

WBSB SURVEY IN KOSOVO

COUNTRY REPORT

2023

# CITIZENS' PERCEPTIONS ON PUBLIC SAFETY AND THREATS TO NATIONAL SECURITY 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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#### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The following Western Balkans Security Barometer (WBSB) report provides a thorough analysis of respondents' perception of potential threats to their public safety and national security in Kosovo in 2022.

Respondents feel generally safe in their close communities. Nevertheless, the sense of safety gradually decreases as the communities grow larger. Around 77 percent of the respondents declared that they feel safe in their houses, while they feel the least safe in their country (around 33 percent). Respondents' perceptions between 2021 and 2022 indicate a slow decrease in their feeling of public safety; whereby in the previous 2021 WBSB, 79 percent and 40 percent of respondents stated that they feel safe in their homes and in their country, respectively. On the other hand, almost half of the respondents feel safe on the cyberspace.

Brain drain is ranked as the highest threat to public safety, with 83 percent of the respondents viewing it as a threat or high threat to their respective communities. Stray animals and drug abuse are also perceived as highly threatening phenomena. Moreover, respondents are generally concerned about shortages of necessities, however, they express the biggest concerns about the shortages of electricity.

On the national level, respondents see the increased prices of goods as the highest threat towards Kosovo's national security, followed closely by the energy crisis. Pollution and climate change, violent extremism, and COVID-19 are seen as the lowest threats to national security.

When asked if COVID-19 continues to endanger public health, almost half of the respondents answered negatively. Further, COVID-19 was ranked as the lowest threat to Kosovo's national security. Opinions are somewhat divided when it comes to the efficiency of the COVID-19 vaccine on hindering the pandemic; yet 45 percent of respondents believe that the vaccine contributed to curb the pandemic.

According to the survey data, the main causes of domestic violence in Kosovo are poor economic conditions and low levels of education. Respondents believe that raising the quality of education, and organizing more raising awareness campaigns are some of the measures that need to be taken by institutions to prevent and fight domestic violence.

#### INTRODUCTION

This report, published in the framework of the 2022 WBSB survey, aims to interpret respondents' perceptions on threats to their public safety and national security in Kosovo.

The report consists of two chapters i) perceptions on public safety, and ii) perceptions on national security threats. The first chapter analyses public perceptions on public safety, including how safe respondents feel in their communities and what issues pose a threat to the well-being of their communities. Public perceptions on the issue of domestic violence and perceptions on the risk from COVID-19 are also included under chapter 1 of this report.

Public safety is a key and recurring topic examined in the annual WBSB survey. The latest edition of the WBSB measured the safety perimeter which implies safety feeling among respondents on their nearby communities, and on a series of close-ended questions it measured respondents' perceptions on different phenomena and how they perceive it as a threat vis-à-vis their respective communities.

The second chapter contains an overview of public opinion on national security threats and risks. The chapter examines respondents' perceptions on internal and external threats to Kosovo's national security through a series of 16 questions in which respondents were asked to assess the perceived level of threat relative to various issues pertaining to national security.

#### **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 closedended 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.

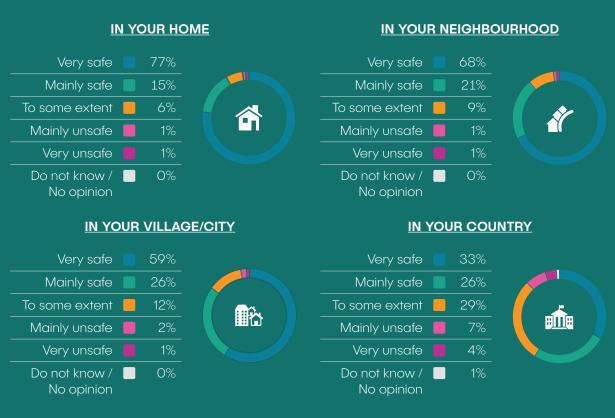
Random patterns were used to select households within the sampled locations, while the randomization within the households was based on the next adult birthday method. The data was verified in real time through field coordinators who visited a pre-defined sample of households after the completion of 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 SAFETY

The safety perimeter is the first indicator pertinent to public safety and respondents in general expressed a feeling of safety in their communities. They view their closest communities as the safest areas, and the sense of safety gradually decreases as the communities grow larger. **Homes** are viewed as the safest places by 92 percent of respondents rating them as mainly or very safe, followed by **neighbourhoods** by 89 percent, and **villages/cities** by 85 percent. The **country** is generally rated as the area where respondents feel the least safe, although more than half of the respondents feel mainly or very safe (59 percent). In addition, the WBSB measured how safe the respondents feel on **cyberspace**, and nearly half of them (48 percent) indicate safety while using the internet.

TABLE 1 RESPONDENTS' PERCEPTIONS ON SAFETY PERIMETER

#### TO WHAT EXTENT DO YOU FEEL SAFE:



#### WHILE USING THE INTERNET

Very safe	23%	
Mainly safe	24%	
To some extent	28%	(((-1))
Mainly unsafe	10%	w.l.s.
Very unsafe	9%	
Do not know /	6%	

Respondents were asked through pre-defined questions on phenomena that risk the community, and how they assess them as threats to their immediate communities. Hence, the highest threat to communities, as perceived by the respondents, is **brain drain** with 83 percent of respondents assessing it as a threat or a high threat. This can be mainly attributed to migration of Kosovars abroad in the European countries and beyond (i.e. Germany and other countries) and due to threat of human capital loss in professional fields, <sup>1</sup> such as health and engineering sector, as well as highly skilled labour force which, similar to other Western Balkan countries, Kosovo is vastly affected by labour migration phenomenon in the recent years.<sup>2</sup>

**Stray animals** are ranked the second highest threat, as 67 percent of the respondents rate them as a threat or high threat, and this marks significant change related to concern expressed in the past four years that WBSB measures this indicator. <sup>3</sup> Many of the respondents who perceive stray animals as a high threat link it to personal experiences, experiences they witnessed, or media reports on stray dogs' incidents.<sup>4</sup>

The stray animals' phenomenon is followed by **drug abuse**, seen as a threat or high threat by 57 percent of the respondents, **poor public health services** by 56 percent of respondents, and **sexual harassment** by 54 percent of the respondents. Contrary to this, some of the lowest threats towards community, as ranked by WBSB respondents, include **poor infrastructure** (rated as a threat or high threat by 40 percent of the respondents), **lack of public lighting** (by 39 percent), and **cyber violence** (by 35 percent).

TABLE 2 RESPONDENTS' PERCEPTIONS ON PUBLIC SAFETY THREATS

		High threat	Threat	Some level of threat	Low threat	No threat at all	I don't know/ No opinion
(3)	Brain drain	67%	16%	9%	5%	2%	1%
(L)	Stray animals	51%	16%	14%	10%	9%	
	Use of drugs / drug addiction	37%	20%	14%	10%	17%	2%

<sup>1</sup> Focus group held with field researchers, October, 2022

<sup>2</sup> BPRG (2023) Health in Kosovo: Emigration of Doctors and Health Workers, Balkans Policy Research Group. Balkans Policy Research Group. Available at: https://balkansgroup.org/en/health-in-kosovo-emigration-of-doctors-and-health-workers/) (Accessed: February 1, 2023).

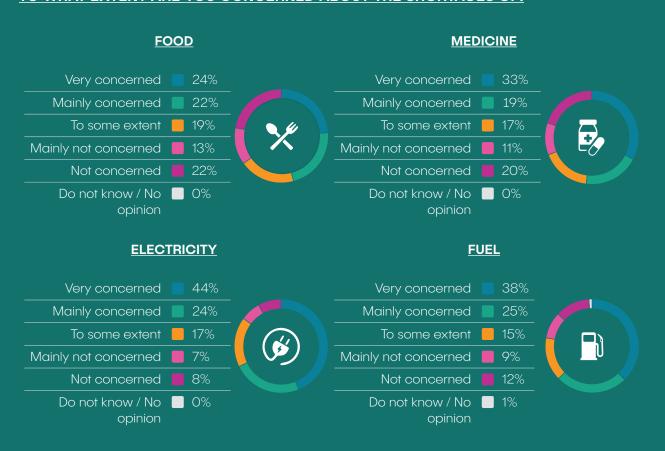
<sup>3</sup> Balaj, S. (2021) PERCEPTIMET E QYTETARËVE NDAJ SIGURISË PUBLIKE, KËRCËNIMEVE TË BRENDSHME DHE TË JASHTME, Qendra Kosovare per Studime te Sigurise. Qendra Kosovare per Studime te Sigurise. Available at: https://qkss.org/images/uploads/files/Kosovo\_Edition\_Eng\_4\_15336.pdf (Accessed: February 1, 2023).

<sup>4</sup> Focus group with field researchers, October, 2022

		High threat	Threat	Some level of threat	Low threat	No threat at all	I don't know/ No opinion
	Poor public health services	39%	17%	20%	9%	15%	
	Sexual harassment	39%	15%	13%	14%	18%	1%
	Traffic accidents	29 %	23%	24%	13%	10%	1%
	Use of illegal firearms	31%	19%	17%	12%	17%	4%
	House/Apartment robbery	30%	17%	19%	15%	18 %	1%
	Murders	32%	14%	15%	18%	20%	1%
<u>Q</u> <u>Q</u> <u>Q</u>	Gender discrimination	29%	18%	21%	14%	17%	1%
	Domestic violence	28%	17%	19%	14%	21%	1%
	Lack of safety measures in the construction sites and/or surrounding areas	27%	19%	22%	15%	15%	2%
	Violence in schools	25%	19%	20%	17%	17%	2%
	Pollution	26%	19%	21%	17%	16%	1%
	Human trafficking	27%	15%	16%	14%	25%	3%
	Bullying	24%	16%	20%	17%	21%	2%
	Poor infrastructure	21%	19%	30%	15%	15%	
	Lack of public lightning in the city / village / neighbourhood	20%	19%	21%	18%	22%	

Given the political development in 2022 of Russia's unprovoked aggression against Ukraine and its consequences which has brought economic crisis predominantly in Europe, including the Western Balkans, consequently the WBSB measured the level of concern among respondents regarding shortages of essential goods and services. It has resulted that respondents are vastly concerned about **electricity shortages** (68 percent of them are mainly or very concerned), followed by **fuel and heating shortages** (with 63 percent each). Respondents are concerned about electricity shortages due to frequent appeals of the Kosovo Government and energy distributors since late 2021 and particularly in 2022 for saving energy consumption, thus highlighting limited energy production capacities of Kosovo's current power plants, as well as warns that there will be energy crisis and blackouts. With reference to **food and medicine**, respondents express less concern about their shortages, however, they vastly note it is very worrying that increased prices of these two essential categories would most likely make them unaffordable for the population in Kosovo.

TABLE 3 RESPONDENTS' CONCERNS ON SHORTAGES OF NECESSITIES
TO WHAT EXTENT ARE YOU CONCERNED ABOUT THE SHORTAGES OF:



<sup>5</sup> Shabani, V. (2023) Kurti e rizvanolli me thirrje Për Kursimin e Energjisë, Thonë se dy Muajt e Ardhshëm Janë Kritik, KALLXO.com. KALLXO.com. Available at: https://kallxo.com/lajm/kurti-e-rizvanolli-me-thirrje-per-kursimin-e-energjise-thone-se-dy-muajt-e-ardhshem-jane-kritik/ (Accessed: February 1, 2023).

<sup>6</sup> Focus aroup with field researchers, 12 October 2022

#### **HEATING**



#### 1.1. THREATS AND RISKS FROM COVID-19

While COVID-19 cases in Kosovo have dropped significantly during 2022, slowing down the pandemic's progression, the WBSB's survey measured perceptions of respondents on some issues in relation to COVID-19 pandemic.

Respondents' perceptions were divided when asked whether the pandemic still poses a risk to their health. 46 percent of them indicated that the pandemic does not pose a danger to their health compared to 35 percent who indicated otherwise, and another 19 percent of respondents answered that COVID-19 is dangerous to some extent. Therefore, it can be assumed that significant decrease in the number of COVID-19 reported cases and death cases, as well as vaccination process have had positive impact to respondents when providing these perceptions.

## TABLE 4 RESPONDENTS' PERCEPTIONS ON COVID-19 AND ITS DANGER TO THEIR HEALTH

DO YOU BELIEVE THAT COVID-19 CONTINUES TO ENDANGER YOUR HEALTH?





Another indicator measured is how vaccination process against the pandemic has contributed to deter its progression. Respondents shared different viewpoints, however, the positive attitude dominates, with 45 percent believing that vaccines have helped to deter the pandemic 23 percent believe that the vaccination helped to some extent, while 30 percent of the respondents were rather pessimistic as they do not believe the vaccination process have had impact to deter the pandemic.

## TABLE 5 RESPONDENTS' PERCEPTIONS ON THE VACCINE CONTRIBUTION TO CURBING THE PANDEMIC

DID THE
VACCINATION
AGAINST COVID-19
CONTRIBUTE TO
STOPPING OR
CURBING THE
PANDEMIC?





## 1.2. THREATS AND RISKS FROM DOMESTIC AND GENDER BASED VIOLENCE

The 2022 edition of WBSB's survey introduced new questions related to domestic and gender-based violence (GBV) in Kosovo. Thus, KCSS aimed to dig deep in order to understand the causes of domestic and GBV which came as a result of respondents' responses to previous 2021 edition of the WBSB in which domestic violence and sexual harassment were identified as major threats.<sup>7</sup>

Additionally, in the recent years, while reported cases of domestic violence and GBV have increased, trust in institutions dealing with these cases has remained low.<sup>8</sup> Furthermore, institutional capacity to handle domestic and GBV cases is rather limited, and gender-insensitive attitudes exists within these institutions.<sup>9</sup> In 2022 Kosovo faced some of the most brutal femicide cases, among the recent cases are the murder of a women at the University Clinical Centre of Kosovo<sup>10</sup> and the murder another women by her husband with an axe at the beginning of "16 Days of Activism" campaign.<sup>11</sup> Domestic violence and GBV cases remain major challenges in Kosovo.

When asked if they themselves or someone they know have experienced domestic violence, only 1 percent of the respondents have declared that they themselves have experienced domestic violence and 11 percent answered they knew someone being exposed to domestic violence. On the contrary, vast majority of respondents, or 80 percent of them, have responded negatively – that they have not experienced domestic violence. On the other hand, cases of domestic violence are constantly growing in Kosovo. Considering that the survey was done in different households during the day, and usually not only in the presence of the respondent but accompanied by other family members, the respondents vastly hesitated to answer this question.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Balaj, S. (2021) PERCEPTIMET E QYTETARËVE NDAJ SIGURISË PUBLIKE, KËRCËNIMEVE TË BRENDSHME DHE TË JASHTME, Qendra Kosovare per Studime te Sigurise. Qendra Kosovare per Studime te Sigurise. Available at: <a href="https://gkss.org/images/uploads/files/Kosovo">https://gkss.org/images/uploads/files/Kosovo</a> Edition Eng. 4. 15336.pdf (Accessed: February 1, 2023).

<sup>8</sup> Avdimetaj, T. (2023) Baseline report on gender-based violence in Kosovo: Community and stakeholder perceptions, QKSS. QKSS. Available at: <a href="https://qkss.org/en/publikimet/raporti-per-vleresimin-baze-te-dhunes-ne-baza-gjinore-ne-kosove-perceptimet-e-komunitetit-dhe-paleve-te-interesit/">https://qkss.org/en/publikimet/raporti-per-vleresimin-baze-te-dhunes-ne-baza-gjinore-ne-kosove-perceptimet-e-komunitetit-dhe-paleve-te-interesit/</a> (Accessed: February 1, 2023).

<sup>9</sup> Ibid

<sup>10</sup> Rfe/rl (2022) Vritet Një Grua Shtatzënë në oborrin e qkuk-së, Radio Evropa e Lirë. Radio Evropa e Lirë. Available at: https://www.evropaelire.org/a/vrasja-e-nje-gruaje-ne-gkuk-/32156048.html (Accessed: January 11, 2023).

<sup>11</sup> NACIONALE (2022) Vrasja me sëpatë E Gruas në Prishtinë: Krejt çka dihet Deri Tash, Nacionale. Available at: <a href="https://nacionale.com/sociale/vrasja-me-sepate-e-gruas-ne-prishtine-krejt-cka-dihet-deri-tash">https://nacionale.com/sociale/vrasja-me-sepate-e-gruas-ne-prishtine-krejt-cka-dihet-deri-tash</a> (Accessed: January 11, 2023).

## TABLE 6 RESPONDENTS' ANSWERS ON THE QUESTION WHETHER THEY HAVE EXPERIENCED DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

HAVE YOU OR SOMEONE YOU KNOW EVER EXPERIENCED DOMESTIC VIOLENCE?

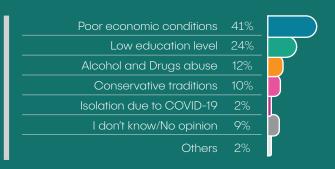




WBSB's survey dug deeper into the perceived causes of domestic violence. In this regard, poor economic conditions are ranked as the main cause of domestic violence by 41 percent of the respondents. When ranking poor economic conditions as the main cause, respondents emphasized more in-depth the following issues: i) the lack of economic independence of women forcing them to stay in violent households and thus lacking an alternative; and ii) stress deriving from poor economic conditions which is perceived to lead to violent behaviour. Next, low education level is ranked as a cause by 24 percent of the respondents, while this phenomenon was also affiliated to the patriarchal mentality and culture. It is followed by alcohol and drugs abuse (by 12 percent of the respondents), conservative traditions (by 10 percent of the respondents), and lockdown I isolation due to COVID-19 measures (by 2 percent of the respondents).

#### TABLE 7 RESPONDENTS' PERCEPTIONS ON CAUSES OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

IN YOUR OPINION, WHAT MEASURES SHOULD THE INSTITUTIONS OF YOUR COUNTRY TAKE TO PREVENT DOMESTIC VIOLENCE?



In addition, respondents provided their stances about the measures that should be taken by institutions to prevent domestic violence. Raising the quality of education is perceived as a necessary measure that should be taken by 41 percent of the respondents. Raising awareness campaigns against domestic violence, both in schools and in towns or villages, are also seen as an important measure by 15 and 14 percent of the respondents, respectively. Nine percent of them believe that front-line workers that address domestic violence should be further trained on gender sensitive approach, and another 7 percent emphasized the increase of women representation in security institutions as means to prevent domestic violence.

## TABLE 8 RESPONDENTS' PERCEPTIONS ON INSTITUTIONAL MEASURES THAT SHOULD BE TAKEN AGAINST DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

IN YOUR OPINION,
WHAT MEASURES
SHOULD THE
INSTITUTIONS OF YOUR
COUNTRY TAKE TO
PREVENT DOMESTIC
VIOLENCE?

vality of education	quality of education 41%
	ss against domestic mpaigns in schools 15%
	s against domestic campaigns in towns and villages
	en representation in security institutions
violence (training	ls in institutions that ic violence (training police officers, etc.)
t know/No opinion	n't know/No opinion 🕒 10%
Others •	Others • 4%

#### 2. NATIONAL SECURITY THREATS

The disruption of war in Ukraine triggered worldwide issues and worsened the existing ones, such as the grain trade blockage in the beginning of the war, change in oil prices, limited supplies of goods, which as a result deepened the hunger crisis in multiple regions in the world. Prices of goods were also affected in Kosovo and an overall disinformation trend with the eruption of the war, potentially caused increased panic that this event might have a spill over effect. This is reflected in respondents answers to the WBSB 2022 survey where the vast majority of the respondents (87 percent) consider the **increase** in prices of products as high threat/threat to the national security, meanwhile less than one percent see no threat from it, marking it as the highest perceived threat to Kosovo's national security. Similarly, the respondents perceive energy crisis as highly problematic, with 86 percent of the respondents ranking it as a threat or high threat to the national security. However, less respondents (58 percent) rank the war in Ukraine itself as a threat for Kosovo's national security; and, correspondingly, 57 percent of respondents believe that **potential for escalations in the region** is a threat or high threat to the national security.

In the list of highest threats, the increase in prices and energy crisis is closely followed by **drug trafficking**, rated as a threat or high threat by 86 percent of respondents. Similarly, **economic crisis** is seen as a threat or high threat by 84 percent of the respondents, and 82 percent of them rate **organized crime** as very threatening to the national security.

On the other hand, the lowest rated national threats include **pollution and climate change**, which are rated as a threat or high threat by 56 percent of the respondents, and **violent extremism** (by 56 percent). The phenomenon perceived as the least threatening by WBSB respondents is **COVID-19**, which is seen as a threat or high threat by 35 percent of the respondents, while 43 percent of them see low or no threat from it.

#### TABLE 9 RESPONDENTS' PERCEPTIONS ON NATIONAL SECURITY THREATS

FOLLOV	W DO YOU RATE THE VING AS THREATS TO THE ATIONAL SECURITY?	No threat at all	Low threat	Some level of threat	Threat	High threat	I don't know/ No opinion
	Corruption	1%	4%	14%	22%	58%	1%
## ## ## ##	Organized Crime	2%	4%	11%	23%	59%	1%



FOLLO\	OW DO YOU RATE THE WING AS THREATS TO THE ATIONAL SECURITY?	No threat at all	Low threat	Some level of threat	Threat	High threat	I don't know/ No opinion
	Illegal trafficking of firearms	2%	5%	13%	27%	50%	3%
	Drug trafficking	1%	3%	8%	24%	62%	2%
CY	Unemployment	4%	4%	13%	16%	63%	
	COVID-19 Pandemic	26%	17%	22%	14%	20%	1%
2	Violent extremism and terrorism	10%	13%	19%	20%	35%	3%
	Migration and brain drain	4%	5%	12%	14%	64%	1%
	Economic crisis	2%	3%	11%	18%	66%	
	Pollution and Global Warming	7%	9%	26%	25%	31%	2%
FAKE	Fake news	3%	4%	17%	25%	50%	1%
(e)	Cybersecurity threats	4%	7%	19%	25%	39%	6%
X	War in Ukraine	7%	10%	23%	22%	36%	2%
	Potential for escalations in the region	7%	8%	25%	29%	28%	3%
	Increase of prices of goods	1%	3%	8%	15%	72%	1%
	Energy crisis	2%	3%	9%	18%	68%	

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