

Women and migration in Kosovo: Exploring the data

From 1940 to 1990 Kosovo has undergone four migration waves. Migration has continued in recent years in Kosovo to a larger extent. Media in Kosovo have recently reported an increase in the number of visa applications to European embassies — for instance, 56,000 visa applications were received in the Embassy of Germany only in December 2021.¹ An unfavorable economic situation, search for better future for their family, and unemployment remain the most cited reasons for migration from the Kosovars surveyed in 2021 by UNDP Public Pulse project. However, migration analysis in Kosovo has been gender-blind, and an explicit gender perspective is quite important.¹

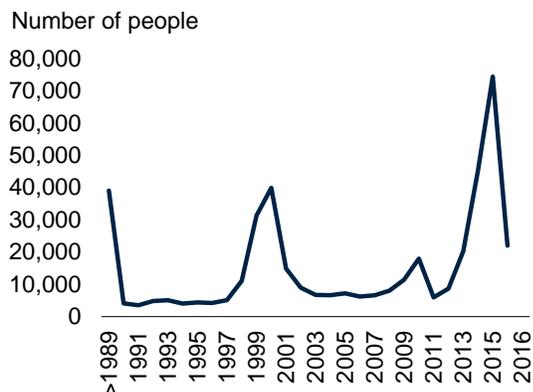


Figure 1: Migration in Kosovo. Source: Kosovo Agency of Statistics

What are gender differences in migration in Kosovo?

This paper tries to provide information regarding the gender differences in migration motives in Kosovo, by analyzing 2021 Public Pulse data. As depicted in figure 1, Public Pulse longitudinal data show that the percentage of respondents with claims to have plans to migrate and live abroad increased in 2016, a percentage which remained relatively high for the next four years.

¹ Balkan Web. 2022. “Qytetaret po ikin nga Kosova, mijera aplikime per viza ne shtetet e BE-se.” <https://www.balkanweb.com/qytetaret-po-ikin-nga-kosova-mijera-aplikime-per-viza-ne-shtetet-e-be-se/>

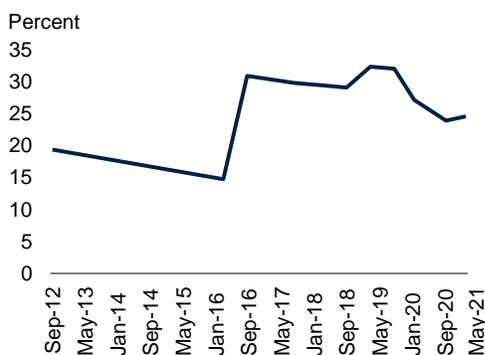


Figure 2: Planning to migrate and live abroad.

Source: UNDP Public Pulse Dataset

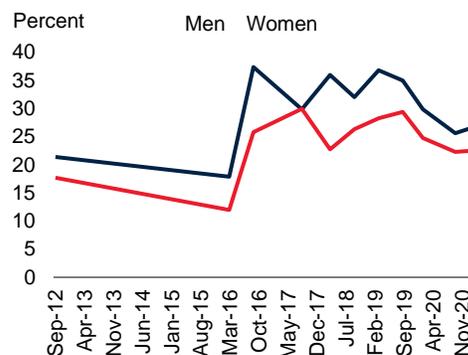


Figure 3: Planning to migrate and live abroad - Gender disaggregation

Source: UNDP Public Pulse Dataset

However, recently, in 2021, this percentage has decreased, and it is important to note that there was a difference in percentage between men and women who claimed to having plans to migrate and live abroad in previous years. In 2017, the same percentage of men and women claimed to have plans to migrate and live abroad, 30% respectively. The gap got quite smaller in 2020-2021 (3-4%), as compared to 2018-2019 (8-13%). As an example, around 22% of women and 25.5% of men claimed to have such plans in December 2020, as compared to 23% of women versus 36% of men in May 2018. As depicted in the figure, the trend of those who plan to migrate shows an uprise, and especially among women. These reports have also shown that in terms of ethnicity, in 2021, 25.4% of Albanians, 11.5% of Serbs, 16.7% of Bosnians, and 33% of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities claimed to have plans to migrate.²

Throughout different migration waves, various circumstances may have pushed the people of Kosovo to seek emigration as a way of securing their future. Expectations about Kosovo's politics, economy, jobs, family income, and the future are some of the factors that have influenced past migration, and they seem to be the main reason that influence present migration as well. 2021 Public Pulse data show that 36% of respondents are not satisfied with the political direction Kosovo is presently heading towards, and 39% of them are neither satisfied nor dissatisfied with this situation. The data show that more men (with 38.8%) than women (with 34%) claimed to not be satisfied with Kosovo political direction, while 35.6% of men and 41.8% of women have not expressed any opinion on it. An even higher percentage of respondents have expressed

² It should be noted that 1201 Albanians, 53 Serbs, 12 Bosnians, and 18 people from Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities were interviewed.

dissatisfaction with the economic direction Kosovo is presently heading towards (53.5%). Around 65% of the respondents do not expect the economic situation to change over the next six months, either for better or worse, while 12% believe it will become even worse. Similar opinions prevail for employment conditions. Around half of the respondents believe that employment conditions are unfavorable (47.6%), and they will not change (48%) but can become worse (33%) in the next six months. Even though gender differences are small, still more women think that six months from now employment conditions will be more even unfavorable than now (33.5%) compared to men (32.4%).

How do circumstances affect migration among men and women?

More than half of the respondents who plan to migrate and live abroad, believe that current employment conditions are neither favorable nor unfavorable (55%), while 35% of them believe that these conditions are not favorable. As depicted in figure 3, a higher percentage of those who have plans to migrate and live abroad see the economic situation as unchanged, but the employment conditions as worse than now, six months from now.

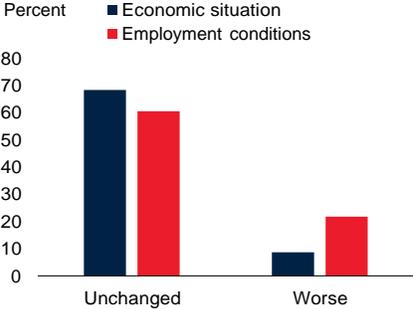


Figure 4: Perceptions of those who have plans to migrate. Source: UNDP Public Pulse Dataset 21

Among those respondents who plan to migrate and live abroad, 38% of them claim that business conditions are unfavorable. An important factor is also the personal perception of these who plan to migrate. Those who plan to migrate have a higher negative personal outlook for the future in general by five percentage points (13.7%), compared to those who do not have plans to migrate (8.8%).

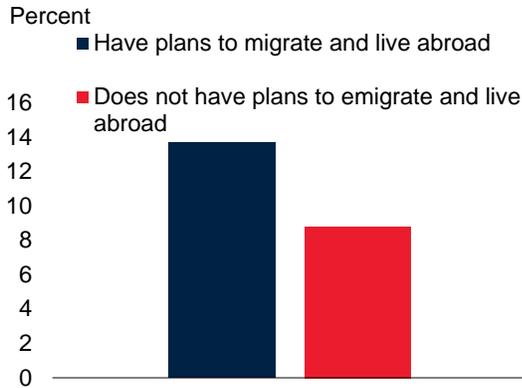


Figure 5: Responses of those who share a negative personal outlook for their future in general. Source: UNDP Public Pulse Dataset 21

There is a marginal difference between women and men who plan to migrate, in terms of their personal outlook for the future in general (0.1 percentage points difference).

UNDP Public Pulse data from 2021 confirm that the economic situation, employment and personal prospects are important in terms of deciding whether to migrate. Around 57% of those who plan to migrate have listed unfavorable economic situation as one of the main reasons of their migration, followed by seeking better future for their family (52%) and unemployment (32%).

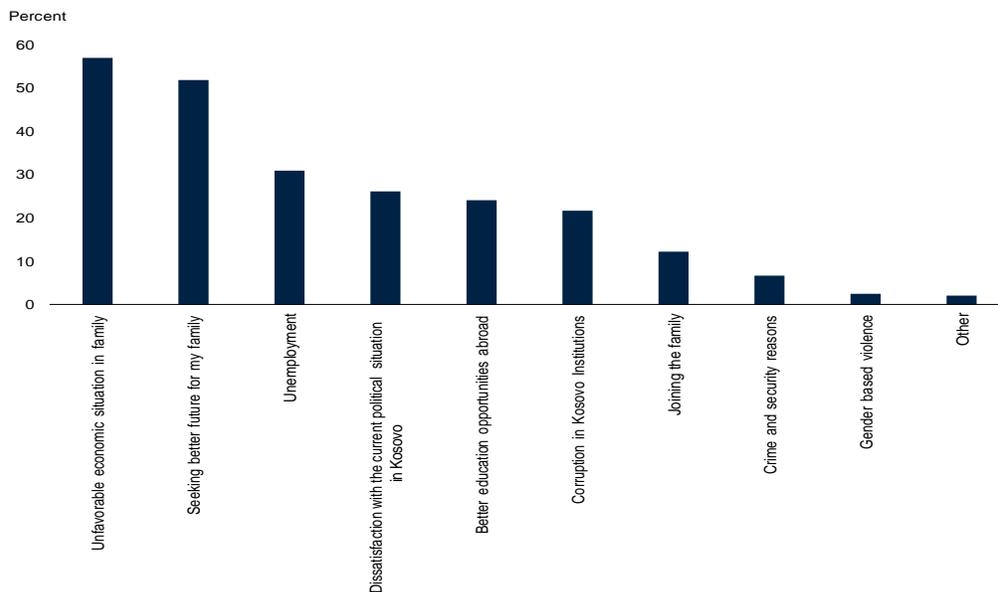


Figure 6: Three main reasons for migration. Source: UNDP Public Pulse Dataset 21

A slightly higher percentage of women have chosen the reason of seeking a better future for their family (53%) compared to men (51%) as a reason for migration. It is also important to note that

crime and security reasons are stated more as a reason for migration among women (with 8.2%) compared to men (with 5.3%). Similar difference is noted also for gender-based violence which was selected as a reason for migration by 3.6% of women with plans to migrate, compared to men (1.5%). Better education opportunities are also one of the reasons stated more by women (25.6%) than by men (22.7%). Lastly, but quite important, dissatisfaction with the current political situation in Kosovo is stated as a reason to migrate by 34% of women, as compared by 20% of men.

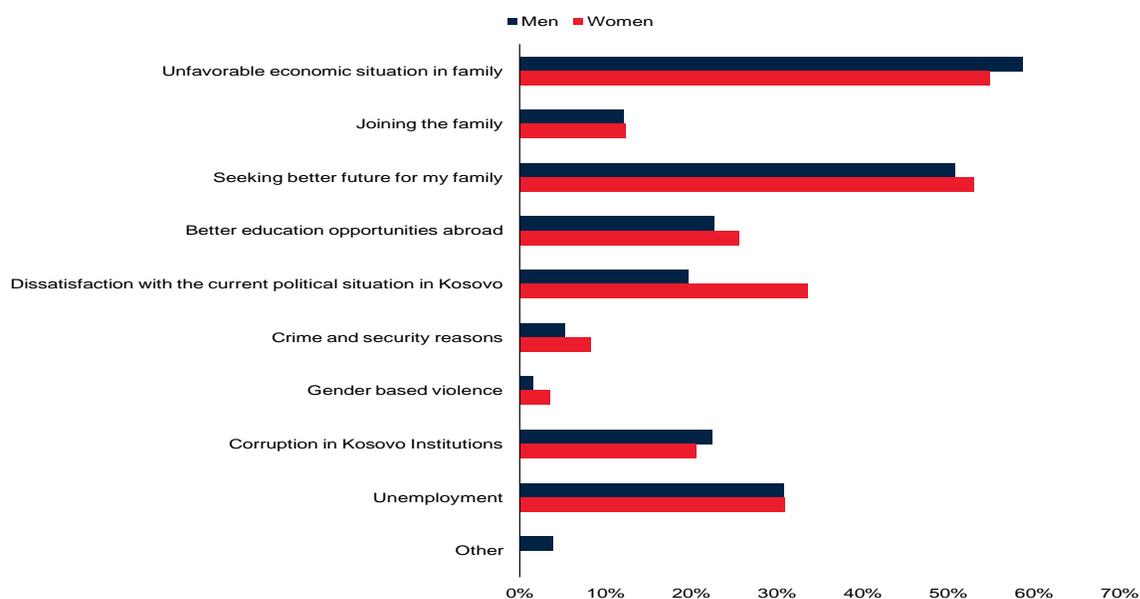


Figure 7: Reasons for migration: Disaggregated by gender. Source: UNDP Public Pulse Dataset 21

Unemployment seems to be a factor that impacts men more than women in their decision to migrate. More than half of the unemployed men (57%) claimed that they have plans to migrate, compared to the unemployed men who do not want to migrate (34%). For women in contrast, the gap is much narrower, where 46% of unemployed women claimed to have plans to migrate, as compared to 41% of the unemployed women who claimed to not have such plans.

In terms of education, the percentage of those claiming to have plans for migration increases with more years of education. For instance, around 32% of respondents with 10 to 13 years of education and 26% of respondents with 14 years of education or higher claimed to have plans to migrate, as compared to 8.1% of respondents with 5 or fewer years of education, and 11% of respondents with 6-9 years of education. A higher percentage of women with 10-13 years of education have claimed to have plans to migrate (34%) as compared to men with the same years of education (30%). However, a higher percentage of men with less than 5 years of education (11%) have claimed to

have plans to migrate as compared to women with the same years of education (5%). This is also an indicator of the “brain drain” phenomenon, which Kosovo faces as a high risk in recent years. People with more education are seeking opportunities abroad, which increases the risks of loss of talented people, creativity, and economic and tax revenues.

But why do people decide to migrate?

An interesting factor is that the 2021 Public Pulse data show that having family living abroad does not necessarily motivate people to migrate. Around 23% of the respondents who claimed to have plans to migrate, claimed to also have family members living abroad, as compared to 65% who have plans to migrate but do not have family members living abroad. Around 20% of those who claimed to have received financial support from their family members who live abroad on a regular basis, have plans to migrate, as opposed to 80% who do not have such plans. Plans to migrate and income received from family living abroad seem also to be negatively correlated. The more financial support is received from family members in diaspora, the less likely the respondents were inclined to migrate. As such, more respondents who claimed that they receive 250-500 EUR from their family members living abroad tend to have plans to migrate compared to those who receive larger amounts. However, these data should be interpreted with special caution, due to missing data and the probability of receiving non-correct income reporting from survey participants.

In 2015 Public Pulse survey, people expressed their opinions on the positive and negative effects that migration has in Kosovo overall and in individuals who migrate. More than half of Kosovo people agree that migration will have a negative impact on Kosovo (55.4%), while 15.3% said that it will not have any impact, 16.9% said that they do not know what impact it will have on Kosovo and 11.6% said that emigration will have a positive impact. On a personal level, (48.7%) of the respondents think that for emigrants themselves, their standard of living abroad will improve when leaving Kosovo.

In summary, according to UNDP's Public Pulse data, the perception of respondents on planning to migrate and live abroad has surged in 2016 and it remains at high levels. As shown in different Public Pulse datasets, while in previous years the gap between men and women migrating abroad has been larger, this gap seems to get narrower in recent years. Even though a decrease in migration

trend was noted from 2019-2020, data show the opposite in 2021. An increase in migration for both men and women is depicted between December 2020 and May 2021. Overall, reasons behind migration seems to be the same throughout the years. Both men and women state unfavorable economic conditions, better future for their family and unemployment as the main reasons of migration. However, women tend to place more importance to security, crime rates, gender-based violence, and education, compared to men. A higher difference between women and men is noted in dissatisfaction with current political situation in Kosovo. While both men and women have stated this as one the reasons for migration, women have placed much more weight to it. It seems that women connect security, gender-based violence, and crime rates with unstable political situation, and place more weight to them when deciding to migrate.

According to data disaggregated by gender, women who claimed to have 10-13 years of education are more inclined to migrate than men with the same years of education. However, even though the difference is not high, men with 14 years of education or more, are more inclined to migrate than women with the same years of education. Having family members living abroad does not seem to have a major effect on the decision of Kosovars to migrate. People of Kosovo are aware that migration has negative impacts on the development of Kosovo overall, but they continue to think that personally, for people who migrate, their standard of living abroad improves when they leave Kosovo.