KOSOVO-WIDE ASSESSMENT OF PERCEPTIONS OF RADICALISATION AT THE COMMUNITY LEVEL
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This report does not represent the views/opinions of the Ministry of Internal Affairs or UNDP.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abbreviations and Acronyms ..................................................................................................................... 6
List of Tables and Figures ............................................................................................................................. 7

## CHAPTER I – INTRODUCTION ................................................................................................................. 8

## CHAPTER II – LITERATURE REVIEW ........................................................................................................ 10

2.1 Introduction .............................................................................................................................................. 10
  2.1.1 Key Definitions ............................................................................................................................... 12
2.2 Why Do Individuals Become Radicalised in Kosovo? ................................................................ 13
  2.2.1 Push factors .................................................................................................................................... 13
  2.2.2 Pull factors ....................................................................................................................................... 16
  2.2.3 The limitations of push and pull factors ............................................................................... 18
2.3 How Do Individuals Become Radicalised in Kosovo? ................................................................. 20
  2.3.1 Radicalisation in educational institutions ............................................................................ 20
  2.3.2 Radicalisation through media, online content, and social media ........................................... 21
2.4 Where Are Individuals Being Radicalised in Kosovo? ................................................................. 22
2.5 Radicalisation and Women: A Cross-Cutting Issue ..................................................................... 23
2.6 Gaps in Previous Research ................................................................................................................... 25

## CHAPTER III – METHODOLOGY .............................................................................................................. 26

3.1 Methodology ........................................................................................................................................... 26
  3.2 Challenges and Limitations ................................................................................................................ 31

## CHAPTER IV – RESULTS .......................................................................................................................... 32

4.1 How Kosovans Understand Radicalisation and Perceive the Radicalisation Process in Their Communities .................................................................................................................................... 32
  4.1.1 Traits associated with a radicalised individual ......................................................................... 32
4.1.2 Existence of radicalised individuals in Kosovo's communities ........................................... 36
4.1.3 The role and importance of religion in society ................................................................. 40
4.1.4 Perceptions of how individuals become radicalised ........................................................ 41
4.1.5 Perceptions of how women become radicalised .............................................................. 43
4.1.6 Hotspots of radicalisation at community level ................................................................. 46
4.1.7 Reactions to the possibility of Kosovan fighters returning to their communities .... 49
4.2 Radicalisation in Educational Institutions ........................................................................ 51
  4.2.1 The extent to which radicalisation is occurring in educational institutions .......... 51
  4.2.2 Radical propaganda in educational institutions ........................................................... 54
4.3 Radicalisation and the Media ............................................................................................ 55
  4.3.1 The role of mainstream media in radicalisation ............................................................. 55
  4.3.2 The role of the internet in radicalisation and self-radicalisation ................................. 56
  4.3.3 Citizens' views on how radicalisation can be prevented by using the internet ..... 57
4.4 Reporting and Preventing ................................................................................................. 58
  4.4.1 How Kosovans would discuss and report instances of radicalisation .................. 58
  4.4.2 The main sources that would help Kosovans in preventing radicalisation .......... 60

CHAPTER V – CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS ....................................................... 62

5.1 Key Findings ....................................................................................................................... 62
  5.1.1 Why Do Individuals Become Radicalised in Kosovo? ............................................... 62
  5.1.2 How Do Individuals Become Radicalised in Kosovo? ................................................. 63
  5.1.3 Where Are Individuals Becoming Radicalised in Kosovo? ....................................... 65
  5.1.4 Reporting and Preventing .......................................................................................... 66
5.2 Conclusion ......................................................................................................................... 67
5.3 Recommendations ............................................................................................................ 67

Appendix 1: Bibliography .......................................................................................................... 71
Appendix 2: Key Survey Responses .......................................................................................... 75
Appendix 3: Survey Questionnaire ......................................................................................... 76
Appendix 4: Focus Group Questionnaires .............................................................................. 81
ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

CVE – Countering Violent Extremism

FTF – Foreign Terrorist Fighter

ISIL/ISIS – Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant

KCSS – Kosovar Centre for Security Studies

KSC – Kosovo Security Council

MASHT – Kosovo’s Ministry of Education, Science and Technology

MoIA – Ministry of Internal Affairs

NGO – Non-governmental organization

OSCE – Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe

UNDP – United Nations Development Programme

USAID – United States Agency for International Development
LIST OF TABLES AND FIGURES

Table 1: Demographic information of survey respondents ................................................................. 28
Table 2: Margins of error ........................................................................................................................ 29
Figure 1: Traits Kosovans associate with radicalisation (Q1.1) .............................................................. 34
Figure 2: Traits Kosovans associate with radicalisation (Q1.1, by gender) ........................................... 35
Figure 3: Is radicalisation a risk? (Q2) ..................................................................................................... 35
Figure 4: Is radicalisation a risk? (Q2, by region) ................................................................................... 36
Figure 5: Are radicalised individuals present in Kosovo's communities? (Q2.1) ................................. 37
Figure 6: Why Kosovans believe there are radicalised individuals in their communities (Q2.1.1) .... 38
Figure 7: Why Kosovans believe there are radicalised individuals in their communities (Q2.1.1, by religion) ......................................................................................................................................................... 38
Figure 8: Radicalisation among Kosovans' social circles (Q2.5) .............................................................. 39
Figure 9: Foreign fighters from respondents' communities (Q2.6a) ........................................................ 39
Figure 10: The rising importance of religion in Kosovo (Q2.1.2) ............................................................ 40
Figure 11: Pathways to radicalisation (Q2.2) .......................................................................................... 41
Figure 12: The radicalisation of women (Q2.3) ....................................................................................... 44
Figure 13: Specific sites of radicalisation in Kosovan communities (Q2.4) ............................................. 47
Figure 14: Specific hotspots of radicalisation in Kosovan communities (Q2.4, if yes) ......................... 47
Figure 15: Specific hotspots of radicalisation in Kosovan communities (Q2.4, if yes, by gender) .. 48
Figure 16: Specific hotspots of radicalisation in Kosovan communities (Q2.4, if yes, by region) .. 48
Figure 17: Radicalisation in Kosovan educational institutions (Q3.1a) ................................................. 51
Figure 18: Educational leaders demonstrating traits of radicalisation (Q1.2) ....................................... 52
Figure 19: Educational leaders demonstrating traits of radicalisation (Q1.2, if yes) ............................ 53
Figure 20: Sources of radical propaganda and intolerant materials in Kosovo's educational institutions (Q3.1b, if yes) ............................................................................................................................................. 54
Figure 21: Media's role in radicalisation (Q6) .......................................................................................... 55
Figure 22: Internet's role in radicalisation (Q5) ...................................................................................... 56
Figure 23: Online outlets used in self-radicalisation (Q5.1) .................................................................... 57
Figure 24: How Kosovans would respond to radicalisation in their social circles (Q7.1) ............... 58
Figure 25: How Kosovans would respond to radicalisation in their social circles (Q7.1, by religion) ......................................................................................................................................................... 59
Figure 26: Which hotlines Kosovans might turn to in cases of radicalisation (Q7.2, if other) ....... 60
Figure 27: Groups and institutions that help prevent radicalisation (Q4.1) ........................................... 60
Table 3: Key survey responses and margins of error (by percent) ...................................................... 75
CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

Though violent attacks by violent extremists have fortunately been absent in Kosovo, like other areas in the Western Balkan region, it has nevertheless significantly experienced the trend of foreign fighters. These fighters have flowed to Syria and Iraq to enlist in groups such as the al-Qaeda-linked Jabhat al-Nusra (which now refers to itself as Jabhat Fateh al-Sham) and the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/ISIS). According to the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MoIA), Kosovo Police have identified 316 Kosovans—including two suicide bombers, 44 women and 28 children—who have travelled abroad to join ISIS, al-Nusra, and Ahrar al-Sham. Like other actors, Kosovo has acted to stem this flow of recruits.

Researchers, practitioners, and the government have, in turn, sought to understand the appeal of such groups in particular, and of violent extremism in general, with several research projects having been conducted in Kosovo as well as the broader Western Balkan region. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has supported the development of countering violent extremism (CVE) assessment guidelines, which guided the Comprehensive Assessment to Counter Violent Radicalisation in Kosovo—in close collaboration with Kosovo’s government. This assessment formed the baseline for the “Strategy Document on the Prevention of Violent Extremism and Radicalisation Leading to Terrorism 2015-2020” which

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1 For definitions of key terms, such as violent extremism, see Chapter II – Literature Review.
2 The use of these terms deserves a brief explanation. Though Jabhat al-Nusra changed its name to Jabhat Fateh al-Sham in July 2016, claiming to officially split from al-Qaeda, this name change has not resulted in any shift in tactics or ideology. This document will also use the more widely used term ISIS, rather than ISIL, as it is the preferred term for the organization in Kosovo.
followed an analysis of the situation in 2015; the extent of the threat and problem within Kosovo; motives of extremism; push and pull factors; strategic objectives for early identification, prevention, intervention and de-radicalisation.

However, due to gaps in the initial research and a changing context, there is a need for more in-depth research on assessing and understanding perceptions towards radicalisation Kosovo-wide. Indeed, the RESOLVE Network highlighted Kosovo as one of the ten areas where CVE research is most critically needed.4 This research is aimed at gathering new perspectives and understanding identified factors that act as drivers of radicalisation in Kosovo – especially at the local level.

Commissioned by the UNDP and the MoIA, this research has the explicit aim of assessing (1) perceptions of radicalisation at the community-level across Kosovo, (2) the perceived role of peers, educational institutions, religious leaders, teachers and communities, as well as (3) the perceived role and impact of media, the internet, and social media on recruitment and radicalisation in Kosovo. Its goal is to provide insights that could further complement Kosovo’s national strategy and its institutions in countering violent extremism.

In its essence, this research seeks to understand and, where possible, provide insight regarding perceptions to the following questions at community level:

- **What motivates a person in Kosovo to embrace and support extreme ideologies, or participate in such extreme forms of violence, especially in a foreign country?**

- **How are these motivations shaped by factors at the local level in Kosovo-wide communities?**

- **What are the specific processes that facilitate an individual’s connection to, affiliation towards, and engagement with an extremist ideology and violent extremist groups?**

These insights may be used to inform measures that may help communities identify early on, prevent, or potentially even counter-act processes before resulting in an individual’s radicalisation. However, it is important to recognise that though the resurgence of interest in understanding radicalisation and combating violent extremism at the community level was motivated by the rise of groups like al-Qaeda and ISIS, violent extremism is not limited to those attempting to justify their extreme views and/or violent acts with Islam. Indeed, violent extremism can be motivated by a variety of ideologies, creeds, and philosophies.

Although the Kosovan government’s strategy aims at tackling all forms of violent extremism, including that based on nationalism, one of the most problematic issues is that of religious violent extremism, hence the literature review below and the rest of this report largely focuses on this issue.

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2.1 INTRODUCTION

A review of recent research on the drivers of radicalisation and violent extremism in Kosovo and other Western Balkan countries reveals an important first insight: there is no consistent “profile” of a violent extremist in Kosovo. For example, while some researchers have highlighted low education, underemployment and unemployment (though these are two separate conditions, in both cases, the individuals in question may not be able to provide for their families’ needs) as factors common among those who have joined violent extremist groups, these factors also appear to be largely representative of the general population. Kosovo’s recruits are male and female, married and single, adults and youth, educated and uneducated, employed and unemployed, and are criminals as well as those who have no criminal records. This lack of a consistent single profile is shared across different jurisdictions and is not particular to Kosovo.

However, the lack of a profile does not diminish the importance of research to understand the various components and individual drivers towards radicalisation. On the contrary, discovering prominent factors that significantly contribute to the radicalisation of individuals can assist in the design and targeting of CVE programming that can respond to them, preventing and even countering the risks and trends of

5 For a list of documents consulted, see Appendix 1.
radicalisation. Therefore, the rest of this review of existing literature on the subject is arranged according to the following key research questions: (1) Where are individuals being radicalised in Kosovo? (2) Why do individuals become radicalised in Kosovo? and (3) How do individuals become radicalised in Kosovo?

In addition, this literature review looks at previous research on radicalisation, including comparisons with countries in the region where applicable, the role of religious institutions in radicalisation and in its prevention, the role of media and social media, and the role of women in being both radicalised and radicalisers, as well as the gender gap in Kosovo's radicalisation research. The literature review concludes with other gaps identified in existing research.

Though this literature review aims to understand radicalisation in Kosovo, it will sometimes leverage regional research on the issue to understand the phenomenon. This is because of a second insight gleaned from the review: studies and research from the Western Balkan region can inform researchers’ and practitioners' understandings of the issue of radicalisation in Kosovo.

This is as a result of the comparability between the countries of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, and Macedonia, discussed below. While there are some substantial differences, this comparability mainly results from three shared factors: (1) political and societal conditions; (2) religious, ethnic, and linguistic traits (the majority of Western Balkan recruits to ISIS and al-Nusra are ethnic Albanians from Albania, Kosovo, and Macedonia8); and (3) the fact that most Western Balkan recruits end up in the same violent extremist organizations. These factors are important to note because they allow for similar recruitment patterns and enable networks of recruiters to target a larger recruitment pool with similar rhetoric, using the same language, in order to bring recruits to the same place. Indeed, many recruits to either al-Nusra or ISIS even end up in the very same units, as both extremist armed groups have formations based on ethnicity or language (such as Chechens, Uzbeks, Albanians, etc.)— a testament to the effectiveness of their appeal and recruitment efforts.9

While these similarities with other Western Balkan countries cannot replace Kosovo-specific research, their findings might be able to guide research on Kosovo when domestic gaps are identified or bolster correlated findings uncovered in Kosovo. These insights are included below.

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8 Official figures allege that 798 people from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, and Macedonia have travelled to join al-Nusra or ISIL. Roughly 500 of those are ethnic Albanians. These numbers may be larger, as not all figures include women and children who may not be considered as “fighters” directly engaging in hostilities. For example, the number of 232 Kosovans grows to 314 by another estimate which includes 44 women and 28 children. See The Soufan Group, “Foreign Fighters: An Updated Assessment of the Flow of Foreign Fighters into Syria and Iraq” (The Soufan Group, December 2015), http://soufangroup.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/TSG_ForeignFightersUpdate_FINAL3.pdf; Ebi Spahiu, “Ethnic Albanian Foreign Fighters and the Islamic State,” Terrorism Monitor 13, no. 10 (May 15, 2015); Adrian Shtuni, “Ethnic Albanian Foreign Fighters in Iraq and Syria,” CTC Sentinel 8, no. 4 (April 2015): 11–14; and Gall, “How Kosovo Was Turned Into Fertile Ground for ISIS.”

2.1.1 Key Definitions

This research is built on the following definitions set forth by the Government of Kosovo:

**Extreme, Extremism:** might be defined only in relation to a broader ideology that acts, e.g. in the context of extreme nationalism, extreme environmentalism, and religious extremism. The defining feature of extremism is the rejection of one or more basic principles of its main ideology. A nationalist which considers members of other nations to be inferior, or rejects the possibility of coexistence, or believes that others should be deprived of their rights, represents an extreme nationalist. A religious believer who condemns the leaders or the majority of the members of his own religion is an extremist. Extremists are not necessarily violent.

**Violent extremism:** Extremism which involves the use of violence; including but not limited to terrorism. For example, violent extremists who attack police or army members, or who participate in war, usually are not terrorists.

**Terrorism:** use of violence with the purpose of causing terror over the civilian population. Terrorism is a special type of violent extremism.\(^\text{10}\)

In addition, radicalisation is defined as:

a process by which an individual or group comes to adopt increasingly extreme political, social, or religious ideals and aspirations that reject or undermine the status quo or undermine contemporary ideas and expressions of freedom of choice.\(^\text{11}\)

The definition of **self-radicalisation**, therefore, is when someone adopts increasingly extreme political, social, or religious ideals and aspirations that reject or undermine the status quo or undermine contemporary ideas and expressions of freedom of choice without necessarily joining an established radical group but by being influenced by its ideology and messages.

Finally, the field of practice called **countering violent extremism (CVE)** is defined as non-coercive efforts to prevent or respond to the problem of violent extremism, such as preventing or intervening in the radicalisation process. CVE also includes efforts to deradicalise or rehabilitate those who have already decided to support or engage in violent extremism. This differs from **counterterrorism**, which focuses on only one symptom of violent extremism, that of terrorism, and traditionally includes a more securitised or coercive approach, such as police and military operations, intelligence gathering, arrests, and criminal prosecution. While CVE may be performed by a variety of actors, including civil society organisations, educational institutions, and religious leaders, some CVE efforts may need to work closely with security services, such as when individuals are referred to the police out of concerns for public safety or when such individuals are in prison or other correctional processes (such as parole or probation).

These definitions helped to shape and guide the research, maintain consistency with previous research, and minimize variation.

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2.2 WHY DO INDIVIDUALS BECOME RADICALISED IN KOSOVO?

2.2.1 Push factors

The radicalisation process in Kosovo is often misunderstood or poorly framed, with many people (including family members, religious figures, and even government counter-terrorism officials) referring to those who joined violent extremist groups like ISIS as “victims” or “brainwashed.” Though recruits to violent extremist organisations can certainly be subjected to manipulation, deception, or even coercion throughout the radicalisation and recruitment processes, such terminology denies the agency of individuals as well as the fact that the radicalisation process can sometimes be self-driven. Therefore, this report explores those factors which “drive” or encourage a person to become a violent extremist.

In seeking to explain the drivers and causes of radicalisation in Kosovo, this report employs the UNDP’s conceptual framework, which is organised along eight drivers that can lead to radicalisation and even violent extremist acts:

1. The role and impact of global politics;
2. Economic exclusion and limited opportunities for upward mobility;
3. Political exclusion and shrinking civic space;
4. Inequality, injustice, corruption and the violation of human rights;
5. Disenchantment with socio-economic and political systems;
6. Rejection of growing diversity in society;
7. Weak state capacity and failing security; and
8. A changing global culture and banalisation of violence in media and entertainment.13

These are also referred to as push factors, and can be considered as negative aspects of an environment that creates vulnerabilities and ‘push’ vulnerable individuals towards radicalisation and violent extremism. In addition to the push factors listed above, the UNDP’s framework also highlights that people get pulled into radical and ultimately violent movements through considered manipulation and accompanying socialization processes. [These processes happen] via media, schools, family, religious cultural organisations and are enabled by personal, emotional or psychological factors such as alienation, searching for an identity, a sense of injustice, loss of a family members, previous mistreatment or imprisonment, etc. Also when socialisation processes that aim to foster social cohesion fail, individuals become more vulnerable and may be attracted to more radical and violent beliefs and attitudes.14

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14 Ibid., 12.
The majority of UNDP’s eight drivers and subsequent analysis of further push factors also resonate with those identified and included in the government’s Strategy document.\textsuperscript{15}

Of interest to note is that, like the UNDP, the United States Agency for International Development’s (USAID) 2015 risk assessment of Kosovo’s violent extremism also recognises limited education alongside state capacity and corruption as two critical push factors towards radicalisation and violent extremism. USAID’s research argues that several of the Kosovans interviewed for the report considered the education system weak, lacking in critical and analytical skills, and one that “favours simple and un-critical acceptance of facts when presented by a perceived authority [which] would seem to make individuals vulnerable to falling prey to slick propaganda of a black and white worldwide view of groups like ISIL.”\textsuperscript{16}

However, the latter statement is difficult to measure. Regarding state capacity and corruption, most of those interviewed in Kosovo by USAID were of the opinion that corruption is still endemic and that the state continued to prove deficient in serving its citizens, their progress and interests. The only exception here was Kosovo’s Police force, which is well-respected and has received continued praise by citizens.\textsuperscript{17}

Interestingly, USAID’s report also lists two further push factors in the drivers to radicalisation and violent extremism: (1) frustrated expectations following the country’s independence, including the lack of full integration within the international community (despite being recognised by a little over 100 countries, travel restrictions within the region, among the Schengen countries, and further afield are in place, and a slow economic development has ensued); and (2) perceptions that “the international system is fundamentally unfair and hostile to Muslim societies,” alongside a natural affinity and sympathy towards Muslims suffering in other countries, including Syria.\textsuperscript{18}

Overall, the body of research on the drivers of vulnerability to violent extremism in Kosovo and other Western Balkan countries reveal that all of the UNDP’s eight drivers are present in the region: global politics, economic and political exclusion, corruption and the violation of human rights, socio-economic and political disenchantment, the rejection of multiculturalism, insecurity and weak governance; and the banalisation of violence in media and entertainment.\textsuperscript{19} The CVE strategy from the Office of the Prime Minister of Kosovo stressed that the two main push factors are “the essential and structural factors such as the economic and social challenges/weaknesses and inadequate institutional capacity and their integrity.”\textsuperscript{20}

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{17} Ibid., 5.
\item \textsuperscript{18} Ibid., 3, 5.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
Last, but not least, the relevant literature is replete with discussions on the cleavages between Kosovo and the region’s mainstream Islamic communities (largely adherents to the Hanafi school of jurisprudence ([fiqh]) and more observant forms of Islamic practice (such as Wahhabism, introduced through the 1990s via foreign-educated preachers and foreign charities—many of which helped rebuild the destroyed or shuttered mosques of the region) as an important push factor and group dynamic in Kosovo.\(^{21}\) This schism is exacerbated by the fact that Kosovo – like each country in the Western Balkans – has a formal institution that administers religious practice within its borders.\(^{22}\)

New or unofficial mosques are outside of formal recognition and the oversight of these Islamic community institutions. In a limited number of these mosques, some imams have advocated for supporting the opposition to Syria’s President Bashar al-Assad. In others, “radical” imams enter formalized mosques following prayers and lecture to small groups of male attendees on the side-lines.\(^{23}\) These rival teachings, spaces, and even mosques have generated polarized Islamic communities in Kosovo and the countries in question.

Cleavages also exist on societal and even familial levels, with those Muslims who embrace more observant or conservative forms of Islam feeling alienated as families “discourage the practice of religion” altogether.\(^{24}\) Such feelings of rootlessness and marginalization may contribute to funnelling individuals to embrace more accepting – in these cases, more conservative – segments of Islamic society. And since some recruiters operate in these marginalized spaces, this may result in a greater vulnerability to the appeal of violent extremism.

However, push factors by themselves are insufficient to explain the process of radicalisation. These so-called “root causes” may also be accompanied by certain \textbf{group dynamics and relationships} (such as peer pressure, kinship, and a group’s framing of a conflict) which take these grievances and “give extremism coherence, force, shape and appeal.”\(^{25}\) Finally, groups or individuals may be drawn to particular groups or ideologies because of \textbf{pull factors}, which are the “positive characteristics and benefits of an extremist organisation that ‘pull’ vulnerable individuals to join.”\(^{26}\) Pull factors include, but are not limited to, things such as the appeal of a specific leader, cause, or ideology or things such as economic or material incentives.

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\(^{22}\) The communities are often identified by the following acronyms: Albania (KMSH), Bosnia (IZ BiH), Kosovo (BIK), and Macedonia (IVZ).

\(^{23}\) Selimi and Stojkovski, “Assessment of Macedonia’s Efforts in Countering Violent Extremism,” 54.

\(^{24}\) Kursani, “Report Inquiring into the Causes and Consequences of Kosovo Citizens’ Involvement as Foreign Fighters in Syria and Iraq,” 68, 76.


\(^{26}\) Muhsin Hassan, “Understanding Drivers of Violent Extremism: The Case of Al-Shabab and Somali Youth” (CTC Sentinel, August 23, 2012).
2.2.2 Pull factors

Previous assessments have identified a number of pull factors specific to Kosovo. Importantly, Kosovo’s government finds that doing something meaningful, even at great personal cost, is at times a more important pull factor than the prospect of financial gain. Active recruitment networks, the role of the internet, media and social media have also been identified as pull factors by Kosovo’s government and USAID’s research. Additionally, USAID also points out that a conscious identity search (both in terms of seeking an identity, and the history of the ethnic Albanian peoples) alongside adventure-seeking play an additional role in making Kosovans susceptible to radical propaganda and recruitment by violent extremist groups.

As the next generation to follow those who fought for Kosovo’s independence from Serbia, there may be a desire to be part of a similar cause. Kosovan Albanian identity is still one that has been shaped by war and resistance to oppression… Warfare is closely tied to Kosovan Albanian masculine identity. The humdrum of daily life is lacklustre in comparison to the exploits of the previous generation, stories which are familiar to every Kosovan, and the stories making up Albanian folklore.

To some, this might be very compelling. Refusing to acknowledge such appeal and instead framing radicalisation as something imposed or simply coerced upon a person blinds researchers, practitioners, and the public to avenues of radicalisation which, if understood, may inform interventions that could prevent or counter radicalisation.

Accordingly, the Syrian conflict has been a particularly effective motivating factor in driving violent extremism. Indeed, a number of respondents to USAID’s research spoke of Kosovans’ natural motivation to want to help Syrian Muslims under attack and the need to intervene to help and protect Syrians stemming from Kosovans’ experience of a similar suffering in their recent past. “This support for the victims of the Syrian conflict was cited as the motivation for some of the FTFs [foreign terrorist fighters] who went to fight in Syria, including those who went over initially as non-combatants.”

Lavdrim Muhaxheri, in Kosovo, called on all Albanian-speaking Muslims to join ISIS because “they [pro-Assad forces and ISIS’s other enemies] are raping our Muslim sisters, they are beheading our children in their cradles, they are burning our houses, and you are sleeping and listening to imams who are saying that we need only financial aid. No we don’t need financial aid, we need man [sic] to fight.” Such rhetoric manipulates not only the gendered norms of male protection but also Islamic norms of jihad, with al-Qaeda and ISIS recruiters claiming that joining them to defend fellow Muslims is a personal religious obligation of every Muslim—including women and

29 Ibid.
30 Ibid., 5. This support for the victims of the Syrian conflict was cited as the motivation for some of the FTFs, including those who went over initially as non-combatants.
children. 32 Faik Uksmajli, whose two sons and daughter travelled to Syria, said that this was a big factor of his children’s radicalisation, reporting that his son Arbnor “talked endlessly of Sham [the greater Syrian region].” 33 The change he witnessed in his children was stark: “I couldn’t recognise my children. They talked about helping their brothers in Syria and said real Muslims were fully committed to the religion. But I was most concerned when they said Camp Bondsteel should be bombed.” 34

New York Times’ Carlotta Gall writes that Zekirja Qazimi, who was given a 10-year prison sentence in Kosovo, organised a summer camp for his young followers. “It is obligated for every Muslim to participate in jihad,” he told them in a videotaped talk. “The Prophet Muhammad says that if someone has a chance to take part in jihad and doesn’t, he will die with great sins,” he said in another recording. 35 The Kosovar Centre for Security Studies’ recent report further argued that, “Worshipers like the ones potentially following Qazimi can be young but very energetic, expressive and ready to take action, and that rhetoric against Shi’ia Muslims can be especially motivating for them to go to Syria and fight the ‘Shi’ia regime’ of Bashar al Assad.” 36 The same report includes a former fighter in Syria from Kaçanik/Kačanik, Kosovo saying he had excessive free time which he spent browsing the internet where he came across videos of Assad’s crimes and atrocities against children in Syria which left him feeling that he had to take action. 37

The trajectory followed above suggests a link between unemployment and lack of opportunities coupled with the role of the internet as drivers to radicalisation and avenues for self-radicalisation. This deduction is supported by KSC’s report, which identifies persons at risk of radicalisation as having the following shared characteristics: Unemployed youth with a low level of education and lacking in opportunities for the future who face economic, social and familial hardship, and who fall prey to radical preachers propagating extremist views. They live in the same communities from where other Kosovan youth have travelled to fight in Syria and Iraq and where the internet has played a critical role in their indoctrination and recruitment. 38

This is in line with Kosovo’s further security assessments. Even the head of the Counter Terrorism Department of the Kosovo Police Service commented that while they had been tracking a rise in extremism from 2006 until about 2016, the crisis in Syria was “a trigger for recruitment to support extremist activities.” 39 The draw of “defending” fellow Muslims is paired with the perception that travelling to Syria and Iraq helps the building of ISIS’s so-called “caliphate.” Similarly, Central Asians who never joined the longer-established Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan or the Taliban have travelled to Syria.

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33 Xharra, “Few but Fanatical – the Kosovo Women Who Go Over to ISIS.”
34 Ibid.
35 Gall, “How Kosovo Was Turned Into Fertile Ground for ISIS.”
37 Ibid., 83.
because they “perceive ISIS as the creator of a novel and ordained political order.” While the Taliban also promised a theocracy, ISIS’s claim of a caliphate was somehow more compelling. This might help to explain why “root causes” have not been a satisfactory explanation of the sudden spike in Kosovans’ embracing violent extremism. Rather, research must also consider the pull factors of specific violent extremist groups like ISIS.

### 2.2.3 The limitations of push and pull factors

However, the issues above are acknowledged as being longstanding problems, so they therefore fall short of being able to explain the sudden rise of support for violent extremism in Kosovo. For example, although radical Kosovan imam Shukri Aliu allegedly began to adopt his extreme beliefs in the late 1990s, he only appears to have engaged with extreme violence with the advent of ISIS.

So if these factors of vulnerability and even ideology have been present for decades in Kosovo, further research is needed on the specific “triggers” that actually began to channel groups and individuals to support or engage in violent extremism. Understanding the conflict in Syria and the rise of ISIS as a main contemporary trigger, it becomes clearer how the above drivers can be “activated” and made more relevant in identifying patterns and dynamics of radicalisation. However, this cautions experts and CVE practitioners to be conscious of how similar trigger events (either in a person or a group’s experience or on the global stage) can be identified and responded to in a proactive approach with the aim of heading off radicalisation trends before they become a larger problem.

Through understanding these drivers to violent extremism, practitioners will be better equipped to counter them and build community resilience to the appeal of violent extremism, perhaps by focusing on strengthening local capacities to lead these efforts themselves. By identifying the factors at play in Kosovo, CVE efforts can be the most effective at designing programming and strategies to counteract the flow of fighters to foreign conflicts and the potential support for domestic violent extremist groups.

MI5’s briefing note, “Understanding Radicalisation and Violent Extremism in the UK”—based on hundreds of case studies of those involved in terrorism in/from the UK—clearly highlighted and concluded, “There is no single pathway to extremism. All had taken strikingly different journeys to violent extremist activity.” However, the report did point out that “most individuals in the sample had some vulnerability in their background that made them receptive to extremist ideology.”

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42 UNDP, “Preventing Violent Extremism through Inclusive Development and the Promotion of Tolerance and Respect for Diversity,” 10.
44 Ibid.
MI5’s analysts identified key vulnerabilities such as “the experience of migrating to Britain and facing marginalisation and racism; the failure of those with degrees to achieve anything but low-grade jobs; a serious criminal past; travel abroad for up to six months at a time and contact with extremist networks overseas; and religious naivety.”

For most, “radicalisation takes months or years with no one becoming a terrorist overnight, and it is most often driven by contact with others.” Additionally, in remarks at the 2015 Summit on Countering Violent Extremism, former U.S. President Barack Obama warned that one cannotProfile a violent extremist, so there is no way to predict who will become radicalised. It is not unique to one group, one ideology or one period of time.

These gaps in understanding and an inability to generate a predictive “profile” exist because:

- an emphasis on the so-called ‘root causes’ of [violent extremism] usually overstates the role of push factors [...] underestimates the potentially critical role played by [...] pull factors [...] and more generally, estimates framed in terms of root causes under-estimate the role of human agency. Contextual factors do matter; they may create grievances and opportunities for violence; but the grievances and opportunities in question may not actually lead to violence in the absence of political entrepreneurs, ideologues, and/or organizations that can frame and channel the relevant grievances in violent directions, and that can make the most of the opportunities for violence with which a particular setting presents them.

Instead, John Horgan suggests that the “elusive search for the root causes of [violent extremism] should give way to efforts to detect routes to extremism, and that instead of trying to identify profiles, [violent extremism] experts ought to concentrate on the pathways to violence.” Therefore, the following section will seek to explore how radicalisation occurs in Kosovo.

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45 Ibid.
46 Ibid.
49 Ibid., 61.
2.3 HOW DO INDIVIDUALS BECOME RADICALISED IN KOSOVO?

Research on the particular pathways of radicalisation in Kosovo is minimal in the literature. However, two main potential avenues have been discussed: educational institutions, and through various forms of media.

2.3.1 Radicalisation in educational institutions

The understanding of how radicalisation and recruitment may occur in Kosovo’s educational institutions is, unfortunately, under-researched. However, recent reports from the region can possibly help illuminate pathways which are potentially comparable to Kosovo and guide this research. For example, focus group discussions among ethnic Albanian youth in Macedonia revealed that “religious pamphlets were being illegally distributed in Macedonian schools, discouraging the ‘un-Islamic’ celebrations of the New Year or prom.”

It further highlights that, “Some educators may have been selecting certain students and encouraging them to engage in more religious practice.”

In addition, some European institutions have launched calls for proposals for CVE projects in Albanian schools, suggesting that they have been identified as potential “sensitive areas where radicalisation is more eager to spread.”

One apparently ongoing project entitled, “Fighting Bullying and Extremism in the Education System in Albania,” seems to suggest that they believe that the isolation or alienation brought about by bullying may contribute to vulnerability to radicalisation. Indeed, social and individual isolation have been identified as potential drivers of radicalisation in Kosovo, as well as part of the radicalisation process.

This includes alienation from family members or schoolmates when an individual begins to practice Islam, or more observant or conservative forms of it. In fact, a number of dormitories in central Prishtina/Priština, Kosovo that specialised in hosting such students and other urban youth were frequently the settings of lectures by radical imams from Macedonia. This remains a critical avenue for continued research in Kosovo.

50 Selimi and Stojkovski, “Assessment of Macedonia’s Efforts in Countering Violent Extremism,” 60.
51 Ibid., 60.
54 UNDP, “Preventing Violent Extremism through Inclusive Development and the Promotion of Tolerance and Respect for Diversity,” 16-17.
The gap of knowledge and practice regarding how radicalisation is being addressed at educational institutions across Kosovo is also highlighted by the government. KSC’s yearly report recommends heightened input and cooperation by Kosovo’s Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MASHT) in activities for the prevention of radicalisation and the creation of multidisciplinary working groups to address the topic of violent radicalisation in school curricula.56

2.3.2 Radicalisation through media, online content, and social media

Though the flow of Kosovans and others from the Western Balkans started early in the Syrian crisis, the issue only began to receive extensive coverage in 2012. This kept the issue out of the national spotlight while the recruitment process mushroomed. Community resilience to the narratives and appeal of extremist groups was hindered without prominent national debates with experts, academics, religious leaders, and politicians regarding this issue.57 Furthermore, portrayals of Muslims in “Islamophobic” or discriminatory ways by the media in Western Balkan countries can contribute to marginalization, potentially facilitating the radicalisation process.58

Alternatively, the body of research evaluated here extensively discusses the role of online and social media in facilitating radicalisation, allowing groups like al-Nusra and ISIS to directly appeal to Muslims in the Western Balkans in their own language. Online communications have helped facilitate self-radicalisation, allowing interested participants to make connections with members of these groups to help them gain entry to Syria and Iraq and the groups themselves.

KSC has identified that radical religious propaganda is being disseminated primarily online.59 This includes Albanian translations of radical books and other literature propagating violent extremism through teuhid.net, www.scribd.com and tens of similar portals.60 Other sources in foreign languages that spread both Islamic and non-Islamic extremist propaganda – from where Kosovan radicals draw inspiration and influence – include links, blogs, and various social media accounts, as well as communications and dissemination apps in English, Arabic and Turkish.61 KSC’s report lists Albanian-language portals that propagate Islamic extremism as well as social media platforms where users have been found propagating Islamic extremism, including “various Twitter, Facebook, Scribd accounts, whereas communication [applications] include Viber, WhatsApp, Telegram and others.”62

60 Ibid., 6.
61 Ibid.
62 Ibid.
2.4 WHERE ARE INDIVIDUALS BEING RADICALISED IN KOSOVO?

Radicalisation may, at times, be concentrated in specific geographical areas called hotspots and a review of existing literature on Kosovo suggests that these exist in the country. For example, the USAID risk assessment of Kosovo’s violent extremism suggested that “Kaçanik/Kačanik, Mitrovicë/Mitrovica, Vushtrri/Vučitrn, Gjilan/Gnjilane, Hani i Elezit/Elez Han, and Ferizaj/Uroševac” would top the list, whereas Kosovo’s three largest cities of Prishtina/Priština, Prizren, and Pejë/Peć were not suggested as hotspots.63

Radicalisation hotspots listed in the Kosovo Security Council’s (KSC) yearly CVE report also correlate to those by USAID. It includes the towns of Kaçanik/Kačanik and Hani i Elizit/Elez Han (including adjacent villages) in the region of Ferizaj/Uroševac, stipulates that tens of fighters from the region of Gjilan/Gnjilane are present in Iraq and Syria, and also lists the region of Mitrovicë/Mitrovica including its capital city of the same name and some of its villages, the town of Skënderaj/Srbica and some of its villages, as well as the city of Vushtrri/Vučitrn and some of its villages as hotspots of radicalisation in Kosovo.64

Importantly, the Kosovan government highlights the additional risk of violent extremism in North Kosovo among ethnic Serbian Kosovans.65 For this unique risk, the government cautions about the potential of Serbian extremist groups funded by the activities of criminal networks, organised crime and illegal structures for their operations to commit “various acts of violence against [Kosovan citizens of Albanian ethnicity], institutions as well as local and international presence in [the north] of the country.”66


65 Ibid., 10, 16.

2.5 RADICALISATION AND WOMEN: A CROSS-CUTTING ISSUE

Another overlooked and cross-cutting facet of radicalisation regards the role of women in radicalisation in Kosovo and the radicalisation of women themselves. Though historical, security-inspired approaches downplay women’s potential to engage in extreme forms of violence, ISIS has become the first Islamic-branded violent extremist organization to overtly prioritize the recruitment of women. This has proven to be a powerful pull factor, providing a sustained pathway to violent extremism for Kosovan women. Indeed, an estimated 10-15% of ISIS’s foreign recruits are women. This ratio is consistent for Kosovo, with 14% of the country’s foreign recruits being women (including both voluntary and coerced). Whilst groups like al-Nusra and ISIS have kept women from participating in hostilities thus far, this is likely to change as the latter group loses territory and foreign women recruits are unable to flee. For example, the Islamic State of Iraq – the predecessor organization of ISIS – began using female suicide bombers heavily as its strongholds, especially in Diyala province, were beset.67

According to a local journalist’s article focusing on Kosovo’s women who travel to ISIS, “In an interview with local media, the father of an 18-year old girl from Kumanovo who went to Syria in 2015 and reportedly married someone after arriving there, said that his daughter used to speak with a girl from Kosovo before radicalising.”68 It adds that, “Videos of war propaganda were also found on her computer. Fellow students further reported that she used to watch these videos also when at school.”69 Xharra also argues that, “Two girls from a rural area of Skopje attempted to travel to Syria in January 2016. The girls first travelled to [Prishtina/Priština], where their uncle tracked them down and repatriated them, but on return refused to discuss details about their contact in [Prishtina/Priština] and their contact’s exact location. However, both girls admitted to their intent of travelling to Syria.”70 KSC also reports identifying “a group of veiled women” who carry out religious lectures in a private home in Gjilan/Gnjilane.71

There is no single profile of a typical female recruit, however, two distinct groups are evident: 1) young women (as young as 15) who travel to ISIS territory to marry an ISIS fighter and 2) women who are already married and travel with their husbands. For young women still living with their parents, evidence from the Western Balkans and elsewhere shows that parents had little to no prior indication that their daughters were being radicalised, or had the intention of departing for ISIS-held territory.72

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68 See Xharra, “Few but Fanatical – the Kosovo Women Who Go Over to ISIS” and Selimi and Stojkovski, “Assessment of Macedonia’s Efforts in Countering Violent Extremism,” 51.
70 Ibid., 15.
72 Eric Mietz, “What about the Women? Understanding and Addressing the Problem of ISIS Female Recruitment in the Western Balkans” (Belgrade, Serbia: Belgrade Centre for Security Policy, 2016), 5.
Women recruits to ISIS from the Western Balkans are usually either solo recruits who travel to ISIS-controlled territory to marry ISIS fighters, or to accompany or join spouses or male family members.73 One mother of a young Kosovan woman told The New York Times that her daughter “did what was expected and followed her husband to Syria.”74 Mia Bloom reports that these connections to men are intentional: “The women are used as a reward… By marrying [the women] off and encouraging children immediately, ISIS retains the men and makes it less likely that they will go back to their home countries.”75

Eric Mietz argues that, “Of all possible pull factors, there are a few elements of ISIL propaganda affecting women in particular: 1) romanticism of the conflict, 2) ideology via online propaganda, 3) a feeling of ‘sisterhood’, and 4) women’s empowerment in the Islamic State.”76 However, it must be pointed out that romanticising of the conflict is, by no means, a trait only attributed to female ISIS recruits.

ISIS’s women recruits are tasked with a variety of roles, such as policing other women, disseminating propaganda, or roles as nurses or teachers.77 Some women may see these roles as empowering and therefore an appealing pull factor to joining ISIS. Kosovan women may have even been responsible for helping to radicalise others inside or outside the country.78

Whilst this is in contrast with KCSS’ latest report on “Women in Violent Extremism: Lessons Learned from Kosovo,” where researchers did not find ISIS propaganda videos in the Albanian language specifically targeting women from Kosovo or other Albanian-speaking regions like existing Albanian-language videos targeting men.79 This does not rule out the possibility that women in Kosovo are acting as recruiters and radicalisers face-to-face, or that those abroad are not using other social media avenues and forms of propaganda aside from videos to reach women in Kosovo.

These insights suggest that gender-sensitive CVE programming ought to find avenues through which women’s desires for camaraderie, empowerment, and fulfilment are met in peaceful, effective ways. It also cautions how gendered blind spots may develop in ways that might allow Kosovan women to emigrate to ISIS-held territory – with their husbands or even their children in tow – without interdiction or intervention.

73 Ibid.
74 Gall, “How Kosovo Was Turned Into Fertile Ground for ISIS.”
77 Ibid.
78 See Xharra, “Few but Fanatical – the Kosovo Women Who Go Over to ISIS” and Selimi and Stojkovski, “Assessment of Macedonia’s Efforts in Countering Violent Extremism,” 51.
2.6 GAPS IN PREVIOUS RESEARCH

In addition to the gaps identified above regarding a lack of Kosovo-specific research findings on pathways to radicalisation, such as in educational institutions, existing research does not fully evaluate the gendered dynamics of recruitment in Kosovo. Critically, an important gap is a lack of research on Kosovan groups that do not claim adherence to Islam, but are rather motivated on nationalistic or ethnic lines. Moreover, while general radicalisation trends in Kosovo may have been mapped by previous research, additional research on the individual and local levels is necessary to better understand the phenomenon of radicalisation in the country.

Another gap in research, particularly on public perceptions of radicalisation in Kosovo, is how community members may identify a particular individual, group, or institution as “radical.” That is, are these perceptions based on their designation as such by authority figures (e.g., government officials, the media), actions of the individuals or groups in question, or even visual characteristics. Throughout the literature, interviewees and stakeholders discuss the physical appearance of radicalised individuals, such as men growing a beard or women donning the hijab or the even more conservative niqab. However, these references are part of a larger discourse on the behaviour and background of alleged violent extremists, so the larger question of how community members identify individuals or groups as radical remains inadequately addressed.

A final gap is that there is little understanding of why the recruitment of Kosovans into al-Nusra and ISIS in Syria and Iraq has dropped off recently. Observers have attributed the groups’ failing recruitment numbers to their losses on the battlefield, financial ruin, and greater security on the Turkish border with Syria. Considering ISIS’s alleged declared intention of forming a “waliyat” (province) in the Balkans, this may explain the trend as well as warn of the potential of violent extremism becoming a home-grown and internal problem in Kosovo. Therefore, an extensive understanding of the problem of radicalisation is crucial to responding to this potential future threat. In the words of Uros Pena, deputy director of Bosnia’s Directorate for the Coordination of Police Bodies, “We don’t even know how big this problem of terrorism and radicalisation is.... And that means going back to basics, to community policing, being among the people, which we don’t do anymore.”

81 For example, see Xharra, “Few but Fanatical – the Kosovo Women Who Go Over to ISIS.”
3.1 METHODOLOGY

This study used mixed methods, including a literature review and quantitative and qualitative research methods to assess the perceptions of Kosovans regarding the issue of radicalisation. A countrywide survey administered in all 38 of Kosovo’s Municipalities gained a breadth of inputs, while a series of four focus group meetings provided depth, with discussions organized as follows: (1) government actors, (2) international community representatives, (3) educational leaders and students, and (4) women and youth. Finally, three stakeholder interviews were conducted with representatives of Kosovo’s religious community, and two students in their first year of university. One of the students was a young man from Gjilan/Gnjilane who had formerly become radicalised whilst in high school.

The Kosovo-wide survey and stakeholder and focus group questionnaire were drafted with input from outside experts, including representatives from UNDP and Kosovo’s MoIA. They sought to cover a wide range of issues and were informed by the research conducted in the literature review, including seeking to address some identified gaps within it. Survey respondents were randomly-selected. They were first asked a series of demographic questions and then a total of 18 closed- and open-ended questions in the Albanian and Serbian languages, with their responses recorded by the interviewer. After securing the demographic information of survey respondents, interviewers read out the following “commonly-accepted definition of radicalisation” in order to ensure greater coherence in the responses:
Radicalisation is a process by which an individual or group comes to adopt increasingly extreme political, social, or religious ideals and aspirations that reject or undermine the status quo or undermine contemporary ideas and expressions of freedom of choice.85

From then on, the questions were arranged in seven (7) sections covering seven (7) objectives. Questions in objective one focused on how respondents understand radicalisation and the process of becoming radicalised, including traits perceived as associated with a radicalised individual. Questions in objective two related to identifying whether Kosovans perceived there was an issue with radicalisation in their communities, if they perceived there were particular hotspots, and understanding where their knowledge and in turn perceptions were being derived.

Objective three posed a question on Kosovans’ perception of radicalisation in educational institutions, whilst the question in objective four focused on Kosovans’ perceptions of the main sources that would prevent someone from becoming radicalised. This was followed by the interviewed being read a commonly accepted definition of self-radicalisation (as included in the earlier definitions section of this report), which followed with questions on the role of the internet in radicalisation and ideas of how the same tool could be used to prevent radicalisation in Kosovo. The question in objective six addressed the perception of the role of traditional media in radicalisation in Kosovo, and the survey concluded with two questions on reporting instances of radicalisation in Kosovo.

The surveys took approximately 30 minutes per interviewee and were carried out from 20 November – 9 December 2016 across Kosovo’s 38 municipalities. The number of those interviewed per municipality was calculated based on the population of each municipality (as per the 2011 census), where a higher population attracted a higher number of respondents. Surveys were carried out every day of the week, including weekends, mostly from 10am-6pm in private homes, apartment buildings, and various public spaces including private businesses. These were randomly selected by neighbourhood and sought to be as spread out as possible, including access to rural villages with considerable (and successful) efforts to interview at least 10 individuals in hard-to-reach non-majority ethnicity areas. The testing of the pre-sample was carried out with five individuals aged between 26–45 years.

The survey did not include a question about ethnicity. However, by virtue of the sample’s wide reach, responses include those of non-majority groups and ethnicities. The sample sought to reflect gender parity (50% men and 50% women—304, each), as well as religious, age, and geographic demographics. Division of the sample based on the number of respondents according to gender, age, education level, employment status and religious affiliation are presented in Table 1 below:

85 “Radicalisation and Extremism,” Safeguarding Children in Gloucestershire.
### Table 1: Demographic information of survey respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0.99%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18-25</td>
<td>221</td>
<td>36.35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26-35</td>
<td>167</td>
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<td>36-50</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>21.38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51+</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>13.82%</td>
</tr>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Municipality</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fushë Kosovë/Kosovo Polje</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graçanicë/Gračanica</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lipjan/Lipljan</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>3.29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Novobërde/Novo Brdo</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.33%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kastriot/Obilić</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0.99%</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Employment Status</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
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<tr>
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<td>Unemployed</td>
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<tr>
<td>Student</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>8.39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housewife</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>5.43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retired</td>
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<tr>
<td>Intern</td>
<td>3</td>
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<th>Religion</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
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<tr>
<td>N/A*</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1.32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muslim</td>
<td>555</td>
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<tr>
<td>Christian*</td>
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<td>Agnostic*</td>
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<td>2.14%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pagan*</td>
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<td>0.16%</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
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<tr>
<td>Uneducated</td>
<td>5</td>
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<td>Primary School</td>
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<tr>
<td>High School</td>
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<tr>
<td>University</td>
<td>352</td>
<td>57.89%</td>
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<td>Master’s Degree</td>
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<td>7.57%</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prishtinë/Pristina</td>
<td>173</td>
<td>28.45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mitrovicë/Mitrovica</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>10.86%</td>
</tr>
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<td>Pejë/Peć</td>
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<td>Prizren</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>19.90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ferizaj/Uroševac</td>
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<td>10.86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gjilan/Gnjilane</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>9.87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gjakovë/Dakovica</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>8.06%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Frequency equals the number of respondents who self-identified as such. All categories add up to 608. All percentages are the percent of the total sample, but due to rounding may not add up to 100%.

*Disaggregated as “Non-Muslim”
**Disaggregated as “Hotspots”
Data input into the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) software was completed from 9 – 16 December 2016 whilst the analysing of the data and creation of graphs through SPSS took place thereafter. The estimated maximum margin of sampling error for the full sample of 608 respondents at a 95% confidence level (p ≤ .05) is ±3.97%. However, this margin of error increases when data is analysed at the disaggregated levels. Details of the margins of error for these demographic groups are included in Table2 below.

The focus group discussions were conducted in Prishtinë/Priština and featured open-ended questions to guide the discussion. Focus groups and participants to be invited were chosen in close consultation with UNDP and MoIA and sought to reflect both key stakeholders interested in the process and phenomenon of radicalisation in Kosovo, as well as representatives from those groups under study. Given the short timeframe required to carry out both the quantitative and qualitative research, as well as produce results, six focus groups were identified as key before the start of the project. These groups were identified by UNDP and MoIA. However, as will be explained below, no invited representatives of the media and only a minimal number of those from Kosovo’s various religious communities attended, allowing only four full focus groups to be completed. Focus groups meetings took place over three days in mid-January 2017, with two sessions per day comprised of two hours of discussion each. The discussions were recorded and transcribed for analysis. The smaller stakeholder interviews with religious leaders were conducted in a similar manner, and an additional two-hour in-depth interview was conducted with the two university students including with the formerly radicalised student.

### Table 2: Margins of error

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Margins of Error</th>
<th>Sample size</th>
<th>Margin of error</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Full sample</td>
<td>608</td>
<td>±4.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>304</td>
<td>±5.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>304</td>
<td>±5.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18-25</td>
<td>221</td>
<td>±6.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26-35</td>
<td>167</td>
<td>±7.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36-50</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>±8.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51 and older</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>±10.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary school</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>±15.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school</td>
<td>164</td>
<td>±7.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University</td>
<td>352</td>
<td>±5.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master’s Degree</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>±14.4%</td>
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<td>Self-employed</td>
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<td>±16.3%</td>
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<td>Employed</td>
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<td>±5.5%</td>
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<td>Unemployed</td>
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<td>±7.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>±13.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housewife</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>±17.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muslim</td>
<td>555</td>
<td>±4.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Muslim</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>±13.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Region</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prishtinë/Priština</td>
<td>173</td>
<td>±7.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mitrovicë/Mitrovica</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>±12.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pejë/Peć</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>±11.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prizren</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>±8.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ferizaj/Uroševac</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>±12.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gjilan/Gnjilane</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>±12.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gjakovë/Dakovica</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>±14.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Municipality</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hotspots</td>
<td>143</td>
<td>±8.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other municipalities</td>
<td>465</td>
<td>±4.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The margins of error are reported at the 95% level of confidence and rounded to the nearest tenth.
As a very important actor, the focus group with media representatives was scheduled to take place first. Fifteen media outlets across broadcast and printed press from across the country were identified – from responses given by interviewees in the field and in close consultation with UNDP and MoIA – including two outlets generally considered to disseminate radical views. All outlets were contacted a number of times both in writing (email) and by telephone and at least ten confirmed their attendance. The same process was followed with representatives from universities, high schools (including professional ones) and elementary schools across Kosovo, which led to the participation of two representatives at director level from Kaçanik/Kačanik, two representatives at the Vice-Chancellor level from two Prishtina/Pristina-based universities, and two students.

The focus groups of government actors (which included two representatives from an international NGO part of the Steering Group) was the largest in attendance with nine representatives comprised of a mix of the MoIA and various units of the Kosovo Police and security services. The women’s focus group had a mixed representation of women and two representatives from Kosovo’s Youth Council. Invitations were also extended to representatives of the Women’s Parliamentary Caucus (at the request and recommendation of the UNDP and MoIA) but attendance did not materialise. The focus group of international actors was composed of representatives from two international organisations and two embassies (one of which sent two representatives) accredited to Kosovo. Representatives of seven further embassies (out of nine approached and invited) sent their apologies due to last-minute engagements. Lastly, the focus group of religious representatives was treated as stakeholder interviews (with a representative of the Muslim Community of Prishtinë/Priština, another of Prizren and a third representing the Protestant community) given the low participation despite inviting a large number of participants.

In order to simplify the analysis of the results and avoid significant variability from smaller sample sizes, disaggregated groups do not include sub-samples of less than ten total respondents. For ease, this resulted in cutting a number of sub-samples, including: unknown age, “uneducated,” unknown employment status, retirees, and interns. In addition, because the sample sizes of various religions other than Islam (including various Christian denominations) is also low, for the purposes of this analysis religion has been disaggregated into those who identify as respondents of Muslim confession (555 respondents) and those identifying otherwise (hereinafter referred to as “respondents of Non-Muslim confession” – 53 respondents).

This has also been done to augment the analysis of the municipality level, where the low sample sizes would include high variability. Instead, municipalities labelled as potential hotspots for radicalisation activity in the literature review above have been disaggregated into a unique category, in comparison to those not identified as such. Those respondents from “hotspot” municipalities make up 23.5% of the total sample (143 respondents) — a significant proportion. Responses from “Hotspots” are compared to “Other Municipalities” (465 respondents) in the results below.
3.2 CHALLENGES AND LIMITATIONS

Field challenges resulted, at times, from the difficulty surrounding research-specific key words and the subsequent need to explain to some of the interviewed concepts such as hotspots and multiple-choice answers that had longer wording. The other challenge when approaching women at home in rural areas was their unwillingness to be interviewed without the presence of their husband and the doubt as to whether they should respond without his presence.

These sentiments may have influenced the data. Furthermore, a number of respondents expressed dissatisfaction with the survey’s topic, immediately assuming it was aimed negatively at Islam. Therefore, the research team had to approach respondents with sensitivity and explain the research objectives carefully.

The choice of questions, although drafted in close consultation with UNDP and MoIA may not have captured the totality of Kosovans’ responses given the wide nature of the topic and since perceptions were being measured, even if respondents were allowed to provide comments during the interview. Lastly, open-ended questions posed a particular challenge, as half of those sampled did not wish to engage beyond structured multi-answer questions.

A particular challenge to the qualitative part of this research was posed by the difficulty to reach members of two stakeholder groups and ensuring their participation. Despite the research team receiving confirmation, no representatives from the media attended the designated session and only three members representing the religious community attended during their session. In the absence of a sufficient breadth of groups that would better represent Kosovo’s diversity, their responses have been framed as stakeholder interviews rather than as a focus group.

Of course, the wording of questions and practical challenges in conducting surveys can introduce bias or error into the findings of any opinion poll. For example, although the survey asked respondents questions regarding foreign fighters, the majority of questions inquired as to radicalisation—rather than violent radicalisation, for example—which may have skewed the findings to focus more broadly than violent extremism.
4.1 HOW KOSOVANS UNDERSTAND RADICALISATION AND PERCEIVE THE RADICALISATION PROCESS IN THEIR COMMUNITIES

4.1.1 Traits associated with a radicalised individual

In order to address a gap that was revealed in the literature review above, the survey’s drafting process gathered the traits below in order to assess public perceptions about how respondents associate them with radicalisation. The perceptions on the following traits inform the rest of the findings as they help to establish a baseline of what Kosovans are formulating their determinations as to who they might consider to be radicalised. Crucially, it is the hope of this study that understanding these public perceptions will also assist in drafting tailored national strategies, as well as information, prevention, and other community and grassroots initiatives in future.

They are (in no particular order):

- Altered appearance – change in style of dress and/or personal appearance;
- Social isolation – losing interest in activities they used to enjoy/distancing themselves from friends and usual social groups;
- Abnormal routines;
- Questioning their identity;
- Questioning others’ faith;
- Becoming more argumentative or aggressive in their viewpoints/becoming quick to condemn those who disagree;
- Displaying feelings of isolation and expressing an “us” and “them” mentality;
- Likes and shares radical/extremist pages or media on Facebook and other social media;
- They talk about and express a desire of fighting in foreign wars; and
- Other (please specify).

These factors are commonly cited actions or visible traits that might lead an individual to suspect a person is radicalised. The choice of these factors, however, does not suggest the authors believe that these are indeed warning signs.

Among Kosovans surveyed, there was a majority belief (59.7%) that radicalisation is accompanied by outward changes in appearance (see Figure 1 below). This particular question was included in the survey after finding no references to perceived traits of radicalisation when conducting the literature review. Although not a majority, significant numbers of respondents also listed social isolation (42.9%), increased aggression (44.4%), and engagement with extremist content on social media (44.4%) as traits associated with radicalised persons. Given the international focus on Kosovo as a country producing FTFs, it is worthy to note that only about a third of Kosovan respondents selected “express[ing] a desire of fighting in foreign wars” as a trait they associated with radicalisation.

Important differences were observed (see Figure 2 below) and are also interesting to notice when disaggregated between those respondents identifying as Muslim and otherwise. First, respondents of non-Muslim confession consistently believed that the above signs were indicators of radicalisation more than respondents of Muslim confession, with the notable exception of altered appearance. The most significant differences were regarding “questioning others’ faith” (56.6% to 26.1%) and “expressing a desire to fight in foreign conflicts” (52.8% to 30.3%). Respondents identifying with religions other than Islam consistently believed that the various signs provided were indicators of radicalisation more than those identifying as respondents of Muslim confession. These differences might illustrate the concerns of religious minority communities in a Muslim-majority country such as Kosovo, or even a greater propensity to be concerned about the issue of foreign fighters, who have largely joined ISIS - a group notorious for its crimes against non-Muslims (although the vast majority of its victims are actually fellow Muslims). They may also be more sensitive to “questioning others’ faith,” being Kosovo’s religious minorities. Indeed, adherents to these religious groups may be experiencing more of this kind of behaviour, which may have informed their responses. Lastly, given that appearance in itself does not denote behaviour, another implication of this finding may be that radicalisation could be perceived as a larger problem than it actually is, especially among some religious groups. More research here is needed.
Women were slightly more likely than men to select a change in appearance (with 63.8% to 55.6%) and slightly more likely to select engagement with extremist content on social media (with 47% to 41.8%). An increase in education was generally related to an increase in belief that the above factors were important, with the notable exceptions of altered appearance, social isolation, and expressing a desire to fight in foreign wars.

Regarding regions, the Ferizaj/Uroševac region saw a large spike in residents who considered feelings of isolation and an “us” and “them” mentality as an indicator of radicalisation. The Ferizaj/Uroševac and Prishtina/Priština regions were significantly more likely to consider an altered appearance as well, and the Ferizaj/Uroševac and Mitrovicë/Mitrovica regions saw large spikes regarding expressing a desire to fight (43.9% and 45.5%, respectively, in comparison to other regions which were grouped around 28%).

At the municipality level, respondents in hotspots were more likely to indicate altered appearance and feelings of isolation and an “us” and “them” mentality as signs of radicalisation than other municipalities (65% to 58.1% and 37.1% to 29.5%, respectively). This could potentially stem from a feeling of antagonism from residents of these municipalities which for some time have been identified and referred to as hotspots of radicalisation in the media. While hotspots were significantly less likely to indicate abnormal routines (16.1% to 23%), they were significantly more likely to report engagement with extremist content on social media and expressing a desire of fighting in foreign wars as indicators (51.7% to 42.2% and 39.9% to 29.9%, respectively).

However, it is important to note that a limited number of respondents associated radicalised persons with mental health issues, or as “having lost their mind” in their comments. This is also congruent with findings in the literature review. In addition, half of those expressed the belief that fundamental changes in appearance denote radicalisation when submitting additional comments – particularly in women – also brought up coercion and financial incentives as the primary reasons for this change, as opposed to this being self-directed or on ideological grounds.

Figure 1: Traits Kosovans associate with radicalisation (Q1.1)
The opinions of stakeholders and focus groups as regards common traits of a radicalised individual generally resonated with the position of Kosovan citizens interviewed in the field. It was largely agreed that ‘radicalisation’ itself is a complex term particularly as it can be associated with politics, nationality, ethnicity, as well as with positive notions of radical breakthroughs in science, medicine and technology. Participants in the focus group of women and civil society, and stakeholders from the religious communities and educational institutions also thought of traits of those deemed religiously radicalised as being less accepting, lacking in tolerance, having more uncompromising political views, aggressive rhetoric and actions, as well as altered external appearances.

These majority views regarding appearances [from field interviews] clashed with the perspectives of focus group participants. Perhaps because they are more informed about the issue, stakeholders from the international and religious communities did not list external appearances as a trait of radicalisation, whilst stakeholders from government actors went further by challenging the view that one’s appearance denotes their extremist tendencies, as well as pointed out the work done at community level to break this taboo. They placed emphasis on a person’s actions and rhetoric as clearer signs, perhaps due to greater familiarity with the subject. This is an important point to note as many of those interviewed seemed to blur the line between religious conservatism and violent extremism in their understanding of signs of the latter.


4.1.2 Existence of radicalised individuals in Kosovo’s communities

Over two-thirds of respondents believe that radicalisation is a problem in their community, even if they said it was only “a little”, though this was not a metric provided as an option in the survey (see Figure 3 – 62.7% of respondents said it was a problem, with 7.2% affirming, but only “a little”).

Some interesting disparities were noted upon cross-tabulation. For example, women were more likely to report that there are radicalised individuals in their community than men (73.7% to 66.1%). The 51+ age bracket had the highest reporting percentage at 77.4%, whereas the 36-50 age bracket was the lowest, with 60.8%. Respondents of Muslim confession were significantly more likely to believe radicalisation is a problem in their communities than respondents of non-Muslim confession—70.8% compared to 60.4%.

Figure 4: Is radicalisation a risk? (Q2, by region)

This belief was largely consistent across the country, although regional variations were significant (see Figure 4). For example, the Ferizaj/Uroševac and Prizren regions, two hotspots, had the highest rates at 77.3% and 76%, respectively.

Nearly three-fourths of Kosovans surveyed believed that there are radicalised persons in their local areas (see Figure 5). Again, women were more likely to report this than men (76.3% to 67.8%), perhaps due to being more attuned to picking up clues and noticing divergences as mothers and wives or even due to women generally defining radicalisation more broadly than men. The likelihood of survey respondents reporting radicalised individuals in their communities trended upward the more educated the respondents were. Similarly to the previous question, the Ferizaj/Uroševac and Prizren regions led with the highest rates (81.8% and 76.9%, respectively). The Pejë/Peć region had the lowest reporting rate at only 61.6%. Hotspots (Kaçanik/Kačanik, Mitrovicë/Mitrovica, Vushtrri/Vučitrn, Gjilan/Gnjilane, Hani i Elezit/Elez Han, and Ferizaj/Uroševac) were only slightly more likely to report this belief than other municipalities (78.3% to 70.1%).

In order to understand the logical basis for these beliefs, the following question inquired how respondents were able to report the presence of radicalised
individuals in their communities. The results presented an interesting array of responses (see Figure 6 below). A surprising 24.7% of Kosovans surveyed (34.2% of those who answered yes to the previous question) personally know someone who is a radicalised individual in their community (over a third of those who said yes to the previous question). Others have been able to observe signs of radicalisation via social media, but 43.2% of those that said ‘yes’ have also heard of the existence of FTFs in their communities through media reports, highlighting the important role of both social and mainstream media. However, since media reports on radicalisation may not actually be localised to the specific “community/local area/village” of the respondent (i.e. a resident of Hani i Elezit/Elez Han hearing a specific report of a radicalised individual from Hani i Elezit/Elez Han), some respondents may have reported this based on broader reports from across Kosovo. Therefore, some caution analysing the results may be warranted for this particular result.

Cross-tabulation revealed no substantial gender disparity, with the exception of men being slightly more likely than women to witness someone expressing radical views on social media (38.3% to 32.3%). Interestingly however, the 36-50 age bracket was significantly less likely to personally know a radicalised individual, suggesting that there may be an age gap in this area as well as suggesting that youth are more aware of the phenomenon because of contact with their peers. Inversely, there is a notable spike observed among those with a university education, with 39.9% of those who said ‘yes’ to the previous question reporting knowing an individual personally.
By region, Gjilan/Gnjilane and Mitrovicë/Mitrovica have significantly lower percentages in knowing someone personally than the other regions (34.1% and 26.5% respectively). However, respondents in Gjilan/Gnjilane who believe that radicalised individuals are present in their community are significantly more likely to report noticing radicalisation in their local places of worship at 19.5%. This is congruent with the trajectory of radicalisation described by the formerly radicalised young student from Gjilan/Gnjilane shared later in the report. An additional reason for this result could also be the positive impact of the recent focus placed on Gjilan/Gnjilane both in terms of information sessions on the risk of radicalisation with an aim towards prevention, and the government’s action to close down places of worship associated with radical preachers and practices leading to violent extremism and the recruitment of FTFs. No significant differences were observed between hotspots and other municipalities except that respondents in hotspots were more likely to observe the expression of radical views on social media and less likely to hear about it in the news (40.2% to 33.4% and 36.6% to 45.4%, respectively). This finding also potentially hints to peers noticing other peers (or people they are friends with or follow on social media) express these radical views, once again highlighting the importance of direct personal contact.

When disaggregated by religion, an interesting disparity is noted: Respondents of Non-Muslim confession are more likely than respondents of Muslim confession to select the various options in nearly every category, such as observing radical content on social media (Figure 7). Surprisingly, respondents of non-Muslim confession who believe that radicalised individuals are present in their communities are also more likely to personally know someone who exhibits radicalised behaviours than their fellow respondents of non Muslim confession (43.2% to 33.4%). This raises the question as to whether respondents of Muslim confession and respondents of non-Muslim confession have diverging understandings of what they define as “radical” or “extremist;” even after considering that a definition was given to all respondents at the beginning of the survey.

**Figure 7: Why Kosovans believe there are radicalised individuals in their communities (Q2.1.1, by religion)**

Furthermore, 19% of respondents report having a friend or acquaintance who was directly approached with the aim of being radicalised (see Figure 8). For example, two respondents from Viti/Vitina told of a relative and a friend respectively who tried...
to radicalise them. Even more interesting were two respondents from Prizren who admitted that they were directly approached with the aim of radicalisation, with one of them adding, “Yes, a lot of my friends came to me with this purpose.”

Housewives were the least likely subgroup to encounter this, with only three percent reporting that this has happened to someone they know. However, the region of Ferizaj/Uroševac had the highest likelihood of this at 28.8%, in line with it being regarded as a hotspot, followed by Pejë/Peć with 23.3% and Prizren at 21.5%. However, importantly; no significant difference was observed between hotspots and other municipalities.

Specifically regarding foreign fighters, Kosovans surveyed were evenly split on hearing about community members leaving to become foreign fighters (see Figure 9). This was highest in Ferizaj/Uroševac, where a substantial 69.7% of respondents from the region reported hearing of this issue in their community. Respondents from the Pejë/Peć and Gjakovë/Dakovica regions were the least likely (38.4% and 36.7%). A significant increase was also observed among respondents in hotspot municipalities at 62.9%. As for other cross-tabulations, affirmative responses were generally positively correlated with an increase in education, and negatively correlated to an increase in age (with the 36-50 year age bracket dipping to only 33.8%). Regarding employment status, housewives were again the least likely to report this (at only 21.2%) while students were the most likely at 62.7%.

The consensus across all stakeholder groups was also that radicalisation is happening in Kosovo, but that its level has seen a significant drop recently (as referenced above). A university student who was radicalised in high school in Gjilan/Gnjilane and pledged allegiance to ISIS before de-radicalising later on pointed out that radicalisation is happening everywhere in Kosovo, though its intensity has significantly waned in comparison to previous years—echoing this assessment. However, he believes that it is mostly happening in the municipality of Gjilan/Gnjilane. A stakeholder from the international group, however, warned against hyperbolising the issue, whilst a stakeholder from the women’s group believes radicalisation is mainly present in
Kosovo’s smaller, rural areas like Kaçanik/Kačanik and the surroundings of Ferizaj/Uroševac. This drop could be due to a number of factors raging from ISIS military defeats and loss of territory in Syria and Iraq, calls to stay at home and carry out attacks there, or citizens’ sensibilisation and better information regarding the phenomenon and its consequences as part of the government’s strategy and the work of international actors. However, this is an important aspect into which to delve deeper and understand better.

### 4.1.3 The role and importance of religion in society

Religiosity is often conflated with radicalisation, especially when increased religiosity is more conservative. Therefore, respondents were asked whether religion was playing a greater role in Kosovo. In response, 40.8% of Kosovans surveyed thought that religion is becoming more important (see Figure 10). However, a large proportion reported they were not sure. This contrasts significantly with public perceptions of radicalisation in respondents’ communities above, however, where respondents were far more certain and more likely to report that radicalisation is occurring.

Respondents of Muslim confession were more likely to report that religion was becoming more important than respondents of non-Muslim confession (41.6% to 32.1%) though the reason for this difference is unclear, bar the obvious one of Kosovo having a majority-Muslim population. By region, Gjakovë/Đakovica was the least certain, whereas Prizren and Gjilan/Gnjilane were most likely to say that religion was becoming more important (47.11% and 45%, respectively). No significant differences were observed at the municipal level.

A few respondents (two from Prishtinë/Priština, one from Pejë/Peć, and another one from Skënderaj/Srbica) believe religion has always been important, with most respondents referring to Islamic practices, such as fasting during Ramadan and celebrating Eid. However, this group also points out that while the importance of religion remains unaltered, what has changed is people’s awareness and awakening towards their religion and religious commitments including references to people who they believe were previously practicing “inappropriately” (such as “by calling themselves religious and still consuming alcohol and drugs”) having now changed their ways. Therefore, it can be deduced that a new-found conservatism can also be mistaken for radicalism and that the increase in religiosity does not imply that radicalisation is increasing in Kosovo.

![Figure 10: The rising importance of religion in Kosovo (Q2.1.2)](image-url)
4.1.4 Perceptions of how individuals become radicalised

Kosovans’ perceptions on how radicalisation occurs (see Figure 11 below) yielded that more respondents saw financial compensation as a driver of radicalisation than any other option (at 43.8%), followed by connections with friends (41.7%) and through the internet (41%). However, respondents largely downplayed the possibility that schools and universities were drivers of radicalisation (an issue that will be revisited below).

Figure 11: Pathways to radicalisation (Q2.2)

Cross-tabulation revealed no significant gender differences, except that women were more likely than men to believe that religious institutions were contributing to radicalisation (39.1% to 31.9%, respectively). The likelihood that respondents would describe these as drivers in their community generally trended upward as education level increased. A notable spike, however, was observed among respondents with master’s degrees, of whom 56.5% saw the internet as a pathway to radicalisation, compared to other groups, which clustered at around 40%. Employed and student respondents were consistently the most likely to attribute the above factors as pathways of radicalisation.

However, there was little difference between respondents of Muslim confession and respondents of non-Muslim confession, with the exception of respondents of Muslim confession being slightly more likely to perceive the internet as a pathway (41.6% to 34%) and respondents of non-Muslim confession slightly more likely to report the same for schools and universities. A stark difference, however, was noted at religious institutions, with most respondents of non-Muslim confession citing them as pathways to radicalisation (58.5%) compared to only a third of respondents of Muslim confession. Drastic differences were observed at the regional level, with Pristina/Priština respondents significantly more likely to offer warnings regarding schools and universities as potential pathways to radicalisation (at 27.7%). The Prizren region was the most likely to cite the internet (51.2%), and Mitrovicë/Mitrovica significantly downplayed the role of religious institutions (at only 19.7%). At the municipal level, respondents in hotspots generally gave responses that reflected those of respondents in other municipalities with only the following exceptions: they were slightly more likely to indicate friends and meetings or lectures as pathways...
(45.5% to 40.5% and 40.6% to 31.7%, respectively) and slightly less likely to indicate schools and universities (9.8% to 15.5%), which would match with the statement of the radicalised youth from Gjilan/Gnjilane on the pathways to radicalisation through friends, meetings and lectures, as well as the lack of awareness of its spread through peers in educational institutions.

A select number of respondents commented that coercion was another potential factor in radicalisation, with two people from Prizren and Malishevë/Mališevo arguing that radicalised individuals were, or could be coerced into radicalising or engagement. Another respondent from Malishevë/Mališevo believed that married women, for example, are being threatened to radicalise by their husbands, perhaps with divorce or custody of their children.

This view was echoed by two respondents who believe that radicalisation is resulting from contact with what they refer to as “inadequate people” and “by being brainwashed by certain people or groups with bad intentions especially looking to influence Kosovan youth to become radicalised.”

Other respondents believe radicalisation is happening as a result of foreign influences. For example, one person commented that the radical spirit “always comes from foreign agencies.” Another cited non-governmental organizations [NGOs] and private houses (this in line with KCS’ security assessments) as sources of this influence, and a third respondent stated that just “like many foreign soldiers came to help us in Kosovo [during the conflict], these guys are now going to help [in Syria and Iraq].

Rather than external influences, another respondent expressed concerns of the deficit in internal services. The respondent believes Kosovans are being radicalised as a result of a lack in cultural, sporting and scientific activities to keep youth interested and occupied. This important factor was also highlighted by stakeholders across all groups. Lack of stimulating extra-curricular activities coupled with the lack of employment and other opportunities for Kosovan youth (also in line with findings from the literature review) – as a country with the youngest population in Europe – is a key issue intimately linked with driving radicalisation in particular, and one that needs to be seriously addressed in general.

There was a mix of opinions regarding other push factors of radicalisation at the community level in Kosovo. Stakeholders from the international group cited economic conditions, a lack of identity, education, and Kosovo’s politics (as also reflected in the literature review), whilst those from educational institutions also added the crucial role played by the family and the influence of foreign groups that spread in Kosovo after the war. Additionally, women stakeholders also pointed out the state of the country following the war and the psychological factors at play (such as mental trauma, post-traumatic stress disorder, and other post-war vulnerabilities) as key push factors.

86 Interview with survey respondent in Ferizaj/Uroševac, November 2016
87 Interview with survey respondent from Prishtina/Priština, November 2016
88 Interview with survey respondent in Pejë/Peć, November 2016
89 Interview with survey respondent in Podujevë/Podujevo, December 2016
90 Interview with survey respondent in Vitina/Vitina, November 2016
91 Interview with survey respondent in Pejë/Peć, November 2016
One of the women shared a personal story of attending a course on religion organised by a Muslim group of women a year after the end of the war in Kosovo. She highlighted that most of the youth attending had no idea of the group’s aims beyond religious teachings that had no reason to be presumed anything other than ‘innocent’. They were given gifts for attendance and were forced to pray “in a certain way and do other things”, which the woman did not wish to specify. She stopped going when her father noticed and took issue with the practices of the group and told her to stop attending, highlighting once more the important role of the family in prevention.

The most important example of the radicalisation journey comes from the formerly radicalised student from Gjilan/Gnjilane who disputed the importance placed on economic factors and its link to radicalisation. He highlighted as key drivers the dissemination of incorrect facts - such as being told by recruiters, “There is a group [referring to Muslims’ of ISIS] that the whole world will want to destroy,” and the wrongful interpretation of religious texts (particularly the Hadith) to youth who have previously not read them. He shared that his radicalisation happened in high school. It was directly influenced by peers and was consolidated by attending lectures of radical Imams in Gjilan/Gnjilane mosques (and one madrassa), who preached radical extremist views. His radicalisation, he said, was further aided by what he read and watched on social media.

The young man from Gjilan/Gnjilane pointed out that the radicalisation journey has no defined time; it can last from one to two years, one to two months, or any other period of time. In his case, he became an ISIS supporter two months from the point his radicalisation began. The initial seeds were planted during [misguided] discussions of Islam with peers at long lunch breaks. From personal experience, he explained that radicalisation in high school started when [already radicalised youth serving as recruiters] saw someone in the group showing interest in their aggressive rhetoric, or even supporting their extremist views. The rest unravels as described earlier, with the dissemination of incorrect facts, the wrongful interpretation of religious texts by radical Imams, and by watching lectures and videos on social media, followed by the repetition of this cycle. Despite the role played by the internet, the importance of direct contact in radicalisation must continue to be stressed. He added that at first, fighting in Syria was not mentioned to him – though he has friends who went to fight and died in Syria – but that he came close to committing “something fatal” before he realised that his way and beliefs were wrong with the huge help and intervention of his immediate and extended family. This highlights that prevention programmes and plans in schools are not only needed, but vital. All results shared so far also attest to the fact that it is extremely difficult to build a single profile of a radicalised person (not only in Kosovo, but also globally), and their pathways to radicalisation, also concurrent with the opening findings of the literature review for this study.

4.1.5 Perceptions of how women become radicalised

As discussed earlier, gender is an important lens through which to analyse the issue of radicalisation. One aspect of this is to understand whether women are neglected in this analysis. Kosovans surveyed, however, expressed a general uncertainty about how women might be radicalised, with nearly 40% saying that they do not know whether women are being radicalised in unique ways (see Figure 12).
For some, unique pathways for the radicalisation of women may not be necessary, with 22.7% of respondents saying that women are radicalised like men, although 14.8% of Kosovans surveyed said that women are not at risk of being radicalised suggesting that perhaps their particular environment, cultural and societal norms do not attach the same importance to women regarding certain phenomenon generally associated with men.

Women were also less likely than men to report that women are not at risk of radicalisation (11.8% compared to 17.8%). Women were additionally more likely to claim that women are radicalised similarly to men (26% compared to 19.4% of men).

Cross-tabulation by region revealed that Gjakovë/Đakovicawas significantly more likely to claim that women were being radicalised similarly to men (with “no” at 34.7%, compared to only 6.1% for “yes”). The region of Ferizaj/Uroševac was the most likely to claim women are not at risk (21.2%). It also revealed that those with only a primary school education were significantly less likely to think that women were radicalised differently than men (9.8%). These low numbers are significant in that they suggest that respondents may not have considered this issue, or that they do not have an adequate understanding of how women are being radicalised.

Among employment status, housewives were the least likely to believe that women are not at risk of radicalisation of any disaggregated group (at only 6%), followed by those employed (11.3%)—although housewives were also the most unsure. The self-employed were also the most likely (among employment statuses) to believe that women were radicalised in unique ways. No significant differences were observed on the municipal level. However, these perceptions still stand at a generally low level, therefore suggesting the need for awareness campaigns regarding the radicalisation of women and potential gender-specific pathways for it.

A significant number of respondents cited coercion as a driver of radicalisation for women. Many also framed women as “victims” of radicalisation. For example, one respondent specifically viewed women as “victims of male radicalisation through world connections.”

For some, unique pathways for the radicalisation of women may not be necessary, with 22.7% of respondents saying that women are radicalised like men, although 14.8% of Kosovans surveyed said that women are not at risk of being radicalised suggesting that perhaps their particular environment, cultural and societal norms do not attach the same importance to women regarding certain phenomenon generally associated with men.

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92 Interview with respondent from Lipjan/Lipljan, December 2016.
women\textsuperscript{93}, whilst another commented that “women are easily manipulated”\textsuperscript{94} when addressing their thoughts of how radicalisation was happening in their community.

An overwhelming majority of those who commented (24 out of 59, or 40\%) firmly connected the radicalisation of women in Kosovo to the impact of a male figure in their lives. Two respondents cited brothers and husbands and a third citing Imams as the reasons why women in their community radicalise.\textsuperscript{95} A fourth added, “All the females I know in my community who are practicing religion in this new way are doing so just because they like a guy, or their brothers forced them.”\textsuperscript{96} A further respondent believed women are being radicalised as a result of marriage [i.e. from the person who they marry, their beliefs, and the power they exert on their female partner].\textsuperscript{97} Another respondent affirmed that women’s radicalisation is imposed by their husband or family\textsuperscript{98}, a view which is also shared by someone else who added, “I have heard cases where women left for foreign wars with their families.”\textsuperscript{99}

Finally, four respondents also believed that the radicalisation of women stems from their families, such as by being married to radicalised husbands, and generally by being coerced-implying that a lack of education was also playing a role in the process.\textsuperscript{100} These perceptions are partly in line with Mia Bloom’s assessment as to why women radicalise or join groups like ISIS through connections with men.\textsuperscript{101} Importantly to note, the opposite perception – that men are radicalised through their connections with women – was not observed throughout this survey. However, the scenario was alleged anecdotally in two separate examples given during the women’s focus group.

Whilst participants across all focus groups believe women face the risk of radicalisation in Kosovo, and that they radicalise differently to men, their opinions diverge on the role of women as radicalisers (otherwise referred to as recruiters). Most respondents—both male and female—commented on the patriarchal nature of Kosovo’s society and (with the exception of the international group) viewed women as victims of their male family and friends’ pressures, though finally this view is now being contested in the KCSS’ latest report on “Women in Violent Extremism: Lessons Learned from Kosovo.”\textsuperscript{102}

One stakeholder from the group of government actors also noted that veiled women feel discriminated by the state (also corroborated by the aforementioned research report) because they are not allowed to work or study while wearing the hijab, therefore falling prey to radicalisation by their husbands or seeing no other option

\textsuperscript{93} Interviews with two respondents from Istog/Istok, December 2016.
\textsuperscript{94} Interview with respondent in Deçan/Dečani, November 2016.
\textsuperscript{95} Interview with three respondents from Pejë/Peć, November 2016.
\textsuperscript{96} Interview with respondent from Pejë/Peć, November 2016.
\textsuperscript{97} Interview with respondent from Klinë/Klina, November 2016.
\textsuperscript{98} Interview with respondent from Gjilan/Gnjilane, November 2016.
\textsuperscript{99} Interview with respondent from Kamenicë/Kamenica, December 2016.
\textsuperscript{100} Interview with four respondents from Prishtina/Priština, November 2016.
\textsuperscript{101} Ferran and Kreider, “Why Young Western Women Would Join ISIS.”
\textsuperscript{102} Jakupi and Kelmendi.
but to follow their husbands to countries like Syria. While this may be overly blackand-white, this example reaffirms the risks of marginalising women, particularly religiously observant women. The student from Gjilan/Gnjilane pointed out that men and women in Kosovo also pray in different locations, with men frequenting mosques whereas women prefer to mostly pray in the privacy of their homes, hinting that this might lead to different ways and approaches to recruitment.

Regarding women as radicalisers, the men across all focus groups (with the exception of representatives from the international community) did not think that women played a role. The student from Gjilan/Gnjilane said he had never heard of cases of women recruiters, and even less so of women recruiting men. Four government actors also pointed out the lack of cases and police data of women in/from Kosovo being used by ISIS as recruiters. A fifth government actor pointed out that the number of women involved in recruiting for violent extremism was much smaller compared to men, whilst a sixth member pointed out that she found it hard to believe that women in Kosovo have no role in recruitment knowing the female nature and their ability in communication and persuasion.

Most of the comments from the field ignore women's control and agency over their lives and decisions, including radicalisation and, crucially, the impact of other women (in Kosovo or abroad) in this process. What are missing from most of these views are perceptions of a woman's autonomy and capabilities (as pointed out by one of the participants from the focus group of government actors), as well as a neglect of women's self-directed radicalisation, especially when such instances have been observed in Kosovo. Additional public education regarding the radicalisation of women is needed to prevent women from becoming a blind spot in CVE considerations.

Whilst KCSS’ report is indeed a good start and a step in the right direction in filling the gap of knowledge and understanding, more focus and research is needed to understand the pathways to radicalisation for women in Kosovo, the age when their radicalisation process begins (whether sooner, later or the same as men), the time it takes for women to radicalise, the probable influences on their radicalisation, the role of their social environment including where / how they pray, as well as the roles they may play in radicalising others.

4.1.6 Hotspots of radicalisation at community level

Similarly to the radicalisation of women, respondents are unsure about specific places or sites where radicalisation is taking place in their communities (see Figure 13). Yet a third reported that these existed. Women were more likely than men to believe that specific sites of radicalisation were present within their communities (with 37.8% saying yes, and only 9.9% saying no). Respondents in hotspot municipalities were the most likely to report them in their communities, with 44.8% saying that there were, as compared to 31.2% in other municipalities. This was only rivalled by respondents in the region of Ferizaj/Uroševac (with 42.4% saying yes), and were also the most certain. Those older than 51 were the most likely to report them (42.9%), while the 36-50 age bracket was the least likely at only 26.1%. Hotspots were more likely to be reported the more educated the respondents were.
Nearly half of those who believed that there were specific hotspots indicated mosques as hotspots (47.4%), followed by madrassas (34.4%) and churches (27.8%). Responses broke into two main groups: religious institutions – which were the largest group – followed by educational institutions or activities (see Figure 14).

Women who believed in the existence of hotspots were also more likely to cite the various options (see Figure 15), especially madrassas, as hotspots (43.5%, compared to 26.6% of men who said yes). This was also true (albeit at less of an extent) for churches, after-school activities, and schools/universities. A similar trend was observed with respondents of non-Muslim confession compared to respondents of Muslim confession. These divides were largest with madrassas and mosques, with respondents of non-Muslim confession citing them as hotspots 57.1% and 66.7%, respectively, compared to 33.5% and 46.3% among respondents of Muslim confession.
Cross-tabulated by region (see Figure 16), Prishtina/Priština and Ferizaj/Uroševac were the most likely to cite schools/universities (39% and 25%, respectively). In addition, more than half of the respondents from Prishtina/Priština who believed hotspots were in their community cited madrassas. A significant spike was also observed in the Ferizaj/Uroševac region, with 57.1% of those who answered yes in the previous question pointing to after-school activities. This last insight is reinforced at the municipal level, with 32.8% of respondents in hotspots indicated after-school activities as hotspots in their communities (compared to only 19.3% in other municipalities).

In contrast, however, respondents in hotspot municipalities were generally significantly less likely to report the other locations as community hotspots.

When disaggregated by education level, a large spike was observed among the university-educated regarding madrassas at 45.3%, over double other groups. Although the sub-samples for this question are relatively lower (as evidenced by the variation), these unique spikes should provoke further investigation as to why certain regions report unique areas as hotspots.
Half of respondents who offered comments believe that radicalisation is happening in their communities in secret but specific places. These included four respondents who believe radicalisation is happening in “basements, where the community cannot suspect anything.”103 Another respondent from said, “I believe they have secret organisations.”104 However, none of these respondents were able to corroborate these suspicions, which seem to reflect common perceptions that radicalisation is only a phenomenon somehow exogenous of society. Yet experience has shown that radicalisation can also be a very public process perpetuated even by individuals operating within society’s institutions. The role of such endogenous actors—such as the media, educational and religious institutions, and student clubs—were explored by this research and its findings are discussed below.

4.1.7 Reactions to the possibility of Kosovan fighters returning to their communities

When asked to give their opinion regarding the possibility that Kosovan fighters in Syria and Iraq may return to Kosovo, 356 out of the 608 people surveyed (58% of the sample) chose to comment on this open-ended question. The themes are as follows:

Grouped generally, 226 of the 356 (63%) commented that they would feel either at risk, threatened, in danger, scared, unsafe, fearful, worried, and disappointed, shocked, very bad, sad or vulnerable at the potential of returned fighters in their neighbourhood. Safety for themselves and particularly for their families and children is the primary concern. The emotions and reactions listed here apply across Kosovo. Comments include:

“I would not socialise with them.”
“At risk, but until he or she is released by the state I am okay.”
“I would kill that person.”
“I would be rough with them, I don’t want them in our neighbourhood.”
“I am scared of them because they could cause problems in our neighbourhood.” “Even if they regret [what they did], I would not feel safe.”
“Always[living] with the fear that they will organise something similar in our country.”
“Happy that they are alive, but I don’t want them in my society, I would be afraid.”
“Not safe; they will start spreading radical views, propaganda and extremism.”
“F - them! I would feel in danger, but we are able to throw bombs too.”
“I would say to them you accomplished nothing, you were just fooling yourself.”
“I wouldn’t feel safe because I think his brain is damaged, they should send them to rehabilitation.”
“A little bit scared about their reasons for returning and aims for the future.”
“I would not feel calm because I have seen many videos about their behaviour.”
“Of course I would feel scared since he is a cold-blooded man and easy to radicalise.”

Sixteen out of 356 (4.5%) of respondents said they would give returned fighters in their neighbourhood a second chance, as well as help them to re-socialise and re-integrate into society. Although this is a small number, it is still an encouraging

103 Interview with respondents from Pejë/Peć, Prizren and Gjilan/Gnjilane, November 2016.
104 Interview with respondent from Vushtrri/Vučitrn, December 2016.
one. All 16 respondents pointed to the need for resocialisation and rehabilitation to ensure returned fighters become part of the community and restart their lives. Respondents also showed interest in understanding the reasons they had radicalised and chose to fight abroad in the first place, as well as showed willingness to impact them positively by using a direct dialogue approach. Additionally, a number of respondents in this group highlighted the important role that needs to be played by the government in the form of immediate rehabilitation programmes upon return.

Thirty-seven out of 356 of respondents (10.3%) expressed neutrality towards any return of fighters to their communities. However, they differed in how they qualified this neutrality and the conditions they placed upon it. A thin line separating neutrality and indifference was also observed. Within this group, one respondent used the term “normal” to describe their feelings – a term also used by another respondent whilst a further two simply stated that, “people regret.” It is interesting to note that the theme of ‘regret’ and the action of repenting came up frequently – on and off the record – across respondents, irrespective of where they stood on the matter of radicalised fighters returning to their communities.

The feeling of neutrality also echoed with respondents from Prishtina/Priština, Gjakovë/Dakovica and Rahovec/Orahovac. Those from Pejë/Pć, Prizren, Ferizaj/Uroševac and Shtime/Štimlje mostly felt a mix of concerned and unconcerned indifference towards this scenario, whereas those of Lipjan/Lipljan and Glogoc/Glogovac/Drenas again placed emphasis on the importance of remorse. A resident commented, “It is not right if no one deals with their re-integration into society if they have shown remorse.” Two respondents pointed out that they would be happy if fighters returned to their communities having regretted their decisions, whereas another resident felt that this is of no concern to him, but rather the government’s job to deal with any returned fighters.

A very small number of respondents specifically mentioned that returnees should be jailed, whilst 23 out of 356 (6.4% of those who commented—3.8% of the total sample) commented they would feel “very good” and “happy” at their return. The latter group of respondents were mainly from Gjilan/Gnjilane, Kaçanik/Kaćanik, Ferizaj/Uroševac, Prishtina/Priština, and one from Mitrovicë/Mitrovica. These results are interesting when considered in light of KCSS’ 2016 survey, where 55% of those they surveyed believing that returnees “should be subjected to strict programs of reintegration, rehabilitation, and deradicalization” compared to 22% who thought they should be arrested, 15% who thought they should not be allowed to return, and 6% who thought they presented no threat. Dealing with returnees remains a complex and challenging task.

105 Interview with respondent from Gjilan/Gnjilane, November 2016.
106 Interview with respondent from Istog/Istok, December 2016.
107 Interview with respondents from Istog/Istok, December 2016.
108 Interview with respondent from Lipjan/Lipljan, December 2016.
109 Interview with respondent from Glogoc/Glogovac/Drenas and Podujevë/Podujevo, November 2016 and December 2016.
110 Interview with respondent from Prishtina/Priština, November 2016.
4.2 RADICALISATION IN EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

4.2.1 The extent to which radicalisation is occurring in educational institutions

When respondents were asked to rank educational institutions according to the risks that radicalisation is occurring within their premises (see Figure 17), madrassas was the top concern (with 31.9% of respondents putting it in the top tier). Madrassas were followed by after-school activities and churches, which were largely listed first, (28.1% and 20.1%, respectively), while primary schools and language classes were largely ranked last (24.5% and 21.1%, respectively). Whilst the student from Gjilan/Gnjilane also mentioned the role of a madrassa in his road towards radicalisation, further research and findings on what is being covered and taught at madrassas in Kosovo – since their general and traditional role encompasses a variety of subjects alongside religious education – would be useful in further understanding public perception.

Figure 17: Radicalisation in Kosovan educational institutions (Q3.1a)

Delving deeper, Kosovans surveyed were asked whether they had ever encountered or noticed educational leaders demonstrating traits suggestive of radicalisation, such as altered appearance, social isolation, and expressing a desire to fight in foreign wars(see Figure 18). These factors are commonly cited actions or traits that might lead an individual to suspect a person is radicalised, and help to clarify how respondents may have arrived at their answers. To this question, 63% answered no, with 37% answering yes.

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112 Again, those traits are (in their entirety and in no particular order):
- Altered appearance – change in style of dress and/or personal appearance;
- Social isolation – losing interest in activities they used to enjoy/distancing themselves from friends and usual social groups;
- Abnormal routines;
- Questioning their identity;
- Questioning others’ faith;
- Becoming more argumentative or aggressive in their viewpoints/becoming quick to condemn those who disagree;
- Displaying feelings of isolation and expressing an “us” and “them” mentality;
- Likes and shares radical/extremist pages or media on Facebook and other social media;
- They talk about and express a desire of fighting in foreign wars; and
- Other (please specify).
Consistent with previous results, women were slightly more likely to report encountering traits of radicalisation in educational leaders than men (39.1% to 34.9% for men). Youth between 18 and 25 were the age group most likely to report it (at 43.9%), and those with university-level education were the mostly likely educational level group to report it, at 43.5%. When considered along with the finding that students were the employment status group with the highest likelihood to report this (at 52.9%), this raises important questions regarding radicalisation in the educational systems, particularly universities. Inversely, housewives were the least likely disaggregated group to report this, at 15.2%, perhaps because of their diminished likelihood of attending university. Geographical differences in both the regional and municipal levels were not observed, with the sole exception of respondents from the region of Pejë/Peć being less likely to report this, at 27.4%.

Respondents who report having encountered educational leaders with traits of radicalisation were asked to specify which traits those were (see Figure 19). Half of those mentioned an altered appearance, as demonstrated by the graph below. Surprisingly, 13.3% of respondents that responded yes (4.9% of the total sample) have encountered educational leaders talking about and expressing a desire of fighting in foreign wars. In addition 34.7% reported witnessing educational leaders liking and sharing extremist pages or media on social media (12.8% of yes), 28.9% questioning others’ faith, and 30.2% becoming more argumentative or aggressive in their viewpoints or becoming quick to condemn those who disagree with them. Though some might be prone to dismiss these numbers as low, the simple existence (even if only perceived) of these traits in figures of authority who are entrusted with shaping, guiding and inspiring the next generation gives extreme cause for concern. None of these traits fit what most would consider a healthy educational environment.

Some gender disparities were observed with disaggregation. For example, women were more likely than men to report an altered appearance (55.5% to 44.3%), abnormal routines (22.7% to 16%), and social media engagement with radical or extremist content (39.5% to 29.3%). On the other hand, men were more likely to report that educational leaders were questioning their own identity (17.9% to 10.9%), the faith of others (33% to 25.2%), and displaying feelings of isolation and a divisive mentality (33% to 25.2%).

By region, significant spikes were observed in Ferizaj/Uroševac regarding educational leaders questioning others’ faith (48.2%) and expressing a desire to fight in foreign conflicts (29.6%) – significantly more than other regions. The Gjilan/Gnjilane region was also most likely to notice engagement with radical or extremist social media...
content at 48%, followed by Prishtina/Priština at 43.8%. These incidents should provoke an interest to investigate more deeply why these issues are being reported in these regions. Differences at the municipal level were less pronounced but more consistent, with respondents from hotspot municipalities generally being more likely to report the various factors, with the exception of social isolation being slightly less likely.

Respondents of Muslim confession were more likely than respondents of non-Muslim confession to report that radicalisation is occurring in their communities, but were also more likely to downplay the existence of specific sites where it was occurring. This was most dramatic when comparing the percentage of respondents of Muslim confession who believe that madrassas and mosques are hotspots to the higher percentage of respondents of non-Muslim confession who agree. Once again, this might also highlight a lack of understanding (and in turn perceiving) the role and teachings of a madrassa in Kosovo among respondents of non-Muslim confession.

There was an overwhelming agreement across the majority of focus group participants that radicalisation is taking place at educational institutions across Kosovo, though there was disagreement to the extent to which radicalization is occurring. Most pointed out that this is happening at high school level, though university was also firmly cited, and even elementary school discussed. Stakeholders from educational institutions affirmed that they think there are cases of radicalisation in their institutions, though one of them did not believe this was happening in his school. Another participant countered with the opinion that the phenomenon was either overlooked, or not noticed by other professors and the management in those institutions.

The student from Gjilan/Gnjilane stated that from his experience, teachers at his high school knew of radicalised students (as well as of radicalised students trying to radicalise others at school) but did nothing. He believes that had teachers held information sessions and warned pupils about the dangers of radicalisation, thus dedicating time to prevention, he may have not ended up adopting such radical views and supporting an extremist group like ISIS. A woman from the female
stakeholder group also shared the example of a Muslim and a Christian kindergarten in Prishtina/Priština where pre-school teachers try to religiously influence children as young as five. Another woman shared a personal example of two private religious high schools in Prizren – one Muslim and another Christian; she wanted to join one of them after finishing 9th grade, but her parents were categorically against it and forbid her from joining either out of fear she would be religiously influenced.

4.2.2 Radical propaganda in educational institutions

Only 73 respondents (12%) claimed to have been exposed to radical propaganda and material intolerant to religious peace or freedom in educational institutions (see Figure 20). This figure, however, increases to 16.74% in the 18-25 age bracket, and is highest among those with a university-level education, followed by master’s level. Of course, this can be explained by understanding that an increase in education increases the likelihood someone would encounter, or have more information to be able to single out such.

However, respondents in Gjilan/Gnjilane and Ferizaj/Uroševac provinces were slightly more likely to report this (at 15% and 15.2%, respectively - compared to the other regions, which clustered around 11.1%). At the municipal level, respondents in hotspot municipalities were more likely to report this coming from staff (19% to 11.5%), student groups and clubs (28.6% to 23.1%), and educational materials (19% to 9.6%) than those from other municipalities.

![Figure 20: Sources of radical propaganda and intolerant materials in Kosovo's educational institutions (Q3.1b, if yes)](image)

Regarding the sources of these materials, teachers, professors, and student groups account for half of these incidents.
4.3 RADICALISATION AND THE MEDIA

4.3.1 The role of mainstream media in radicalisation

Almost half of Kosovans surveyed believe that the media has a role in radicalisation (48.9%, cumulatively), compared to 23.7% who said no (see Figure 21).

Upon disaggregation, men were more likely to say ‘yes’ than women (46.7% to 39.5%), as well as respondents of non-Muslim confession compared to respondents of Muslim confession (slightly, from 47.2% to 42.7%). Those with a master’s degree had the highest likelihood of answering yes to the question of any disaggregated group, at 58.7%. However, this was matched by respondents from hotspot municipalities (also at 58.7%), who significantly differed from Kosovans from other municipalities (at only 38.3%). By region, Mitrovicë/Mitrovica and Gjilan/Gnjilane had the highest percentage of yes responses at 57.6% and 55%, respectively.

Additionally, 219 individuals out of the 608 sampled (36% of the sample) chose to comment on which media, print, or online platform they thought contributes to radicalisation. 98 out of 219 respondents (or 44.7%) identified online media as key a contributor particularly through radical or extremist video content, including freely available lectures from radical Imams. The rest of the respondents chose either a mix of both mainstream and online media as drivers, or named specific TV and internet channels they believed directly contribute to radicalisation by giving a platform to radical religious leaders via various programmes, or by disseminating wrong information and distributing inflammatory news content.

The concern of news reporting in Kosovo, and the specific role this has played in aiding the spread of radical extremist views was also highlighted by all stakeholder groups. International stakeholders pointed out that Kosovo has an issue with funding of serious journalism and viewed with great concern the “copy/paste” nature of Kosovan news irrespective of the outlet. They also pointed out there is a lack of training on how reporting should be done, as well as highlighted the important role the government must play in protecting the few Kosovan journalists who research and report upon this topic properly and qualitatively.

Stakeholders from government actors expressed concern of those who have been invited to speak in various programmes on issues of national security pertaining to violent extremism or terrorism. They viewed none of them as experts in the field and
commented on the need for greater and stronger collaboration between government and the media. Additionally, giving a national platform (even if unknowingly) to radical Imams and other figures known in security circles for their radical extremist views was also highlighted as a key issue in the spread of extremist propaganda and incorrect religious information. The latter was also highlighted by the group of women stakeholders who commented that the media has both a positive and negative role in radicalisation, particularly with the reporting of inadequate news on Islam, which has irritated, revolted and led to hatred from many Muslims.

The issue of inflammatory and hyperbolised titles – particularly in the online portals of mainstream media – was also highlighted as problematic in the group of women stakeholders. It was recognised that when media reporting is done impartially and correctly, this can play a crucial positive role. One of the participants in this group gave a concrete example of witnessing the same news being reported differently by two different outlets. A lack of corroboration of facts alongside a lack of critical and analytical reporting was also noted, which supports earlier observations for the need of serious journalism and funds towards appropriate journalistic training.

Lastly, religious communities also commented on their concerns of how media hyperbolise issues and lack a collaborative approach with these communities. Stakeholders from the Islamic Community highlighted through the example of Ramadan, in that no media (with the exception of Radio Dukagjin) invites them to hold lectures on the meaning of this important month in Islam, as well as the tolerance and fraternity promoted by it. Additionally, they warned that Kosovan media must be extremely careful not to propagate religious ideologies, which they noted as a serious issue. These comments and experiences make it clear that better training in serious journalism, as well as more and better communication, collaboration and cooperation between and across media, government, and religious communities is needed and essential.

### 4.3.2 The role of the internet in radicalisation and self-radicalisation

Regarding the internet, there is nearly a consensus among Kosovans surveyed that it has a clear role in self-radicalisation (92.6%, cumulatively), with less than two percent saying no (see Figure 22). Regarding specific outlets, survey respondents pointed to Facebook, YouTube, and religious chat rooms or forums as being used the most for self-radicalisation (see Figure 23). This is significant, as Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, and Microsoft recently announced their intention to cooperate to identify and
remove extremist content from their platforms in December 2016.\textsuperscript{113} This becomes particularly important when considered in light of the fact that internet penetration in Kosovo is quite high, with 76.6% of Kosovans claiming to use the internet and 53.7% of those users being less than 30 years of age.\textsuperscript{114}

**Figure 23: Online outlets used in self-radicalisation (Q5.1)**

![Diagram showing online outlets used in self-radicalisation](image)

### 4.3.3 Citizens’ views on how radicalisation can be prevented by using the internet

The inverse question of how the internet could be used to prevent radicalisation was answered by 120 individuals out of the 608 sampled, corresponding to 19.7% of the total sample. These respondents were generally divided into two main sides holding a firm position, with a third group (27 respondents, or 22.5%) being generally uncertain of a solution, or resigned to the fact that nothing can be done about controlling what is posted on the internet as a measure for prevention. 50 out of 120 respondents (41.6%) advocated for a ban or censorship of those portals featuring and spreading radical extremist propaganda. Some went as far as suggesting radical measure of barring access to social media pages such as Facebook and YouTube.

Though the government, as part of its CVE strategy, has done significant work in closing down sites and portals propagating hate and extremism, it is also accepting of the fact that the respective departments do not have the necessary resources to monitor a large source such as the wide world web – and therefore highlight the inability to take action against every instance of hate and extremist propaganda – at all times.

Forty-three out of the 120 respondents (35.8% of the total sample) suggested that various online campaigns can be created to counter the negative influence emanating from portals spreading hateful and extremist propaganda. Concrete examples of possible campaigns included: educational videos; positive religious outreach and


\textsuperscript{114} Kursani, “Report Inquiring into the Causes and Consequences of Kosovo Citizens’ Involvement as Foreign Fighters in Syria and Iraq.” 13.
programmes correctly interpreting religious teachings and texts; awareness-raising videos which document the negative aspects of violent extremism; programmes that promote religious tolerance; conversations with religious leaders warning against violent extremism and sharing the true position of Islam on the matter; and posting of lectures where the teachings of the Qur’an and Hadith are interpreted ‘correctly’ by Imams who are viewed as authoritative by Kosovo’s devout Muslim population. Interestingly, these responses are in line with the predominate view that radicalisation is a religious (and even Islamic) issue. Missing from these responses are ideas related to a more holistic approach, such as by addressing political and socioeconomic issues.

4.4 REPORTING AND PREVENTING

4.4.1 How Kosovans would discuss and report instances of radicalisation

Responses regarding how those surveyed may respond to the suspected radicalisation of a friend or family member revealed a series of interesting insights. Most respondents, it is important to notice, would seemingly only opt to talk to an individual suspected of becoming radicalised personally (which 60.2% would do). In comparison, 42.3% would talk to a friend or family member and 38% would talk to an influential member of the community, while only 34% would talk to the police (see Figure 24).

No significant gender disparity was observed in cross-tabulation, although the likelihood these actions would be taken mostly increased with the educational level of the respondent—with the notable exception of talking to the police, which trended inversely. Self-employed respondents were far less likely to reach out for outside guidance (only 13.9% would talk to a friend or family member and only
11.1% would seek the guidance of an influential community member, for example, although they were the employment status group most likely to talk to the police (41.7%).

Geographically, respondents in hotspot municipalities were less likely than respondents in other municipalities to talk to an influential person in the community (32.2% to 39.8%) but were more likely to talk to the police (41.3% to 31.8%)—more than almost any other disaggregated group.

**Figure 25: How Kosovans would respond to radicalisation in their social circles (Q7.1, by religion)**

Alternatively, respondents of Muslim confession were significantly more likely to engage with a friend or family member that they believed was at risk, as well as leveraging the advice and support of others (see Figure 25). However, respondents of Muslim confession were far less likely to talk to the police, whereas most respondents of non-Muslim confession opted to not get personally involved and refer the issue to the police.

However, when asked if a hotline was established to discuss and report instances of possible radicalisation, 67.4% said that they would be willing to use it, compared to 19.2% who said no. There was no significant disparity revealed through cross-tabulations, with the minor exception of respondents from hotspot municipalities, who were more likely to say yes than respondents from other municipalities (73.4% to 65.6%).

For those that selected “other,” over 60% would opt to alert a police hotline, whereas over a third would place a call to a hotline of their respective religious community (see Figure 26). Men were slightly more likely to appeal to their religious community (25% to 20%), while women were slightly more likely to reach out to their municipal government (15.4% to 9.4%). These findings are in line with KCSS’s survey, where 57% of Kosovans they surveyed reporting trust in religious institutions, compared to only 14% of respondents reporting trust in their government (21% and 25% reporting that they do not trust these institutions, respectively—the survey here had high rates of uncertainty, with 22% and 61% of respondents selection “do not know”).

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4.4.2 The main sources that would help Kosovans in preventing radicalisation

When asked what societal elements might be most helpful in preventing radicalisation (see Figure 27), family is overwhelmingly cited as the most important source of prevention (at 69.2%). This is distantly followed by friends/peer group (25.3%), religious leaders (25.2%), and the police (19.4%). Therefore, an effective CVE strategy would have to specifically seek to augment the abilities of families to consider and respond to the risk of radicalisation of its members. Even though friends, religious leaders, and the police were less likely to be cited as sources of prevention, CVE programming would do well to avoid neglecting them. Interestingly, the majority of respondents answered ‘yes’ to whether the establishment of a hotline to report issues of radicalisation would be helpful, which they prefaced with the need for this to be done anonymously.

In line with findings from the field, all stakeholders interviewed placed a key importance on the role of the family – and particularly mothers – in prevention. Mothers were singled out as crucial in this respect for a number of reasons, including: being closer and more attuned to their children’s lives; their heightened ability to pick up on early signs of the negative phenomenon, as reflected in rhetoric and daily
routines; local Islamic beliefs that a mother must give permission for their child to perform jihad; and the critical importance of love and affection.

The Islamic Council was singled out as having a primary role in disseminating counter-narratives (which at present are weaker than narratives) to radicalisation. The two representatives from the Islamic Council of different Kosovan cities present at stakeholder interviews pointed out, however, that as many as 600-700, or even 1000 Muslims pray in some of their mosques, thus making their task impossible. However, they did concede to the strong role they can play in engaging with Imams who may be viewed as preaching violent extremism. They also advocated against the use of indiscriminate imprisonment (followed by subsequent release) of Imams, which has sent a message of intolerance and scapegoating to the Muslim community. They further advocated for greater collaboration with the government - which they maintain has not properly engaged with them in fighting this phenomenon – and across all religious communities. The Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) was singled out as the only international actor that is engaging with all religious communities at once, regarding collaborative work on religious tolerance. It was suggested as an example to be followed by other international organisation and Kosovo’s government itself.

Stakeholders from the international group pointed out that a video campaign featuring human stories could be a useful tool in prevention. They added that the national action plan on CVE needs to be streamlined, as well as coordinated and executed better. They highlighted that Kosovo’s Ministry of Education, Science and Technology holds responsibility for 48% of the action plan on CVE whilst receiving no budget for its implementation. This was viewed as an important issue. They agreed that Kosovo Police has done most of the preventive work so far, though this is not in their remit, and shared information about the new Referral Mechanism being piloted in one of Kosovo’s municipalities with the support and steering of the MoIA. They also held themselves accountable by conceding that the international community doesn’t always collaborate as well as it could and should, which in turn translates into poorer coordination and collaboration with state actors. These findings are reflected in KCSS’ 2016 finding that 5% of Kosovans they surveyed perceived their government’s CVE strategy as having been effective (with another 35% saying it was “somehow [sic] successful”), compared to 57% who believed these efforts were unsuccessful.116 Whilst more efforts are needed, better visibility and wider public information of those efforts and initiatives already put place by the government is also required.

Lastly, the formerly radicalised student from Gjilan/Gnjilane proposed that the creation of groups of former radicalised individuals speaking to youth about the signs and dangers of violent extremism would also be an effective tool in prevention.

This mixed-methods research delves deeper into Kosovan citizens’ perceptions and concerns regarding radicalisation in their communities than before with a broad and representative sample of 608 respondents. Additional insights were gained through stakeholder interviews and focus groups. Many of the results above confirm that radicalisation is an issue across Kosovo, which has complex routes, a varied understanding in Kosovan society, and stems from a combination of societal and external factors. Divides that exist between expert and stakeholder perspectives with those of the public suggest that understandings of the nature and extent of radicalisation may not be fully grasped by the average Kosovan citizen. There is no consistent profile of a radicalisation leading to an individual becoming a violent extremist in Kosovo, whilst the issue of dealing returnees, their rehabilitation and de-radicalisation continues to remain crucial. No single strategy can be advised, with punitive, prevention, rehabilitation and de-radicalisation measures needing to be tailored to fit the specific context, be this regional, demographic or other. Some of the key findings include the following:

5.1 KEY FINDINGS

5.1.1 Why Do Individuals Become Radicalised in Kosovo?

Beliefs that radicalisation is driven by economic incentives continue to persist in Kosovo, with 43.8% of respondents believing so - more than any other choice. However, this is in contrast with police records of 112 returned known foreign

117 For a summary of key survey responses, see Appendix 2.
fighters (mostly self-declared after arrest) where 64% are in average or above-average economic circumstance, and only 36% in poor circumstances as reported in Adrian Shtuni’s latest work on the “Dynamics of Radicalisation and Violent Extremism in Kosovo.” These contrasting views between the public’s perception and what is reported by returned FTFs further highlight the need for bespoke and holistic policies and programmes of information, awareness-raising and prevention tailored to different strata of Kosovan society.

In an in-depth interview with a former radicalised individual, the view of economic incentives and one’s financial situation was refuted as a reason for radicalisation in Kosovo. The youth in question cited the dissemination of wrong and/or untruthful facts alongside the incorrect interpretation of religious texts (particularly the Hadith) by radicalised Imams to people who have not previously read them as key reasons.

Only a third of respondents selected “express[ing] a desire to fight in foreign wars” as a sign of radicalisation, therefore most respondents did not believe that radicalisation was solely related to the issue of foreign fighters.

Lack of stimulating extra-curricular activities coupled with the lack of employment and other opportunities for Kosovan youth— as a country with the youngest population in Europe— is a key issue intimately linked with driving radicalisation in particular, and one that needs to be seriously addressed in general.

The overall results from the quantitative and qualitative research of this study on why Kosovans perceive their fellow nationals become radicalised are congruent with those of the literature review; there is no one single profile and no one set of circumstances or reasons leading to radicalisation.

There is a need for public education about pathways to radicalisation as these are diverse and continue to be poorly understood in Kosovo. The variety of responses received on this subject illustrates the difficulty in confining the discussion on the pathways to radicalisation to only a number of options.

5.1.2 How Do Individuals Become Radicalised in Kosovo?

42.9% list social isolation as an indicator of radicalisation and becoming radicalised, with 44.4% listing aggression and a further 44.4% engaging with extremist content on social media.

59.7% of Kosovans look to outward signs in changes of appearance as indicators of radicalisation. This raises questions of whether community members may over-report incidences of radicalisation in their community, such as via a hotline or to the police.

Women were consistently more likely to report that radicalisation is occurring in their communities. This finding calls for further analysis on why this is the case, such as whether women have differing definitions of what classifies as radical or whether women face increased exposure to radicalised individuals.

There is a general uncertainty about the risks and manners of women's radicalisation in Kosovo. In addition, a minor but significant number of respondents believe that women are not at risk of radicalisation—despite numerous examples of Kosovan women to the contrary. This is in comparison to two out of five Kosovans who believe women are at risk and over a third who do not know. This is significant in that it suggests that respondents may not have considered this issue, or that they do not have an adequate understanding of how women might be radicalised. In contrast, focus group participants all agreed that women were at risk. Women’s roles as recruiters, however, were largely unknown by respondents.

34.7% of respondents reported witnessing educational leaders liking and sharing extremist pages or media on social media. This is 12.8% of the overall sample who replied yes to having noticed educational leaders demonstrating traits suggestive of radicalisation.

28.9% and 30.2% of the sample above reported witnessing educational leaders questioning other’s faith, becoming more argumentative or aggressive in their view-points respectively.

12% of respondents have been exposed to radical propaganda and material intolerant to religious peace or freedom in educational institutions. This figure increases to 16.74% in the 18-25 age bracket, and is highest among those with university-level education.

Respondents in hotspot municipalities were more likely to report this coming from staff (19% to 11.5%), student groups and clubs (28.6% to 23.1%) and educational materials (19% to 9.6%) than those from other municipalities.

Almost half of Kosovans surveyed believe that the media has a role to play in radicalisation. 48.9% cumulatively, compared to 23.7% who said no.

Training, serious reporting, and collaboration across all actors and the media are clearly needed to enable the media to best play the positive role it could in fighting and preventing the spread of violent extremism in Kosovo. This was a need identified by survey respondents and focus group discussants, although none of the media invited to stakeholder interview meetings attended, making it impossible to reflect their views on the issue.

44.7% of respondents (from a pool of 219 who chose to address the question) identified online media as a key contributor to radicalisation particularly through radical or extremist video content, including freely available lectures from radical Imams.

92.6% (cumulatively) of Kosovans surveyed believe the internet plays a clear role in self-radicalisation.
Facebook, YouTube, and religious chat rooms or forums are seen as the most used platforms in self-radicalisation. Interestingly, Instagram and Twitter – two platforms used by ISIS recruiters – were not labelled as such.

Numerous statements by survey respondents and focus group participants do warn that a person’s new-found conservatism can also be mistaken for radicalism. Moreover, reliance by respondents on an individual’s changing appearance as a sign of radicalisation calls into question this finding—a reliance that was just as likely regardless of the religion of a respondent.

### 5.1.3 Where Are Individuals Becoming Radicalised in Kosovo?

62.7% of Kosovans surveyed believe that radicalisation is occurring in their local communities. Nearly one in four respondents claim to know someone personally who is or has been radicalised.

24.7% of Kosovans surveyed (and 34.2% of those who answered yes to there being radicalisation in their communities) personally know someone who is a radicalised individual in their community.

Results support previous findings regarding the idea and locations of geographical hotspots in Kosovo. However, the differences between the hotspot municipalities (Kaçanik/Kačanik, Mitrovicë/Mitrovica, Vushtrri/Vučitrn, Gjilan/Gnjilane, Hani i Elezit/Elez Han, Skënderaj/Srbica, and Ferizaj/Uroševac) and other municipalities were not to the extent to justify focusing solely on hotspot municipalities. That is, reports of radicalisation were largely prevalent throughout Kosovo. While these findings may assist in identifying priority areas for CVE programming, neglecting other areas completely may create additional gaps.

47.4% of those who believe there were specific hotspots of radicalisation indicated these to be mosques, and 34.4% indicated madrassas.

Respondents from the Ferizaj/Uroševac region consistently report higher rates of radicalisation and hotspots. This largely reaffirms concerns that the region is a hotspot of radicalisation.

57.1% of those who answered yes to believing there are specific hotspots of radicalisation in Ferizaj/Uroševac pointed to after-school activities.

Focus group participants believe that the risks of radicalisation, although present throughout Kosovo, have diminished. This view reaffirms recent research, which finds that the incidence of Kosovans leaving to become foreign fighters and recruits has nearly ceased. This may be the result of a variety of factors, including the increasing difficulty to get to ISIS-held territory (the group which received the majority of recruits from Kosovo), diminishing security and resources in those areas, or even a change in ISIS’s own recruitment strategies. However, this finding requires caution, as the fact that Kosovans are no longer leaving to become foreign recruits does not necessarily mean that radicalisation trends inside Kosovo have behaved similarly.
Many Kosovans worry about the risks and vulnerabilities from the potential of returned fighters in their neighbourhoods. Safety for themselves and particularly for their families and children is the primary concern. As highlighted in some of the comments above, the potential return of fighters to respondents’ home communities, if not managed carefully in terms of de-radicalisation and re-integration, could also lead to violence as a response in perceived self-defence. Therefore, de-radicalisation and reintegration programmes must secure the buy-in and enlist the support of the community in order to be successful.

Radicalisation is likely occurring in Kosovo’s educational institutions. This view was demonstrated by student respondents’ higher rates of reporting radicalisation in their communities and by educational leaders in the focus group all agreeing that it is occurring.

31.9% of respondents who believe radicalisation is happening in educational institutions placed madrassas as a top concern for radicalisation followed by after-school activities.

5.1.4 Reporting and Preventing

60.2% of respondents would seemingly opt to talk to an individual suspected of becoming radicalised personally. 42.3% would talk to a friend or family member, 38% would talk to an influential member of the community, and 34% to the police.

Respondents in hotspot municipalities were more likely than respondents in other municipalities to talk to the police (41.3% to 31.8%).

Respondents of Muslim confession demonstrate greater willingness to engage with at-risk individuals, when compared to respondents of non-Muslim confession. This is a key insight, demonstrating that respondents of Muslim confession express a greater confidence to get involved with the issue of radicalisation. However, respondents of Muslim confession were far less likely to talk to law enforcement. Greater trust might be needed to ensure that, if personal interventions to the potential radicalisation of a friend or family member are unsuccessful, Kosovan respondents of Muslim confession would be more willing to reach out to the country’s security services. Taken together, these insights encourage CVE programming to empower Kosovans to engage with at-risk individuals effectively as well as building further trust with the police.

The vast majority of respondents see the family as the most important social structure to help in the prevention of radicalisation.

67.4% of respondents said they would be willing to use an anonymous hotline to report instances of radicalisation. Kosovans surveyed also seem to prefer to call religious leaders over government actors.
5.2 CONCLUSION

These key findings are helpful in assisting researchers to prioritize critical avenues of further study, encouraging media officials to promote healthy journalistic practices, and guiding state actors to strategic areas of priority—both geographically and thematically. Moreover, it serves as a foundation on which to build the national conversation on radicalisation, its causes, and how best to prevent it. While the trend of Kosovans travelling to Iraq and Syria to join or support ISIS has diminished, this latest crisis of radicalisation has proven that Kosovo, like the rest of the world, needs to develop smart, research-driven preventative and intervention measures in order to counter the pull of violent extremism. However, this lull in recruitment must not be taken as an excuse to withhold or delay the development of proactive strategies and national referral mechanisms, as the threat of violent radicalisation is an ever-evolving one. New local or global triggers may create different trends of radicalisation. An effective CVE strategy boasts more than just an eye to prevention and response: families, communities, and states that are resilient to the pull of violent extremism are more likely to be cohesive, well-informed, and empowered to discuss and pursue their goals effectively and non-violently.

Though Kosovo has so far been spared from violent effects of this latest cycle of violence, and is regarded as well ahead of the region in having drafted a strategy and national action plan, the country and its residents are no strangers to the damaging effects of polarisation and extreme forms of violence. Indeed, an effective CVE strategy can, in the spirit of the Preamble of the Constitution of Kosovo, contribute to “building a future of Kosovo as a free, democratic, and peace-loving country that is a homeland to all its citizens.”

5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

Commission additional research on identified Kosovo-specific gaps in the literature. This includes pathways to radicalisation—such as in educational institutions—the gendered dynamics of recruitment in Kosovo, and on Kosovan groups that do not claim adherence to Islam, but are rather motivated on nationalistic or ethnic lines.

Educate the public about the issue of radicalisation and ensure they know the government has a CVE strategy. This should include what the term means, how radicalisation is occurring in Kosovo, what the government is doing to counter it, and how women may or may not be radicalised in unique ways.

Leverage the importance of family in Kosovan society as a tool for prevention. Family consultations fashioned after Germany’s HAYAT counselling programme could be one example to consider, study further, and adapt to Kosovo’s context.119

119 From Hayat’s website: Hayat was established in 2011, tying in with the experiences of the first German de-radicalization and disengagement program for highly radicalized neo-Nazis: EXIT-Germany. This initiative developed methods and approaches to counsel and work with the relatives of radicalized persons to eventually prevent, decelerate and invert the radicalization process. Transferring this unique knowledge and experience into the realm of Islamic extremism, HAYAT is now available to parents, siblings, friends, teachers, employers, and anyone else who has a relationship to a person potentially on the path of a (violent) radicalization. (http://hayat-deutschland.de/english/)
Establish an anonymous hotline where citizens can report suspected cases of radicalisation in their families or communities. However, before doing so, educate the public on how they can distinguish between what constitutes common dangerous traits of violent extremism and how it differs than nonviolent religious conservatism.

Develop effective alternative messaging and public campaigns to provide alternatives to those disseminated by violent extremist groups. In addition, actively seek to remove radical propaganda in the Albanian language and diminish its reach.

Empower local actors to develop ways to prevent and counter the radicalisation of community members. A growing consensus argues that locally led efforts are the most effective, being more sensitive to the context and perceptive to the problem.

Avoid focusing exclusively on hotspots of radicalisation. Although resources may be limited, these findings caution against focusing overwhelmingly on those locations identified as hotspots. While higher reporting was noted in specific areas, the problem of radicalisation was observed across all areas—often closely behind particular hotspots. Like the survey’s geographic reach, CVE initiatives should seek to cover all Kosovo.

Find ways to leverage the perspectives and abilities of Kosovan women to understand and prevent radicalisation. Although often overlooked, women may provide key roles in this important issue, including the crucial issue of prevention.

Include more gender-sensitivity in CVE programming to be aware of the ways men and women are radicalised through gendered mechanisms and narratives and work to provide healthy alternatives. Specifically, seek to identify and (if found) remove gendered blindspots that might allow Kosovan women to become radicalised “under the radar” of governments, communities, and families. Additionally, build awareness campaigns regarding the radicalisation of women and potential gender-specific pathways for it.

Delve deeper into what role school break times and after-school activities may play in driving radicalisation. These activities were highlighted by a significant number of respondents, particularly those in the region of Ferizaj/Uroševac, where a majority cited them as hotspots. This was also a significant finding on the municipal level, with hotspot municipalities also identifying them as an issue.

Emphasise critical thinking and the critical consumption of information in the educational system. These skills are crucial to build resilience to misleading information, such as propaganda disseminated by violent extremist groups. This requires student to be taught how to interpret information logically in order to arrive at an informed conclusion. Such skills are already an integral part of literature, writing, mathematics, and debate curricula.

Develop empowering extra-curricular activities as well as other opportunities for Kosovan youth in general and youth in high-risk areas in particular.
Interviewees and focus group discussants highlighted issues surrounding a lack of opportunities for youth. Providing programming grounded in positive interactions and personal development may provide options alternative to those suspected to be utilized in radicalisation.

A lack of active, engaging programming for youth is likely contributing to their radicalisation. Programmes and government strategies that address the pronounced lack of cultural, sporting and scientific activities to keep youth interested and overall opportunities to keep them occupied have been identified as crucial and urgently needed as part of prevention.

The Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MASHT) and other key actors should play an increased role in the execution of the national strategy on countering violent extremism. International actors should take responsibility in aiding its implementation. This includes streamlining the plan, dedicating a budget to it, taking responsibility for it and ensuring better coordination of the plan both within government actors responsible for it, and across the government and the international community—especially countries in the Western Balkans which have experienced similar trends. Appoint a coordinator.

Allocate MASHT and other ministries on the frontline of executing the national CVE strategy a budget for delivering their action plans regarding radicalisation and prevention and facilitate “know-how training.” At present, MASHT has responsibility for delivering 48% of the action, but no budget and technical know-how to implement it.

Design de-radicalisation and reintegration programmes that secure the buy-in and enlist the support of Kosovo’s communities. If communities are sceptical and distrustful of returned fighters or others targeted for deradicalisation programming, such individuals may be marginalised by the community or even violently targeted by others.

Enlist public support in identifying and responding to threats of radicalisation requires obtaining the buy-in of community members and institutions. Whilst openness to the re-integration of returned fighters and their families alongside the willingness to re-socialise them in their communities is positive, a lax approach towards others’ beliefs (as demonstrated by some survey respondents) may prove to be an issue for enlisting community assistance in these efforts.
ABOUT THE AUTHORS:

Anisa Goshi is a multi-lingual professional with an extensive track record in delivering outstanding senior level relationship, project, communications and media management. Trained in PRINCE II Project Management, Anisa has run and managed successful projects for international NGOs, grassroots organisations and corporate businesses across borders. In the past few years, Anisa has become significantly involved with the effects of the conflict in Syria working in community building with registered and un-registered refugees from across Syria in the UK as well as in humanitarian aid at border crossing points in Europe and the Middle East. Anisa holds a dual-accredited (UK/US) BA Honours Degree in International Relations and Political Science from Richmond, The American International University in London and a first level certificate in Working in Conflict.

Dallin Van Leuven is an experienced researcher, having worked on a number of issues at the junction of justice, conflict, and gender across Africa, Europe, and the Middle East. As a Visiting Fellow at the Feinstein International Center, Van Leuven focuses on issues related to gender and conflict, including child soldiers and sexual and gender-based violence. Along with Feinstein’s Dyan Mazurana and Rachel Gordon, he recently co-authored a book chapter on the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant’s unprecedented use of gendered strategies to recruit foreign men and women, which was published in Foreign Fighters under International Law and Beyond. Van Leuven received his Bachelor of Science in Justice Studies from Westminster College (2010) before earning a Master of Arts in Law and Diplomacy from The Fletcher School at Tufts University (2015). He can be reached at dallin.vanleuven@tufts.edu.

About RTC Consulting: RTC Consulting is one of Kosovo’s leading research and management consultancies focussing on development. Established in 2006, and led by Drilona Emrullahu since 2009, the team at RTC have long established a reputation of providing high level consulting services in research, quality control, project management and management of training for public administration, social, as well as private sector development. Since its inception, RTC has delivered a vast number of long-term and short-term projects for its clients, which include the World Bank, USAID, the International Finance Corporation (IFC), Mercy Corps, Save the Children, national institutions and many others, with research work directly contributed to key national and regional strategy-setting initiatives.
APPENDIX 1: BIBLIOGRAPHY


Zuijdewijn, Jeanine de Roy van, and Edwin Bakker. “Returning Western Foreign Fighters: The Case of Afghanistan, Bosnia and Somalia.” ICCT Background Note. The Hague: The International Centre for Counter-Terrorism, June 2014.
## APPENDIX 2: KEY SURVEY RESPONSES

Table 3: Key survey responses and margins of error (by percent)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Do you believe there is a problem with radicalisation in your community?</th>
<th>Are there radicalised individuals in your community/local area/village?</th>
<th>Has anyone you know been directly approached to be radicalised?</th>
<th>Have you heard of fighters from your community joining wars in foreign countries?</th>
<th>Margin of Error</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Full sample</td>
<td>69.9</td>
<td>72.0</td>
<td>18.6</td>
<td>48.7</td>
<td>±4.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>66.1</td>
<td>67.8</td>
<td>19.1</td>
<td>49.3</td>
<td>±5.6%</td>
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<td>Female</td>
<td>73.7</td>
<td>76.3</td>
<td>19.1</td>
<td>48.0</td>
<td>±5.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18-25</td>
<td>72.9</td>
<td>75.1</td>
<td>21.7</td>
<td>57.9</td>
<td>±6.6%</td>
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<tr>
<td>26-35</td>
<td>70.1</td>
<td>74.9</td>
<td>19.8</td>
<td>51.5</td>
<td>±7.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36-50</td>
<td>60.8</td>
<td>60.0</td>
<td>13.1</td>
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<td>±8.6%</td>
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<td>51 and older</td>
<td>77.4</td>
<td>78.6</td>
<td>20.2</td>
<td>44.0</td>
<td>±10.7%</td>
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<td>Primary school</td>
<td>70.7</td>
<td>63.4</td>
<td>9.8</td>
<td>24.4</td>
<td>±15.3%</td>
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<tr>
<td>High school</td>
<td>65.9</td>
<td>71.3</td>
<td>18.9</td>
<td>45.1</td>
<td>±7.7%</td>
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<td>70.7</td>
<td>71.9</td>
<td>20.2</td>
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<td>Master's Degree</td>
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<td>21.7</td>
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<td>Self-employed</td>
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<td>52.8</td>
<td>27.8</td>
<td>41.7</td>
<td>±16.3%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Employed</td>
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<td>73.6</td>
<td>20.1</td>
<td>50.6</td>
<td>±5.5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td>67.5</td>
<td>70.2</td>
<td>16.1</td>
<td>46.0</td>
<td>±7.8%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Student</td>
<td>76.5</td>
<td>78.4</td>
<td>19.6</td>
<td>62.7</td>
<td>±13.7%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Housewife</td>
<td>72.7</td>
<td>72.7</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>21.2</td>
<td>±17.1%</td>
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<td>Muslim</td>
<td>70.8</td>
<td>72.3</td>
<td>18.7</td>
<td>49.0</td>
<td>±4.2%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Non-Muslim</td>
<td>60.4</td>
<td>69.8</td>
<td>22.6</td>
<td>45.3</td>
<td>±13.5%</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>Prishtina/Priština</td>
<td>69.9</td>
<td>69.9</td>
<td>17.3</td>
<td>48.0</td>
<td>±7.5%</td>
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<td>Mitrovicë/Mitrovica</td>
<td>62.1</td>
<td>74.2</td>
<td>13.6</td>
<td>48.5</td>
<td>±12.1%</td>
</tr>
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<td>Pejë/Peć</td>
<td>63.0</td>
<td>61.6</td>
<td>23.3</td>
<td>38.4</td>
<td>±11.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prizren</td>
<td>76.0</td>
<td>76.9</td>
<td>21.5</td>
<td>49.6</td>
<td>±8.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feriza/Luroševac</td>
<td>77.3</td>
<td>81.8</td>
<td>28.8</td>
<td>69.7</td>
<td>±12.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gjilan/Gnjilane</td>
<td>65.0</td>
<td>68.3</td>
<td>15.0</td>
<td>48.3</td>
<td>±12.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gjakovë/Dakovica</td>
<td>71.4</td>
<td>71.4</td>
<td>12.2</td>
<td>36.7</td>
<td>±14.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Municipality</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hotspots</td>
<td>71.3</td>
<td>78.3</td>
<td>22.4</td>
<td>62.9</td>
<td>±8.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other municipalities</td>
<td>69.5</td>
<td>70.1</td>
<td>18.1</td>
<td>44.3</td>
<td>±4.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: All margins of error are calculated at a 95% level of confidence (p ≤.05). All percentages are rounded to the nearest tenth.
APPENDIX 3: SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

Kosovo-wide Assessment of Radicalisation at Community-Level in Kosovo

This survey is commissioned by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and Kosovo’s Ministry of Internal Affairs. Its main aim is to assess perceptions of the levels of radicalisation and potential for radicalisation within communities across Kosovo in order to implement an informed prevention strategy. The survey will last approximately 30 minutes and is composed of both multiple choice and open-ended questions. We are very grateful for your time and assure that all responses are strictly confidential and conform to national privacy and confidentiality laws.

Section A: Demographic Information

Gender:
Age:
Educational level:
Employment status:
Religion:
Geographical location (Region and Municipality):

Section B: We will start by reading out a commonly-accepted definition of radicalisation.

Radicalisation is a process by which an individual or group comes to adopt increasingly extreme political, social, or religious ideals and aspirations that reject or undermine the status quo or undermine contemporary ideas and expressions of freedom of choice.
## Objective 1

**Understand how Kosovans across society understand radicalisation.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question 1</th>
<th>How do respondents understand radicalisation and the process of becoming radicalised?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>Based on the definition of radicalisation above, which traits would you associate with a radicalised person:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>a. Altered appearance – change in style of dress and / or personal appearance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b. Social isolation – losing interest in activities they used to enjoy / distancing themselves from friends and usual social groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>c. Abnormal routines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>d. Questioning their identity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>e. Questioning others’ faith</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>f. Becoming more argumentative or aggressive in their viewpoints / becoming quick to condemn those who disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>g. Displaying feelings of isolation and expressing an “us” and “them” mentality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>h. Likes and shares radical / extremist pages or media on Facebook and other social media</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>i. They talk about and express a desire of fighting in foreign wars</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>j. Other (please specify)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| 1.2                 | Have you ever encountered or noticed educational leaders demonstrating any of the above traits? |
|                     | **(Yes)** – circle those that apply:                                                   |
|                     | a. Altered appearance – change in style of dress and / or personal appearance           |
|                     | b. Social isolation – losing interest in activities they used to enjoy / distancing themselves from friends and usual social groups |
|                     | c. Abnormal routines                                                                  |
|                     | d. Questioning their identity                                                          |
|                     | e. Questioning others’ faith                                                           |
|                     | f. Becoming more argumentative or aggressive in their viewpoints / becoming quick to condemn those who disagree |
|                     | g. Displaying feelings of isolation and expressing an “us” and “them” mentality         |
|                     | h. Likes and shares radical / extremist pages or media on Facebook and other social media |
|                     | i. They talk about and express a desire of fighting in foreign wars                    |
|                     | j. Other (please specify)                                                             |
|                     | **(No)**                                                                              |
**Objective 2**

**Identify the factors driving radicalisation at community level.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question 2</th>
<th>Do respondents believe there is a problem with radicalisation in their communities?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 2.1                 | a. Do you think there are radicalised individuals in your community/local area/village?  
                       *(Yes)* 1. How do you know? Check all that apply.  
                       a. Because I personally know someone  
                       b. Because I was told by someone who knows someone  
                       c. I have noticed it in my local place of worship  
                       d. Increase support for radical groups on Facebook / social media  
                       e. They started expressing radical views on social media  
                       f. I have heard it in the news  
                       *(No)* 2. Do you think religion is becoming more important in your community?  
                       a. Yes  
                       b. No  
                       c. Don't know  
                       d. Other (please ask them to explain) |
| 2.2                 | How do you think people become radicalised in your community?  
                       a. Through friends  
                       b. At school / university  
                       c. At religious institutions  
                       d. By attending meetings and lectures  
                       e. By being offered financial compensation  
                       f. Via the internet  
                       g. Don't know  
                       h. Other (please explain) |
| 2.3                 | If the above generally apply to men, do you believe women are being radicalised in a different manner?  
                       a. Yes (if so, in what ways)  
                       b. No  
                       c. Women aren't at risk of being radicalised  
                       d. Don't know  
                       e. Other (please explain) |
| 2.4                 | Do you believe there are specific hotspots where people are being radicalised in your community?  
                       a. Yes (if so where: school / university, madrassas, mosques, church, after school activities, at neighbourhood playgrounds or activities, other specify)  
                       b. No  
                       c. Don't know  
                       d. Prefer not to say |
| 2.5                 | Do you know of anyone in your circle of friends and acquaintances who has been directly approached with the aim of being radicalised? |
| 2.6                 | a. Have you heard of fighters from your community joining wars in foreign countries?  
                       1. Yes  
                       2. No  
                       b. How would you feel if they returned to their homes, even if they are in your neighbourhood? |
### Objective 3

**Identify factors of radicalisation and prevention in educational institutions.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Research Question 3</strong></th>
<th>Do respondents believe there is a problem with radicalisation in educational institutions?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>3.1</strong></td>
<td>a. Do you think there is radicalisation going on in the following institutions? Select all that apply and then please rank from 1 – 5 in order of importance (1 = most important, 5 = least important): b. Have you ever been exposed to radical propaganda and material intolerant to religious peace/freedom in educational institutions?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>a. Primary Schools b. Middle Schools c. High Schools d. Universities e. After school activities f. Language classes / schools g. Madrassas h. Churches i. Bible study groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>a. Yes (if so, what was the source: teachers/professors, staff, student groups/clubs/after school activities, fellow students, educational materials, other [specify]) b. No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Objective 4

**Identify key challenges and entry points to prioritize areas of engagement and mitigating approaches such as the role of women, families, peers, and the religious community.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Research Question 4</strong></th>
<th>Do respondents believe there are weaknesses or opportunities for social groups to have a positive effect on the prevention of radicalisation?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>4.1</strong></td>
<td>On a scale of 1-5, please rank below the main sources which would help you to prevent someone become radicalised: a. Family b. Friends / peer group c. Religious leader d. School / University e. Municipality f. Police g. Other (please explain)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
We will now read you the definition of the process of self-radicalisation which is: when someone adopts increasingly extreme political, social, or religious ideals and aspirations that reject or undermine the status quo or undermine contemporary ideas and expressions of freedom of choice without joining an established radical group but by being influenced by its ideology and messages.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objective 5</th>
<th>Identify the role of the internet in self-radicalisation and prevention.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Research Question 5</td>
<td>Do respondents believe that the internet has a role in radicalisation?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>In your opinion, which of the following social media and internet outlets is most used for self-radicalisation (choose all that apply and rank in order of importance): a. Facebook b. Twitter c. YouTube d. Instagram e. Religious chat rooms/forums f. The dark web g. Other (please explain)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>Do you have any ideas of how radicalisation can be prevented by using the internet?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objective 6</th>
<th>Identify the role of the media in self-radicalisation and prevention.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Research Question 6</td>
<td>Do respondents believe that the media has a role in radicalisation?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>Which media, print or online, do you think contributes to radicalisation and in what way?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objective 7</th>
<th>Identify perceptions towards the performance of law enforcement and other government institutions.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Research Question 7</td>
<td>Reporting of instances of radicalisation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>Think about your friends and family members. If one of them started to say or do things that made you believe that they are becoming radicalised, what (if anything) do you think you would do in response? (In the first column, check all that apply) a. I would talk with them individually. b. I would talk about it with another friend or family member to ask for advice about what to do. c. I would talk to an influential person in the community (religious official, counsellor, etc.). d. I would talk to the police. e. Other (please explain)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>a. If a helpline was established to call in discussing and reporting instances of radicalisation, would this be useful? Would you use it? a. Yes b. No c. Other (national government; police; municipal government; religious community; sports group; local youth action councils)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Is there anything else you would like to share with us?

Thank you very much for your time!
APPENDIX 4: FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONNAIRES

Please note that answers from this questionnaire are collated and reported upon anonymously.

Radicalisation in Kosovan Communities

1. How do you understand radicalisation; what does it mean to you?

2. In your opinion, is there radicalisation occurring at community level in Kosovo? How do you know? How could someone be identified as radicalised?

3. What factors do you think are driving radicalisation at community level in Kosovo? Why do you think extremist groups have seen a rise in appeal in recent years?

Radicalisation of Women

4. Do you see women and girls in Kosovan communities face the risk of radicalisation? (Yes) - How? Is this risk different compared to men? Why?

4.1. Are pressures to become radicalised different between men and women?

4.2. What role do you think women are playing in radicalising others in Kosovo’s communities? (No) – Why not?

Radicalisation in Educational Institutions

5. Do you think radicalisation is happening in educational institutions? (Yes) - At what level of education do you think it more prominent and what does it look like? (No) - Is there a potential risk? How could that be?

How do you think educational institutions can be engaged to help prevent the phenomenon and spread of radical propaganda? (No) - Is there a potential risk? How could that be?

6. Do you think women have a specific advantage to prevent radicalisation? (Yes) - In what ways? (No) - Why not?
Radicalisation and the Role of Families / Peer Groups

7 - Do you think families play a role in the process of radicalisation?  
(Yes) - In what ways? How can this be mitigated?  
(No) – Why do you think so?  
7.1. How can families help prevent radicalisation?

8 - Do you think a person’s peer group (such as friends, colleagues, or fellow students) play a role in the process of radicalisation?  
(Yes) - In what ways? How can this be mitigated?  
8.1. How can peer groups help prevent radicalisation?

Radicalisation and Religious Communities

9 - Do you think religious communities play a role in the process of radicalisation?  
(Yes) - In what ways? How can this be mitigated?  
(No) – Why do you think so?  
9.1. How can religious communities prevent radicalisation?

Radicalisation and Media / Internet

10 – Do you believe the media has a role in radicalisation? If so, how?  
How can this be mitigated?  
What do you think can be the media’s role in preventing radicalisation?  
11 - How do you think the internet can be used to help prevent radicalisation?

Prevention and Rehabilitation

12 - Are you aware of any organised efforts in Kosovan communities or universities that are being made to combat the rise of radicalisation? If so, what are they?  
13 - How do you think are the police and government performing in preventing radicalisation? What about rehabilitation?  
14 - Do you believe that the government and its institutions are collaborating with the international community, civil society and NGOs constructively to counter the threat of radicalisation? What do these endeavours look like in your opinion? How could they be extended to rehabilitation?  
15 - How do you think can communities be used both for prevention and rehabilitation, through what programmes and initiatives? Are you aware of any such initiatives already in place in a community or communities across Kosovo?  
16 – What activities would you like to see implemented by the government and partners that tackle radicalisation?

Thank you for your time and contribution.