent, are not aware that the Law on Protection of Whistleblowers in Kosovo exists. In addition, only 15 percent are aware of this law, and another 4 percent have no opinion on the issue. It is worth mentioning that the Law on Protection of Whistleblowers entered into force in late 2018.

FIGURE 6 CORRUPTION AND ORGANIZED CRIME AS KEY NATIONAL SECURITY THREATS

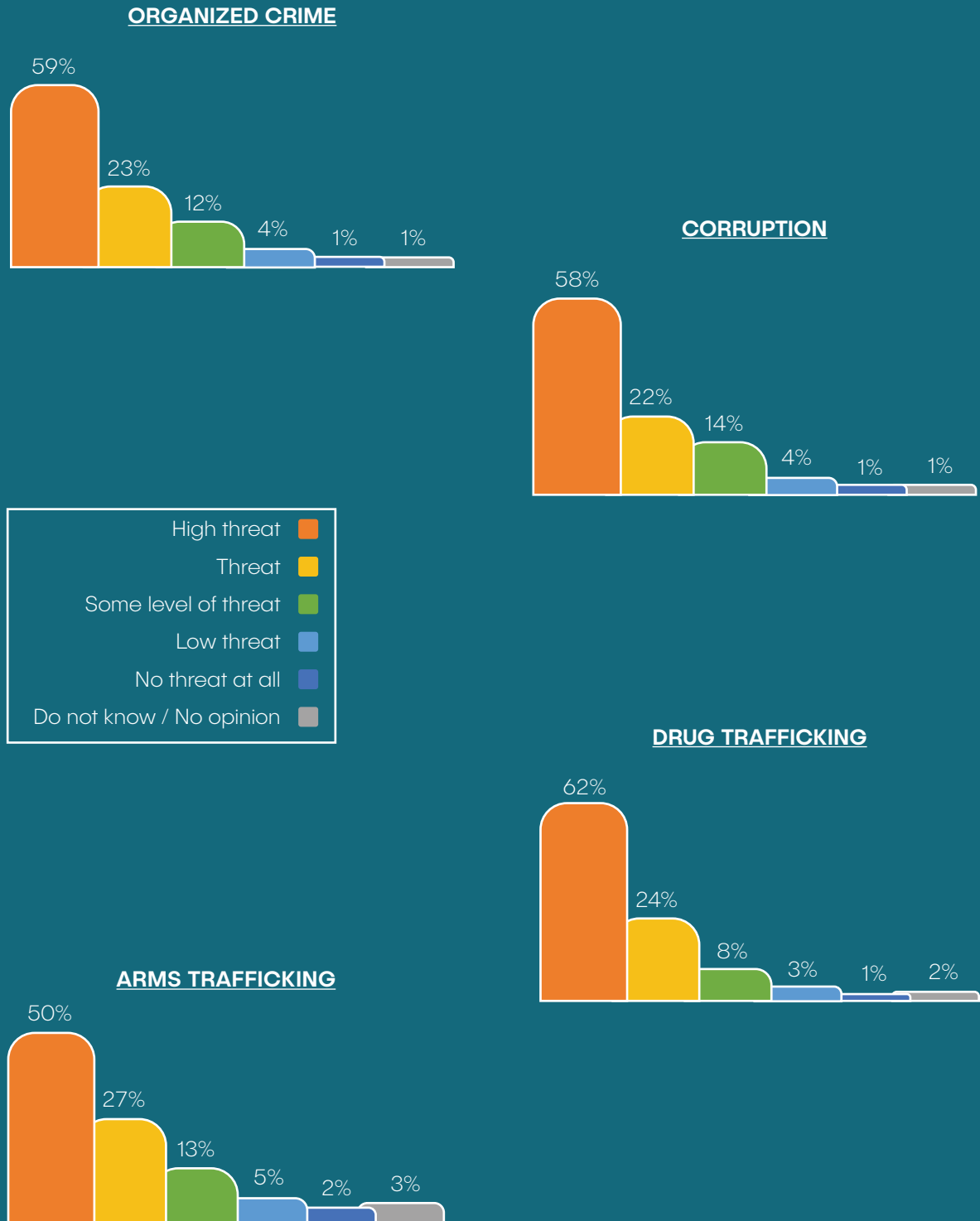
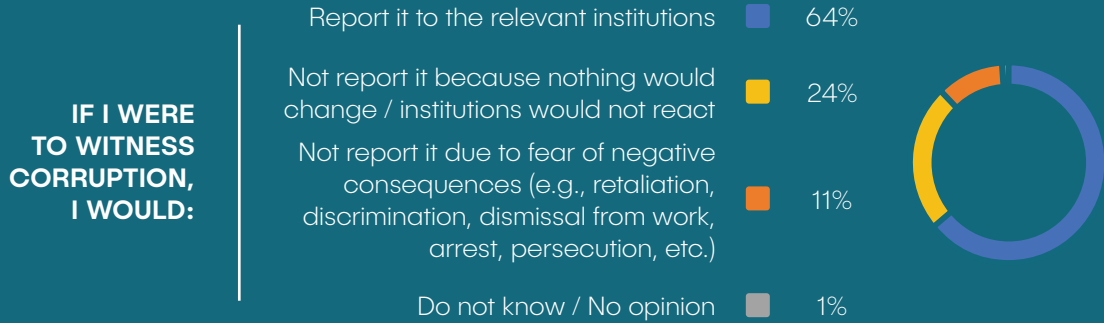


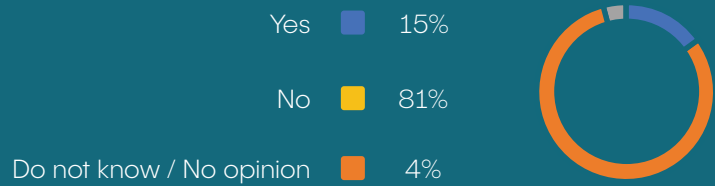
FIGURE 7 CORRUPTION REPORTING



CAN YOU NAME AN INSTITUTION TO WHICH YOU WOULD MOST TRUST TO REPORT CORRUPTION TO (OPEN-ENDED QUESTION)?



ARE YOU AWARE OF THE LAW ON PROTECTION OF WHISTLEBLOWERS IN KOSOVO?



Respondents provided rather doubtful stances when asked to rate activities of the Kosovo Government in the fight against corruption and organized crime. The question was to assess the political will of the executive branch to lead reforms in the judiciary power rather than to rate in practical terms the governmental response in fighting corruption and organized crime, given that this is specific to the competence of law enforcement and judiciary mechanisms. Therefore, it has resulted that around 30 percent of respondents rated the fight against corruption as good, and another 28 percent rated the fight against organized crime as good. There is a solid number of respondents who assessed the work of Kosovo Government as somewhat good in this respect – 36 percent on the fight against corruption and 38 percent in terms of fighting organized crime. However, around 33 percent of respondents viewed the governmental related activities in both sectors as weak.

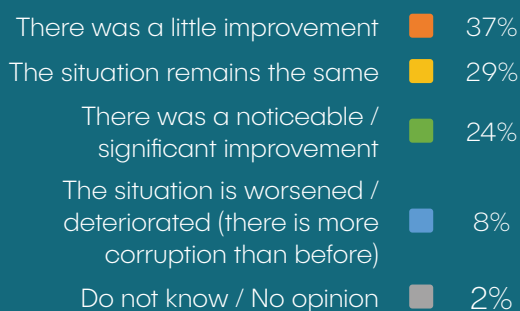
Respondents shared similar perceptions to assess the governmental efforts in fighting corruption during the last 12 months period. 24 percent of respondents saw noticeable or significant improvement in that regard. On the contrary, 37 percent of respondents perceive there was a little improvement, and another 29 percent viewed the Government's efforts as regressive in the last 12 months since the situation remains the same. Moreover, around 8 percent think that situation has worsened and deteriorated in the last 12 months due to the fact that there is more corruption now than before.

FIGURE 8 FIGHT AGAINST CORRUPTION

PLEASE RATE THE KOSOVO GOVERNMENT'S WORK IN THE FOLLOWING AREAS:



PLEASE RATE THE KOSOVO GOVERNMENT'S EFFORTS IN FIGHTING CORRUPTION IN THE LAST 12 MONTHS:



3. INTEGRITY OF RECRUITMENT PROCESS IN KOSOVO'S PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

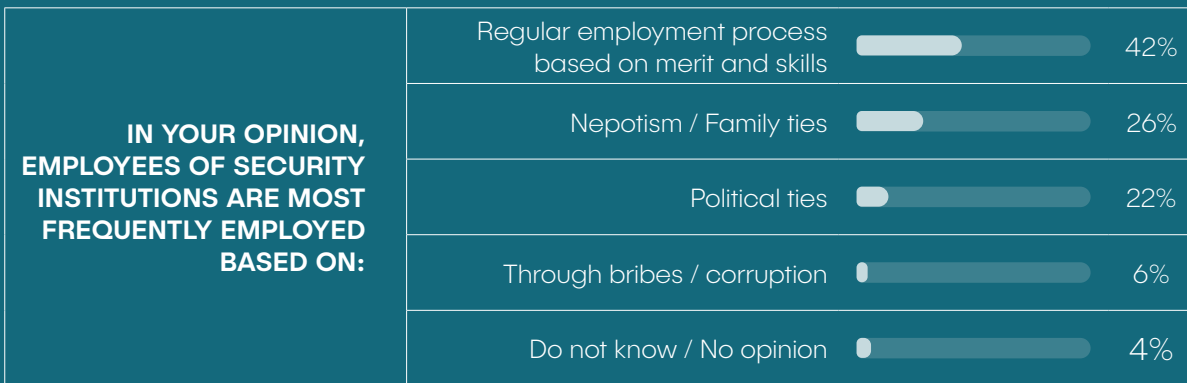
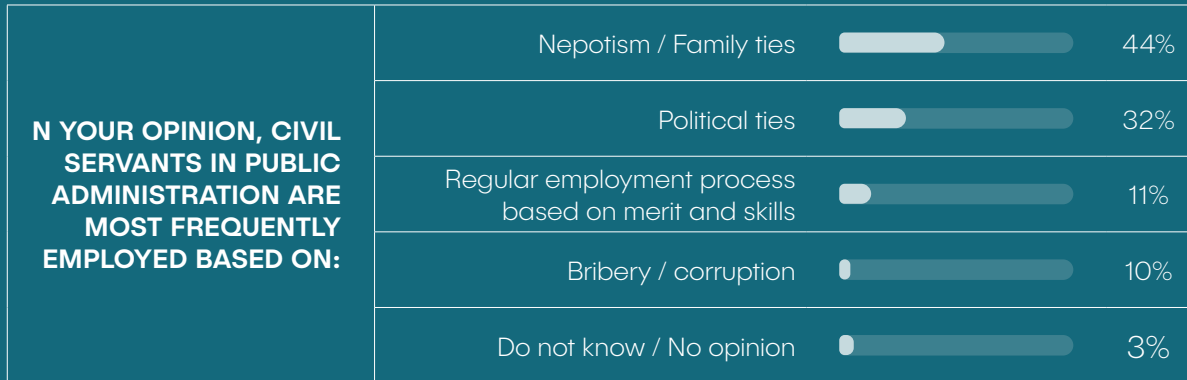
The integrity of Kosovo's public administration is of vital importance, and since public administration is integrated within the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the KCSS has measured public perception as to how respondents view recruitment process conducted by public institutions.

It is exceedingly worrying that 86 percent of respondents think that civil servants in public administration are not frequently employed based on merit and their skills. If results are interpreted on answers provided by respondents through pre-defined options, around 44 percent of them put nepotism (family ties) first on the list as the most frequent method of how civil servants are employed, 32 percent perceived political ties as the next frequent method, and 10 percent perceived bribery or corruption as the third. Whilst only 11 percent of respondents perceived that civil servants in public administration are employed through the regular employment process based on merit and skills-based system.

When it comes to the recruitment process within the security sector, perceptions of respondents are less negative compared to public administration in general, however fierce challenges remain. Furthermore, 42 percent shared perceptions that employees of security institutions are most frequently employed in line with regular employment processes based on merit and skills. Contrary to this, around 54 percent of them perceive that employees of the security sector in Kosovo are employed through non-formal procedures, such as nepotism (family ties) with 26 percent, political ties with 22 percent, and bribery and corruption with 6 percent, as indicated in the following figures.

Respondents have not been optimistic when they were asked to rate the Kosovo Government's work in fighting nepotism and ensuring equal opportunities in employment. Only 21 percent of respondents rated the Government's performance to fight nepotism and guaranteeing equal opportunities in employment as good, compared with 40 percent of respondents who perceive it as weak. Another 35 percent stated as somewhat good the work of Government in this regard.

FIGURE 9 PERCEPTIONS ON RECRUITMENT PROCESS IN THE PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS AND SECURITY INSTITUTIONS



PLEASE RATE THE KOSOVO GOVERNMENT'S WORK IN FIGHTING NEPOTISM AND ENSURING EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IN EMPLOYMENT:



ENDNOTES

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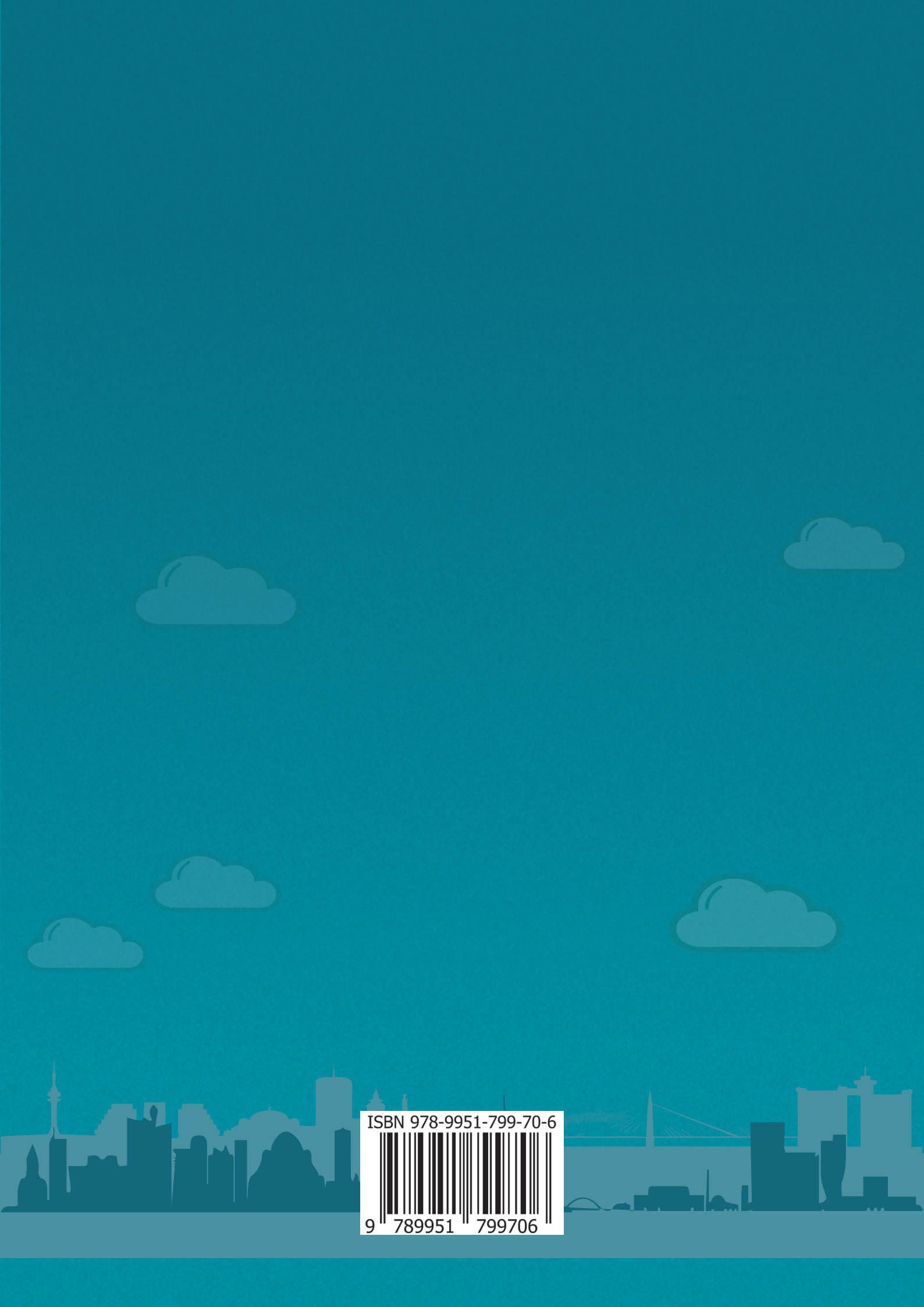
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