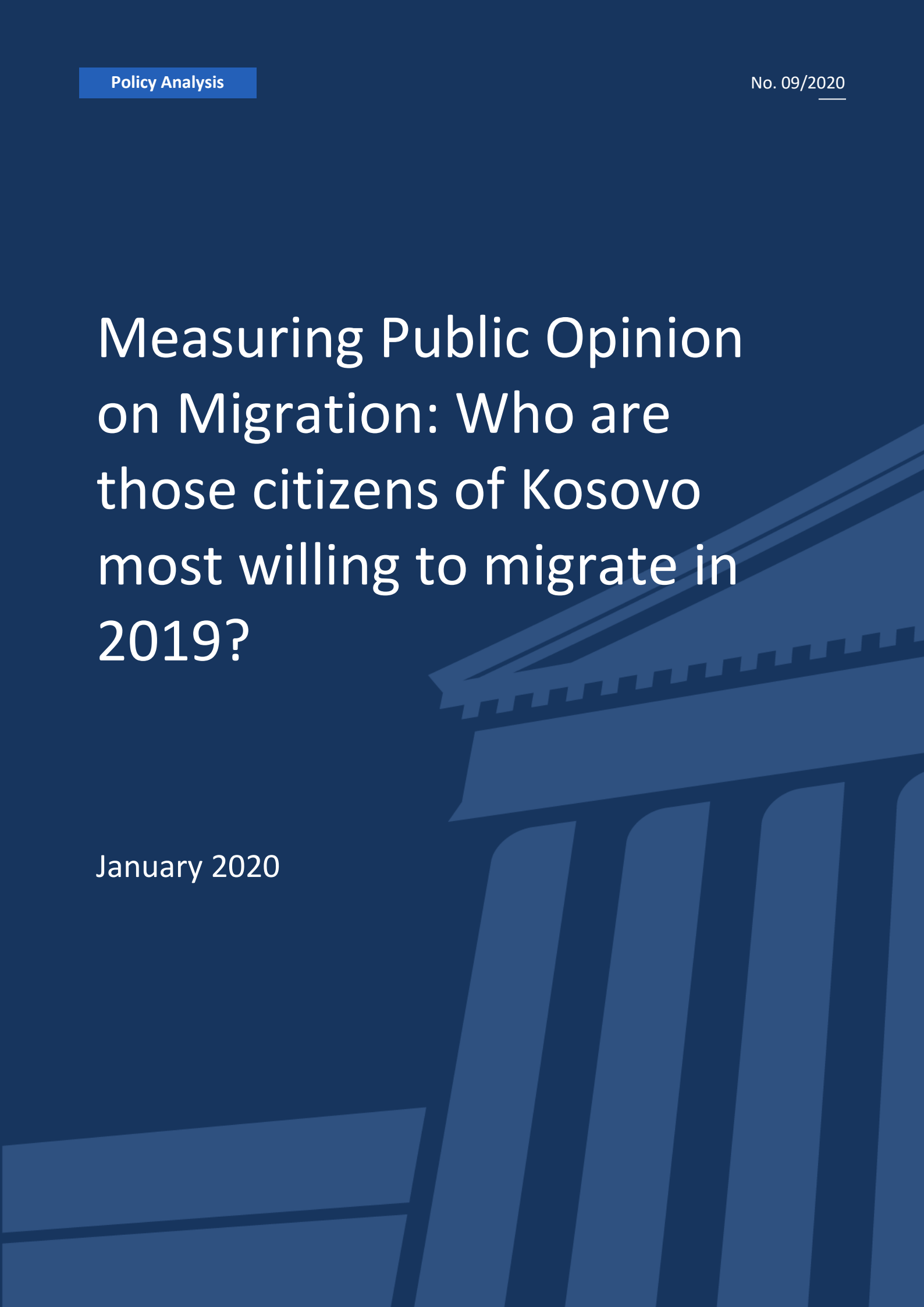


Measuring Public Opinion on Migration: Who are those citizens of Kosovo most willing to migrate in 2019?

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MEASURING PUBLIC OPINION ON MIGRATION: WHO ARE THOSE CITIZENS OF KOSOVO MOST WILLING TO MIGRATE IN 2019?

I. INTRODUCTION

As the poorest country in the region, with a GDP of €6,725.9 million (€3,746 per capita) Kosovo encounters numerous substantial economic challenges, among them high unemployment, low labor force participation, and high poverty rates.¹ According to the Kosovo Agency of Statistics (KAS), only 28.8 percent of the working age population was employed in 2018; and among women, barely 12.3 compared to 45.3 percent of men. The employment rate was lowest among the young population; one in ten (10%) young individuals are employed. The situation is even worse for women, for whom the numbers halves, 12.3 percent employed, down to 5.2 percent in the 15-24 age group.² The main sectors of employment seem to be trade (17%), construction (11.9%), education (11.3%), and production (10.3%).³ Conversely, unemployment remains among the highest in the region, at 29.6 percent, higher among women (33.4%) and youth (55.4%).

The broader picture is even more devastating. Less than half (40.9%) of the working age population were economically active in 2018. Less than a fifth (18.4%) of women participate in the labour force, in comparison to approximately two third (63.3%) of men.⁴ In other words, Kosovo registers the lowest rate of labour force participation not only in the region but worldwide.⁵ Eight out of ten (81.6%) women are inactive, as well as more than one third (36.7%) of men, increasing from 2017.⁶

The poverty rates are also significantly high. The latest KAS data suggest that, in 2018, 18 percent of the population lived below poverty line (€1.85 per adult per day), 5.1 percent in conditions of extreme poverty (€1.31 or less per adult equivalent per day). These rates remain higher in rural areas.⁷

Alongside the economic challenges, Kosovo struggles with political uncertainty as well. Especially since 2014, Kosovo has continually witnessed political deadlocks, which blocked most of the institutional activities and increased insecurity. These systematic economic and political challenges arise because the political parties cannot pull their weight, leading to a further deterioration of citizens' welfare. Hence, they are forced to seriously consider leaving the country, i.e. migrating. On a similar note, Kosovo has had a sizable Diaspora and remittances have always played a crucial role in improving citizens' welfare. In 2018, the overall amount of remittances increased by 5.4 percent, reaching €800.5 million.⁸

¹Kosovo Agency of Statistics (2019) *Series 3: Economic Statistics Gross Domestic Product 2008 – 2018*. Prishtina, September 2019. Available at: <https://ask.rks-gov.net/media/5075/gross-domestic-product2008-2018.pdf>

²Kosovo Agency of Statistics (2019) *Labor Force Survey 2018*. Prishtina, April 2019. Available at: <http://ask.rks-gov.net/media/4671/anketa-e-tregut-te-punes-2018.pdf>

³Central Bank of the Republic of Kosovo (2019). *Raporti Vjetor 2018*. Prishtina, June 2019. Available at: https://bqk-kos.org/repository/docs/2018/BQK_RV_2018.pdf

⁴Kosovo Agency of Statistics (2019) *Labor Force Survey 2018*. Prishtina, April 2019. Available at: <http://ask.rks-gov.net/media/4671/anketa-e-tregut-te-punes-2018.pdf>

⁵The World Bank (2018) *Promoting Women's Employment in Kosovo*. Available at: <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/kosovo/brief/promoting-women-employment-in-kosovo>

⁶Kosovo Agency of Statistics (2019) *Labor Force Survey 2018*. Prishtina, April 2019. Available at: <http://ask.rks-gov.net/media/4671/anketa-e-tregut-te-punes-2018.pdf>

⁷Kosovo Agency of Statistics (2019). *Consumption Poverty in the Republic Of Kosovo*. Prishtina, May 2019. Available at: <https://ask.rks-gov.net/media/4901/poverty-statistics-2012-2017.pdf>

⁸Central Bank of the Republic of Kosovo (2019). *Raporti Vjetor 2018*. Prishtina, June 2019. Available at: https://bqk-kos.org/repository/docs/2018/BQK_RV_2018.pdf

Even to date, migration continues to be a phenomenon amongst Kosovars. Over the years, various surveys tended to measure citizens' willingness to migrate. More precisely, according to the "Survey of Awareness of the EU and European Integration in Kosovo" from 2010 to 2014 citizens' willingness to migrate increased from 35 – 43 percent. Moreover, GLPS' previous survey, which took place in 2015, suggested that 37.2 percent of individuals surveyed were willing to migrate. Among the key motives for migration were the lack of hope that the socio-economic and political situation would improve in the near future, the bad economic situation, and a search for a better life. Finding a stable job with an average wage, employment for other members of the family, and visa liberalization were the three main reasons that would convince them not to migrate.⁹

A clearer picture of Kosovars' migration over the years is depicted by Eurostat. The number of migrants towards EU countries from 2015 to 2018 totaled 342,947, 136,160 or roughly 40 percent in 2015 alone. Moreover, according to 2019 country report, the total number of asylum seekers/requests in the EU and other Schengen countries has decreased since 2015. From a total number of 73,240 requests in 2015, it dropped to 5,100 in 2018, roughly a 93 percent decrease. Regarding readmitted citizens, the total number also decreased by approximately 87 percent, from 18,789 in 2015 to 2,395 in 2018. It should be noted that Kosovo has signed readmission agreements with 20 of the aforementioned countries.¹⁰ On a similar note, recent years show an increasing trend of legal migration, where individuals of different backgrounds are receiving working visas, especially in Croatia, Slovenia and Germany. Illustratively, the German Embassy has issued around 13,000 work visas for Kosovars only in 2018.¹¹

Given the economic challenges and the current political uncertainty, this policy analysis aims to update the potential migrant's profile and identify the main characteristics of the citizens willing to migrate. This study is organized as follows: Section II presents the data and descriptive statistics of the survey results. Section III then provides information on the potential migrant's profile and the characteristics of the citizens willing to migrate. It also draws comparisons with the results of the survey conducted in 2015. Section IV concludes and the last section provides a list of recommendations, which aim to inform policymakers on tackling the causes of potential migration in Kosovo.

II. DATA AND DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

This policy analysis uses the data from the survey "Measuring Public Opinion on Migration" conducted during December 2019 by UBO Consulting on behalf of Group for Legal and Political Studies. It encompasses a nationally representative sample of 1069 respondents, spread across the entire territory of Kosovo. The survey consists of 28 questions, which focus on individual and household characteristics as well as perceptions.

The descriptive statistics of the variables/questions used in the survey are depicted on Table 1. More precisely, Prishtina and Prizren have the highest number of respondents with 26.7 and 15.4 percent, respectively; Peja has the lowest (9.5%). Out of 1069 respondents, 54.3

⁹Loxha, A., and Elshani, D. (2015) *Potential Migrant's Profile: Who are the most likely Kosovars willing to migrate?* Group for Legal and Political Studies. Available at: <http://www.legalpoliticalstudies.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/GLPS-Potential-Migrants-Profile-Who-are-the-Kosovars-most-willing-to-migrate.pdf>

¹⁰ European Commission (2019) *Kosovo* 2019 Report*. Brussels, May 2019 Available at: <https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/20190529-kosovo-report.pdf>

¹¹Bota Sot (2019) *Ambasadagjermane: Për 1 vit, 13 mijëvizapunepërshqiptarët e Kosovës*. Prishtina, July 2019. Available at: <https://www.botasot.info/kosova/1116167/ambasada-gjermane-per-1-vit-13-mije-viza-pune-per-shqiptaret-e-kosoves/>

percent of the respondents live in the rural areas and the remaining 45.7 percent in the urban ones. In terms of ethnicity, 92 percent of the respondents are Albanians whereas Serbs and Others are 4 percent each. The respondents are almost equally distributed on gender-basis and the majority of them belong to age groups 25 – 44. Concerning the education levels of the respondents, every second (51.2%) respondent has a secondary education level and a sixth (16.7%) has completed primary education. The majority (25.6%) of the respondents are employed in the private sector, followed by the unemployed looking for a job (17.4%) and housewives (16.7%). With regard to the sector of employment, the majority of respondents belong to the service (28.6%) and trade (27.2%) sector.

On one hand, roughly a third (32.8%) of the respondents receive no monthly income and almost a fourth (23.4%) receive an income ranging from 150 to 300€. On the other hand, the majority of respondents (26.5%) receive a household monthly income ranging from 451 to 600€ followed by those who earn a monthly household income from 301 to 450€ (22.5%). Almost two third (62.4%) of the respondents consider their socio-economic situation as average. Only 23.7 percent of the respondents have received remittances in the last 12 months. Of these, seven in ten (70.1%) have received an average monthly amount of up to €200, and the majority of them received them whenever possible.

Regarding the ownership of assets, 75.5 percent of the respondents own land and real estate, 64.4 percent vehicles, and 15.5 percent of them own livestock. All in all, nearly four (39.2%) in ten respondents are willing to migrate of which two third (66.6%) would consider permanent migration and only one in ten (10.6%) would consider seasonal migration. It must be noted that the ‘willingness to migrate’ shows merely the will to migrate, but cannot in any way be taken as willingness to engage in illegal migration. Therefore, that ‘willingness to migrate’ indicator is not and cannot be associated with illegal migration.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics

Variables	Proportion
- Willingness To Migrate	39.2
Form of Migration	
- Permanent	66.3
- Temporary	23.1
- Seasonal	10.6
Regions	
- Prishtina	26.7
- Mitrovica	13.3
- Prizren	15.4
- Peja	9.5
- Gjilan	10.5
- Ferizaj	10.5
- Gjakova	14.0
Residence	
- Urban	45.7
- Rural	54.3

Gender	
- Male	49.2
- Female	50.8
Perception of Socio-economic Situation	
- Very Bad	1.3
- Bad	7.5
- Medium	62.4
- Good	24.6
- Very Good	4.2
Received Remittances	23.7
Monthly Amount of Remittances Received	
- Up to €200	70.1
- €201 - €400	14.5
- €401 - €600	6.7
- Over €800	8.7
Frequency of remittances received	
- Every month	21.1
- Every 3 months	22.5
- Every 6 months	21.3
- Once a year	8.5
- Whenever possible	26.6
Land and Real Estate Ownership	75.5
Vehicles/ Tractor Ownership	64.4
Livestock Ownership	15.5
Ethnicity	
- Albanian	92.0
- Serb	4.0
- Other	4.0
Age	
- Age 18 - 24	17.7
- Age 25 - 34	24.4
- Age 35 - 44	21.0
- Age 45 -54	15.8
- Age 55- 64	10.7
- 65 and over	10.5
Personal Income	
- Up to €150	17.7

- €151 - €300	23.4
- €301 - €450	11.8
- €451 - €600	5.9
- €601 - €750	1.5
- €751 - €900	0.6
- €901 - €1200	0.5
- Over 1201	0.4
- No income	32.8
- Refused to answer	5.5
Household Income	
- Up to €150	2.7
- €151 - €300	13.9
- €301 - €450	22.5
- €451 - €600	26.5
- €601 - €750	10.8
- €751 - €900	6.2
- €901 - €1200	4.3
- Over 1201	2.2
- No income	1.1
- Refused to answer	9.8
Education	
- Some years of primary education	3.3
- Primary education	16.7
- Some years of secondary education	3.0
- Secondary education	51.2
- Student	6.9
- Bachelor degree	16.2
- Masters or PhD	2.8
Occupation	
- Unemployed - looking for a job	17.4
- Unemployed - not looking for a job	7.9

- Employed in the public sector	8.7
- Employed in the private sector	25.6
- Employed from time to time	4.9
- Retired	11.0
- Household	16.7
- Student/pupil	6.1
- Other	1.8

III. SURVEY RESULTS: POTENTIAL MIGRANT'S PROFILE

The aim of this section is to provide data on the potential migrant's profile by focusing on demographic, household, and, amongst others, regional characteristics, as well as draw comparisons with the results of the previous survey conducted in 2015. The overall percentage of individuals willing to migrate, if given the opportunity, is 39.2, an increase of approximately 5 percent from 2015. These results are worrisome since the willingness is higher now than it was during the largest flux of migration after the war. In both cases, the political uncertainty is evident, with victorious parties failing to form government. Nonetheless, the rationale behind this increase in willingness to migrate might lie in the fact that the results of the last elections gave hope for a change, but the parties' inability to do so has only worsened the situation as citizen's hope is fading away. Moreover, the majority of the individuals willing to migrate would consider permanent migration instead of a temporary or seasonal one.

Among the main reasons for migration are lack of hope that the economic, political, and social situation will improve, bad economic situation, lack of good employment opportunities, as well as inability to find a job. The majority of respondents (90%) blame the government for their need to migrate. These results are quite similar with the ones in 2015, a clear depiction of the failure of the government to do its job and live up to citizens' expectations. The three main reasons that would convince individuals not to migrate are an improvement of the economic situation (70.5%), employment of other members of the household (40.6%), and improvement in the health and education system (37.1%).

Regarding gender, the willingness to migrate is somewhat higher for men, even though women's unemployment rate is higher. This might be due to the pressure put on men by patriarchal societies like Kosovo and the general perception, which unfortunately still persists, that men must be the main breadwinner in the family. In addition, citizens with higher willingness to migrate belong to communities other than Albanian and Serb. Contrary to the results of 2015 where the willingness to migrate was higher among citizens of Mitrovica and Prishtina, the survey shows higher willingness to migrate among individuals living in Gjilan (47.8%) and Peja (47.1%). In addition, residents living in urban areas have a slightly higher willingness to migrate than they rural counterparts do.

Similar to the previous survey and as expected, the willingness to migrate is higher among the youth. Individuals pertaining to young group ages 18 to 24 and 25 to 35 have a higher willingness to migrate, with 60.3 and 46.4 percent, respectively. The staggering 55 percent youth unemployment and dim prospect for improvement provides a straightforward rationale. Along the same line, the results suggest that students (63.1%), the individuals employed from time to time (51.9%), and the unemployed looking for a job (50%) are most willing to migrate. Regarding the

sector of employment, individuals working in the telecommunication, non-governmental organizations, production, and construction sector have a higher willingness to migrate. In other words, individuals with technical or specialized skills are more willing to migrate abroad because they will have better opportunities to put their skills to use.

Moreover, individuals enrolled in university (students), as well as those who finished high school and university tend to have a higher willingness to migrate. These results are somehow in line with the results of 2015. Personal and household income also plays a crucial role in individuals' decision to migrate. As expected, individuals belonging to the poorest groups, i.e. no income or monthly income up to €300, are more willing to migrate. Surprisingly, also individuals with a monthly income from €901 to €1200 have a high willingness to migrate. In terms of household income, the willingness to migrate is also high among individuals with no monthly income or income up to €450.

On a similar note, individuals with a poor perception of their socio-economic situation are more willing to migrate. More precisely, 85.7 percent of individuals who perceive their socio-economic situation as very bad and 57.5 percent of them who recognize it as bad are willing to migrate. The percentage drops as the individuals' perception of their socio-economic situation improves. Contrary to 2015 results, as well as to expectations, the willingness to migrate is higher among individuals who received remittances in the last 12 months. Having said that, individuals who have received remittances each month, as well as monthly amounts of over 800 Euros or below 200 Euros are more willing to migrate. This suggests that despite the importance that remittances play in improving Kosovars' welfare, it is not sufficient to lessen their willingness to migrate. Lastly, people with deeper roots in the form of property are less prone to migrate; only 37.1, 37.7 and 39.2 percent of individuals who own real estate, vehicles, and livestock, respectively, are willing to migrate.

In short, there seems to be two distinct poles of potential migration, as two separate profiles emerge from the study. First and matching expectations, those with scarce income, more often than not unemployed and with limited studies. Second, and more counterintuitively, there is a higher disposition to migrate among young, urban professionals, even for those employed and with a higher than average income. While the explanation for the former is straightforward, a sustained lack of opportunities and better perspectives abroad, it would seem that the latter group is also dissatisfied with their conditions, even when these are objectively better than the norm. That could perhaps be due to a desire of advancement that cannot be satisfied domestically, and would deserve a more in-depth study.

Potential Migrant's Profile 2.0

This infographic uses data from the survey "Measuring Public Opinion on Migration" from December 2019 conducted by Ubo Consulting on behalf of GLPS. It encompasses a nationally representative sample of 1069 respondents, spread across the entire territory of Kosovo.



If you had the opportunity, **would you migrate?**



Since 2015, the overall percentage of individuals willing to migrate if given the opportunity, has increased by approximately **5 percent**.



⊗ Which **form of migration** would you consider?

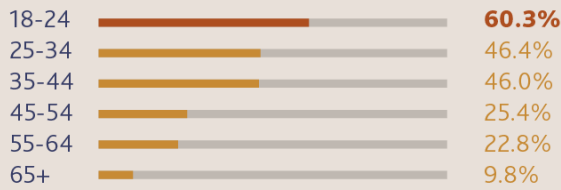


Percentage of individuals willing to migrate according to:

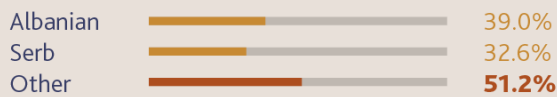
⊗ Gender groups



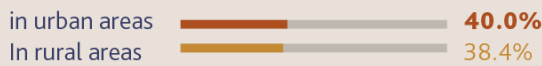
⊗ Age group



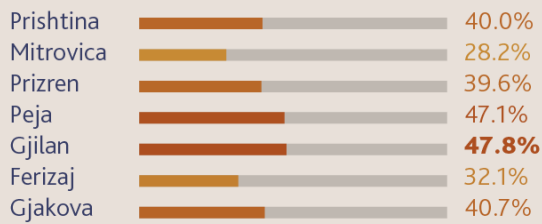
⊗ Ethnic group



⊗ Urban and rural areas

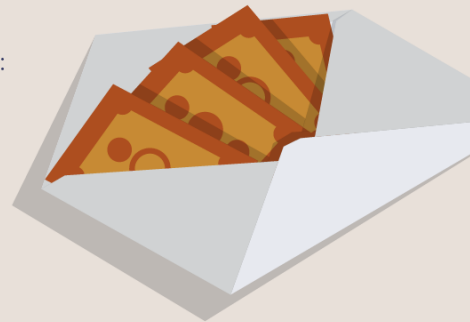


⊗ Regions

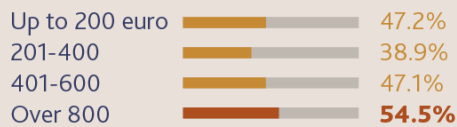


Percentage of individuals willing to migrate according to:

⊗ Remittance receipt (%)



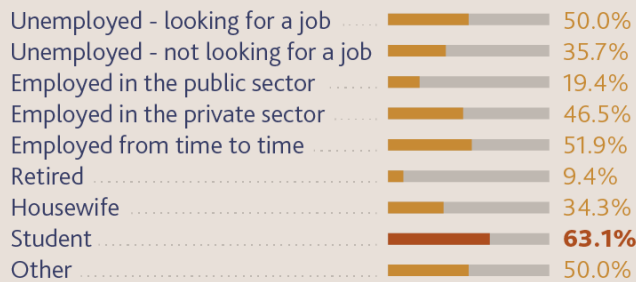
⊗ Monthly remittances



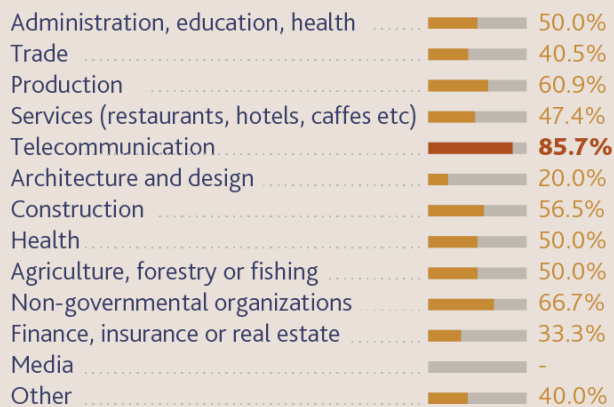
⊗ Frequency of remittance receipt



⊗ Employment



⊗ Sector of employment

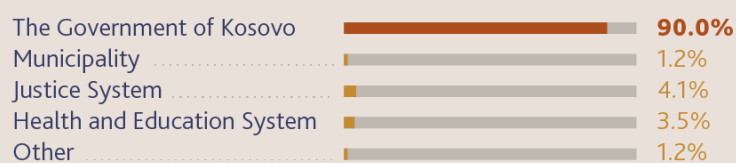


Percentage of individuals willing to migrate according to:

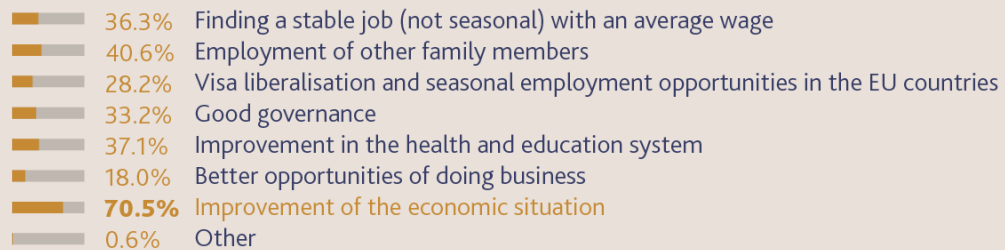
⊗ **Main reason** for migration



⊗ **Institutions responsible** for your willingness to migrate



⊗ Three main reasons that would convince individuals **not to migrate**?



IV. CONCLUSION

Throughout the history and especially after the independence, Kosovo has experienced migration waves with serious implications on its development. Citizens have considered migration as a prominent solution for their poor economic situation. These migration waves have had both an economic and social impact. Given the importance of this issue, Group for Legal and Political Studies has conducted a survey with 1069 individuals, which has been administered by UBO Consulting. The aim of the survey “Measuring Public Opinion on Migration” is to provide an up to date profile of the potential migrant. Since the current economic and political situation as well as the government’s failure to seriously tackle this issue, this policy analysis aims to build a potential migrant’s profile as well as identify the characteristics of the individuals willing to migrate.

The results of the survey suggest that 39.2 percent of the respondents are willing to migrate, which is an increase of approximately 5 percent from 2015. The results also indicate two different profiles of a potential migrant. The first one is a young person (18-24) who is a student or works from time to time with no personal monthly income or income below €300 and a household monthly income of up to €150, who consider his/her socio-economic situation as very bad. The second potential migrant profile is an individual employed in the telecommunication, NGO, production, and construction sector, lives in urban areas with an income between €901 and €1200, and who received remittances over €800 per month.

The three main reasons for migration highlighted by the respondents are lack of hope for a better economic, political, and social situation, bad economic situation, and lack of good employment opportunities. However, they would not be willing to migrate if the current situation changes. In other words, if they can expect an improvement in the economic situation, employment opportunities for other member of the household, and improvement in the health and education system.

Given the large willingness of Kosovars to migrate to EU countries, policymakers should utilize the findings of this analysis to develop complementary policies on migration and development. Their policies should correspond to the causes and characteristics related to their 'willingness' to migrate.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS

This policy analysis, through the survey, managed to identify the profile of the potential migrant. Therefore, based on the results of the survey, the following are some recommended policy directions for the institutions and the decision makers.

- First, the two political parties currently in negotiations for a governing coalition should overcome their differences and urgently form the government. Failure to do so might cause a further resent on citizens; hence, lead to another potential massive flux of migrants from Kosovo.
- Second, the new Government should create the necessary conditions for new employment opportunities, especially for youth and individuals with no or low monthly income, who the analysis suggests are most willing to migrate. Therefore, an imperative priority of the government should be to develop the private sector, as one of the main drivers of economic development, improve business climate in order to attract domestic and foreign direct investment, fight corruption, and establish the rule of law.
- Third, government policies and investment should concentrate on preventing illegal migration with a regional focus. On this note, individuals from the Gjilan and Peja are most willing to migrate; hence, the government should orient seasonal employment opportunities and investment towards these regions and other regions with high willingness to migrate.
- Fourth, since individuals aged 18 – 24 are more willing to migrate, the Government must concentrate on providing special short-term employment start-ups for this group of individuals. Education-related programs that advise and train this category of people on their potential labor market orientation are also highly important.
- Fifth, the Government should constantly focus on the trends of perception among the categories of people as more 'willing to migrate', in order to prevent potential chances of migration and respond accordingly with policy measures and prevention responses.
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Policy Analysis

Policy Analysis in general is a policy advice paper which particularly aims to influence the key means through which policy decisions are made in both local and central levels of government. The purpose of Policy Analysis is to address, more in-depth, a particular problem, to examine the arguments related to a concerned policy, and to analyze the implementation of the policy. Through Policy Analysis, Group for Legal and Political studies seeks to stimulate wider comprehensive debate on the given issue via presenting informed policy-relevant choices and recommendations to the key stakeholders and parties of interest.



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