

Socioeconomic Conditions in Northern Kosovo

Perceptions about Healthcare, Education, Social Welfare and Employment

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ECMI Kosovo

ECMI Kosovo is the principal non-government organisation engaged with minority issues in Kosovo, with the overarching aim to develop inclusive, representative, community-sensitive institutions that support a stable multi-ethnic Kosovo.

ECMI Kosovo contributes to the developing, strengthening and implementation of relevant legislation, supports the institutionalisation of communities-related governmental bodies, and enhances the capacity of civil society actors and the government to engage with one another in a constructive and sustainable way.

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Executive Summary

This objective of this report is to spotlight issues encountered by northern Kosovo residents in their daily lives, to voice their needs, concerns and aspirations. In assessing local perceptions about the quality of life, it aims to provide useful data for local and international stakeholders interested in the region's stabilisation and development, circumventing political issues.

To achieve this, ECMI Kosovo conducted a large-scale survey in the four municipalities of Mitrovica/Mitrovicë North, Leposavić/Leposaviq, Zubin Potok and Zvečan/Zveqan. A team of 11 local researchers reached a convenience sample of 721 respondents from diverse education level, employment status, ethnic background, gender and age. A quantitative and qualitative analysis was performed with the support of key stakeholders during consultation workshops.

This report follows the structure of the questionnaire used in the study. It summarises key findings within four pillars of socioeconomic conditions: education, healthcare, social welfare, and employment and local economy. For each of them, the report considers issues specific to northern Kosovo and offers relevant analysis based on field observations.

The key findings of the study are the following:

Education:

- Overall perceptions about formal education are positive.
- Formal education is deemed insufficient for expanding employment opportunities.
- Informal education could be a way to create employable skills.
- Inclusive education for people with disabilities is obstructed by existing discrimination, and the lack of training and school equipment.

Healthcare:

- Perceptions about the quality of healthcare are generally positive, but negative with regard to the quality of medical equipment.
- Level of awareness about reproductive healthcare is low.
- Levels of addiction and substance abuse are underreported.

Social Welfare:

- Participation and assistance from social welfare schemes is perceived as insufficient.
- Public programmes and services for older people and people with disabilities are considered unsatisfactory.
- Cultural programming is viewed as unsatisfactory, particularly by young people.
- There is a pervasive feeling of safety despite perceived shortcomings of local authorities' ability to respond to violence.

Employment and local economy:

- Precarious workers are over-represented in the labour market.
- The public sector is considered the most reliable source of employment, leaving the private sector as a largely untapped opportunity.
- The private and agricultural sectors are not considered to be strong sources of income generation.
- Infrastructures across all sectors are deemed below average.

Based on these findings, recommendations have been formulated, addressing the main areas that need improvement in each pillar. The recommendations can help stakeholders prioritize their efforts to improve local socioeconomic conditions, and benefit intelligibly from the findings of this study.

Introduction

There is significant discussion on the politics of northern Kosovo, whereas the day-to-day problems and quality of life of those living in this area receive far less attention. This report seeks to **build a holistic overview of people's daily lives** in this geographic area, presenting information on how people perceive the delivery of public services in sectors such as education, healthcare and social welfare, and overarching issues such as personal wellbeing, safety and security, and economic perspectives. With regard to each subject area, this report seeks to **circumvent the political issues** pervasive in the majority of studies on northern Kosovo, in order to focus on practical issues. The ambition of this report is not to deliver answers to factual questions, nor to provide the government with policy prescriptions, but instead to voice citizens' concerns so that they can communicate their experience of current daily life and how they feel about it. This report is **intended for all stakeholders active in northern Kosovo**, to contribute in their development of strategies of intervention for sustainable stabilisation measures.

In light of the estimated population of the region, between 100,000 and 120,000,¹ ECMI Kosovo opted for the **methodology** of 'convenience sample,' with a geographical breakdown based on current population estimates for the region. This report displays a wealth of information as the result of quantitative and qualitative analysis of answers from a questionnaire administered to a sample of 721 respondents living in the four municipalities of Mitrovica/Mitrovicë North², Leposavić/Leposaviq, Zubin Potok and Zvečan/Zveqan. This sample includes respondents of different ages and ethnic backgrounds. A strict gender balance has been observed. All questionnaires were gathered by a team of 11 local researchers under constant ECMI supervision. The qualitative and quantitative analysis of the data collected in the field was performed by a team composed of a sociologist, a statistical expert and a researcher. ECMI Kosovo held two consultative workshops in Mitrovica/Mitrovicë North and Prishtinë/Priştina to present the main findings and get local and international stakeholders' preliminary reactions. All relevant comments collected during both events have been incorporated in this report.

However, the chosen methodology also has certain **limitations** to bear in mind while reading the report. First, while the sample allows for disaggregation by age, municipality and gender with a high level of confidence, data broken down on the basis of ethnic background should be used in a very cautious way as some ethnicities make up a low absolute number, not allowing any scientifically sound interpretation. The reader should also be very careful when interpreting the results shown in raw data charts. In particular, the reader should be aware of the very diverse level of education of respondents from communities, leading to uneven discernment capacities. In addition, the reader must recall that the report addresses perceptions, meaning that self-declarations from the respondents are valued as such,

¹ Based on OSCE *Municipal Profiles* and ECMI Kosovo *Ethnopolitical Map* estimates because the 2011 Kosovo Census excluded northern Kosovo. See also ECMI Kosovo, *Policy Brief: Minority Communities in the 2011 Kosovo Census Results*, 14 Dec. 2012.

² Mitrovica/Mitrovicë North is under the authority of the UNMIK Administration in Mitrovica (UAM) for the area north of Ibër/Ibar and thus not a fully-fledged "municipality". However it is considered as such for simplicity reasons and for the purposes of this report.

rather than accurate factual statements. Although the questionnaire was designed in a way that avoids political issues and does not allow for political bias in participants' responses, political interference may not be totally excluded from some respondents' opinions. Finally, respondents from different communities refer to different established systems when they voice their concerns about education, healthcare, and social welfare.

In presenting the survey's results, **this report's structure matches the four pillars** defined in the scientific methodology and in the questionnaire: education, healthcare, social welfare, employment and local economic development.

- The study's findings in the area of **education** address questions related to quality of education, school infrastructure, number and quality of teaching staff, match between educational profile of graduates and labour demand. Participants were also encouraged to express their views on more specific thematic areas such as the efficiency and typology of informal education and the inclusiveness of formal education for those with special needs and disabilities.
- For the **healthcare** section, the reports first attempts to analyse issues such as access to healthcare, perceptions about its quality, including that of the personnel and infrastructure. The report then focuses on reproductive health, substance misuse and addictions.
- The **social welfare** part encompasses not only public social welfare such as cash transfer schemes but also peer violence, youth development, problems faced by vulnerable people and, more generally, the dynamism of the cultural opportunities in the area.
- Finally, the findings in the area of **employment and local economy** try to highlight the key features of the labour market, employment perspectives in the public and private sectors, SMEs livelihood, and the potential of agriculture for development.

1. Education

Access to quality education is a fundamentally important part of any practical approach to building a stable and sustainable social environment in Mitrovica/Mitrovicë North, Leposavić/Leposaviq, Zubin Potok and Zvečan/Zveqan. Under the Comprehensive Proposal for the Kosovo Status Settlement (CSP),³ provision of public and formal education is the responsibility of the municipality.⁴ However, Northern municipalities also receive significant support and direction from Serbian institutions, especially in terms of education in Serbian, which remains fully under Belgrade's jurisdiction. Questions have been raised about whether people would stay in the region without access to this education,⁵ which has a good reputation in the region. Furthermore, parallel systems of education for the different ethnic communities result in inconsistencies regarding the recognition and employability of school diplomas, both inside and outside Kosovo.

In attempting to support a more informed view on related questions, the respondent sample benefits from the perceptions of persons from different age groups, with various levels of formal and informal education, and coming from different communities. However, they all share the same geographic and socioeconomic environment and thus have a stake in improving the current educational systems in their municipalities.

³ The Comprehensive proposal for Kosovo Status Settlement, 'Ahtisaari Plan', <http://www.unosek.org/>.

⁴ U.N. Security Council, *Letter dated 26 March 2007 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council, Addendum, Comprehensive Proposal for the Kosovo Status Settlement*, 26 Mar. 2007, at art. 4.1.1.

⁵ International Crisis Group, *Setting Kosovo Free: Remaining Challenges*, 10 Sep. 2012 available at [http://www.crisisgroup.org/~media/Files/europe/balkans/kosovo/218-setting-kosovo-free-remaining-challenges](http://www.crisisgroup.org/~/media/Files/europe/balkans/kosovo/218-setting-kosovo-free-remaining-challenges), at p. 22.

1.1. General Perceptions

Throughout all four municipalities, perceptions about the delivery of formal education are generally positive. As *Figure 1* shows, the majority of the respondents expressed at least some level of satisfaction: 22.73% satisfied and 41.70% somewhat satisfied. Those who expressed a degree of dissatisfaction add up to a small 11.18% of the total sample, leaving 24.38% who are neither satisfied nor dissatisfied.

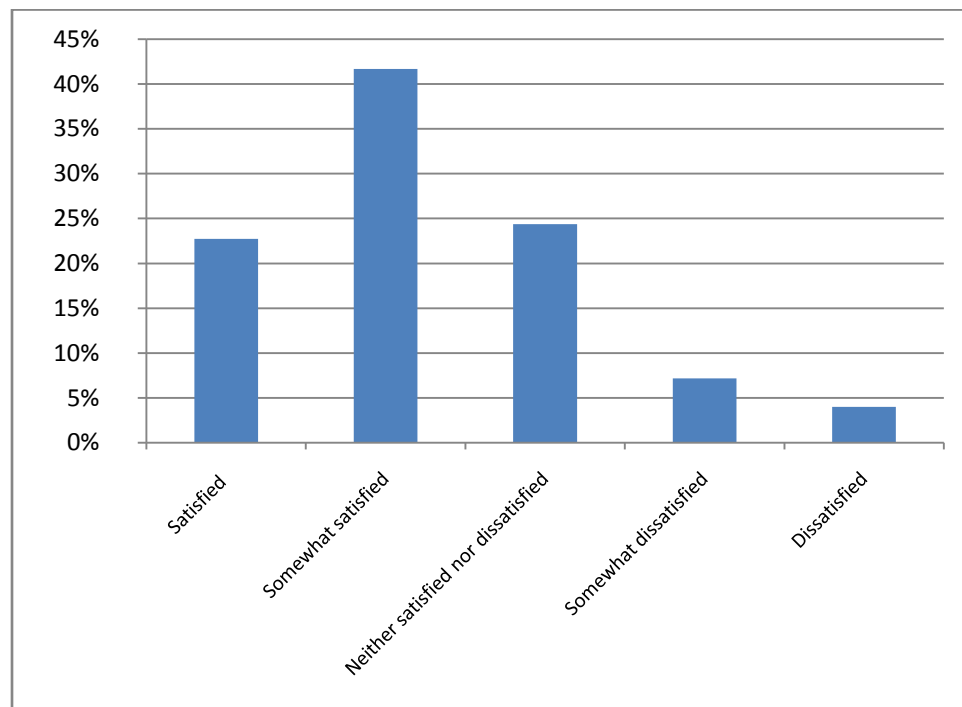


Figure 1. "In general, are you satisfied with the delivery of formal education in your area?"

The majority of the neutral responses come from Mitrovica/Mitrovicë North, where 31.94% of the participants gave this answer, more than for any other municipality. For comparison, most of the respondents in Leposavić/Leposaviq, or 49.42%, declared satisfaction, while 61.02% in Zubin Potok and 40.95% in Zvečan/Zveqan were somewhat satisfied with the delivery of formal education.

This general ranking between municipalities persists in a closely related question that addresses perceptions about the quality of teaching. As presented in *Figure 2*, participants in Leposavić/Leposaviq once again give the highest reviews, with 48.54% expressing satisfaction. However, the most common response in Mitrovica/Mitrovicë North, totalling 36.71%, was dissatisfaction with the level of teaching. Respondents in this municipality were also critical about school equipment, with 35.09% somewhat dissatisfied or dissatisfied, although not as much as in Zvečan/Zveqan, where dissatisfaction accounted for 45.28%. This certainly contributes to the relatively lower level of satisfaction with the general delivery of education in this municipality.

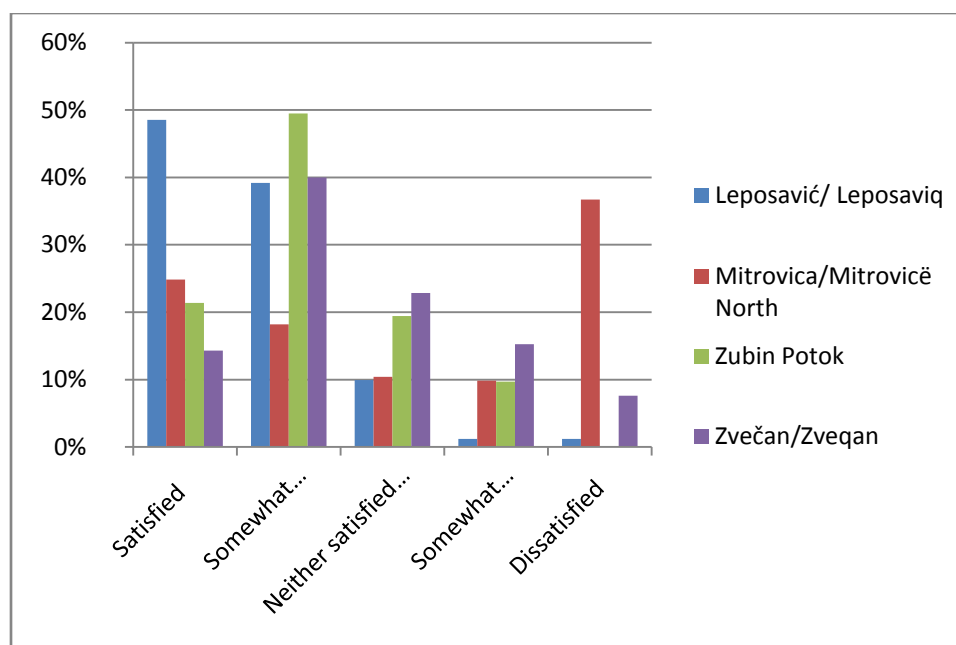


Figure 2. “Are you satisfied with the quality of teaching?”

When analysing and comparing responses between municipalities, it is very important to remember that the questionnaire addresses perceptions and not necessarily the objective reality of the current situation. For instance, even though Mitrovica/Mitrovicë North receives the worst reviews, it remains an important centre for education in northern Kosovo with a public university, large numbers of primary and secondary schools,⁶ and even private educational institutions. Conversely, Leposavić/Leposaviq receives the best reviews despite poorer infrastructure and more limited access to education.⁷ Thus, the negative perceptions in Mitrovica/Mitrovicë North could be considered as affected and could also be attributed to better-informed and more critical respondents. Regardless of differences after breakdown by municipality, general perceptions of education in northern Kosovo are positive overall.

1.2. Transition from Education to Employment

Despite this sense of satisfaction, the transition from education to employment remains very difficult. When asked about employment opportunities within their field of study or geographic area, respondents expressed a high degree of pessimism.

⁶ OSCE, *Municipal Profiles: Mitrovicë/Mitrovica*, Nov. 2011 available at <http://www.osce.org/kosovo/38678>.

⁷ OSCE, *Municipal Profiles: Leposavić/Leposaviq*, Nov. 2011 available at <http://www.osce.org/kosovo/13120>.

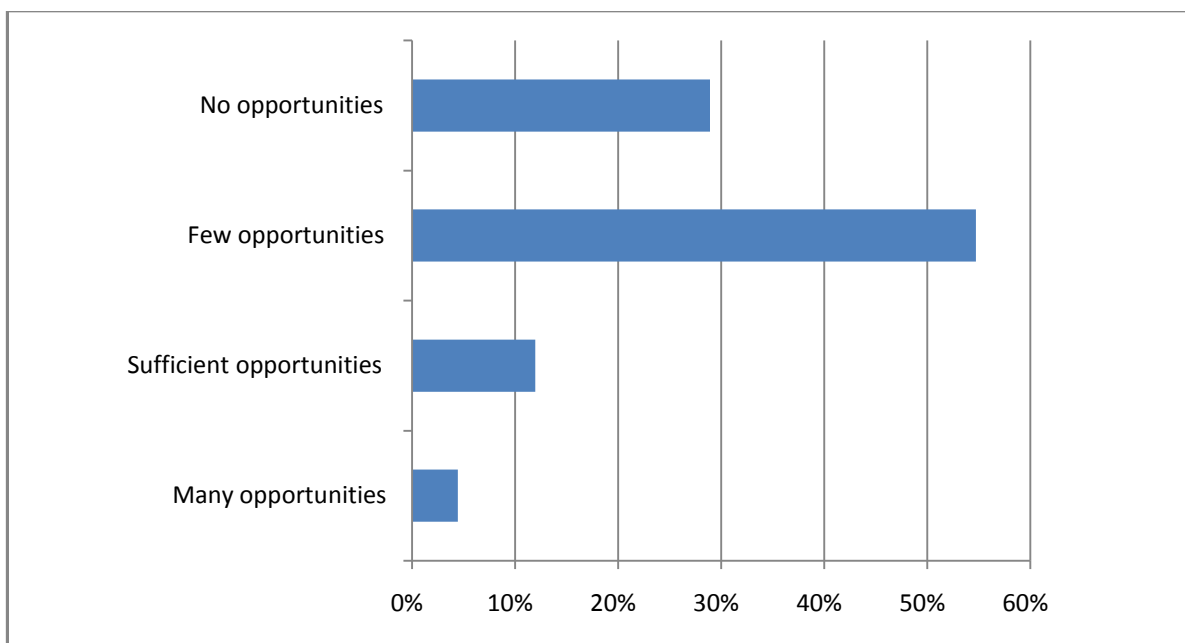


Figure 3. “After you graduate, or if you have already graduated, to what extent do you see opportunities for employment in your field of study?”

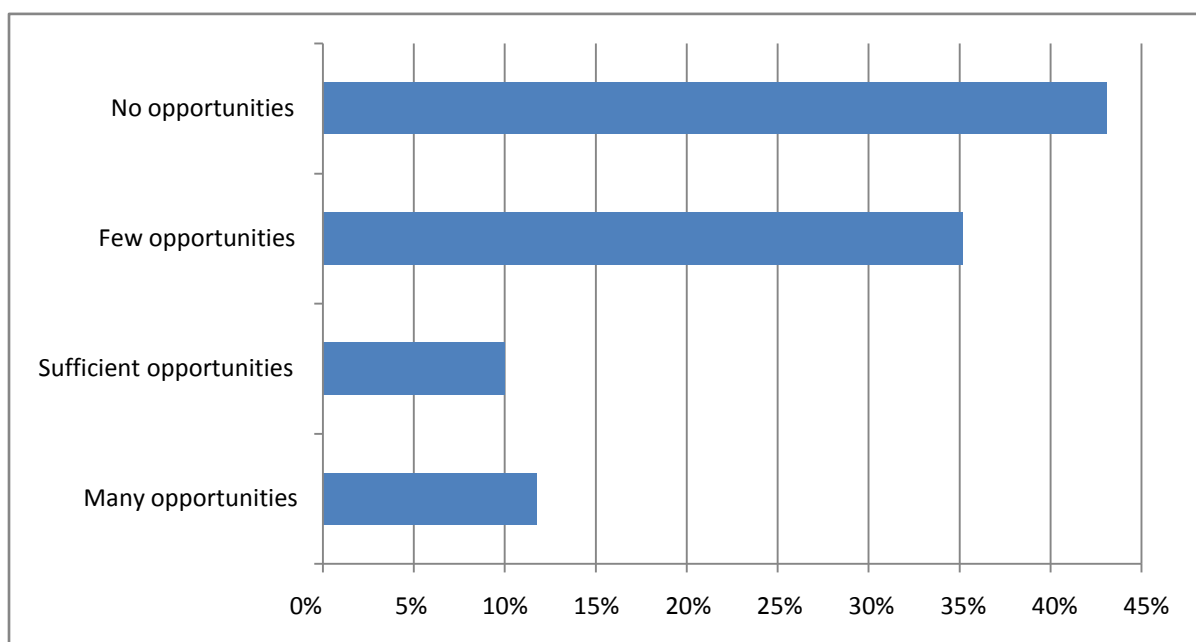


Figure 4. “After you graduate, or if you have already graduated, to what extent do you see opportunities for employment in your geographic area?”

As *Figure 3* shows, the majority of participants in northern Kosovo, or 54.72%, see few opportunities for work within their field of study, whilst a striking 28.90% see no opportunities. These proportions are consistent across the municipalities, except in Mitrovica/Mitrovicë North, where those who see no opportunities are as high as 47.52%.

Another question assessing opportunities in the same geographic area suggests similar pessimism, with 35.16% reporting few opportunities and 43.08% no opportunities.

Nonetheless, the respondents who declared that there were many opportunities in *Figure 4* are almost exclusively from Mitrovica/Mitrovicë North. This seems unexpected, considering that almost half of the people in the same municipality report no opportunities for the previous question. But the fact that 28.81% see many opportunities for employment in that municipality, while 30.75% still see none can be explained by the local economy. Although people with a university degree have job prospects, it is often outside their field, in non-governmental and other institutions, or even shops.⁸ The labour market in Mitrovica/Mitrovicë North is only able to provide jobs to certain types of skilled workers.⁹ Still, perceptions are better in this area because of its urban environment, which draws many young people from rural towns. Nevertheless, social science and humanities students are likely to be one group of university graduates who find difficulties finding employment within their field. Even taking this into account, the overall consensus remains that employment opportunities after graduation are insufficient in all four municipalities northern Kosovo.

1.3. Informal Education

The previous findings clearly reflect a perceived discrepancy between the labour demand and supply in northern Kosovo. One way to bridge the gap between education and employment or to mitigate the risk of working in other fields is to enhance informal education. It is considered a plausible way to acquire the skills necessary for the labour market according to 91% of respondents in Leposavić/Leposaviq, 78% in Zvečan/Zveqan, 75% in Mitrovica/Mitrovicë North, and 70% in Zubin Potok. In each of the four municipalities, language courses and IT skills are the most popular forms of informal education, forming almost half of the overall sector.¹⁰

Respondents in Zubin Potok are relatively less convinced of the usefulness of informal education, but this is to be expected since 34.12% of them also express dissatisfaction with its current quality.¹¹ Related to this more negative perception are the results in *Figure 5*. Local NGOs are usually the providers of informal education, yet in Zubin Potok the respondents who had benefited from such education noted a relatively weaker presence of local NGOs. This reduced presence can be explained by the less multi-ethnic environment in Zubin Potok,¹² but also by a lack of facilities and infrastructure as a more rural area. In contrast, in Mitrovica/Mitrovicë North, and to a large extent in Leposavić/Leposaviq and Zvečan/Zveqan, NGOs are the main provider of informal education. This is not the case in Zubin Potok, where only 22.73% reported participating in identical NGO-sponsored training.

⁸ ECMI Kosovo consultation with local researchers, Mitrovica/Mitrovicë, 11 Dec. 2012.

⁹ See also 4.1. Labour Market, at p. 28.

¹⁰ See Annex 1, Question 2J: What types of informal education are you aware of in your area?.

¹¹ See Annex 1, Question 2O: Do you think the current level of informal education is satisfactory?.

¹² OSCE, *Municipal Profiles: Zubin Potok*, Nov. 2011 available at <http://www.osce.org/kosovo/13135>.

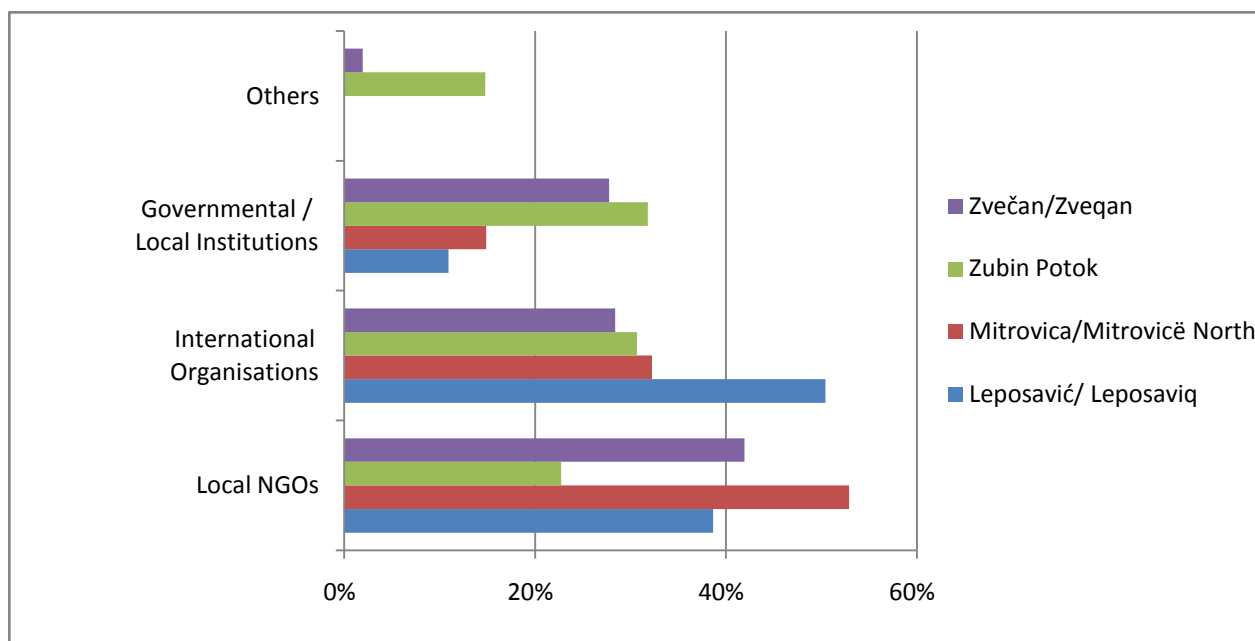


Figure 5. “Who provided this informal education?”

1.4. Inclusive Education

Lack of inclusion in education in northern Kosovo is another important focus of the survey. This report focuses on people with disabilities, although inclusive education also concerns special needs. Even though the survey did not specifically target people with disabilities, some conclusions can still be drawn from the overall sample of responses. *Figure 6* confirms that discriminatory practices are certainly perceived to exist to varying degrees in each of the four municipalities. Such practices can be considered as discriminatory in both a legal sense e.g. the lack of physical access to facilities, and based on individuals’ subjective definitions, e.g. marginalisation in social life. The majority of respondents reported discrimination towards people with disabilities: 33.58% saying “often” and 23.36% “very often”.

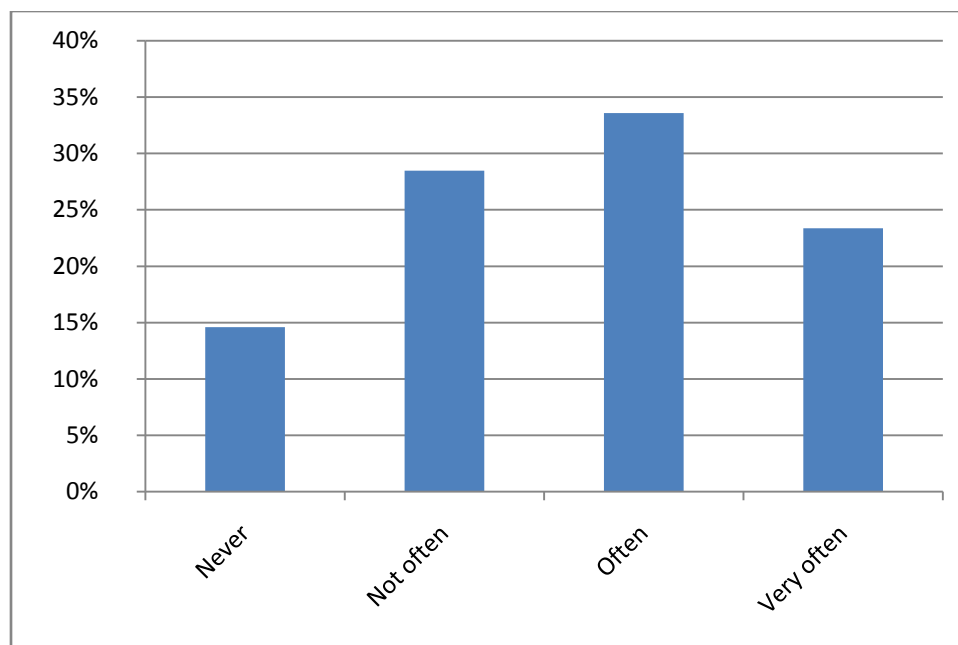


Figure 6. “Do you think there is discriminatory practice towards people with disabilities in relation to other students?”

The more positive responses come from Leposavić/Leposaviq and Zubin Potok, but even there, 51.09% and 53.76% respectively fall under “not often”, suggesting that discrimination exists. Responses in Mitrovica/Mitrovicë North vary, but nevertheless a total of 66.26% participants think students with disabilities are often or very often put at a disadvantage compared to other students. Critically, in Zvečan/Zveqan not only do the most people, 40.38%, perceive discriminatory practices as “very often”, but also the fewest, 1.92%, think they never take place.

This high perception of discriminatory practices towards people with special needs and disabilities can be attributed both to the quality of teaching and general school infrastructure. The lack of school resources and training are the main challenges to implementing existing legal standards and further exacerbate the low awareness about inclusive education.¹³ In Zvečan/Zveqan, 77.66% of respondents considered the quality of teaching in relation to people with special needs to be below average, either poor or very poor.¹⁴ As seen in Figure 7, the lack of school infrastructures for people with disabilities is clear. In Zubin Potok and in Zvečan/Zveqan the majority of respondents, 50.56% and 51.58% respectively, gave the lowest possible rating, “very poor”, for the quality of relevant school equipment. Even respondents from Leposavić/Leposaviq and Mitrovica/Mitrovicë North, who considered the quality of teaching as relatively good,¹⁵ perceived the equipment as far less satisfactory for people with disabilities.

¹³ ECMI Kosovo consultation with local researchers, Mitrovica/Mitrovicë, 11 Dec. 2012.

¹⁴ See Annex 1, Question 2G: What do you think about the quality of education in terms of teachers skill at satisfying the needs of people with disabilities?.

¹⁵ Ibid.

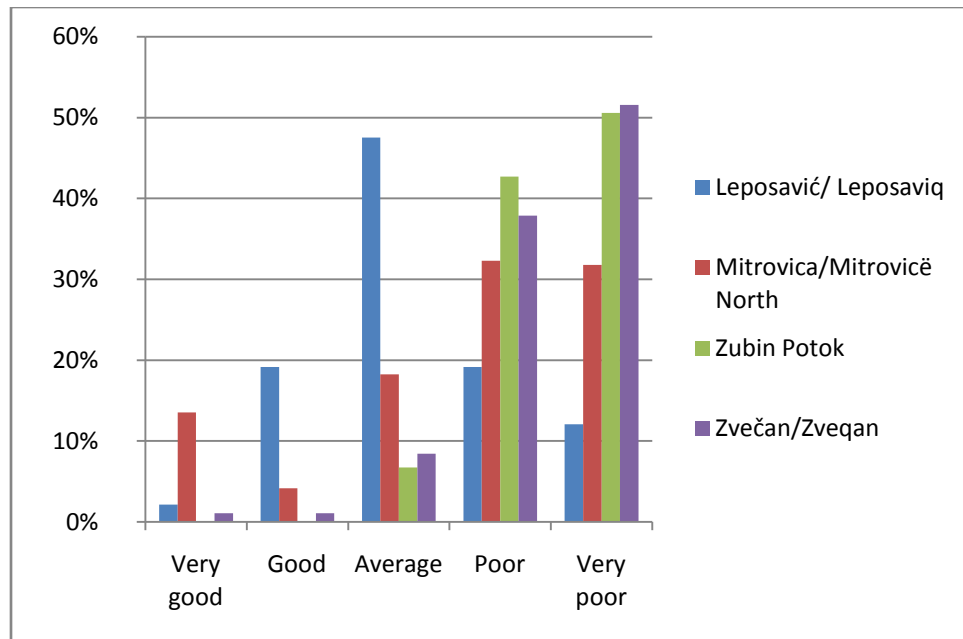


Figure 7. “What do you think about the quality of education in terms of equipment at satisfying the needs of people with disabilities?”

2. Healthcare

As with education, access to quality healthcare is a top priority for citizens of Mitrovica/Mitrovicë North, Leposavić/Leposaviq, Zubin Potok and Zvečan/Zveqan, and anyone who has a stake in creating a stable and sustainable socioeconomic environment in northern Kosovo. All communities have access to healthcare and health facilities in each of the municipalities; in Mitrovica/Mitrovicë North, the sector is also one of the primary providers of employment.¹⁶ In practice, healthcare in northern Kosovo is sponsored and remains under Serbian regulation.¹⁷ This creates fear over a decrease of quality should parallel structures cease to exist,¹⁸ despite current CSP¹⁹ guarantees of Serbian supervision of the sector. Amidst general discussions are also concerns about the effects of substance abuse and lack of reproductive health awareness among young people. Indeed, problems with the healthcare system have immediate and tangible impacts on communities. Problems with healthcare provision could be a strong incentive to leave the region, or else suffer a significant decrease in the quality of life.

All participants in the survey have a stake in improving healthcare in their municipalities, regardless of age, education, employment or ethnic background. Where the sample allows for statistical significance,

¹⁶ OSCE, *Municipal Profiles: Mitrovicë/Mitrovica*, Nov. 2011 available at <http://www.osce.org/kosovo/38678>.

¹⁷ International Crisis Group, *North Kosovo: Dual Sovereignty in Practice*, 14 Mar. 2011 available at <http://www.crisisgroup.org/~/media/Files/europe/balkans/kosovo/211%20North%20Kosovo%20---%20Dual%20Sovereignty%20in%20Practice.pdf>, at p. 2.

¹⁸ Malazogu, Leon and Alex Grigorev, *From Creative Ambiguity to a Constructive Process*, 2012 available at http://d4d-ks.org/assets/2012-10-17-PER_VeriuENG.pdf, p. 48.

¹⁹ The Comprehensive proposal for Kosovo Status Settlement, ‘Ahtisaari Plan’, <http://www.unosek.org/>.

their background has been taken into account as a way to further illuminate potential sources of weakness in the current provision and infrastructure of healthcare. With health being an area which can tangibly and personally affect each respondent on a more palpable level, perceptions about the situation become all the more important.

2.1. General Perceptions

Perceptions about the quality of healthcare in northern Kosovo are generally positive. There is little deviation across all four municipalities when compared to the total proportions shown in *Figure 8*. The majority of respondents reported above average satisfaction; 39.94% are somewhat satisfied and 23.48% are satisfied. These responses roughly correspond to the aggregated results concerning highly related questions: 59.71% reported that the number of hospitals in their areas is good or very good,²⁰ 86.55% considered access to healthcare easy or very easy,²¹ and 73.81% were satisfied or somewhat satisfied by the services provided in their hospitals.²²

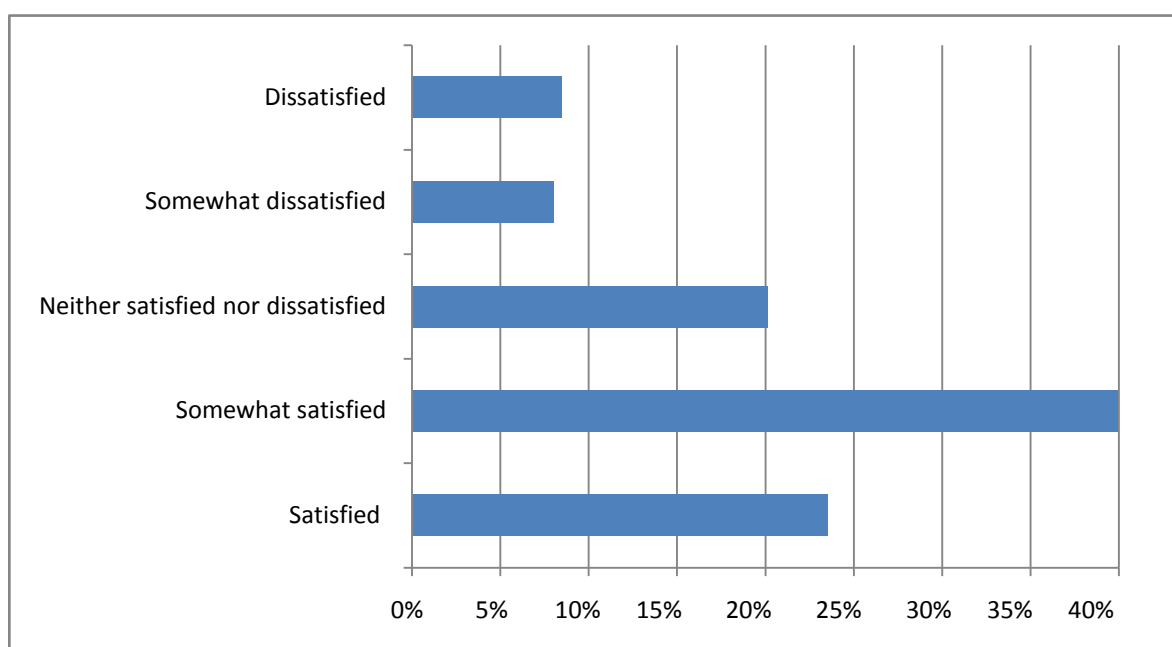


Figure 8. “In general, are you satisfied with the level of quality of healthcare in your area?”

However, perceptions were significantly less consistent between municipalities in terms of satisfaction with medical equipment. As presented in *Figure 9*, no more than 5% of respondents gave the highest rating for any of the municipalities. The most positive reviews come from those living in Leposavić/Leposaviq where 37.87% declared that medical equipment is good and 46.75% said it is average. In contrast, participants from Zubin Potok answered more negatively, with 43.64% rating

²⁰ See Annex 1, Question 3B: Do you think the number of hospitals in your area is appropriate in relation to the number of people living there?.

²¹ See Annex 1, Question 3C: How easy is it for you to access healthcare in your area?.

²² See Annex 1, Question 3D: Do you think that the services provided by the hospital in your area are satisfactory?.

equipment as poor and 44.55% as very poor. Zubin Potok does not have a functioning hospital,²³ and is perceived as neglected when it comes to medical equipment donations.²⁴ But even in municipalities with a lot of donated equipment, it can go unused due to the lack of relevant training.²⁵ Overall perceptions indicate significant space for improvement in terms of quality of medical equipment, despite a general sense satisfaction with the overall quality of healthcare.

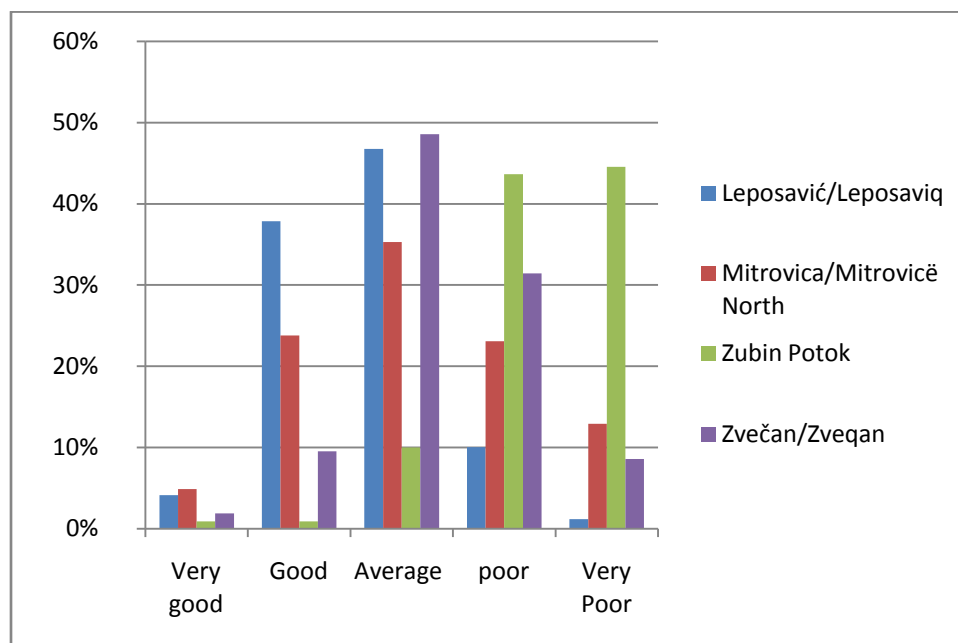


Figure 9. “What do you think about the quality of healthcare in terms of medical equipment satisfying the needs of people?”

Seeing that the general quality of healthcare is considered to be good, other factors might be compensating for or balancing out the perceived lack of proper medical equipment. One such factor is the quality of medical personnel, which is also considered to be above average in all four municipalities. As seen in Figure 10, perceptions are still highest in Leposavić/Leposaviq, but the 57.87% majority of respondents from Zubin Potok considered the level of personnel to be good and 7.02% even very good. Personnel are judged relatively worse in Zvečan/Zveqan, where 59.43% rate it as average.

²³ OSCE, *Municipal Profiles: Zubin Potok*, Nov. 2011 available at <http://www.osce.org/kosovo/13135>.

²⁴ ECMI Kosovo consultation with local researchers, Mitrovica/Mitrovicë, 11 Dec. 2012.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

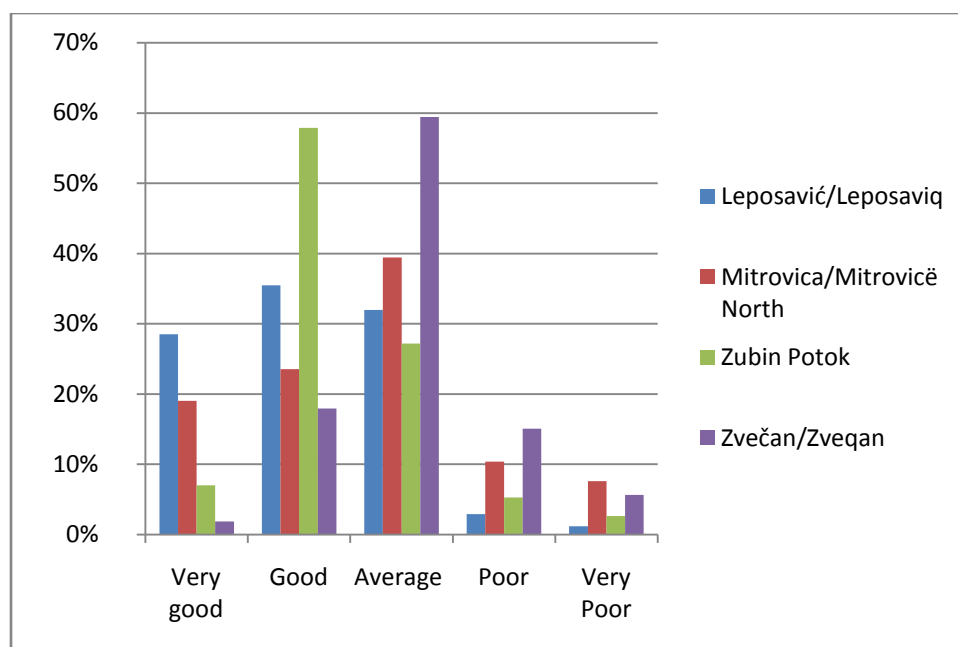


Figure 10. “What do you think about the quality of healthcare in terms of qualified personnel at satisfying the needs of people?”

These conclusions are reinforced by findings from a question asking for the three weakest aspects of healthcare in each municipality.²⁶ Medical equipment was the top answer in all four municipalities, followed closely by infrastructure. Another answer that stands out but confirms perceptions in *Figure 10*, is the need for improvements in terms of quality of staff in Zvečan/Zveqan, where 21.15% (a significantly higher figure than anywhere else) of respondents ranked ‘quality of staff’ as a priority concern that needs to be addressed.

2.2. Reproductive Healthcare

Reproductive healthcare is an aspect of healthcare that was specifically targeted by the survey. As seen in *Figure 11* the majority of responses fall under neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, without any significant distinction between male and female respondents.

²⁶ See Annex 1, Question 3G: What elements of healthcare in your area, do you feel need improvements most urgently?.

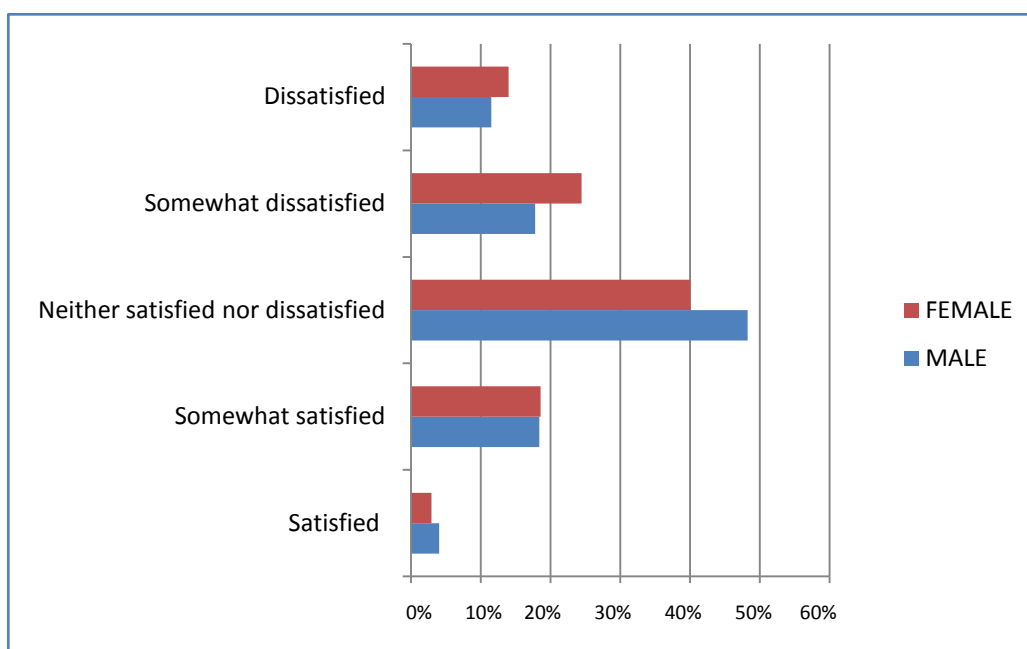


Figure 11. “Do you think that the quality of reproductive healthcare services is satisfactory?”

When broken down by municipality, this trend can be seen for Leposavić/Leposaviq and Zvečan/Zveqan, where ‘on the fence’ answers account for 42.16% and 46.94% respectively. In Mitrovica/Mitrovicë North and Zubin Potok, respondents are somewhat more dissatisfied, but the aggregated responses are still generally neutral. Such results could point to neutrality, but it could also reflect a low level of awareness about reproductive healthcare among respondents, especially in Leposavić/Leposaviq and Zvečan/Zveqan. It is very unlikely that respondents would report feeling vulnerable or perceive lack of reproductive health as a tangible threat, if they are not first aware of the related dangers. The topic is largely taboo and not a matter of public debate, and older respondents are even sometimes unfamiliar with the terms.²⁷ Particularly in rural areas, young women are unfamiliar with reproductive health services because they are unlikely to undergo checkups for fear of being regarded as pregnant.²⁸ This could potentially explain the otherwise scattered answers and strict below 5% satisfaction for both genders.

2.3. Substance abuse

Respondents were also asked to self-report substance abuse, which is another distinct aspect of public healthcare. Typically, substance abuse is used synonymously with harmful or hazardous use and addiction is defined simply as “repeated use” when frequency is concerned.²⁹ For the purposes of this

²⁷ ECMI Kosovo consultation with local researchers, Mitrovica/Mitrovicë, 11 Dec. 2012.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ World Health Organization, *Lexicon of alcohol and drug terms published by the World Health Organization*, available at http://www.who.int/substance_abuse/terminology/who_lexicon/en/.

survey, addiction was considered use of a substance more than once a week and questions were designed to be less judgmental towards participants. Across the whole northern region, 35% of below and 46% of above 25-year-olds admitted to substance abuse. There was not a significant variation by age, except in Leposavić/Leposaviq, where only 29% of young people reported using alcohol or nicotine in comparison to 51% of the older respondents.

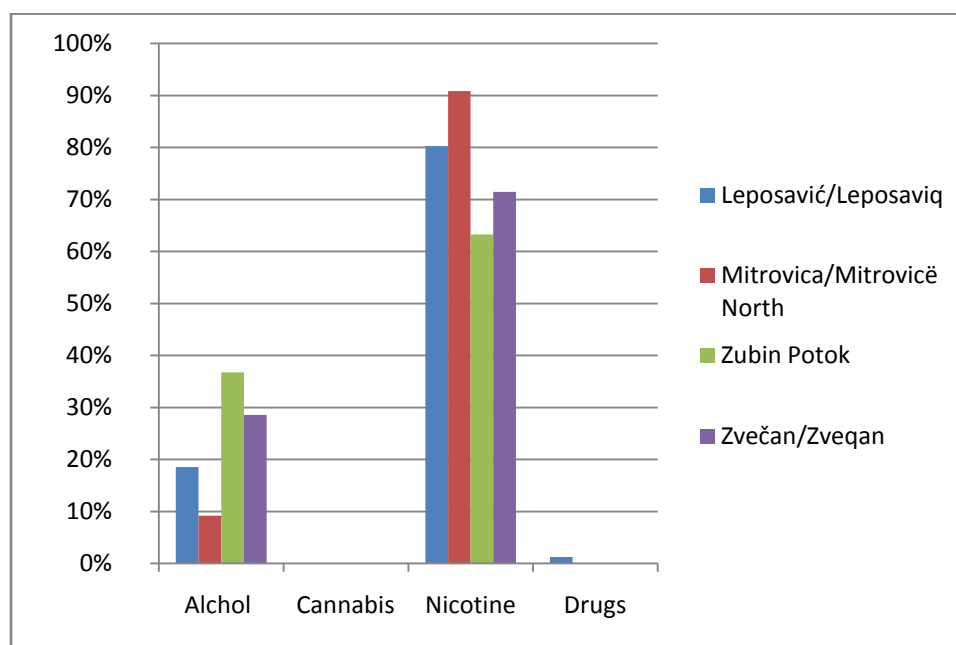


Figure 12. "Please specify which substance you are addicted (more than once a week):"

Figure 12 outlines the important distinction between types of substance abused. The overwhelming majority of those who admitted to being addicted said the addiction was for nicotine. There is a high rate of nicotine addiction across the municipalities: 30.24% in Zubin Potok, 33.67% in Mitrovica/Mitrovicë North, 32.66% in Zvečan/Zveqan and 32% in Leposavić/Leposaviq. For comparison, smoking rates among adults are estimated to less than 20% in OECD countries.³⁰

It should be stressed that these results are self-reported and most likely do not reflect the situation with complete accuracy. Whilst the smoking rate in northern Kosovo is already comparatively high, it could very likely have been underestimated by this survey when considering firsthand field observations.³¹ Furthermore, respondents are reluctant to declare alcohol addiction, even when it is classified as more than once a week use in the survey. This could be a result of misinterpretation of the definition of alcohol: even though beer and wine are types of alcohol, participants might only consider hard liquor since the question puts alcohol alongside otherwise very unhealthy or addictive substances. The lack of responses related to alcohol can also be attributed to far worse social perceptions relative to those for nicotine. Even though the term "alcoholism" was not used in the survey, it is a synonym of addiction to

³⁰ OECD Publishing, *Health at a Glance 2011: OECD Indicators*, 2011 available at http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/health_glance-2011-en, at p.8.

³¹ ECMI Kosovo consultation with local researchers, Mitrovica/Mitrovicë, 11 Dec. 2012.

alcohol with a very negative connotation. This may prevent participants from saying they abuse alcohol, even if in the context of the survey this means as often as a twice a week use.

A much stronger stigma is perceived with regard to cannabis and other drug use. Respondents are extremely reluctant to confess using drugs, despite a local general consensus and international reports³² that narcotics are a common problem in northern Kosovo. Participants do, however, point out a lack of addiction rehabilitation facilities as a weakness in current healthcare,³³ yet only one person admits to using drugs in *Figure 12*. It could be that researchers simply did not reach regular users, a possible shortcoming of the convenience sample. It is also conceivable that even though respondents are guaranteed anonymity, they still do not want to admit use during the interpersonal interaction with the interviewer. Still, the findings suggest a serious marginalisation of drug addicts, most likely stemming from the highly negative social perceptions about this type of substance abuse.

3. Social Welfare

As with anywhere else, social welfare in Mitrovica/Mitrovicë North, Leposavić/Leposaviq, Zubin Potok and Zvečan/Zveqan, is not just limited to government assistance programmes, and is affected by a variety of factors. Indeed, poverty is considered to be the biggest problem by local communities, second only to unemployment, according to UNDP opinion polls.³⁴ But also important is overall safety, which many observers target as an area that needs improvement. Media reports of violence in northern Kosovo are common, and the issue of violence among youth persists.³⁵ Nevertheless, perceptions of safety seem to have risen among residents,³⁶ raising a question about the day-to-day experience of life in northern Kosovo. Finally, even though a lack of cultural and social development programmes have less striking negative effects, they remain an integral factor for the long term perception of satisfaction and social welfare of the communities.

In attempting to reach a better understanding of the current social welfare condition, the sample includes all segments of the population. Thus, some respondents' answers might not come from an entirely informed perspective when it comes to social programmes that target distinct groups by design.

³² E.g. "Crisis Group observed open drug dealing on Mitrovica University's campus on several occasions. Heroin is cheap, indicating a large supply; cocaine is expensive and hard to find, while marijuana is 'just part of university life'." International Crisis Group, *North Kosovo: Dual Sovereignty in Practice*, 14 Mar. 2011 available at <http://www.crisisgroup.org/~media/Files/europe/balkans/kosovo/211%20North%20Kosovo%20---%20Dual%20Sovereignty%20in%20Practice.pdf>, at p. 14.

³³ See Annex 1, *Question 3G: What elements of healthcare in your area, do you feel need improvements most urgently?*.

³⁴ UNDP, *Public Pulse Poll: Fast Facts V*, Nov. 2012 available at http://www.kosovo.undp.org/repository/docs/2012/Fast_Facts_5-Final.pdf, at p. 5.

³⁵ Malazogu, Leon and Alex Grigorev, *From Creative Ambiguity to a Constructive Process*, 2012 available at http://d4d-ks.org/assets/2012-10-17-PER_VeriuENG.pdf, p. 52.

³⁶ UNDP, *Public Pulse Poll: Fast Facts V*, Nov. 2012 available at http://www.kosovo.undp.org/repository/docs/2012/Fast_Facts_5-Final.pdf, at p. 7.

However, general social welfare affects the whole population and, especially when it comes to safety, has triggered useful observations from every citizen, benefitting this report.

3.1. General Findings

The survey attempted to provide an accurate understanding of the perceptions about all types of social programmes. However, a very small percentage of respondents reported being among the beneficiaries of social welfare programmes: only 10% in Mitrovica/Mitrovicë North, 14% in Leposavić/Leposaviq, 10% in Zubin Potok, and 7% in Zvečan/Zveqan.³⁷ This could also be an underestimation due to the essence of the question; respondents might not feel comfortable disclosing what state benefits they receive, despite guaranteed anonymity.

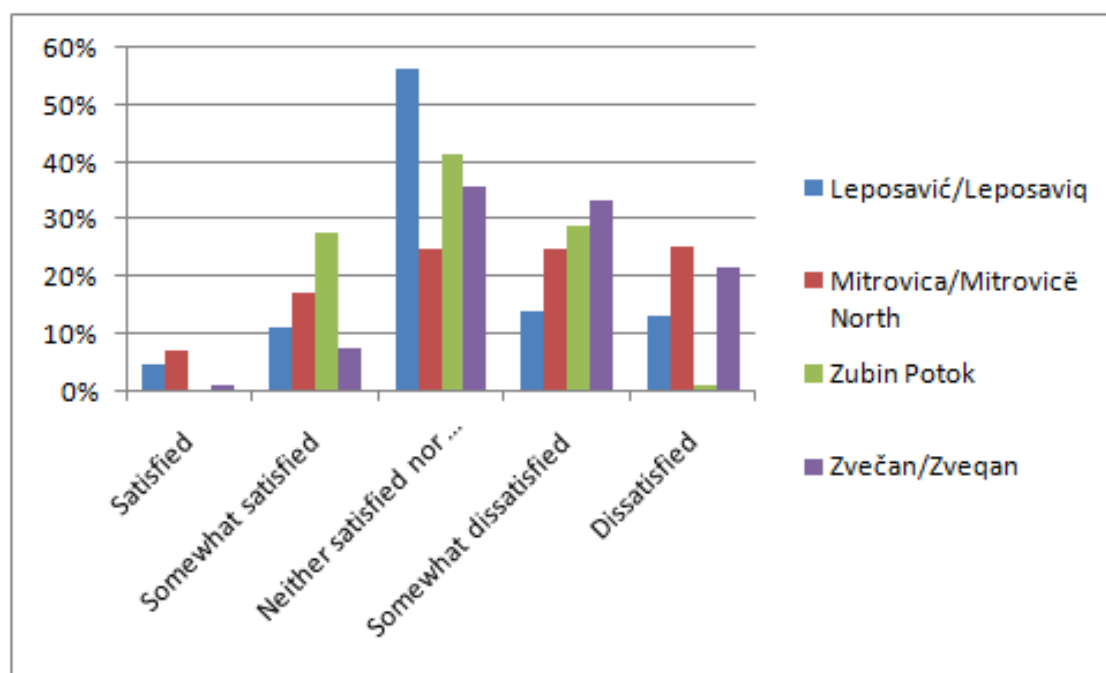


Figure 13. “Do you think that the quality of services provided by centres for social welfare to child and adult people are satisfactory?”

With the above considerations in mind, one can still draw conclusions from *Figure 13*. The most popular answer in all four municipalities was the neutral “neither satisfied nor satisfied,” with 44.44% in Leposavić/Leposaviq, 33.48% in Mitrovica/Mitrovicë North, 38.67% in Zubin Potok, and 36.11% in Zvečan/Zveqan. It should be noted that 36% in Zubin Potok are also somewhat satisfied, while 34.72% in Zvečan/Zveqan are somewhat dissatisfied.

In another question directed only towards beneficiaries of cash value schemes, those same municipalities stand out with their higher levels of satisfaction. It is positive for 38% in Zubin Potok and

³⁷ See Annex 1, Question 4A: Are you among the beneficiaries of the services provided by centres for social welfare?

43% in Zvečan/Zveqan, but negative for 86% in Mitrovica/Mitrovicë North.³⁸ Based on these variations between municipalities, discrepancies between the answers of beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries of social welfare programmes, as well as high percentage of neutral answers, it can be observed that the level of information about such programmes is generally low. This could be associated with complications arising from having parallel sources of public funding in northern Kosovo.

3.2. Public Programmes and Services

Respondents in all four municipalities expressed significant dissatisfaction with the three types of public programmes and services: those for older people, those for people with disabilities and those related to cultural events and initiatives. As seen in *Figures 14, 15 and 16*, no more than 10%, and in most instances significantly fewer of participants in each municipality, expressed satisfaction with any of these.

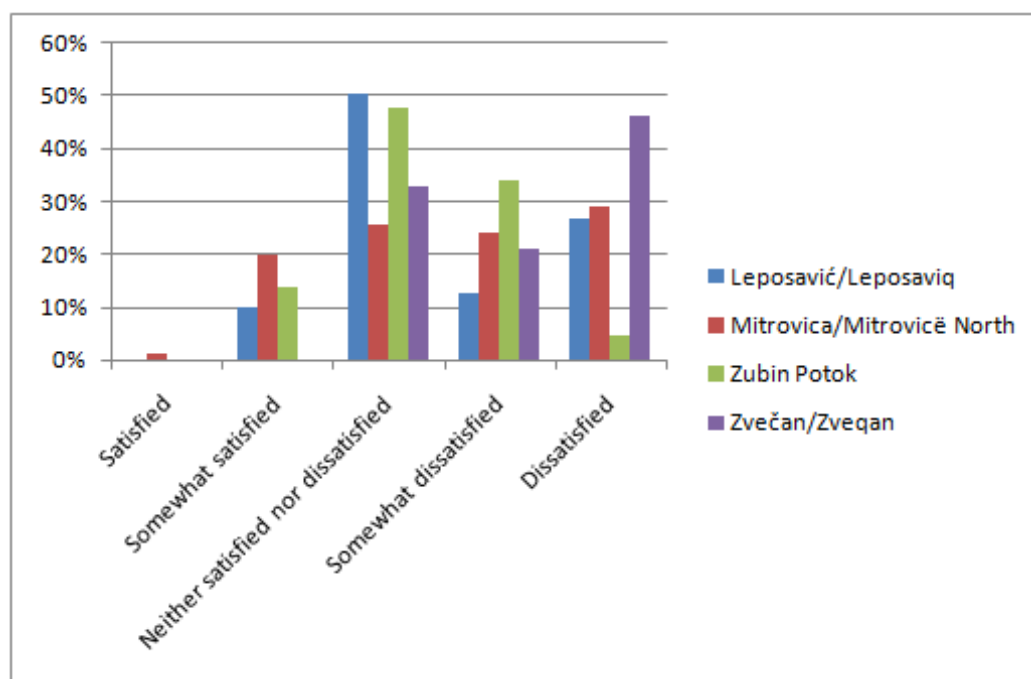


Figure 14. "If you are aware of programmes and services implemented in your area towards older people by the Ministry of Social Welfare and Social Affairs, do you think they are satisfactory?"

Programmes and services targeting older people are far from satisfactory according to respondents, as presented in *Figure 14*. Although the 1.24% satisfied in Mitrovica/Mitrovicë North comes exclusively from those aged between 15 and 24, age makes minimal difference in the way people respond across the other options. A lack of satisfactory programmes does, however, affect the younger population who are expected to take care of parents once they grow old, in accordance with local culture.³⁹ Much more significant are the variations between municipalities: 50.63% in Leposavić/Leposaviq and 47.69% in

³⁸ See Annex 1, Question 4D: *If you are among the proportion of people who are benefiting of cash value schemes, do you think that cash value schemes are satisfactory?*

³⁹ ECMI Kosovo consultation with local researchers, Mitrovica/Mitrovicë, 11 Dec. 2012.

Zubin Potok are neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, while 46.17% in Zvečan/Zveqan are outright dissatisfied. Proportions in Mitrovica/Mitrovicë North are more spread out, but it is generally clear that much more can be desired from programmes for the older population. Pensioner associations work at limited capacity in northern Kosovo, and only provide activities such as excursions or recreational games, mostly chess.⁴⁰ There was also a negative consensus from 50-70 year olds when asked whether they think their income is able to meet their basic requirements. Those who said “no” are 62% in Leposavić/Leposaviq and Zubin Potok, 70% in Zvečan/Zveqan, and 82% in Mitrovica/Mitrovicë North.⁴¹

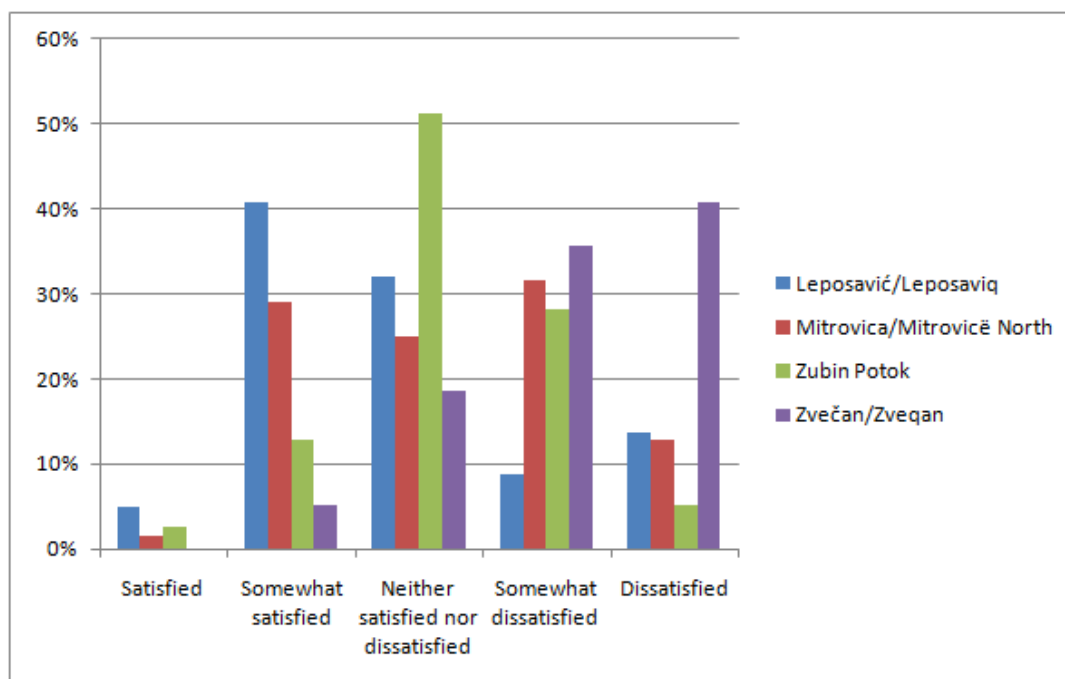


Figure 15. “In general, do you think that the services provided by centres for social development to people with disabilities are satisfactory?”

Social development services for people with disabilities also seem far from satisfactory based on local perception indicated in Figure 15. Participants did not necessarily belong to a group with special needs, but the sample also helps identify how well known such programmes are locally. The most popular responses are again best in Leposavić/Leposaviq, with 40.78% somewhat satisfied, and worst in Zvečan/Zveqan,⁴² with 40.68% dissatisfied. Variations between municipalities do not necessarily reflect the actual situation and offer no reliable comparison between the quality services, but nevertheless show a discrepancy in the level of satisfaction that could be coming from the visibility and efficiency of the services in question.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ See Annex 1, Question 4M: Do you think your income is able to meet your basic requirements?.

⁴² See also 1.4. Inclusive Education, at p. 13.

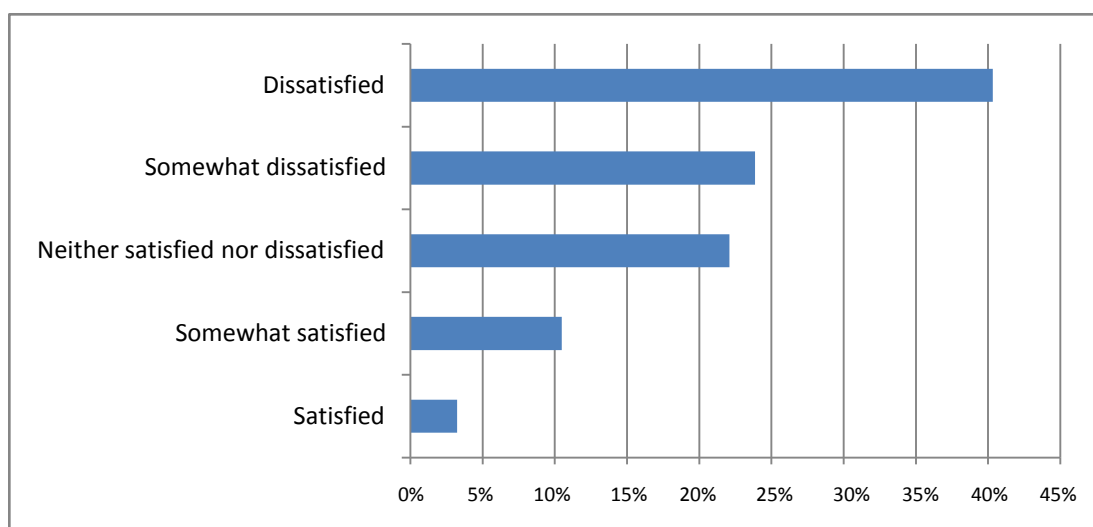


Figure 16. "What is your perception with regard to cultural events in your area?"

Perceptions about cultural events are also generally negative, with a total of 40.32% dissatisfied and 23.87% somewhat dissatisfied in northern Kosovo. Satisfaction is lowest in Mitrovica/Mitrovicë North and Zvečan/Zveqan, where the 50.36% and 54.90% are dissatisfied. In all four municipalities, respondents aged between 15 and 24 were the main contributor to these negative results, especially in Zvečan/Zveqan, where 70.97% of young people reported being dissatisfied. This information indicates a certain lack of cultural programmes targeting young people. Alternatively, cultural events might not be accurately meeting the expectations and desires of young people. Since total levels of satisfaction are very low regardless of age, the findings may indicate a serious lack of adequate cultural programming.

3.3. Safety

Safety is generally regarded as a leading threat to social welfare in northern Kosovo, but this was not drastically reflected in the sample of responses. Answers did not differ significantly between gender, age or ethnicity, although there is noticeable variation among municipalities.

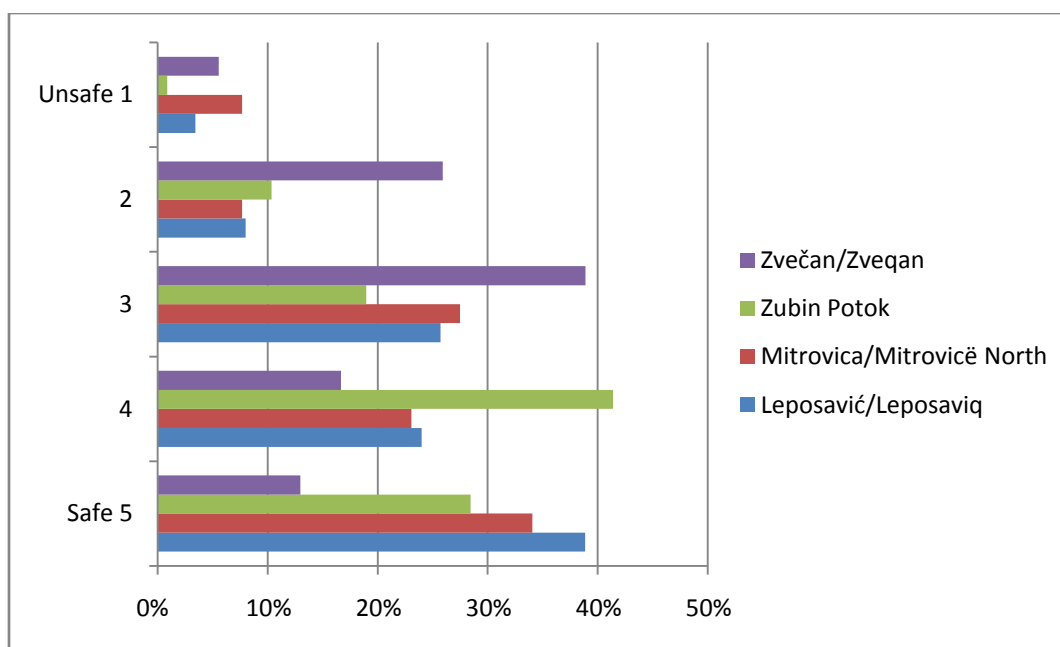


Figure 17. “How safe do you feel in your area?”

When asked to report their perceived degree of safety, the least amount of respondents for each municipality declared that they felt completely unsafe – 3.43% in Leposavić/Leposaviq, 7.69% in Mitrovica/Mitrovicë North, 0.86% in Zubin Potok, and 5.56% in Zvečan/Zveqan. Even feeling somewhat unsafe is the next most unpopular option, except in Zvečan/Zveqan where 25.93% ranked their safety as two on the 1-5 scale. As shown in *Figure 17*, responses generally vary among municipalities and are most positive in Leposavić/Leposaviq and Zubin Potok, which are less multi-ethnic and further away from the Ibar River. Some degree of favourable responses is to be expected, considering that participants would have a positive bias towards their own municipalities and domestic environments. Even so, similar studies estimate self-reported feelings of safety in OECD countries to be 67% on average, which is considerably higher.⁴³

The above findings are somewhat inconsistent with perceptions regarding local authorities’ and civil societies’ capacities to respond to violence presented in *Figure 18*. Even though Zubin Potok has the least satisfied respondents, with 51.48% dissatisfaction, the general level of satisfaction in other municipalities is unexpectedly low. Only 9% in Mitrovica/Mitrovicë North, 2.78% Zubin Potok in and 0.97% in Zvečan/Zveqan are actually satisfied with the quality of response to violence. Those same municipalities also have respectively 34.07%, 28.45% and 12.96% of people who feel safe. Even Leposavić/Leposaviq shows a significantly low level of satisfaction in terms of ability to respond to violence. This discrepancy may be rooted in a different understanding of safety for each respondent. Because the survey did not provide a definition of safety, some respondents might not have replied in a strictly physical context. Similarly, safety can be perceived both as an everyday issue, such as walking

⁴³ OECD, *Better Life Index: Safety*, <http://www.oecdbetterlifeindex.org/topics/safety> (last visited 10 Dec. 2012).

alone at night, or a more general one, such as long term stability in the region. These variations dilute the correlation between adequate response to violence and general feelings of safety.

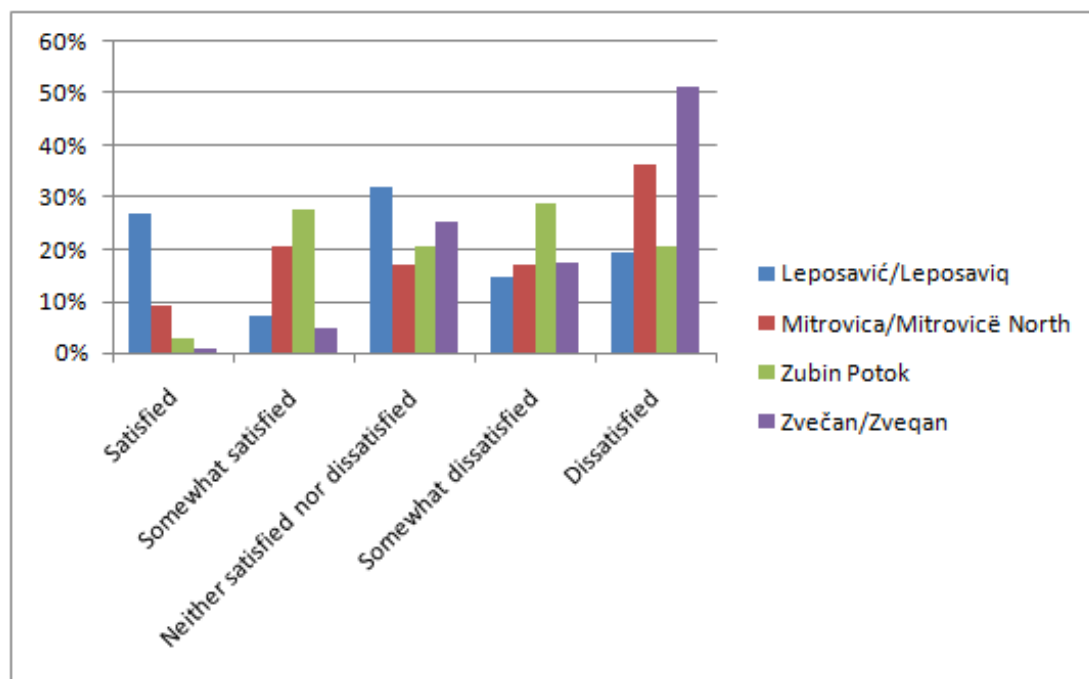


Figure 18. “Do you think that the capacity of local authorities and civil societies to respond to violence is satisfactory?”

4. Employment and Local Economy

Unemployment in northern Kosovo, and in Kosovo as a whole, is a prime matter for public debate and a source of dissatisfaction among the population. For 42% of the general population, this is the biggest problem in Kosovo and accordingly calls for the most urgent improvements.⁴⁴ High unemployment rates are an impediment not only to returning, but also to staying in Mitrovica/Mitrovicë North, Leposavić/Leposaviq, Zubin Potok and Zvečan/Zveqan. This is the case for all members of the community as younger people tend not to speak both official languages in Kosovo, older ones do not have the necessary marketable skills, and all potentially face discrimination in hiring based on their ethnic background.⁴⁵ The quality of the labour market and access to employment opportunities is detrimental to the overall quality of life for any community and its members.

This report addresses perceptions and is therefore particularly useful in assessing the situation of young people, those who are most likely to be looking for employment and opportunities for professional growth. Those respondents who are already employed come from different sectors of employment and education, as well as various age groups. Thus they would not be ideal for assessing the quality of each

⁴⁴ UNDP, *Public Pulse Poll: Fast Facts V*, Nov. 2012 available at http://www.kosovo.undp.org/repository/docs/2012/Fast_Facts_5-Final.pdf, at p. 5.

⁴⁵ International Crisis Group, *Setting Kosovo Free: Remaining Challenges*, 10 Sep. 2012 available at [http://www.crisisgroup.org/~media/Files/europe/balkans/kosovo/218-setting-kosovo-free-remaining-challenges](http://www.crisisgroup.org/~/media/Files/europe/balkans/kosovo/218-setting-kosovo-free-remaining-challenges), at p. 21.

sector individually, but are very useful in formulating the social dispositions ultimately affecting the direction people take when looking for employment or choosing fields of education.

4.1. Labour Market

Participants who were employed were divided into precarious and permanent workers. In the context of the survey, precarious work was considered as either temporary or part time employment. The proportions in *Figure 19* are strictly based on self-reported answers, but they show a much higher estimated rate of precarious workers than permanent workers.

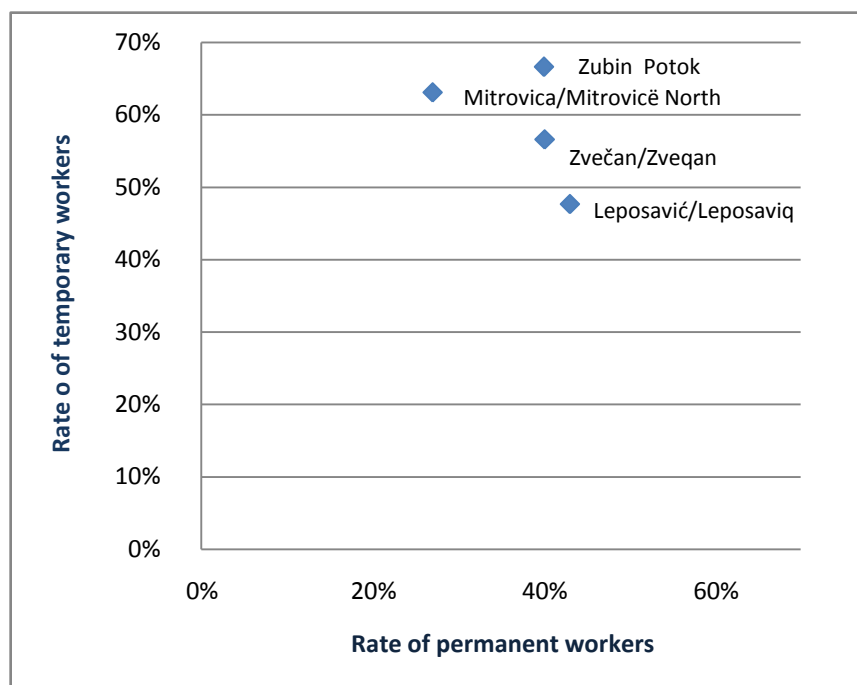


Figure 19. Rate of temporary versus permanent workers ('temporary' including part-time and short-term).

According to this self-reported analysis of the labour market, people living in the four municipalities have a much harder time getting a stable job and are over-represented in precarious jobs. These usually have a shorter duration and provide limited stability; such workers are often the first to lose their jobs in times of adverse economic conditions and the last to be recruited during an economic expansion. Furthermore, 29.63% of respondents in Leposavić/Leposaviq, 39.01% in Mitrovica/Mitrovicë North, 25.86% in Zubin Potok, and 46.03% in Zvečan/Zveqan reported that their employment income is insufficient.⁴⁶ It should however be considered that people in any circumstances could desire higher income.

Lack of skills and educational background may seriously hamper locals' ability to enter the labour market and get decent work.⁴⁷ Indeed, 47.06% in Leposavić/Leposaviq, 62.24% in Mitrovica/Mitrovicë North,

⁴⁶ See Annex 1, Question 5C: *If you are employed, does this job provide you with sufficient income?*.

⁴⁷ See also 1.2. Transition from Education to Employment, at p. 10.

49.12% in Zubin Potok, and 55.74% in Zvečan/Zveqan did not report holding a job in a field related to their education.⁴⁸ Furthermore, this answer was given respectively, by 64.10%, 69.64%, 55.17%, and 100.00% of young people between 15 and 24 years of age. This is a very clear majority, and especially in Zvečan/Zveqan, signals a significant problem with the labour market in northern Kosovo that affects young people disproportionately.

4.2. Economic Development

The responses were based on the self-reported sectors of employment. Throughout the four municipalities, 37.44% participants reported being employed in the private sector, 41.37% in the public sector, only 2.20% in the agricultural sector and 18.99% in SMEs.⁴⁹ Generally, public employment is highly sought after for its security, but this does not mean it is necessarily as stable in northern Kosovo.⁵⁰ Total proportions are mostly kept within each municipality, except in Zubin Potok where only 8.33% are employed in SMEs and Mitrovica/Mitrovicë North where more people reported employment in the private sector than in the public, or 41.92% versus 50.73%, including 18.99% in SMEs.⁵¹ Considering this information, respondents were asked to evaluate the employment and income generation, as well as available infrastructure, of each sector in each municipality.

Aggregated responses about employment generation did not vary significantly between sectors, with a total of 66.69% agreeing that the private sector generates sufficient opportunities, 77.60% regarding the public, 78.93% regarding the agricultural and 87.49% SMEs. The only significant discrepancy between total perceptions from northern Kosovo and a single municipality comes from Zubin Potok where 71.26% actually disagreed that the private sector can generate employment opportunities. As a more rural area with fewer infrastructures, this is not unexpected.

Figures 20, 21 and 22 show the aggregated perceptions by municipality about income generation and quality of infrastructure for the private, public and agricultural sectors respectively. In general, there is no significant difference between the total proportions for northern Kosovo and individual municipalities.

⁴⁸ See Annex 1, Question 5D: *If you are employed, is this job related to the field in which you were educated?*

⁴⁹ See Annex 1, Question 6A: *Are you employed in the private, public, agricultural sector as well as SMEs?*

⁵⁰ ECMI Kosovo consultation with local researchers, Mitrovica/Mitrovicë, 11 Dec. 2012.

⁵¹ See Annex 1, Question 6A: *Are you employed in the private, public, agricultural sector as well as SMEs?*

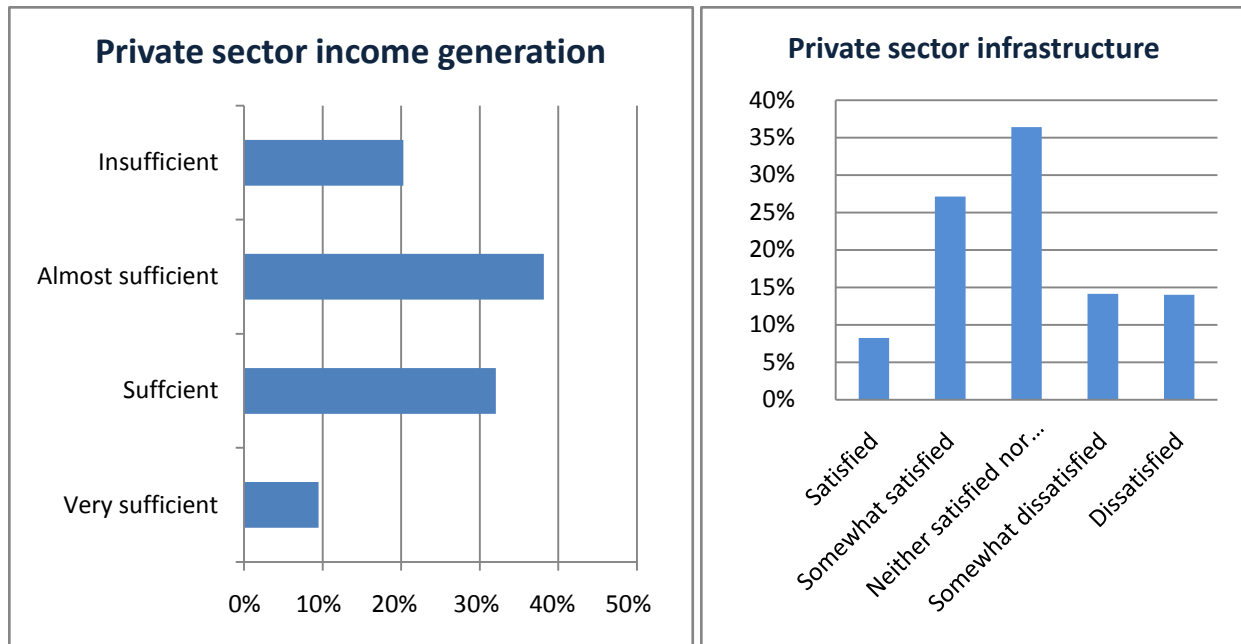


Figure 20. “Do you think that the private sector is able to generate sufficient income/has satisfactory infrastructure?”

Perceptions about the private sector are mixed: 38.16% of participants thought that income generation from the sector is almost sufficient and 20.29% found it insufficient. Yet, the infrastructure received slightly more positive reviews: 27.15% found it somewhat satisfactory and 36.42% neither satisfactory nor dissatisfactory. Zubin Potok stands out with particularly negative perceptions about the private sector, which deviate from the general consensus in other municipalities. In the more isolated and rural municipalities, a total of 90% regarded income generation from the private sector as insufficient or almost sufficient, and 60% perceived infrastructure as dissatisfactory or somewhat dissatisfactory.

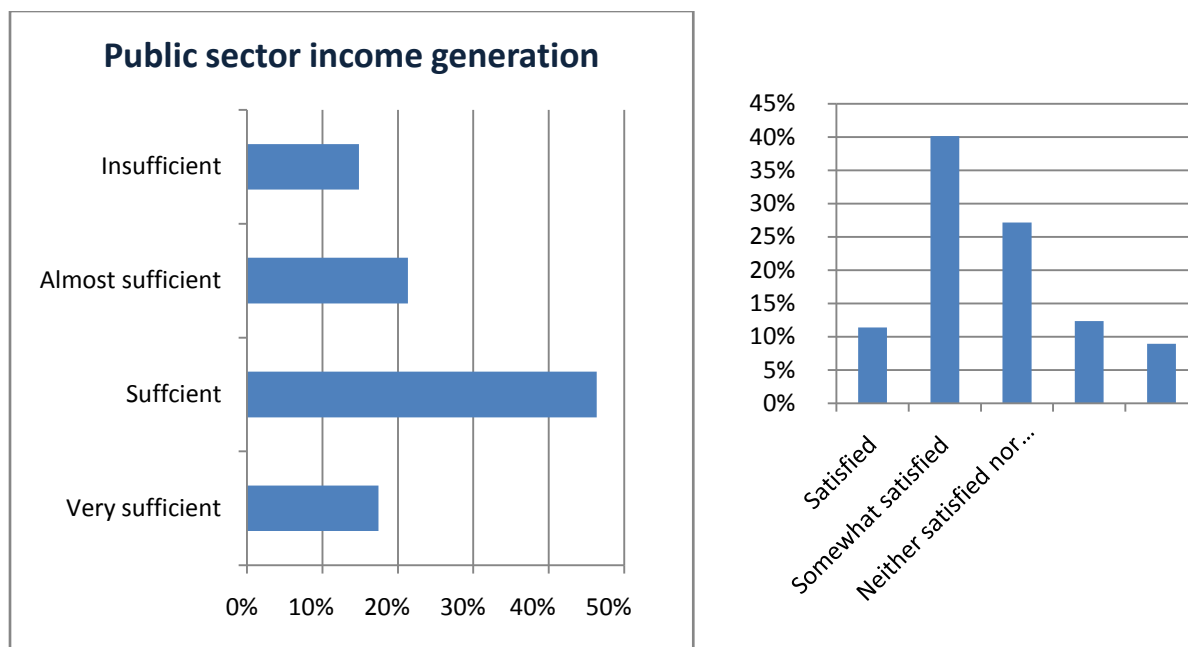


Figure 21. “Do you think that the public sector is able to generate sufficient income/has satisfactory infrastructure?”

Perceptions about the public sector tend to be more positive, possibly because of its historical image as a stable employment provider in the region, a legacy of the Yugoslav state structure. A total of 46.37% thought income generation from the public sector is sufficient and a similar 40.16% thought infrastructure is somewhat satisfactory. Improvement is still desired, especially in Zvečan/Zveqan, where 70% actually found income insufficient or almost sufficient.

Figure 22. “Do you think that the agricultural sector is able to generate sufficient income/has satisfactory infrastructure?”

From the three sectors, income and infrastructure of agriculture is deemed least satisfactory. Perceptions about infrastructure are particularly negative in northern Kosovo, with 42.61% finding it outright dissatisfactory and only 2.27% as satisfactory. Although some regard income generation in this sector as strong, this is mostly because of positive perceptions in Mitrovica/Mitrovicë North, where 26.96% of respondents think income from agriculture is very sufficient.

Concluding Remarks

The key findings in this report address improvements that can be made in Mitrovica/Mitrovicë North, Leposavić/Leposaviq, Zubin Potok and Zvečan/Zveqan in accordance with the desires and needs of the local population.

Even though perceptions about the delivery of education in northern Kosovo are positive overall, significant improvements can be made in terms of infrastructure and school equipment, especially when it comes to inclusive education for people with disabilities. A particularly important issue is the inability of formal education to provide the necessary skills to enter employment within the same field or even geographic area. Informal education is regarded as the best way to ease the transition between education and employment.

Perceptions about the quality of local healthcare also tend to be positive overall. However there are major shortcomings in terms of infrastructure and quality of medical equipment. Certain issues suffer from particular lack of awareness and social stigma among the population, namely reproductive healthcare and substance abuse related dangers.

Social welfare receives negative reviews from those who benefit from it. There is significant pessimism when it comes to programmes targeting old people or people with disabilities, and a strong dissatisfaction with the quality of cultural events among young people. There is a surprisingly high perception of safety, despite general dissatisfaction with the ability of local authorities to respond to violent incidents.

One of the greatest causes for concern in the region is problems related to employment. There is a high rate of precarious, non-permanent workers that disproportionally affects young people. The local population is also relatively more confident with the income generation and prospects within the public sector, leaving the private and agricultural sectors behind in terms of infrastructure, opportunities, and sufficient income.

Recommendations

Education

- Maintain efforts to invest in and enhance the capacity of the education system.
- Conduct additional research to assess strengths and weaknesses of each distinct level and type of formal education, including vocational education.
- Make significant efforts to adapt the educational system to matching the requirements of professional life.
- Further develop and intensify informal education as a means to help people integrate into employment by extending their knowledge and know-how base.
- Enhance the capacities of local NGOs to provide high quality informal education in various domains.
- Improve hard and soft infrastructure to better accommodate people with disabilities and fight discrimination.

Healthcare

- Invest in better medical equipment and deliver appropriate training to personnel.
- Raise awareness about reproductive health and substance abuse (in particular the dangers related to nicotine) by intensifying public campaigns.
- Improve treatment of people affected by substance addictions through educating the public, training medical personnel, and providing treatment facilities and/or programmes.

Social Welfare

- Conduct further research with beneficiaries of social welfare.
- Increase efforts to provide adequate social development for people with disabilities and for older people.
- Increase efforts to match local desires (especially of young people) with cultural events.

Economic Situation

- Intensify efforts to improve socioeconomic security, skills and training opportunities for young people.
- Increase abilities of the private sector to generate income through conditions encouraging entrepreneurship.
- Improve infrastructures across municipalities to build a more conducive business environment.

Annexes

- 1. Questionnaire*
- 2. Methodology*
- 3. Sample*
- 4. Full answers to the questionnaire*

Annexes are available on our website: www.ecmikosovo.org

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