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*Centre for Civic Education*

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Advocacy Center For Democratic Culture

**SUPPORT TO RECONCILIATION  
IN KOSOVO BY RAISING AWARENESS  
ON THE ISSUE OF MISSING PERSONS**

# **RESEARCH ANALYSIS**

**April, 2020.**

**Reserve:**

The views expressed in this report are the sole responsibility of the Advocacy Center for Democratic Culture (ACDC) and cannot, in any respect, be taken as the views of the donators who are supporting this project.

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## **Context of research**

The issue of missing persons presents one of the key problems that people are facing in reconciliation process after ethnic conflicts. Although this topic is extremely sensitive, especially for the work and activities of civil society organizations, it is very important and required in the process of reconciliation. Because of that, NVO Advocacy Center for Democratic Culture – ACDC, supported by Center for civic education – CCE, is conducting a project that is a part of the wider project called “Activism of Civil Sector for Reconciliation in the region of former Yugoslavia – Support to REKOM”, and will deal with reconciliation process in Kosovo through raising awareness on resolving the issue of missing persons.

The goal of the project is to provide support to reconciliation in Kosovo through raising awareness on missing persons.

Within the mentioned project, the research was conducted aimed at measuring and raising level of consciousness that citizens have about issue on missing persons, and activities conducted by REKOM.

The research included surveying the public through questioner and focus groups.

The aim is to implement a policy based on the obtained results and make an action plan to help solving this problem.

## Research Methodology

### *-Quantitative research-*

**Research modality:** Field research F2F combined with online survey and two focus groups.

**Geographical coverage:** North Mitrovica, Zvečan, Leposavic and Zubin Potok

**Research timeframe:** 1 March – 6 April 2020.

**Sample size:** 308 respondents through field research and 210 respondents through online survey.

**Sample description:** From total of 518 respondents, 34.3% were males and 65.7% were females.

**Sample type:** Stratified representative random sample, based on municipality of residence

**Post stratification:** Age, level of education and employment status

## **The most important results**

*71.6% of citizens believe that the issue of missing persons is insufficiently discussed in public*

*55.2% of citizens never heard of Coalition for REKOM*

*83.6% of citizens are aware of the existence of associations of families of missing persons.*

*74.2% of citizens believe that until present time, the correct number of missing persons was not determined*

*84.8% of respondents believe that resolving missing person issue is of high importance*

*71.2% of respondents knows someone who's relative is missing from the last conflict in Kosovo.*

*64% of respondents says that the given cases are not clarified*

*57.6% of citizens believe that politicians are not engaged in solving missing person cases*

*51.5% of citizens believe that neither local institutions did not take the necessary measures to find out the fate of the missing persons*

*71.6% of citizens believe that cooperation between Serbian and Albanian side needs to be improved*

*67.2% of citizens believe that issue of missing persons should be an important theme of dialog in Brussels between representatives of Belgrade and Pristina*

## Research summary – Perception of key issues

### Survey results:

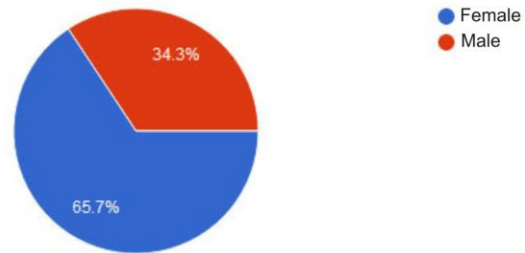
- *The research showed that the awareness of public about Coalition for REKOM and their activities is very low;*
- *Huge number of citizens are aware of existence of associations of families of missing persons but this issue is insufficiently discussed in public;*
- *Unfortunately, a huge number of respondents knows persons, from their environment who are having someone close to them missing during last conflict in Kosovo and they also claim that those cases remain unsolved;*
- *Majority of respondents think that neither politicians nor local institutions are not engaged enough in solving fate of missing persons;*
- *A small number of respondents believe that in a close future issue of the missing persons will be solved just because of distrust in institutions and organizations;*
- *The citizens think that representatives in dialog between Belgrade and Pristina should discuss about this issue.*



## Demography

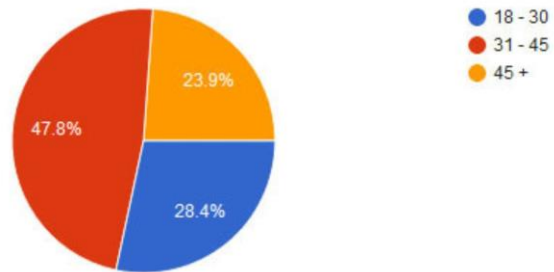
### 1. Gender

518 responses



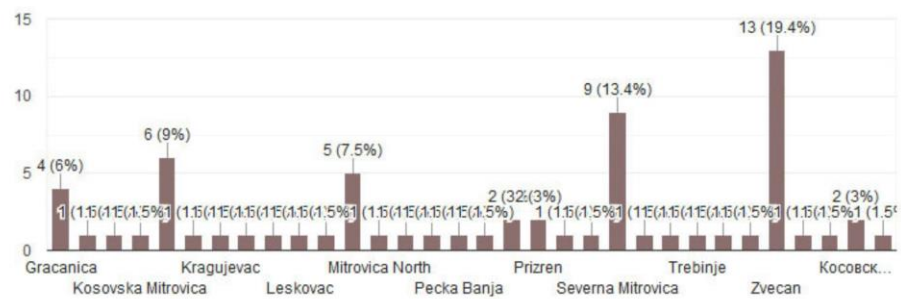
### 2. Age

518 responses



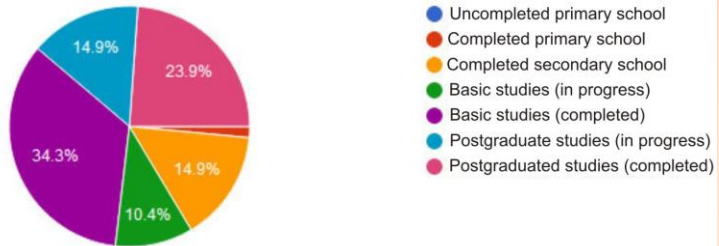
### 3. Municipality (write the name of the city)

518 responses



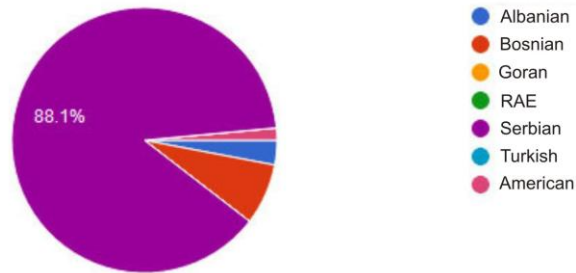
#### 4. Education

518 responses



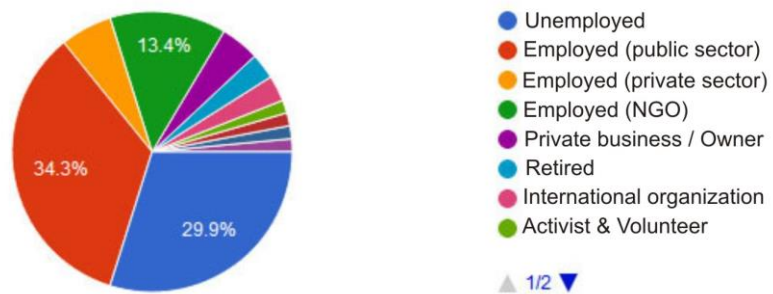
#### 5. Ethnicity

518 responses

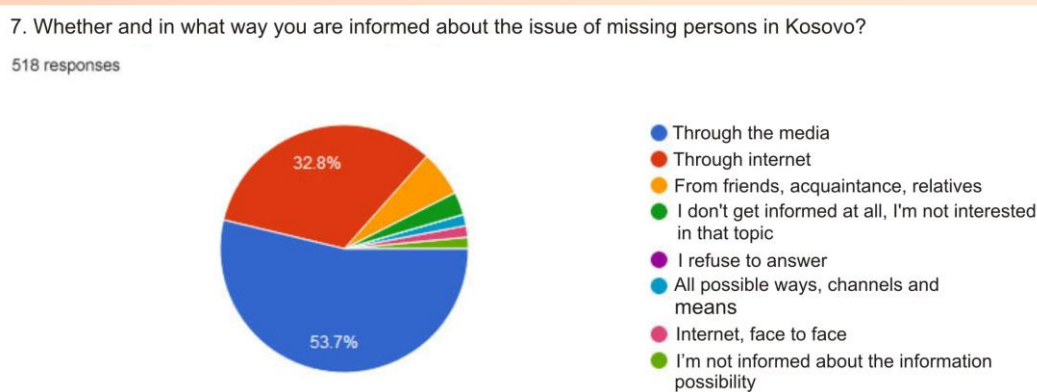


#### 6. Employment status

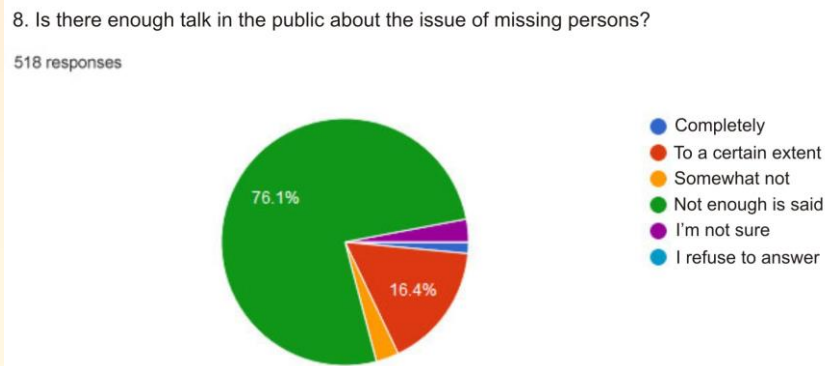
518 responses



## Research results



Medias presents the main source of information about missing persons for majority of questioned citizens 53.7%, 32.8% are getting information online. A small percentage of respondents said they do not get information and there are those who are interested in using all means of informing to obtain information. A certain number of respondents is not aware of informing possibilities.

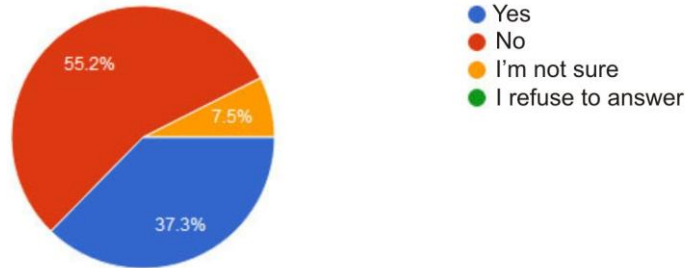


Needs to be mentioned that a small quantity of information is available to present and former habitants of Kosovo as well as to citizens of neighboring countries who were related or they were friends of missing persons or persons who are searching for them.

It is of highest importance to provide access to information for those persons about achieved results in finding missing persons, as well as presenting periodical reports to public.

9. Did you hear for Coalition for REKOM?

518 responses

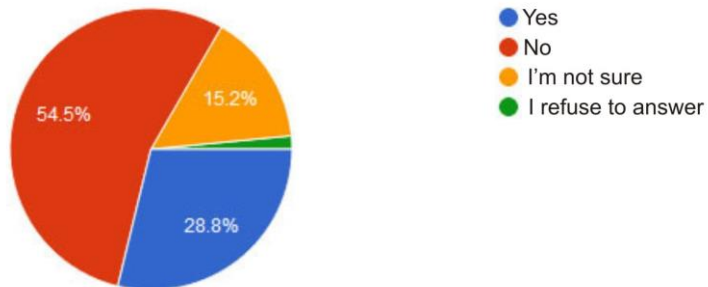


37.3% of respondents heard about REKOM, while 7.5% is not sure. Majority of respondents, 55% of them didn't hear for REKOM

These results are pointing toward necessity of a planned media campaign, so that citizens can be informed about the existence and work of REKOM.

10. Do you know what REKOM does?

518 responses



According to obtained results, majority of respondents, 54.5% of them is not aware of what the REKOM is doing, 28.8% are aware and 15.2% are not sure.

10a. If answer is YES, state what are they doing?

257 responses

Missing persons from former SFRY countries

REKOM advocates the establishment of a regional commission to investigate all crimes located during the wars in the former Yugoslavia

Finding missing persons on the territory of the former Yugoslavia

It deals with establishing the facts about the wars in the former Yugoslavia from 1991 to 2001.

Missing persons

Missing persons in Balkan

According to Your principal net record this is what REKOM stands for : "It is a network of civil society organizations in the post-Yugoslav countries, which advocate for the establishment of an official Regional Commission tasked with establishing the facts about the war crimes and other serious human rights violations committed on the territory of the former Yugoslavia in the period from 1 January 1991 through to 31 December 2001."

REKOM is an abbreviation of the full name of the Regional Commission for the Investigation of War Crimes and Other Serious Human Rights Violations Committed in the Territory of the Former SFRY, from January 1, 1991 to December 31, 2001.

Reconciliation in countries of former SFRY

Finding the truth and establishing the facts about missing and injured persons during the wars in the former SFRY

Human rights, missing and killed persons

Violation of human rights and establishing of committed war crimes

NGOs

I don't know

The Commission for War Crimes and Human Rights, which deals with the enumeration of victims during the war, the causes of death, the places of imprisonment and torture, the interrogation of victims and similar

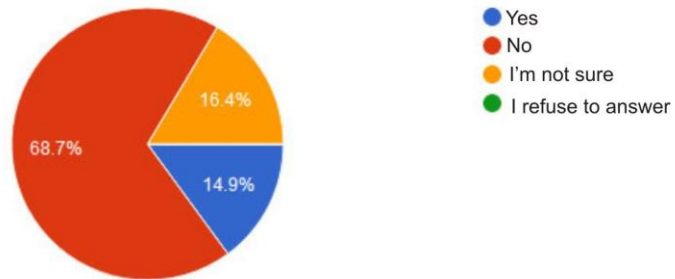
In that sense, a comment of one respondent stands out

“REKOM is abbreviation of full name Regional Commission for establishing the facts about war crimes and other serious human rights violations committed on the territory of the former SFRY from January 1, 1991 to December 31, 2001.”

Received answers are showing that attitudes of this small number of respondents are mostly similar but at the same time critical towards lack of information. Dissatisfaction arises from numerous problems and consequences that citizens were facing during conflict, then difficult topic that this coalition is dealing with and because of lack of information that citizens should get from media.

11. Do you know of any of the activities carried out by REKOM?

518 responses



Further, according to obtained results, we can notice that the awareness of citizens about the activities carried out by the Coalition for REKOM is at a very low level, only 14.9% of respondents is aware of the activities, while 68.7% of respondents doesn't know what kind of activities are in question. 16.4% is not sure.

11a. If answer is YES, state the activities

79 responses

Research

Collecting signatures from citizens for foundation of REKOM

Mostly initiating the participation of the governments of all countries that were absent and note the dates of the suffering

Hlc

Regional Level Networking, Reports, Campaigns, Petitions, Debates, Forums, Social Based Dialogues, Art Projects, Sports ( Marathons ), Scripts & Writings, Books, Prints, Documents and Publications, etc.

Organization of various debates, forums for transitional justice ...

Forums with topics about human rights and missing persons

I don't know

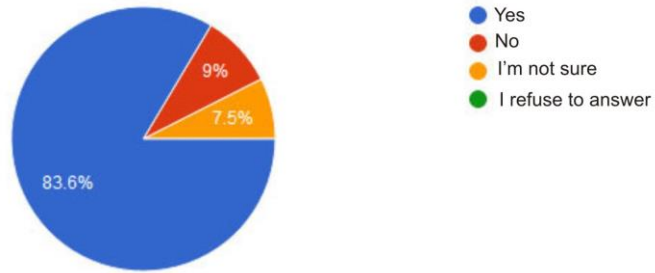
Idiotism

We highlight one of the comments from those familiar with REKOM's activities:

"Mostly initiating the participation, that was missing, of the governments of all countries and note the dates of the suffering."

12. Are you aware that there are associations of families of the missing?

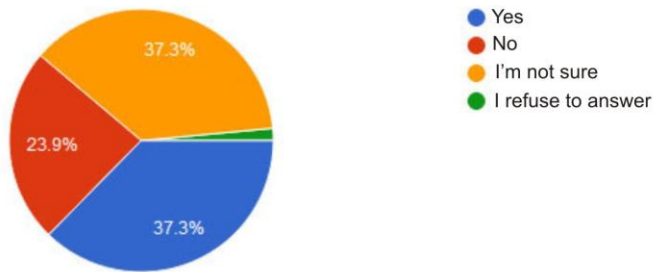
518 responses



Majority of respondents – 83.6% is aware of Association of missing persons’ family’s existence, a small percent, 9% are not aware while 7.5% are not sure. A huge number of missing persons, as well as numerous of unsolved cases, produced a need for joining of these families in order to influence investigation to be improved and accelerated, as well as for mutual support.

13. Do you know what activities these associations are engaged in?

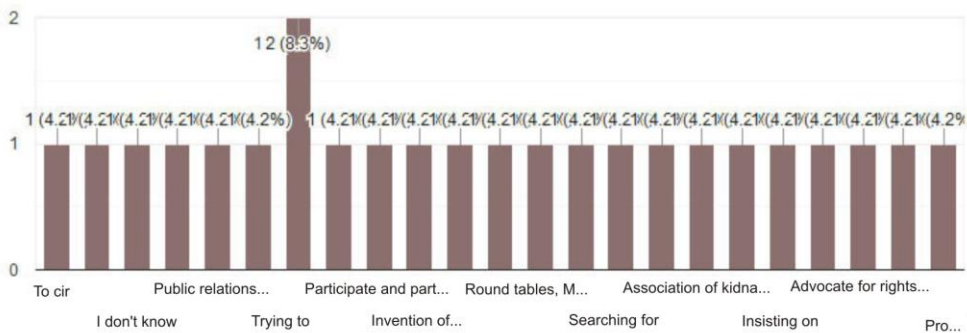
518 responses



37.3% of respondents is aware with activities of the mentioned associations and 37.3% is not sure. 23.9% of respondents stated that they are not aware of the association activities.

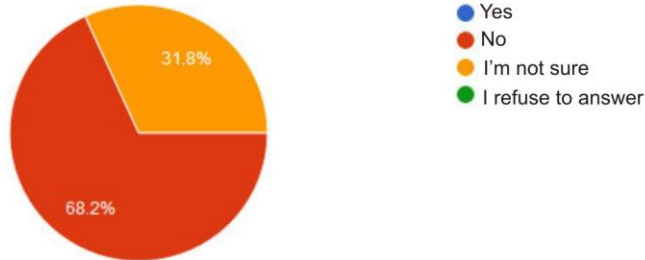
13a. If answer is YES, state the activities

178 responses



14. In your opinion, have human rights standards been fully respected in identifying the missing?

510 responses

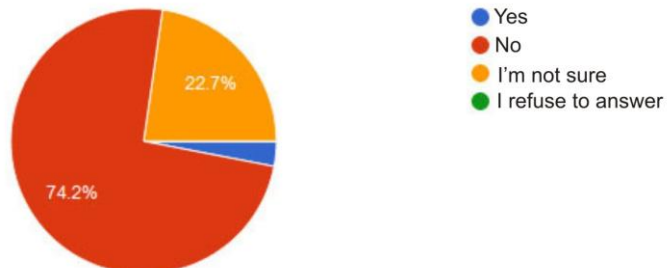


Majority of the respondents gave negative response on the above question. As many as 68.2% of them do not think that human rights standards are fully respected in determining the missing persons, while 31.8% are not sure.

This is one more in the line of presented dissatisfactions made by our respondents, toward responsible institutions and insufficient respect of human rights.

15. In your opinion, has the exact number of missing persons been determined so far?

512 responses

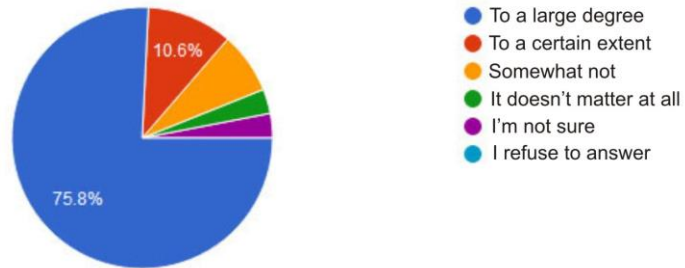


When it comes to the number of missing persons, 74.2% of respondents believe that the exact number of missing persons has not been determined, while only a small number, 3.1% think that it has been. 22.7% of them are not sure.



16. To what extent is it necessary to seek a solution for each individual case of missing persons?

512 responses



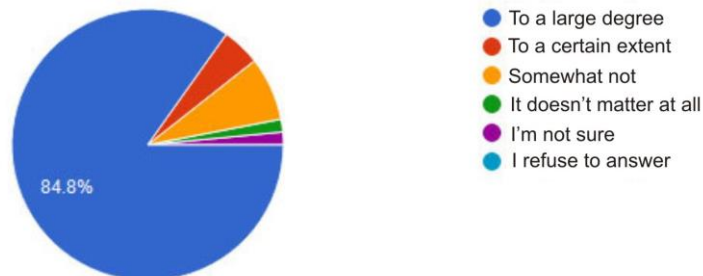
The largest percentage of respondents - 75.8% believe that it is largely necessary to find a solution for each individual case.

On the other hand, a certain number of respondents show indifference, misunderstanding of the problem and the importance of solving individual cases and think that it is somewhat irrelevant.

The families of missing persons certainly deserve every possible effort to resolve all cases, in order to satisfy justice and provide peace to those who seek the truth.

17. To what extent is it important to address the issue of missing persons?

512 responses

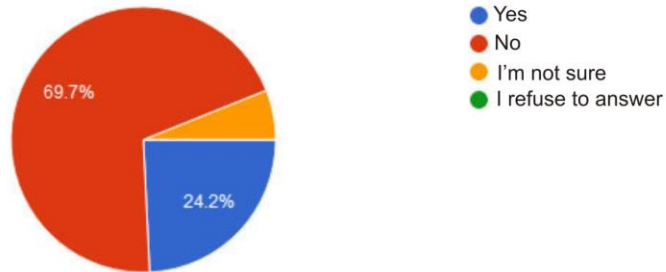


A large number of respondents believe that resolving the issue of missing persons is of great importance - 84.8%.

This result is undoubtedly encouraging, having in mind the pain of the families and friends of the victims who have been waiting justice for decades.

18. Has anyone close to you disappeared during the last conflicts in Kosovo?

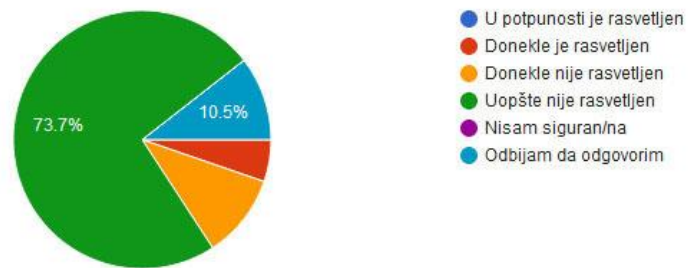
512 responses



24.2% of respondents stated that they had close relations with persons from Kosovo who are listed as missing, while 69.7% say that they did not have someone close who is missing.

18a. Ukoliko je odgovor DA, da li je taj slučaj rasvetljen?

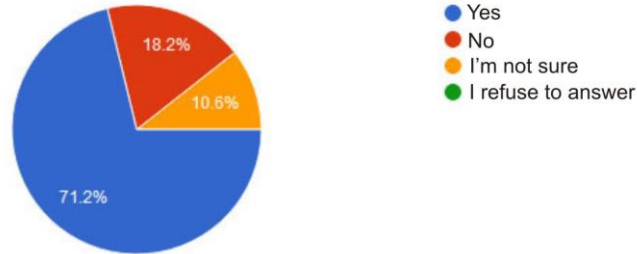
134 responses



The answers of a large number of respondents show that no case of a missing person close to them has been resolved, while a small percentage stated that to some extent these cases have not been clarified. As many as 73.7% of respondents stated that cases were not resolved at all. The results obtained are very worrying, which speaks in favor of the fact that little has been achieved even 20 years after the conflict. If similar practices continue in the near future, the chances of resolving cases will be less and less.

19. Do you know a person whose relatives have disappeared during the recent conflicts in Kosovo?

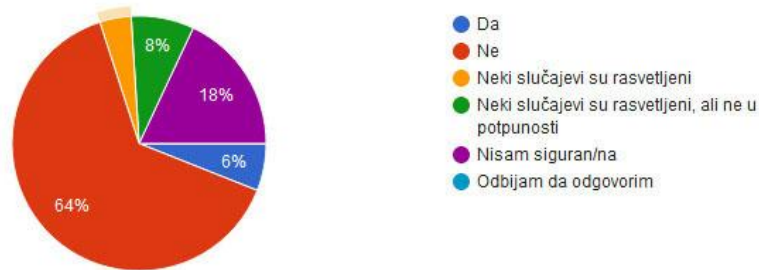
511 responses



As many as 71.2% of respondents know someone who is looking for a close person who is listed as missing in the conflict in Kosovo, while 18.2% say they do not know.

19a. Ukoliko je odgovor DA, da li je/su taj/ti slučaj/evi rasvetljeni?

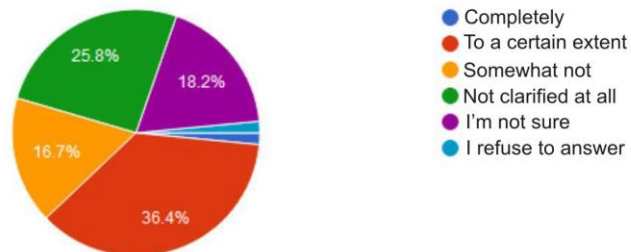
368 responses



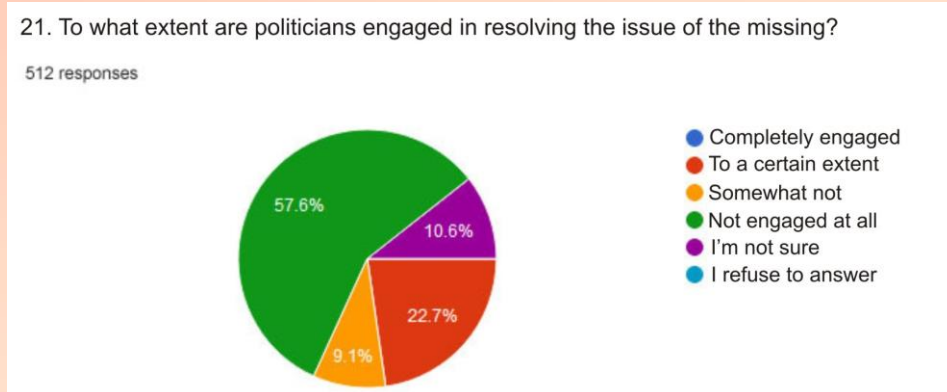
Unfortunately, the answers to this question show a very small percentage of resolved cases. Only 6% of respondents said they knew someone who was looking for a close person and that the case of missing person was resolved, 8% claimed that such cases were partially resolved, while 64% of respondents said, most of the cases were not clarified.

20. In general, to what extent are those cases of missing persons (which are kept in public as clarified) resolved?

512 responses

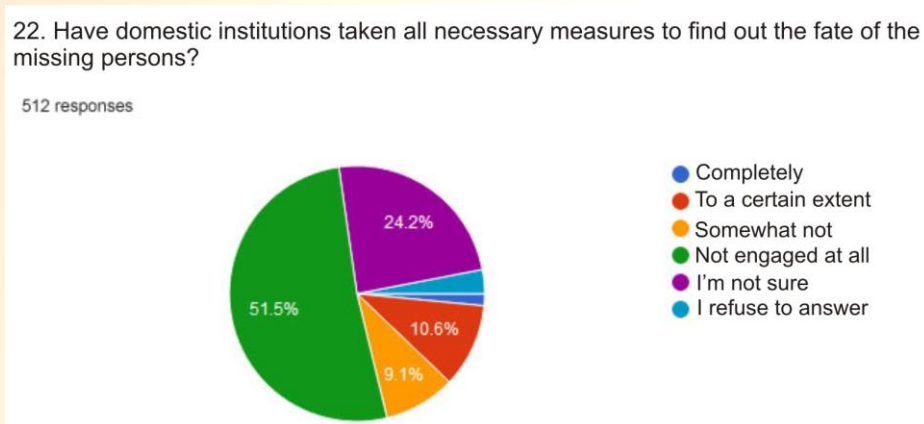


When it comes to the trust and honesty of institutions, as well as the information they present to the public, the answers show that most respondents receive this information with reserve, and doubt their relevance. 36.4% of respondents believe that the information provided by the institutions is somewhat accurate, and 16.7% stated that it is somewhat incorrect. Only a small percentage of respondents believe that cases considered as resolved have indeed been resolved. 18.2% of respondents are unsure.



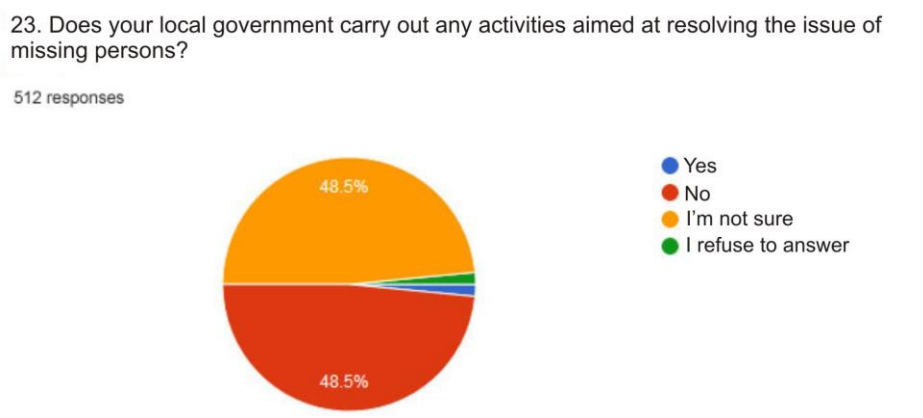
Distrust in politicians is huge. None of the respondents confirmed the full engagement of local politicians in resolving the issue of missing persons. 22.7% think that they are somewhat engaged and 9.1% that they are not engaged to some extent. The largest percentage thinks that politicians are not engaged at all - as many as 57.6%.

Given that there are very few resolved cases, such an attitude is not surprising.



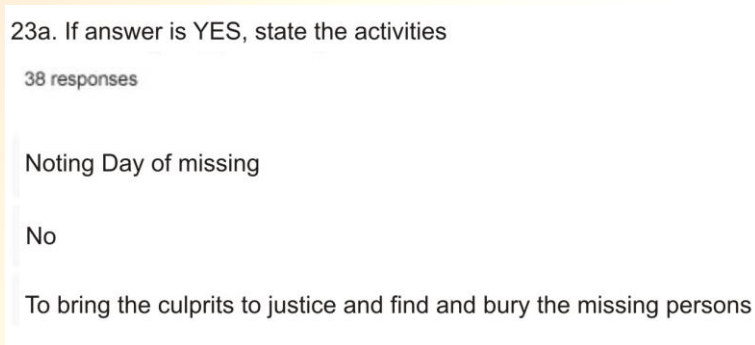
51.5% of respondents are dissatisfied with the work of domestic institutions, and believe that institutions have not taken all necessary measures to find out the fate of missing persons. A smaller percentage of respondents support them and they believe that the institutions have taken the necessary measures. 10.6% of respondents stated that some measures have been taken, while 9.1% believe that they have not.

These results are not surprising either, given that this issue is not a priority on the agenda, not even of the existing institutions in Kosovo.



There are hardly any positive answers from the respondents to this question. 48.5% of them believe that local self-governments have not undertaken certain activities aimed at resolving the issue of missing persons, and the same percentage does not know whether any activities have been undertaken.

The obtained answers lead to the conclusion that even if local self-governments carry out any activities related to resolving the issue of missing persons, only a small percentage of citizens are aware of that.

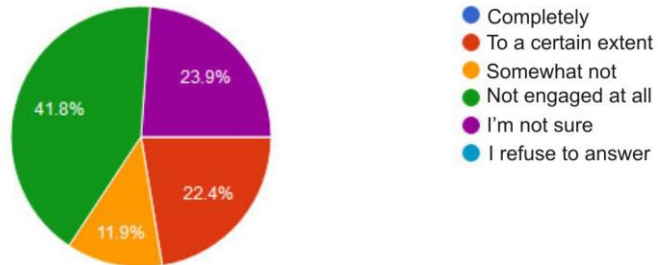


The activities that the respondents believe the local self-governments are carrying out are noting the day of the missing and bringing the perpetrators to justice.

It can be seen from the attached that the citizens do not have a developed awareness, nor information about the work of the local self-government when it comes to solving the cases of the missing persons.

24. Has the international community taken all necessary measures regarding missing persons?

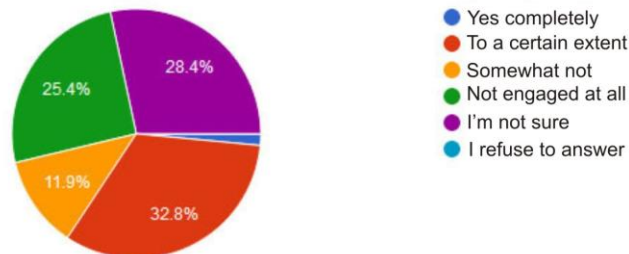
514 responses



Respondents are also generally dissatisfied with the work of the international community. A large number, 41.8% of them, believe that the international community has not taken the necessary measures regarding missing persons at all. 22.4% of the respondents think that they have taken some steps, 11.9% think that they have not done enough, while the rest are not sure that all the necessary measures have been taken.

25. Is there mutual cooperation between the Serbian and Albanian sides regarding the resolution of the issue of missing persons?

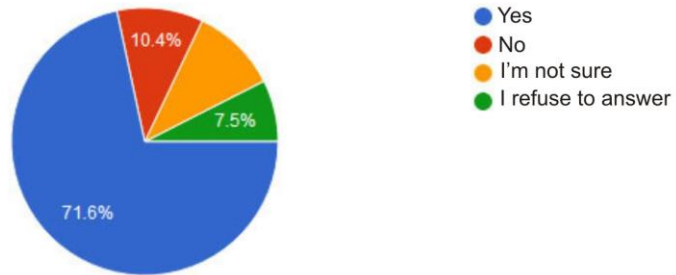
514 responses



32.8% of respondents believe that there is some cooperation between the Serbian and Albanian sides in resolving the issue of missing persons, while 11.9% think that it does exist to some extent. There is no doubt that cooperation is extremely important for both sides, in order to clarify the cases of missing persons as soon as possible. However, 28.4% of respondents are not sure that it exists, and 25.4% think that it does not exist at all, because the political situation and the slowdowns and / or interruption of negotiations between Belgrade and Pristina do not contribute to resolving the issue of missing persons.

26. In your opinion, should the cooperation between the Serbian and Albanian sides be improved?

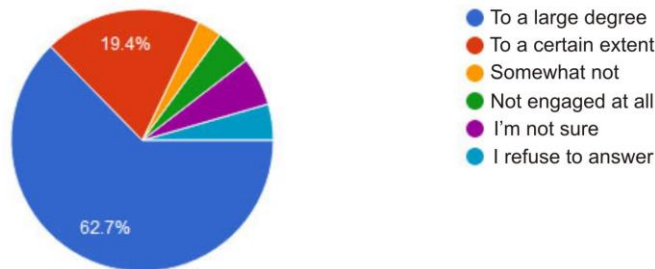
514 responses



The highest percentage - 71.6% of respondents are aware of the importance of improving cooperation between the Serbian and Albanian side, in order to achieve the best possible results in resolving the issue of missing persons. Only 10.4% of respondents believe that this cooperation should not be improved.

27. To what extent is community dialogue in Kosovo important for addressing the issue of the missing?

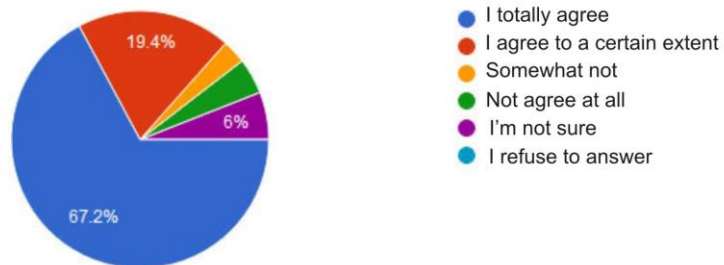
514 responses



Dialogue between communities in Kosovo is also of great importance in addressing the issue of the missing persons. 62.7% of respondents believe that better results would be achieved with such a dialog, and 19.4% of respondents agree to some extent. A smaller percentage of respondents believe that dialogue between communities is somewhat or not at all important.

28. In your opinion, should the issue of missing persons be the topic of conversation between the representatives of Belgrade and Pristina in Brussels?

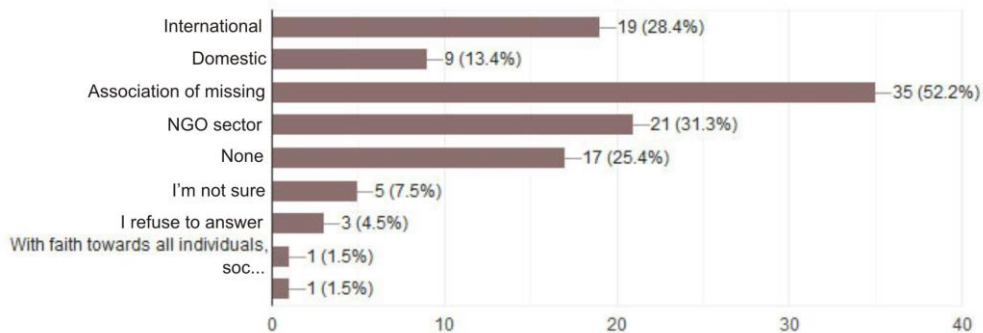
514 responses



67.2% of respondents agree that the issue of missing persons should be the topic of discussion between Belgrade and Pristina in Brussels, and 19.4% of respondents agree to some extent. Very few respondents disagree that this topic should be part of the talks in Brussels. This result is expected, as citizens are aware that important issues, especially the issue of missing persons, can only be resolved if there is political will at a high level and with the commitment of the international community.

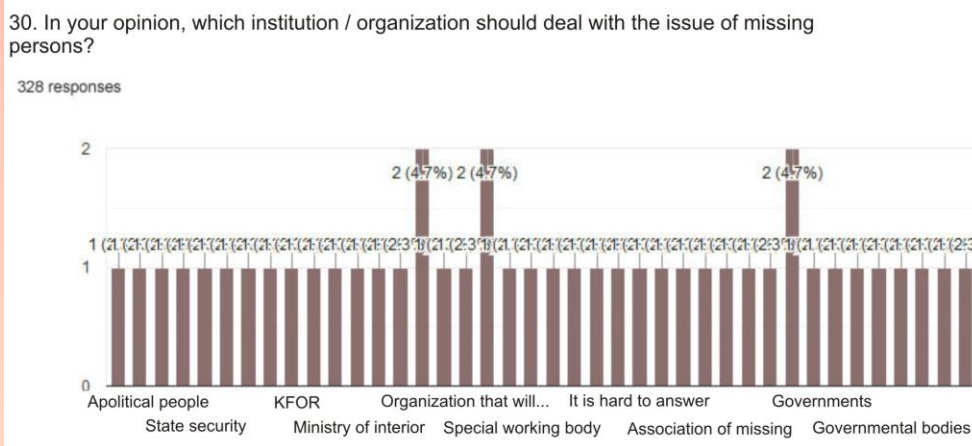
29. Which institutions / organizations do you trust more, when it comes to resolving the issue of missing persons? (Multiple answers possible)

514 responses

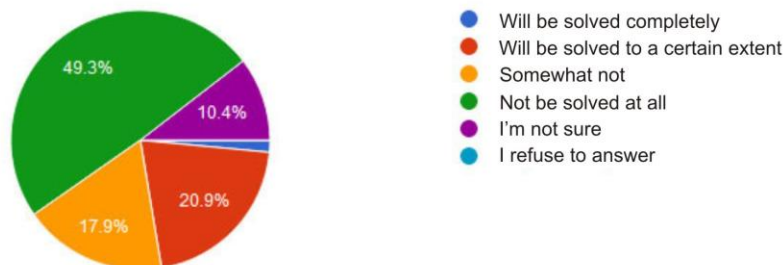
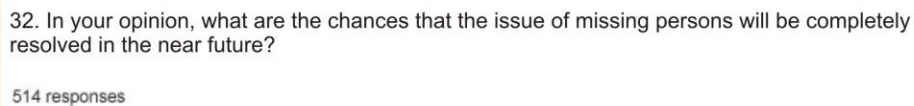
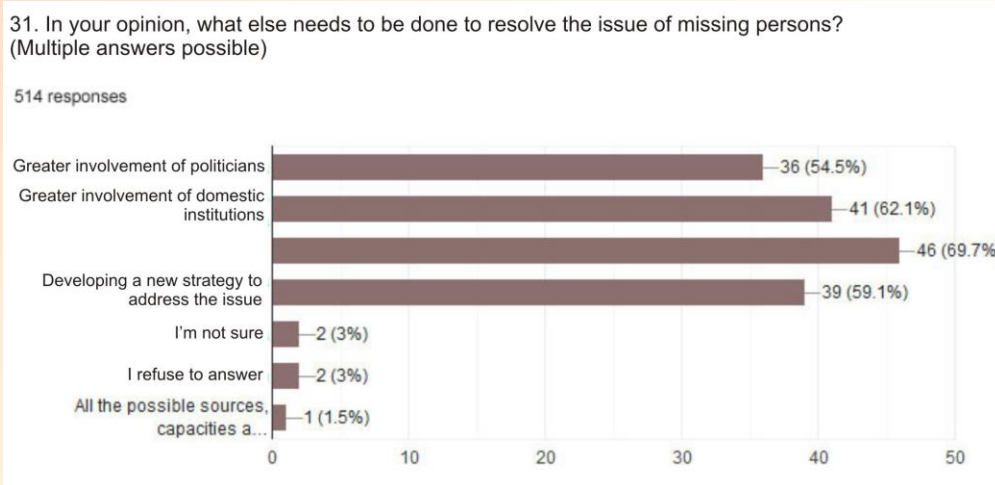


The graph shows that the respondents expressed greatest trust in associations of missing persons. Associations are actively involved in the search for missing persons, mostly relatives or family members, and this is their primary activity. It is logical that the role of associations is very important and that all institutions and organizations in Kosovo, local and international, should support associations of families of missing persons. Great trust was also shown to non-governmental organizations and the international community.





According to the respondents, the institutions that should deal with the issue of missing persons are governments and governmental bodies and then equally, state security, the Ministry of Interior, special working bodies, local self-governments, associations and others. If all institutions are involved, the chances of resolving the fate of the missing will be higher.



Unfortunately, the respondents are not optimistic about resolving the fate of missing persons, 49.3% think that it will not be solved at all, 20.9% that it will be solved to some extent and 17.9% that it will not be solved to some extent. There is a small percentage of those who believe that this issue will never be completely resolved.

Such results are certainly not surprising, given that more than 20 years have passed since the conflict in Kosovo, and the fate of many missing persons has not yet been clarified.

### 33. Additional comments, if you have:

198 responses

For 20 years, the international community has tolerated politicians' incomprehensible corruption, they have plundered the whole of Kosovo without any mercy or compassion for the oppressed people, all with the tacit consent of the international community. Catastrophically corrupt and dysfunctional legal order. History will never forgive you.

The irony is that politicians who were participants in the abductions of Serbs and crimes against them speak about the issues of the missing. They can give an answer where these people are.

The second thing. Albanians persistently talk about 1,400 missing people, and at the same time deliberately hide that a third of them are Serbs!

I do not think that there is an universal truth or that it is a precondition for reconciliation. There are all sides to the war, even two truths. There is a third in the war in Kosovo, represented by the international community. They equally had her motives for covering up and fabricating war crimes.

Solve this issue as soon as possible

**Thankful to all the individuals and collective societies who are laying forward all their energies in synergy with one - another in order to find the final truth about the Missing Persons regardless of the origins and/or their backgrounds**

I have nothing to add

Things will not change as long as the PDK, AAK, SNS, SRS and SPS are important factors in the institutions in power. These are the elites who carry that blood on their hands.

N/A

To address the police more and for the police to determine the last contact of those missing persons

Grate questioner

The issue of missing persons is a huge issue for every individual who is connected with such cases, those who's relatives have disappeared and especially those whose cases have not been resolved (at all). To resolve the issue of missing persons, I believe, is the right of all those who lost someone in the war. Usually, a person thinks that justice is served when those responsible are convicted but in many cases, the remains of many missing persons have not been found, and finding them I believe, is an achievement as itself, without finding those responsible. Let's start here from the assumption that the missing persons are dead. As I said, resolving as many cases as possible is a right of relatives and less of a political issue, although politics should also address this (improve it).

I have nothing to add

Greater engagement of the state, associations, NGOs

Regarding the final comments in the survey, the respondents left a large number of comments, more precisely, almost every other respondent left a comment. A total of 198 concluding comments were given in this survey.

One of the respondents commented that it is difficult to expect that the issue of the missing will be resolved as long as the parties that were part of the conflict and bear great responsibility for the victims and the missing in Kosovo are in power in Belgrade and Pristina.

Also, some of the comments showed distrust and intolerance towards civil society organizations and international organizations in Kosovo, accusing them of bias.

Finally, most of the comments go in the direction of the need for resolving the issue of the missing as soon as possible and in the direction of the necessary cooperation between Belgrade and Pristina, as well as the support of international organizations in resolving this issue.

## **Conclusions:**

The missing persons issue still presents a big problem in Kosovo, in spite of the fact that two decades passed from Kosovo conflict, conflict that contributed the fate of so many people become unknown. Many state institutions are dealing with this problem, as well as international community, missing person associations, nongovernment organizations, but all that was not enough to reveal fate of missing persons. Establishing cooperation between Belgrade and Pristina in solving mutual problem of missing persons is of high importance.

Analysis of responses collected during research from respondents, brought to conclusions that majority is obtaining information about this issue through media and internet. There is only few information about this topic available to general public and only a small number of participants is familiar with the activities carried out by the Coalition for REKOM. The majority of respondents agreed that it is necessary to work on transparency and to increase informing of public about work done on every single case and delivered resolutions.

Trust in politicians, state institutions, international organizations, local self-governments and other factors regarding solving fate of missing persons, is on the low level. The best proofing indicator is the fact that majority of respondents shared the opinion that determining the exact number of missing persons didn't respect the basic human rights. Also, respondents were mostly suspicious that all necessary measures are undertaken in solving cases and more extensive engagement is needed from above mentioned institutions.

The association of families of missing persons was recognized as an important factor in resolving the issue of missing and they were indicated with highest trust. Having in mind that these are the people with huge interest in solving cases in question as soon as possible and to find out the fate of their loved ones, these results do not present surprise.

Some of the respondents had close ones which are listed as missing or they know persons who are searching for missing member of their family. Most of those cases are not solved or just partially solved, in spite of the fact that more than 20 years passed from Kosovo conflict. Majority of respondents do not believe or they are losing faith, that the issue of missing persons will ever be completely solved and think that missing ones will present only a number in some reports.

Many people are asking themselves if solving this problem will bring reconciliation or just awake a painful memory. Recovering truth about fate of missing will not be comfortable for general public and it could lead to greater divisions between communities in Kosovo, but it is necessary and certainly, their families deserve to know.