

Citizen perceptions of integrity of public institutions in Kosovo



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The data presented in the report derive from the Western Balkans Security Barometer (WBSB) survey. WBSB is a new regional initiative launched by KCSS in 2020, implemented in cooperation with the Belgrade Centre for Security Policy (BCSP) in Serbia and Center for the Study of Democracy and Governance (CSDG) in Albania, supported by the National Endowment for Democracy (NED). WBSB serves as an instrument to measure public perceptions in Albania, Kosovo and Serbia on different security-related issues. The findings demonstrate how citizens percept or are informed about the issues presented in this report. As such, the views presented in this report do not necessarily represent the views of the KCSS, BCSP, CSDG or NED.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Kosovo Security Forces, the Kosovo Police, the President of Kosovo and the Municipalities are the most trusted public institutions in Kosovo, with over 50 percent of respondents declaring that they trust or completely trust these institutions. This is followed by the Kosovo Customs and the Kosovo Intelligence Agency with 45 percent of respondents sharing such an opinion. On the other hand, less than 40 percent of the respondents declared that they trust or completely trust Courts, Prosecution, Kosovo Correctional Services, the Government of Kosovo and the Kosovo Assembly. The results of the report show that citizens of Kosovo find the security institutions more reliable with a higher level of trust towards them, compared to other public institutions in Kosovo, such as the justice institutions which citizens perceive less trustworthy and with weak integrity. The citizen confidence in the institutions of the Courts and the Prosecution in Kosovo has been consistently in decline, and this is concerning. Citizens have higher confidence in the public institutions from the central level, especially when compared to the previous year (2020), however, the skepticism towards these institutions generally prevails.

The citizen perception of the presence of corruption in the public institutions follows their perception of trust in the institutions. The lower the trust in an institution, the higher the perception that corruption is present in the respective institution. In line with this, the Security institutions are perceived to be less corrupted when compared to the other institutions. Kosovo Security Forces and Kosovo Police are perceived to be the least corrupted institutions with less than 25 percent of respondents declaring that these two institutions are corrupt or very corrupt, followed by Municipalities with 33 percent of respondents sharing the opinion that they are corrupt. On the other hand, more than 45 percent of the respondents perceive the Government of Kosovo, Courts and Prosecution as corrupt and very corrupt.

Finally, high level of skepticism about the competence of public administration employees is observed among the WBSB respondents. The majority of WBSB respondents believe that only a small group of people are employed in the state administration solely on the basis of merit and qualifications. Although in slightly lower level, similar attitudes are present towards the security institutions as well. More than 50 percent of the respondents hold the opinion that only a fraction of the employees in the security institutions are there on the basis of merits and qualifications.



INTRODUCTION

Confidence of the citizens in the public institutions and their integrity are cornerstones of a democratic and transparent society. In this context, citizen perceptions of the public institutions are very important for accountability of the public sector. Accordingly, this report provides an overview of the results of the public survey with the citizens of Kosovo on their confidence in the public institutions in Kosovo as well as their understanding of different integrity-related issues in the public sector. By reflecting the citizens' opinions and attitudes, this report provides a basis for projecting a citizen-focused approach in governance and policies. The report consists of three sections. The first section discusses the results of the public perceptions in Kosovo towards the security, justice and the public institutions at the central level. The second section, examines perception of citizens with respect to the spread of corruption in public institutions, and the third section focuses on citizen perceptions of employment process in the public administration.

With respect to methodology, the data for this report were collected within the framework of Western Balkans Security Barometer (WBSB) survey through face-to-face interviews with randomly selected respondents throughout Kosovo. The field research was conducted from September 17 until September 25. The questionnaire for the survey primarily consisted of closed-ended questions in the form of five-point Likert Scale, followed by several open-ended questions without predefined options. The national sample for the survey featured 1,197 households. The first stage of drawing the sample was based in the administrative divisions of the regional directorates of the Kosovo Police, including the eight districts: Ferizaj, Gjakova, Gjilan, Mitrovica South, Mitrovica North, Peja, Prishtina and Prizren. The number of surveys conducted in each district was drawn in proportion to the number of populations for each municipality within the respective districts based on Kosovo's 2011 population census. Within the municipalities, the sample was stratified into urban/rural sample based on the number of households in each area. Random patterns were used to select the households within the sampled locations, while the randomization within the households was based on the next adult birthday method. The data were verified in real time through field coordinators that visited a predefined sample of households after the completion of the survey in the respective households, through telephone contact with all respondents to confirm the adherence to the methodology and some of the key answers and by analyzing the logical consistency of the answers when processing and analyzing the data. The margin of error is 3 percent with a confidence interval of 95 percent

CITIZENS' TRUST TOWARDS SECURITY, JUSTICE AND CENTRAL INSTITUTIONS



The WBSB survey measures the trust of the Kosovo citizens towards various public institutions. The key institutions presented in this report are categorized in:

- **Security Institutions** – (Kosovo Security Forces (KSF), Kosovo Police (KP), Kosovo Intelligence Agency (KIA), Kosovo Customs (KC) and Kosovo Correctional Services (KCS));
- **Justice Institutions** – (Prosecution and Courts);
- **Central and Local Institutions** – (Assembly of Kosovo, Government of Kosovo, President of Kosovo, and Municipalities).

In comparison to the previous edition of WBSB, there is an overall increase in citizens reliability to public institutions. Security institutions are perceived more trusted from the citizens compared to those of the judiciary and central institutions. In this respect, despite the fact that only 13 percent of respondents stated that they have had direct contact with the Kosovo Security Force in the last 12 months, it remains the most trusted institution with 82 percent of the respondents declaring that they trust or completely trust the KSF. Similarly, the Kosovo Police is ranked as one of the most trusted institutions in Kosovo. 70 percent of WBSB respondents stated that they trust or completely trust KP. KP is also the security institution with whom WBSB respondents have interacted the most; 32 percent of respondents stated that they had direct contact with this institution in the last 12 months. On the other hand, Kosovo Intelligence Agency is the security institution which has had the greatest increase in citizens trust compared to last year. While in 2020 only 29 percent of WBSB respondents expressed trust or complete trust in this institution, in the 2021 survey, 44 percent of respondents hold such opinion. Moreover, 44 percent of WBSB respondents trust or completely trust Kosovo Customs, while 40 percent hold such opinion for Kosovo Correctional Service. The trust towards both these institutions has increased for six percent when compared to last year.

Citizens tend to be more skeptical towards the Courts and the Prosecution, and this has been a consistent result of the WBSB concerning Kosovo. With respect to the latest results, they show that 31 percent of the WBSB respondents have trust or complete trust in the former, while 30 percent hold such beliefs for the latter. However, despite the lower level of trust when compared to security institutions, the level of distrust towards these two institutions has decreased from the last year. While in the 2020 survey of the WBSB, 44 percent of the respondents declared that they have very little trust or no trust at all towards the Courts and 39 percent towards the Prosecution, in 2021, 37 percent of the respondents hold such opinion for both. The results clearly indicate that there is a need for a change in the justice sector to address lack of public confidence in their work. One of the objectives of the current Government of Kosovo is to reform the justice sector, focused on improving integrity through a vetting process.² However, the Kosovo Prosecutorial Council (KPC) and the Kosovo Judicial Council (KJC) are resisting such a process and are refusing to cooperate with the Government in this direction, while the EU and the opposition in Kosovo

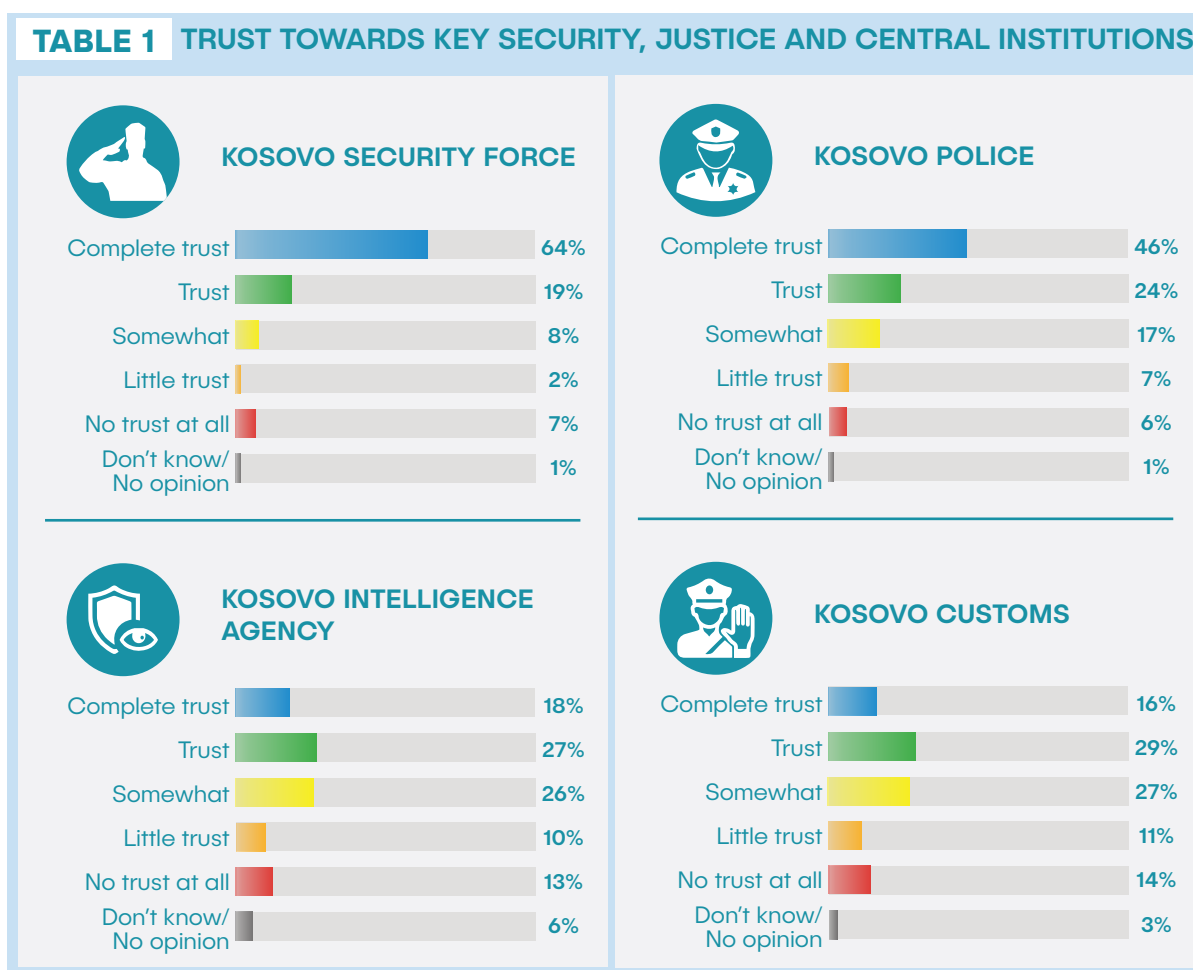
1. The KSC and KC are subject of WBSB analysis since 2019. Despite the fact they operate under different ministries that are not related with security, their integration in KSB as security institutions relates to their contribution to security, as well as to the fact that they serve as uniformed security staff. For more information on why they are categorized as such, please see the ninth edition of KSB: http://www.qkss.org/repository/docs/KSB2019_339996.pdf

2. Shehu, B., 2021. A ka skeptiozëm për vetting në sistemin e drejtësisë në Kosovë?. *Deutsche Welle (DW)*. Available at: <https://www.dw.com/sq/a-ka-skeptioz%C3%ABm-p%C3%ABr-vetting-n%C3%AB-sistemin-e-drejt%C3%ABsis%C3%AB-n%C3%AB-kosov%C3%AB/a-59724252>

are opposing the justice sector reform through vetting.³ Failure to reform the justice sector can potentially exacerbate citizen confidence in the institutions and this is detrimental to the rule of law.

The trend of increased trust reflects in the central and local institutions as well. In contrast to the WBSB 2020 results when only 13 percent of respondents stated that they trust the Government of Kosovo, in the 2021 survey 36 percent of respondents declared that they trust or completely trust the Government, while 41 percent have very little trust or no trust at all. A similar perception is observed for the Assembly of Kosovo as well. 33 percent of respondents stated that they trust or completely trust this institution, while 42 percent have no trust at all or very little trust towards it. On the other hand, the President of Kosovo has marked the most significant increase in trust compared to 2020. While in 2020 the majority of the respondents, respectively 63 percent, declared that they have very little trust or no trust at all for the President, in 2021 the percentage of distrust towards the President in 2021 has dropped to 28 percent. The majority of respondents, precisely 55 percent of them, have trust or complete trust in this institution, making it the institution with the highest trust among the institutions of the public sector. Municipalities also have a high percentage of trust with 52 percent of respondents declaring trust or complete trust towards Municipalities. At the same time, Municipalities are the institutions which citizens have had the most interaction with. In this respect, 53 percent of the respondents stated that they have had direct contact with their respective Municipalities in the last 12 months.

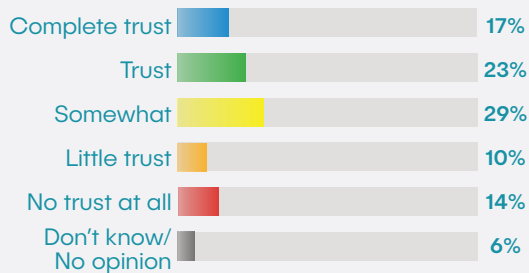
TABLE 1 TRUST TOWARDS KEY SECURITY, JUSTICE AND CENTRAL INSTITUTIONS



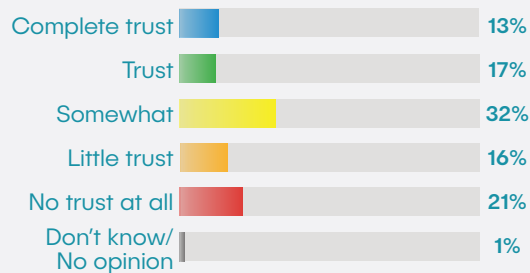
3. Ibid.



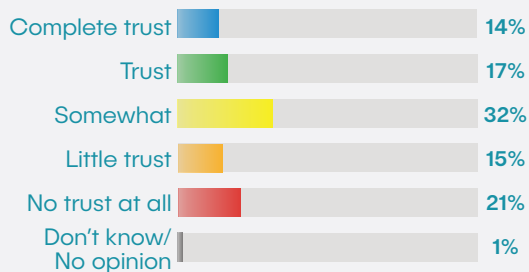
KOSOVO CORRECTIONAL SERVICES



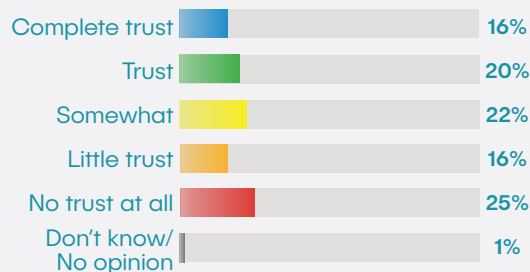
PROSECUTION



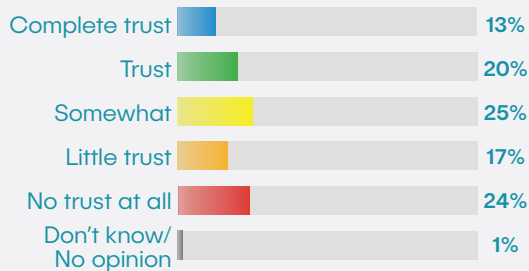
COURTS



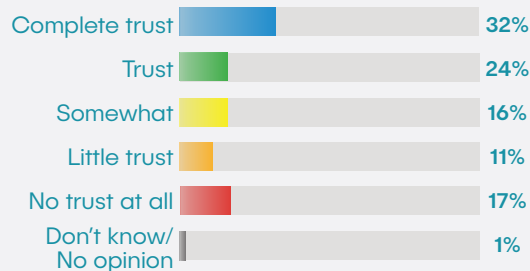
GOVERNMENT OF KOSOVO



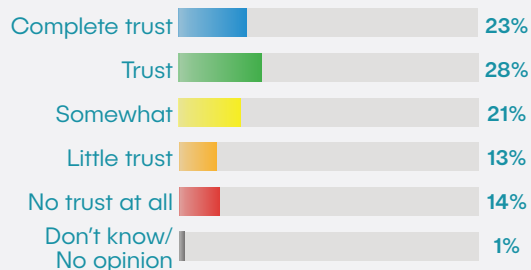
ASSEMBLY OF KOSOVO



PRESIDENT OF KOSOVO



MUNICIPALITIES

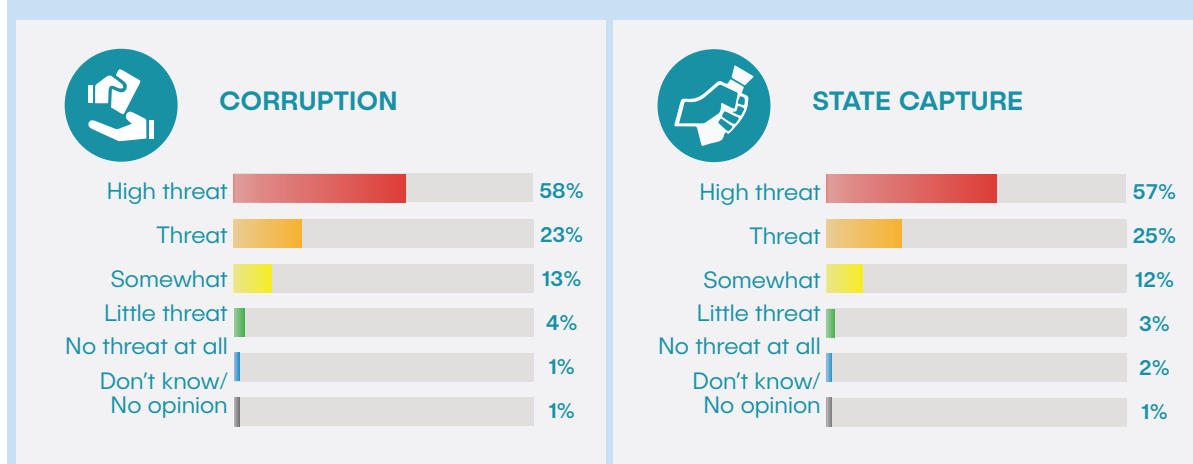




CITIZENS' PERCEPTION ON THE PRESENCE OF CORRUPTION IN PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS

The results of the WBSB survey show that Kosovo citizens continue to perceive corruption as one of the key phenomena threatening Kosovo's national security. In this respect, 81 percent of the respondents believe that corruption is a threat or a high threat for Kosovo. State capture is also seen by the citizens of Kosovo as posing a threat or a high threat for the national security of Kosovo. For the needs of the survey, state capture was defined as the political circumstances where the interests of citizens are subject to the private interests of individuals in power, as well as their political and economic partners. In this regard, 82 percent of the respondents declared that state capture is a threat or high threat for the national security of Kosovo.

TABLE 2 CITIZENS' PERCEPTION TOWARDS CORRUPTION AND STATE CAPTURE AS NATIONAL SECURITY THREATS

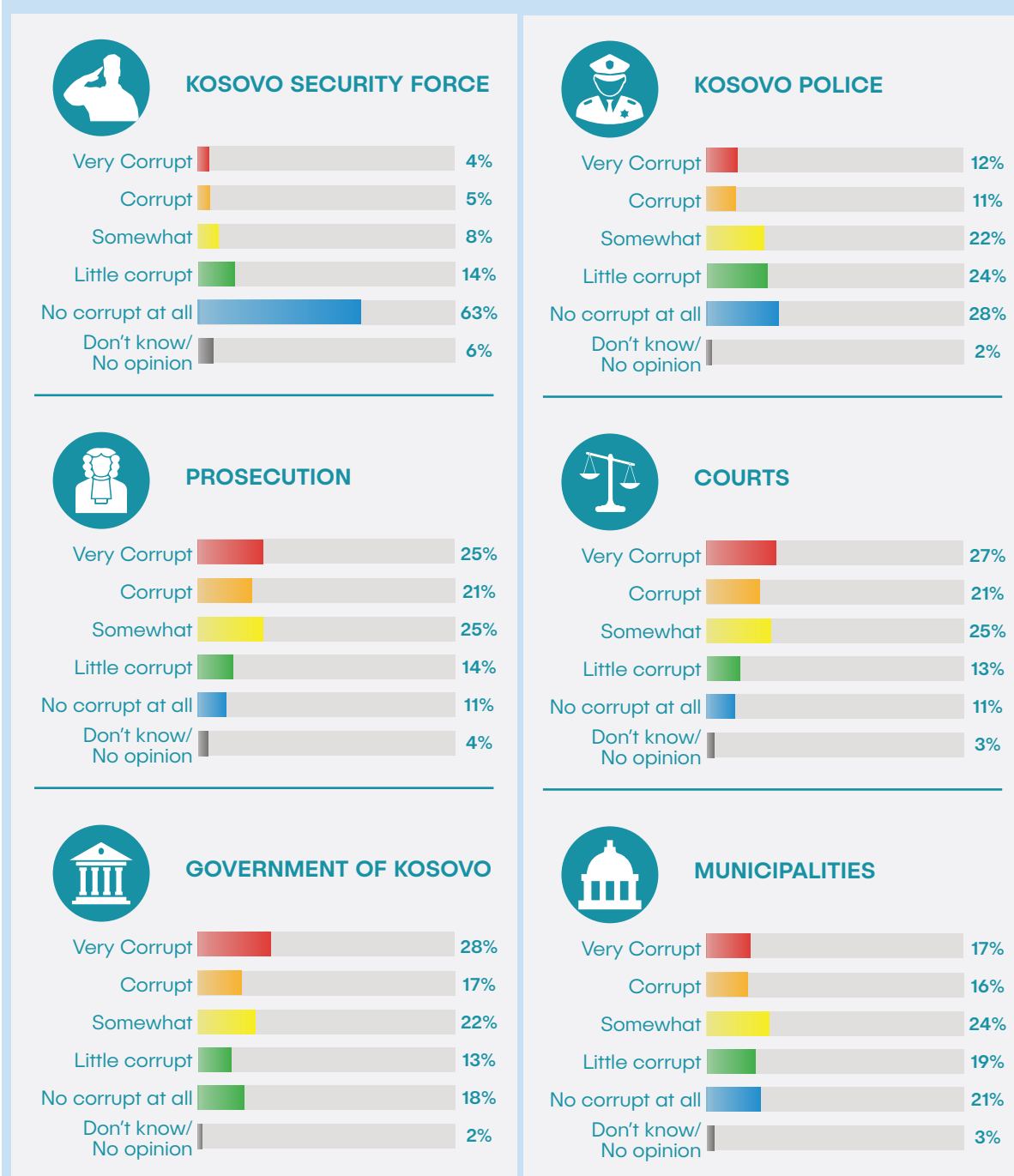


The WBSB results show that the higher citizens trust in an institution, the perception of the presence of corruption in the respective institution is lower. Consequently, the WBSB respondents perceive justice institutions and central institutions as more corrupt when compared to security institutions. In this context, according to the WBSB respondents, KSF is the least corrupted public institution in Kosovo, with 77 percent of the respondents declaring that KSF is very little or no corrupt at all, opposed to only 9 percent of respondents perceiving it as very corrupt or corrupt. Whereas, 23 percent of respondents believe that KP is corrupt or very corrupt as opposed to 52 percent of the respondents who hold the opinion that it is little or no corrupt at all. On the other hand, similar to the trend of the previous edition of WBSB, Courts and Prosecution remain corrupt from the viewpoint of the citizens. 48 percent of the respondents believe that Courts are corrupt or very corrupt, while 47 percent hold such opinion for Prosecution. Only a quarter of respondents believe that these two institutions are not corrupt, respectively 24 percent hold the opinion that the Courts are little or no corrupt, while 25 percent share this opinion for the Prosecution.

As per the central and local institutions, contrary to the chapter of the survey regarding the trust towards public institutions, the perception for the presence of corruption was measured only for the Government and Municipalities. In this respect, the Government of Kosovo continues to be perceived as corrupt, although there has been a significant reduction in

the perception for the presence of corruption in this institution compared to last year. While in 2020 the WBSB respondents ranked the Government as the most corrupt institution in Kosovo with 63 percent of respondents who shared the opinion that it is corrupt or very corrupt, the respondents of this edition of WBSB ranked it at a similar level to the justice institutions. Respectively, 45 percent of the respondents believe that the Government is corrupt or very corrupt while 31 percent share the opinion that it is little or no corrupt at all. Furthermore, 33 percent of the respondents hold the opinion that Municipalities are corrupt or very corrupt as opposed to 40 percent who believe that the Municipalities are very little or no corrupt at all.

TABLE 3 CITIZENS' PERCEPTION ON THE PRESENCE OF CORRUPTION IN PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS





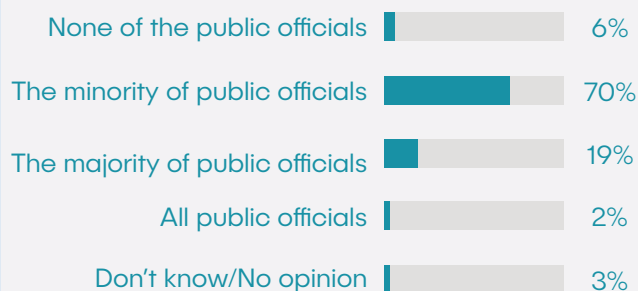
CITIZENS' PERCEPTION ON THE EMPLOYMENT IN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

In the context of institutional integrity and good governance, the WBSB survey measured the perception of Kosovo citizens regarding the employment process in the public administration, with a particular focus on the security institutions. Citizens show high levels of skepticism about the competence of the public administration employees (public officials). The majority of WBSB respondents, respectively 70 percent of them, believe that only a fraction of the public officials were employed on the basis of merit. Moreover, 6 percent of the respondents believe that none of the public officials are employed based on the merit and qualifications, while 21 percent hold the opinion that the majority or all of the public officials are employed due to their qualifications. It is important to note, that despite the efforts of the government to promote meritocracy in the employment in the public sector, including through cooperation with the UK Embassy in Kosovo that has contracted a specialized company to oversee the process for senior employments in the public administration, the perception of citizens has not changed that there continues to be lack of merit-based employment in public administration.

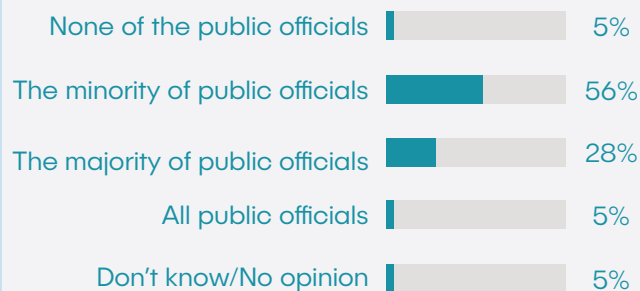
With respect to the employees of the security institutions there is a more positive perception among the citizens. 56 percent of the respondents hold the opinion that only the minority of the employees in the security institutions were employed based on merits and qualifications, while 28 percent believe that the majority of them are qualified and justify the public positions they hold. A similar survey conducted by UNDP in May 2021 shows similar results to those of the WBSB.⁴ More than half of the respondents of this survey share the opinion that political and family ties as well as bribery are key factors in the employment in public administration. The UNDP survey shows that all ethnic groups in Kosovo share similar views regarding the merit-based employment, with the highest skepticism observed among Kosovo Serbs and Kosovo Albanians.

TABLE 4

HOW MANY PUBLIC OFFICIALS DO YOU THINK ARE EMPLOYED IN THE STATE ADMINISTRATION SOLELY ON THE BASIS OF MERIT AND QUALIFICATIONS



HOW MANY PUBLIC OFFICIALS ARE EMPLOYED IN SECURITY INSTITUTIONS SOLELY ON THE BASIS OF MERIT AND QUALIFICATIONS



4. For details of the methodology and results of this survey, please refer to: <https://kosovoteam.un.org/sites/default/files/2021-08/PUBLICPULSEBRIEF-ALB.pdf>



KEY TAKEAWAYS

The results of the WBSB indicate that citizens rely on the work of certain institutions, such as the Kosovo Police, therefore, this should be seen as an opportunity to further develop their relationship with citizens. For example, in the case of the Kosovo Police, the trust they enjoy among citizens should serve as a mean of strengthening mechanisms such as community policing. On the other hand, institutions such as KIA, consider low levels of trust as normal due to the lack of public information about their work. They estimate that the increase in trust towards them also comes as a result of the recognition of their contribution to the national security by the country reports of the US State Department and the EU, and the public statements of other institutions for effective cooperation with this institution. They provide a good example of reflection on citizens' opinions as they have stated that they plan to start publishing annual reports in order to be more visible to citizens and provide a basis for citizens to evaluate their work based on updated information.⁵ In this respect, the results of the survey and the reflections of institutions on these results also emphasize the need to increase the visibility of the work of certain institutions and the clarification of their mandate. In many cases, especially in rural areas, citizens have stated that they do not feel the presence of the institutions at all, while they also lack information on the extent to which the mandate of various institutions is limited.⁶

On the other hand, the results of the perception regarding the corruption and integrity in public institutions should nevertheless serve to prioritize the fight against corruption. Institutions should not be complacent with the perception of citizens in this regard but rather focus on further strengthening the mechanisms for preventing corruption. In this context, although the KSF is perceived by citizens as the institution with the least potential for corruption, according to Transparency International indicators the defense sector in Kosovo has a very high potential for corruption.⁷ Consequently, even the institutions that enjoy a positive perception among the citizens, must actively work in minimizing the potential of institutional integrity violation. Moreover, the consistent low trust towards justice institutions and the perception that they themselves are corrupt may indicate to the need to strengthen the integrity within these institutions, improve the track record for resolving corruption cases and further strengthen internal and external anti-corruption mechanisms to ensure continuous integrity and effectiveness of these institutions and the fight against corruption in general.

5. Focus Group with Stakeholders. 27 October 2021, Prishtina.

6. Focus Group with Field Researchers. 25 October 2021, Prishtina.

7. Steadman, M., 2021. Government Defence Integrity Index. *Transparency International*, [online] Available at: <https://kdi-kosova.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Kosovo_GDI-2020-Brief.pdf>

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