

PERCEPTIONS AND ATTITUDES TOWARDS GENDER CONCEPTS AND GENDER-BASED  
VIOLENCE IN KOSOVO

# AN ANALYSIS OF INSTITUTIONAL ACTORS AND THE GENERAL POPULATION

NOVEMBER, 2022



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*For the UN, references to Kosovo shall be understood in the context of Security Council Resolution 1244 (1999).*

## List of acronyms

**GBV** - Gender-Based Violence

**DV** - Domestic Violence

**NGO** - Non-Governmental Organization

**OSCE** - Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe

**UNFPA** - United Nations Population Fund

**LGBTQ+** -Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, plus

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# Introduction

Kosovar society is characterized by patriarchal family values which are reflected in traditional gender norms and an unfavorable position of the Kosovar women. Differences between men and women in socioeconomic terms are also by the Kosovo Program for Gender Equality assessment report 2008-2013 (Färnsveden, Qosaj-Mustafa, Farnsworth, & Nordlund, 2014). This analysis on the gender differences in several aspects, including state legal framework, human rights, access to quality education and health services, socioeconomic empowerment, Domestic Violence (DV), and inclusion in decision-making processes – points out the hindrances in improving women's position against men. Some of the labor market and socio-economic markers – as inclusion in entrepreneurship and benefitting grants, showed a small progress in women's inclusion. However, the target has not been met yet. In regard to Domestic Violence which disproportionately targets women, the analysis has shown a noticeable progress since 2008 in the frame of ensuring political and legal frames as strategies and actions plans.

Even though, it pointed out the lack of programs oriented towards re-integration of DV survivors.

Another essential improvement in the legal framework and its implementation in regard to addressing DV is also reported by a study conducted by Kosova Women's Network (Farnsworth, Qosaj-Mustafa, Banjska, Berisha, & Morina, 2015). However, a revision and improvement of the existing legal framework is necessary.

*According to this research, 31% of the surveyed had experienced some kind of Domestic Violence in 2014, with women-reported cases being 41%, compared to men-reported rate which was 20%.*

*62% of the surveyed reported to have experienced some kind of domestic violence during their life as well. Women again reported a higher rate of such incidents with a rate of 68%, while 56% of men reported such cases of violence. In regard to attitudes towards violence, 21% of women and 22% of men agree that sometimes it is okay for a man to hit his wife*

This study also points out the tendency of various institutions' representatives to blame victims for the crimes committed against them

Another study on men's attitudes and women's opinions regarding gender equality in Kosovo, using the International Men and Gender Equality Questionnaire found that the majority of men and women belong to the moderate gender norms category (OSBE/UNFPA Kosovë, 2018).

However, around 13% of men belong to the low category of gender norms compared to women with only 1% being part of this category. More specifically, regarding Domestic Violence, 21% of women partially agree that women should tolerate violence in order to keep their family together, while 7.1% of them fully agree. In addition, 32.7% of men partially agree that there are cases when a woman deserves to be hit, and 7.1% of them fully agree.

The abovementioned studies and research show an understanding perspective towards Gender-Based Violence. Such attitudes have a positive correlation with violence against women (Brownridge et al., 2008; Markowitz, 2001), and have a negative impact in the readiness to report it. Add here the victim-blaming mentality of institutional actors, the situation is getting more and more difficult for the Kosovar woman.

These analyses show the situation up to 2017 only, and show data by institutional actors within the legal framework only. Taking these factors into consideration, we consider that an analysis of perceptions and attitudes towards gender concepts and GBV in Kosovo, including the general population and institutional actors will provide us a clear conception of the current situation regarding this issue. Moreover, the data found in this study will be used to compile a brochure aiming to inform people and raise awareness on gender concepts and Gender-Based Violence in Kosovo



# Methodology

## Study design and sample selection

A combination of qualitative and quantitative methodology was used to explore the perceptions and attitudes towards gender concepts and GBV among institutional actors and the general population in Kosovo.

Nine (9) key stakeholders' representatives were interviewed through purposive sampling including representatives of public institutions, civil society, and Academia. In addition, 122 people from the grown up general population were selected to partake with the main criteria of being over the age of 18. They were contacted through telephone and email. The final sample was made up of a total of 131 people.

## Data collection

Qualitative data were collected through interviews held in person and via Zoom online platform. Data were analyzed based on interview recordings, and notes taken by the researcher. Nine in-depth interviews with stakeholders (public institutions such as Prishtina Basic Court, University of Prishtina, University of Gjakova, Kosovo Police, Civil Society Organizations, Islamic Union, and the Catholic Church) were conducted. The in-depth interviews helped us collect multi-person perspectives on the current events – the awareness and main barriers regarding gender equality in Kosovo. The interviews were 45-minutes structured interviews.

The questions asked intended to unveil more about the perceptions regarding key gender terminologies, gender equality, and perceptions about GBV as a phenomenon in our society.

Data from the quantitative stage were collected through the internet (online). Initially, these data were verified individually regarding answers consistency and time checks in fulfilling each part of the questionnaire. After validation, data were analyzed by administering the online questionnaire to the general population

## The questionnaire used in this stage collected information on:

*Social and gender norms* - the main purpose of this questionnaire was to measure the attitudes of all age groups on their opinions on gender and social norms in our society. Questions measure the restrictive gender and social attitudes. The questionnaire is focused on a variety of aspects that are considered important, such as education, financial inclusion, economic empowerment, and marriage. The "fully agree", "agree", "neutral", "do not agree", and "do not agree at all" were provided to the surveyed, and they had the chance to express their opinion on the given topics. This questionnaire showed a very high internal consistency on a .864. Cronbach's' Alpha.

*Attitudes on gender roles* - this part of the questionnaire measured the opinions of the surveyed regarding roles and the rights of men and women in our society and the division of work among them. The answers were taken from the given options: "fully agree", "agree", "neutral", "do not agree", and "do not agree at all", showing their agreement or disagreement with traditional gender roles. This questionnaire showed a very high internal consistency with a .662 Cronbach's' Alpha value, considering the low number (9) of the included items.

*Masculinity attitudes* - this section of the questionnaire measured the attitudes towards "gender equality" norms. It also provided information regarding dominant and promoted norms in our community and pointed out specific patterns of manhood or masculinity. Respondents were given three degrees to choose whether they agree or not to the given statements. This questionnaire showed a .559. Cronbach's alpha can also be justified by the low number of items included in the questionnaire.

*Social norms and the expectations of women and men in your community* - this questionnaire consists of statements about society's expectations for girls, women, boys, and men on what they should achieve or respect in a certain period of time. The "Agree, somewhat agree, neutral, do not fully agree, and do not agree" were provided to respondents. This questionnaire was separated into two parts, measuring the attitudes towards women and men, with respective Cronbach's alpha .765 and .693 values.

*The questionnaire on perceptions towards violence* - was composed of 35 questions, aiming to identify the attitudes of the surveyed towards violence. Respondents provided their answers whether they agree with the statements or not. This questionnaire showed a very good internal consistency of .808 Cronbach's alpha value

**Table 1.** Demographic data according to gender, age, education level, and place of living of the participants who filled out the online questionnaire.

	Woman		Man		Non-binary		Prefer not to say	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
<b>Age</b>								
18-29 Years old	57	61.3	17	65.4	1	100	1	100
29-39 Years old	13	14	4	15.4	-	-	-	-
39-49 Years old	9	9.7	1	3.8	-	-	-	-
49-65 Years old	13	14	4	15.4	-	-	-	-
Above 65 Years	1	1.1	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Level of Education</b>								
High School	8	8.6	2	7.7	-	-	-	-
Bachelor Studies	44	47.3	18	69.2	-	-	-	-
Master Studies/Specialization	40	43	6	23.1	1	100	1	50
PhD	1	1.1	-	-	-	-	1	50
<b>Place of living</b>								
Rural Area	16	17.2	5	19.2	-	-	-	-
Urban Area	77	82.8	21	80.8	1	100	2	100

The fact that 76.2% of the surveyed were women, and 21.3% of them were men should be considered when interpreting these analyses. Also, the vast majority of respondents were young, 61.5% (18-29 years old) and 13.9% (29-39 years old). As well as 50.8% of the sample stated that they completed Bachelor's studies, and 39.3% completed Master's studies or similar specializations. These characteristics of the sample make it less representative of the general population.

# Analysis and Results

## *Key findings from qualitative data analysis:*

- Around 67% of the interviewed reported that they use the word gender to refer to the biological sex – the division into two categories as male and female. Whereas three individuals understand it as the identity, and the gender shaping which we take, regardless of the biological sex we are born with.
- When asked what are the gender roles for men and women in our community according to society's perceptions, there was a general perception that women are given attributes and expectations as being mindful of the family and the house, while keeping the balance of the work outside the house as well. Women are expected to create a family and tolerate some actions of their partners for the sake of keeping the family together.

*“Women experience social punishments which men do not. Women are often included in social activities in order to complete a given gender role, as can be going to the park to take children for a walk”*

- an Interviewed social worker.

- **88.89% of the interviewed have considered violence as imposing someone's will to another person, based on their gender**

➤ 88.89% of the interviewed agree that women are more often victims of GBV in Kosovo. They also stated that marginalized groups are also more vulnerable to this phenomenon, including people from the LGBTQI+ community and other minority communities in Kosovo.

➤ Some of the GBV consequences in our society that have been identified by these institutional actors are:

- Economic harm and stagnation in the development of the society;
- Physical consequences/body injuries in victims;
- Negative consequences in the emotional well-being and mental health of the victim;
- Social instability, including unhealthy families, and children who lack the necessary care;
- Exposure to violence increases the tolerance towards being violated against, and of being a perpetrator of violence, thus enabling a way for violence repetition/recycling.

➤ While based on their personal perceptions, institutional actors referred to feminism as work on gender equality, focusing on women's rights as an underrepresented category of the society, one of them who studied law said:

*“Feminism is women demanding more rights since it belongs to them”.*

➤ Feminist movements are perceived as a rebellion against society. This kind of attitude impacts delete in gender inequalities, sexism, discrimination and/or hostility against women, as well as discontent regarding improvements in women's rights.

➤ 66% of the surveyed declared that the main barrier for victims and perpetrators in seeking help is the lack of adequate services and institutional irresponsibility, name Police and the court. Patriarchal mentality, the low number of reported violence cases, and the stigma created regarding this phenomenon are also considered barriers to seeking help. Shame is also considered as a barrier, either due to the nature of their experiences, or because they believe that people would put blame on them for the violence they have experienced.

➤ 55% of the interviewed declared that advocacy for gender equality is a concern for men since it puts their privileged position in our society at risk, and consequently affects their integrity.

➤ Furthermore, 22% of the interviewed declared that gender equality advocacy presents a concern for men and women in our community.

## Findings from quantitative data analysis:

**Table2.** Findings on social and gender norms

Statement	Fully agree (%)	Agree (%)	Neutral (%)	Do not agree (%)	Do not agree at all (%)
Our culture makes it harder for girls to achieve their goals than it is for boys.	44	52	11	11	4
Most people in my community expect men to have the final say on decisions at home.	34	50	15	16	7
Most families in my community control the behavior of their daughters more than the behavior of their sons.	46	52	8	12	4
Most boys and girls in my community do not share homework equally	59	41	14	3	5

There are many definitions of social norms, and all of them highlight the importance of mutual expectations or informal rules among a group of people about how people should behave. The majority also agree that norms are withheld through social rewards for people who meet them (e.g. approval of others, staying in the community), while there are social sanctions against people who do not do that (such as gossip, isolation, or violence).

Findings from this section highlight the presence of rigid gender norms in our society. Around **36.1%** of the surveyed fully agree, and **42.6%** agree with the statement that our culture makes it more difficult for women to reach their goals in life, compared to men.

Women are also excluded from the decision-making process, since **27.9%** fully agree, and **41%** agree that in our society, men are given the privilege of making final decisions for their house. These attitudes mine the independence of women and the decision-making in their private life. These attitudes agree with the fact that men have a greater 'natural' authority in decision-making, and control in the private sphere of intimate relationships, and should have the final say on what is happening within a relationship or in the family – and the family economy is led by them. Gender norms and values which restrict the voice and options of girls to challenge the decisions taken for them, are also noticed.

Furthermore, **37.7%** fully agree and **42.6%** agree that the majority of families control women's behaviors more than those of men. These findings imply attitudes that promote solid gender roles, stereotypes, and expressions. These reflect the idea that men and women are naturally adaptive to 'overtake' several duties and responsibilities, and have naturally distinctive, and often contradictory personality traits.

**Table 3. Findings on attitudes on gender roles**

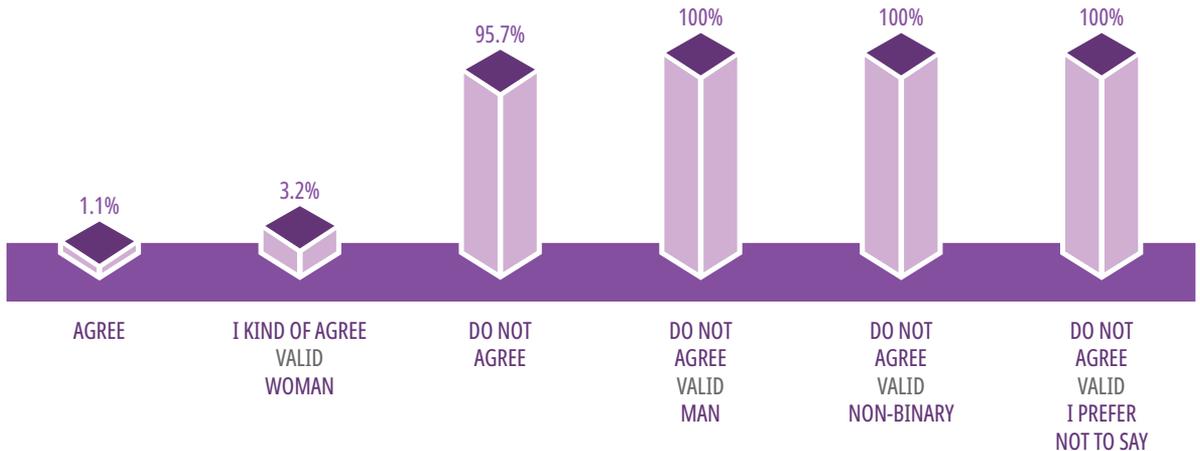
Statement	Fully agree (%)	Agree (%)	Neutral (%)	Do not agree (%)	Do not agree at all (%)
Changing diapers, cleaning children and feeding children are the responsibility of mothers.	2.5	9	13.1	36.1	39.3
It is the man who decides when he will have sex with his wife.	0.8	2.5	5.7	32	59
A woman is only a real woman when she has a child.	1.6	1.6	3.3	24.6	68.9
Men should help with housework.	93	26	2	1	/

In regard to findings related to gender roles, there seems to be a general conception that gender roles should be divided proportionally among men and women in society. **72.6%** of the respondents fully agree, while **21.3%** agree. This seems to be in contradiction with society's practices, if we consider findings from the aforementioned statements that work is not divided evenly, that women are less included in decision-making, and their actions are more controlled than the actions of men. Simultaneously, around **97%** of the sample agree that men should participate in housework.

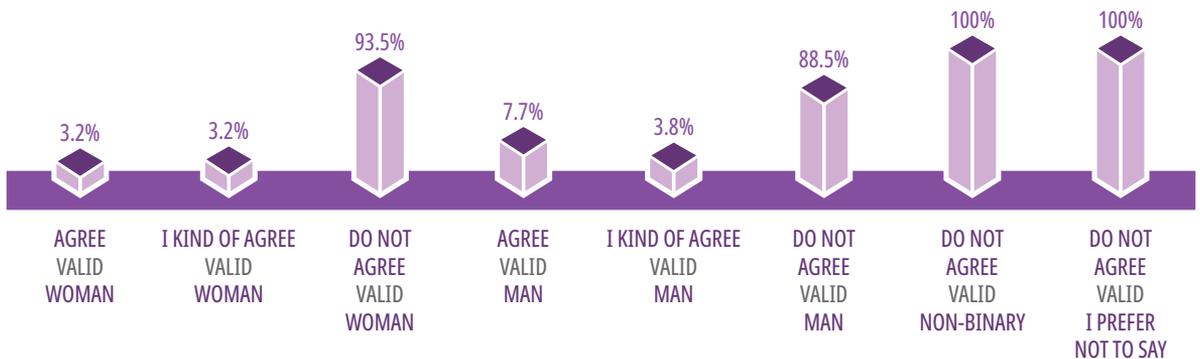
In the majority of the surveyed sample, values such as ideologies over the advantage of men, men's rights on women's bodies, and that women's and girl's place is at home, were not noticed. **32%** of the surveyed sample will not agree, and **59%** will not agree at all to that statement that man is the one who decides when he should have sex with his wife.

# Findings on attitudes on gender roles

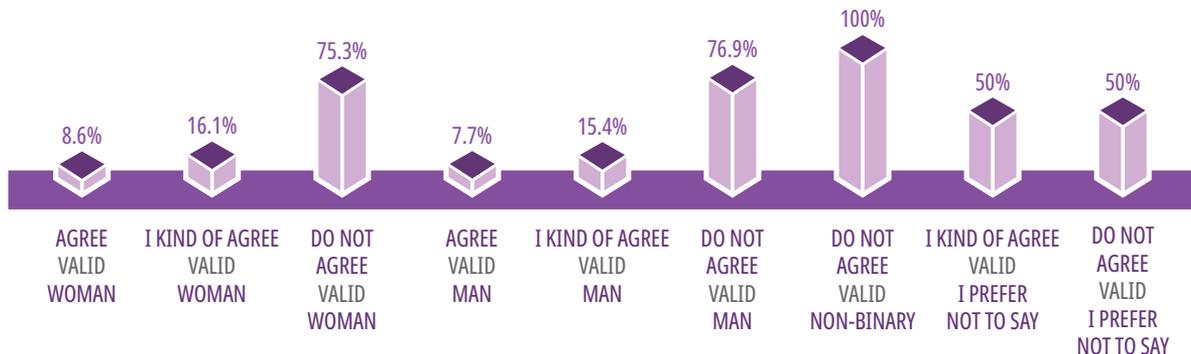
To be a man, you must be tough. (%)



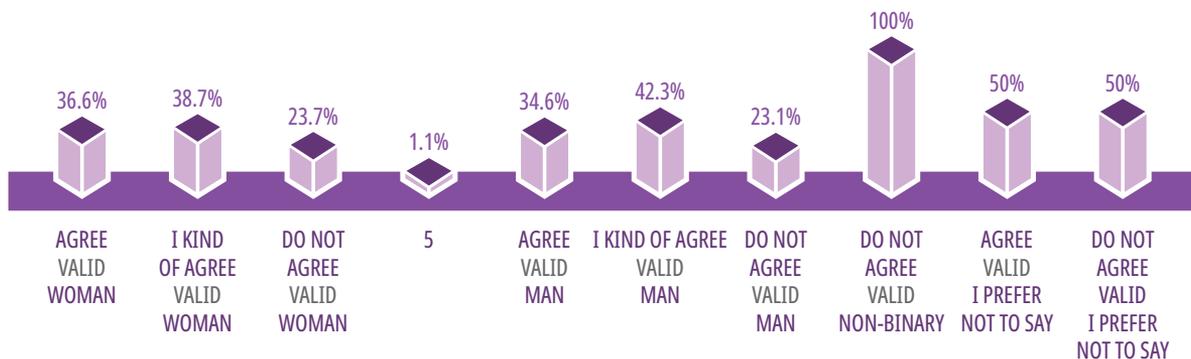
Men should be ashamed if they are unable to have an erection. (%)



## Man have a greater need for sex than women (%)



## Most men would not like to have a homosexual friend. (%)



Based on these findings, it is noticed that attitudes towards masculinity are relatively more tolerant in the online surveyed sample. Around **97%** of the surveyed declared not to agree with the statement that man should be tough. However, it is worth mentioning that while all men declared they do not agree, **1.1%** of women agree, and **3.2%** somewhat agree with the statement.

Even though we cannot generalize due to the characteristics of the sample, we notice a women's tendency to reinforce certain toxic masculine attitudes.

**92.6%** of the sample declared not to agree with the statement that men should be ashamed in case they cannot reach an erection. While **7.7%** of men and **2.2%** of women from the sample agree with the statement.

As regards to the statement that men have a greater need for sex than women, **75.4%** of the sample do not agree with such a statement, **16.4%** somewhat agree, and **8.2%** agree.

In addition to these data implying relatively tolerant attitudes towards a balanced life towards the expressiveness of masculinity, there is a general agreement that men would not want to have a gay friend with **36.1%** agreeing and **38.5%** somewhat agreeing with the statement.



## Findings from social norms and expectations for women and men in the community:

Statement	Social norms and expectations towards women (average value)	Social norms and expectations towards men (average value)
1. They should be better at housework such as cooking and cleaning.	3.24	2.59
2. They should get married.	2.86	2.55
3. They should have children.	2.85	2.62
4. They must remain virgins until marriage.	3.87	4.09
5. They should be respectful to their parents.	1.50	1.57
6. They should mostly be at home and should not be "wandering" with friends.	4.17	4.27
7. They should dress modestly.	2.96	3.22
8. They should finish high school.	1.68	1.71
9. They should finish university.	1.45	1.47
10. They must have monetary income to help keep the family financially secure.	1.67	1.39

**Degrees:** 1- Agree, 2- Somewhat agree, 3- Neutral, 4- Somewhat do not agree, 5- Do not agree  
 (\*The lower the average value, the higher the compatibility with the statement in question)

According to the statements of the surveyed, it is noted a contradiction with traditional gender norms and roles, which also contradicts other studies conducted in Kosovo, and findings from qualitative data analysis of this study.

Results show that there is a higher expectancy in society for men to do traditionally female-considered work as chores – including cooking and cleaning. Also, results show that there is a higher expectancy for men to get married and have successors.

There is a high societal agreement (slightly higher than for attitudes towards women) that both men and women should be respectful to their parents, and should complete secondary and higher education. While there is a moderately higher expectancy that men should provide monetary income for the family, compared to women. Simultaneously, the results imply fair gender norms that support the freedom of individuals to live their life based on the preferences of their sexuality, and their right to recreational time despite their gender.



**Table 6.** *Perceptions towards violence according to frequency and percentage*

	Agree f (%)	Do not Agree f (%)
1. What is called Domestic Violence is often a normal reaction to everyday stress and frustration.	18 (14.8%)	104 (85.2%)
2. Domestic violence can be justified in cases where people get so angry that they temporarily lose control.	6 (4.9%)	116 (95.1%)
3. Domestic violence can be justified if the perpetrator has been violated during childhood.	9 (7.4%)	113 (92.6%)
4. Domestic violence can be justified if the perpetrator sincerely apologizes for what they have done.	11 (9%)	111 (91%)
5. It is a woman's duty to stay in a violent relationship to keep their family together.	1 (0.8%)	121 (99.2%)
6. Domestic violence is a private issue that should be managed within the family.	10 (8.2%)	112 (91.8%)
7. Domestic violence can be justified if the victim is under the influence of alcohol.	4 (3.3%)	118 (96.7%)
8. Domestic violence can be justified if the perpetrator is under the influence of alcohol	5 (4.1%)	117 (95.9%)
9. A man is less responsible for sexual violence if he was under the influence of alcohol or drugs during the act.	7 (5.74%)	115 (94.26%)
10. If a woman is sexually assaulted while under the influence of alcohol or other drugs, she is at least partially responsible.	14 (11.5%)	108 (88.5%)

11. In family settings when one partner is violent towards the other, it is perfectly reasonable that the perpetrator of the violence is forced to leave the family environment.	90 (73.8%)	32(26.2%)
12. A female victim who does not leave an abusive partner is partly responsible for the continued abuse.	46 (37.7%)	76(62.3%)
13. Women who are sexually abused should solve the issue themselves rather than report it.	3 (2.5%)	119 (97.5%)
14. Women often say “no” when they actually want to say “yes”.	20 (16.4%)	102 (83.6%)
15. Rape happens from men who are not able to control their need for sex.	82 (67.2%)	40 (32.8%)
16. In many cases women who say they have been raped, have initially seduced the man and then regretted it.	8 (6.6%)	114 (93.4%)
17. It is a serious problem when a man tries to control his partner by denying her access to their money.	86 (70.5%)	36 (29.5%)
18. When a man is very sexually aroused, he may not realize that the woman does not want to have sex.	30 (24.6%)	92 (75.4%)
19. Women who constantly flirt should be blamed when their partner gets jealous and hits them.	14 (11.5%)	108 (88.5%)
20. Many women exaggerate the problem of violence perpetrated by men.	15 (12.3%)	107 (87.7%)

At first sight, the findings from this section of the analyses show relatively unsupportive attitudes towards violence as a phenomenon, and that a spirit that empathizes with the victim's condition prevails among the population that has pursued university education. Even though the previous study has shown that women and men have tolerant attitudes towards GBV and that the level of education is not a very significant indicator of this phenomenon, findings from this study provide a different conclusion.

At the same time, we notice attitudes that justify the perpetrator and hold women accountable. These attitudes shift responsibility from the perpetrator to the victim, holding them partially accountable for the violence they have experienced, or for not preventing it (e.g. excessive flirting with other men, or the drunk condition of the victim when violence occurred).

Attitudes that justify men are based on the perception that there are factors that lead to the impossibility of men to controlling their behavior. Thus, 67% of the sample agreed that rape happens due to men's impossibility to control their sexual needs.

*Attitudes that minimize violence against women* – denying its severity, minimizing its impact on the victim, or making violence and its consequences look less important or complex than they really are (e.g. 12.3% agree that women exaggerate the problem of violence perpetrated by men).

*Attitudes that do not believe the reporting of violence by women* – having such attitudes that relate to the idea that women lie or exaggerate with reporting violence in order to 'go back' to their spouses or to gain a tactical advantage in their relationship with men.

*Attitudes that ignore the need to ask for consent* – denying the request that sexual intercourse is based on the presence and continuous negotiation of consent. These attitudes rationalize the failure of men in actively getting consent as a 'natural' aspect of masculinity (e.g. 24.6% of the sample agreed that if a man is sexually aroused, he might not understand that the woman does not want to have intercourse; while 20% of the sample agreed that the women often say "no" when they actually want to say "yes").

# Conclusions and Recommendations

Social norms and attitudes contribute to gender inequality and stigma related to violence reporting and help seeking.

The legislation in place is not being properly implemented, and faith in institutions that should provide support to victims is low.

The actors who were interviewed for the purposes of this report generally shared the opinion that Kosovo has good laws, and that there has been an improvement during the last years. While laws that relate to GBV were considered as partially adequate, their implementation is considered to be insufficient.

As one of the most evident human rights violations, GBV continues to be present in Kosovo. To combat this phenomenon, it is important that there is a proper reaction from all responsible institutions. Kosovo Police, which is often the first institution in which victims of GBV contact, consequently being the victims' first contact with public institutions, can impact in encouraging the victim to take further legal actions against the perpetrator, or discourage the victim and make her give up.

Among the persisting problems related to the assessment of cases of gender-based violence are the widespread stigmatization and blaming of the victims by the responsible institutions, as well as the lack of confidentiality in the identity of the victims.

Violence against women is both a cause and a consequence of gender inequality, which is perpetuated by existing norms and attitudes. The surveyed actors say that Kosovo is still a patriarchal society where men dominate at home, at work and in the public sphere.

Attitudes are shaped by the world around us, from the media we are exposed to, to influences in everyday environments such as schools, workplaces, and friendship groups. Thus, they are a good 'snapshot' of the wider social conditions that contribute to violence against women. The non-supportive attitudes towards violence in Kosovar society found by this research suggest that Kosovo is on the right track to achieve changes in the conditions that are understood to contribute positively to violence against women. However, there is still a need for further awareness of the general population.

Gender roles and attitudes of men and women are classified as traditional and egalitarian roles. The roles attributed to women in traditional roles consist of unequal responsibilities, such as being responsible for internal affairs and not being active in professional life. The roles attributed to men in traditional roles consist of responsibilities such as being the head of the household and also responsible for providing food. Egalitarian roles, however, are the equal sharing of responsibilities in family, professional, social, and educational life. Social norms and attitudes that place men in a position of sexual dominance have dire consequences for women's ability to control their reproductive and sexual health. Although the findings of this research suggest the presence of egalitarian attitudes, the reported practices show the presence of traditional roles in the functioning of life in Kosovar society.

Girls are expected to be submissive, docile, shy, and not vocal and opinionated. Similarly, girls' behavior is closely linked to notions of honor, shame and prestige, as girls feel that they are under the close and constant scrutiny of society. This means that girls are constantly under pressure to think about the family's name and honor in their daily lives, from the clothes they wear to the way they behave in public. Thus, a girl cannot stay the night at a friend's house; she cannot be seen wandering around/being mobile; she cannot be seen talking/interacting with the boys. Although boys can express their sexuality and sexual curiosity, girls face great pressure not to be interested in knowing about sex, sexual activity, or sexual attraction.

The fear of being excluded from society is the main reason that girls do not challenge the established norms, although this does not prevent them from criticizing and questioning the norms and their situation.

## Recommendations

*Recommendation:* Increasing the capacities of institutional actors on gender concepts, specifically gender, gender identity and biological sex. Lack of knowledge in this regard can result in discriminatory decisions against certain categories, including persons with non-binary gender identities or others.

### *Education, information sharing, and awareness*

To design and implement public awareness campaigns to raise awareness of violence against women, its causes and consequences, in accordance with the legislation for the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women. Ensure that these campaigns include the perspective of gender equality, gender-based violence as a violation of human rights, as well as the notion that the perpetrator is the one who bears responsibility for the violence and not the victim.

To promote discussions between different generations to encourage the engagement of youth and, in particular, young men to fight violence against women. In addition, women and girls should be better informed about the special services available to them from NGOs and institutions.

To implement the gender perspective component in school curricula, including through the removal from textbooks of all discriminatory language and social and cultural norms that cause the ineffective continuation of gender inequality.

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