

Kosovo Serb Community Census Outlook

June
2022



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About Open Initiative

Democracy, Openness and Perspectives of the Serbian Community in Kosovo – Open is an initiative of Kosovo Foundation for Open Society (KFOS) launched during 2020. The aim of this initiative is to develop an open and dynamic space for discussion within and among the Serbian and other communities, as well as with institutions in Kosovo.

Civil society organizations and media from Serb community in Kosovo, members of the initiative, specifically deal with analyses and assessments of impact of civic and political organizations on the development of democracy as well as openness of Serb community in Kosovo. These analyses assess the openness of institutions, public policies, and important processes towards Serb community in Kosovo, as well as the level of openness of Serb community towards them.

These analyses will help provide insights into the situation and perspectives of Serb community in Kosovo, serving at the same time for informed representation in front of decision-makers, local and central institutions, and the international community.

1. Study Methodology

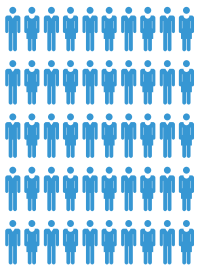
The face-to-face field survey was conducted between October-November 2021. A total of 500 Serb citizens were surveyed Kosovo-wide. The questionnaire consisted of 46 questions

and covered a total of 6 areas. The sample was purposeful, quota based, and the size of the municipality of residence served as a criterion for determining quotas. Confidence interval is +/-5.

The face-to-face field survey was conducted between October-November 2021. A total

500

Serb citizens were surveyed Kosovo-wide



Education

5.4% primary education

47% secondary education

45% higher education, i.e. university.

Employment

58% were employed

42% unemployed or retired

Sample included 60%

60.2%



39.8%



The average age of respondents is **42 years**

Confidence interval is +/-5

* It is important to note that given the fact that there are no official statistics on the demographic structure of the target population, i.e. Serb population in Kosovo, we can speak only conditionally of the sample representativeness.

Distribution by place of residence is as follows:

MUNICIPALITY:	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE	VALID PERCENTAGE	CUMULATIVE PERCENTAGE
Leposavić/ Leposaviq	110	22.0	22.0	22.0
<hr/>				
Kamenicë /Kamenica	10	2.0	2.0	24.0
<hr/>				
Novobërdë / Novo Brdo	30	6.0	6.0	30.0
<hr/>				
Zubin Potok	50	10.0	10.0	40.0
<hr/>				
Štrpce/ Shtërpce	30	6.0	6.0	46.0
<hr/>				
Zvečan/ Zveçan	60	12.0	12.0	58.0
<hr/>				
Gračanica/ Graçanicë	60	12.0	12.0	70.0
<hr/>				
Ranilug/Ranillug	30	6.0	6.0	76.0
<hr/>				
Parteš/Partesh	10	2.0	2.0	78.0
<hr/>				
Klokot/Kllokot	10	2.0	2.0	80.0
<hr/>				
Mitrovica North	100	20.0	20.0	100.0
<hr/>				
Total	500	100.0	100.0	

Unit

Qualitative Research Design and Methodology

FOCUS GROUPS

Time frame:

Survey was conducted between March 2022 - April 2022.

Survey instrument:

A sixteen (16) question interview guide

Number of focus groups:

8 focus groups

Total number of participants:

64 participants
(8 participants in each focus group)

Criteria for selection of participants:

gender, age, occupation, place of residence, level of education, employment

INTERVIEWS

Time frame:

Survey was conducted between 9/1/2022 and 19/4/2022

Survey instrument:

An eleven (11) questions interview guide

Total number of interviewees:

12 interviewees

Criteria for selection of interlocutors:

expertise, engagement and knowledge in areas directly related to the census process

Interlocutors:

Interviewed experts are (insisted on remaining) anonymous.

2. Introduction

About the OPEN Project

The analysis, *Kosovo Serb Community Census Outlook*, examines which factors will influence the decision of Kosovo Serbs (not) to participate in the upcoming census. The aim of the research is to explore the roles of Belgrade and Prishtinë/Priština in mobilizing the population to participate in the census, possible boycott of the process, as well as expectations and fears resulting from the census and its results. This research was conducted in partnership between NGO AKTIV and CPMZ.

About Project Partners

NGO AKTIV is a non-governmental organization that seeks to encourage community based civic participation, in the areas of economic, cultural and social development. Therefore, projects and work in the region reflect a holistic approach to problem solving and a strong belief in community inclusivity and active participation in civic life. As a reflection of its multilateral approach, the NGO AKTIV's project work has been extremely diverse and expanded to include projects focused on strengthening capacities of local public institutions, increasing access of vulnerable groups within Kosovo to judicial mechanisms, and rule of law issues. As AKTIV's position in the local community grows, and the cooperation with other civil society organizations, international organizations and the public sector

at the local and central level deepens, AKTIV has managed to enhance the scope and reach of its projects. In this regard, AKTIV strives to enable meaningful participation of Kosovo Serb community in fostering a peaceful and prosperous future in the region, where empowered individuals and institutions of open and active communities contribute to Kosovo's sustainable development through open, transparent and democratic processes, while complying with the rule of law.

Centar za prava manjinskih zajednica (CPMZ)

(eng. *Center for Rights of Minority Communities*) is a non-governmental organization based in Osojane (Municipality of Istog/Istok) that deals with the promotion of rights and overall position of non-majority communities in Kosovo, through direct work with local activists and awareness raising campaigns. CPMZ focuses on areas otherwise neglected by political and international stakeholders, such as returnee communities in Western Kosovo.

3. Executive Summary

Context

In the last three decades, no complete and inclusive census has been conducted in Kosovo. The last census, held in compliance with the minimum standards prescribed by international organizations and with (relatively) full participation of citizens, was held now quite some time ago, back in 1981, at the time of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. The next census held in 1991 was largely boycotted by Albanians, as well as some Bosniaks and Roma, and the data collected did not provide an objective cross-section of Kosovo's population. As a result of the war in the late '90s, as well as attempts to build peace under the auspices of the international community, there were no basic security, administrative and procedural conditions conducive to 2001 census in Kosovo.

After the declaration of independence, the census was supposed to be held in 2011. In the midst of a politically heated climate, and latest news about the signed Brussels agreements, this cycle of population and housing census was also a fiasco. In four northern Kosovo municipalities (Mitrovica North, Leposavić/ Leposaviq, Zubin Potok and Zvečan/ Zveçan), no census was conducted, while members of the Serb community living south of the Ibar river boycotted the process, to a large extent.

In 2016, a motion was submitted in the Assembly of Kosovo to adopt the so-called Law on

Census in the North, which would compensate for the lack of data. However, this initiative did not bear any fruit. April 2021 census was not carried out due to the pandemic and was therefore postponed for 2022. Meanwhile, the topic of the census in Kosovo was far from being top ranking on the political agenda, and the political representatives of Serbs in Kosovo, as well as official Belgrade, not even once, commented on the participation of this community in Kosovo census. In the meantime, Kosovo Serbs have not been informed about the census, which has been announced for the end of 2022, thereby creating the prerequisites to see the same or similar scenario being repeated - **failure of the census in Kosovo**. In such circumstances, a need arose to conduct an in-depth study of the positions, interests, fears, and desires of members of Kosovo Serb community when it comes to consequences and implications that (non) participation and the results of the census, could give rise to.

Study Methodology

The research partners organized eight focus groups in total, five in municipalities south of the Ibar, while the remaining three in each of the municipalities of Mitrovica North, Zvečan/ Zveçan and Zubin Potok. In order to complete, individualize and clarify the collected data, the partners held twelve expert interviews with key stakeholders from Kosovo Serb community, with

relevant knowledge related to history, importance and procedures of population and housing census process in Kosovo and areas of immediate significance or impact on the subject of this study. In addition to research activities implemented by the NGO AKTIV and the Center for Rights of Minority Communities, OPEN initiative conducted public research through surveys. This method included 500 respondents - members of Kosovo Serb community - and surveyed them in terms of their views in areas of importance and interest for this non-majority community. Among others, the topic of the upcoming census was part of the research spectrum, and the results of the survey are included and presented in this publication. The stated methodological approach aimed to encourage Kosovo Serbs to speak openly and freely of the consequences that the census process would produce among their members, providing an opening for suggestions on how to implement it.

Key Findings

Research activities have shown that members of Kosovo Serb community have different, though uniform and consistent views on the potential impact of the census process on their daily lives in Kosovo. The key findings from the research showed that, from the perspective of this community:

- Issue of census participation is influenced by a range of different factors (key among them include security situation, preservation of guaranteed rights and a need to establish a total number of Serbs living in Kosovo), and that there is no community-wide consent related to this topic;
- Almost half of the respondents (47.6%) indicated that they would participate in the census;
- To date, neither relevant institutions nor political stakeholders have informed Serb citizens about the time and manner of holding, procedures and competent

bodies for the census, although most citizens are aware of the essence and objectives of the process;

- It is of utmost importance that displaced persons are given an opportunity to participate in the census, as well as that their illegally occupied or non-occupied property is adequately enumerated;
- That throughout the census process, its members are actively involved in the relevant bodies.

Key Recommendations

- Conduct a public information campaign on the census in Serbian language, which will provide detailed and comprehensible information on the details of this process.
- Clearer and unambiguous definition of the scope of population considered resident, and enable participation of displaced persons and impartial inventory of their private or illegally occupied property.
- Adequate translation of accompanying census material and adaptation of digitalized enumeration to persons who need such facilities.
- Enable the representatives of Kosovo Serbs, and non-governmental organizations from the ranks of this community, to actively participate and be elected as members of the Central and Municipal Census Commissions, as key bodies for monitoring the regularity of the census.
- International community to provide minimum monitoring mechanisms, which in turn will contribute to the collection of data, that will not be subject to any doubts.

4. Kosovo Serb Community Census Outlook

Concept of Population and Housing Census

According to available historical sources, the first known census was taken by the Babylonian Empire, around 3800 BC and counted the number of livestock, quantities of butter, milk, honey, wool, and vegetables. Five centuries later, and according to preserved data, in the 2nd century AC, Chinese Han dynasty conducted the first incomplete census and established that the territory under its rule was inhabited by 57.7 million people in 12.4 million households.¹ The following centuries witnessed the development of the population and housing census system, for the purpose of collating data, which would then in turn serve for the planned development of certain territorial units. It is for this reason precisely that during the colonialism, the population of the newly conquered territories was enumerated, in order to plan the exploitation of human and natural resources. While in the fourteenth century in the Andes, the numerical state of the Inca Empire was maintained and supplemented by knots on wires made of llama hair, while in the United States prairies by the late eighteenth century, the census was conducted by enumerators, who moved on horses. However, the first com-

plete census, which included the entire population of a certain area according to the nominal system, was held in Iceland in 1703.²

Although an isolated case of that period, the Icelandic exception will become a certain benchmark when it comes to the manner, methods and purpose of conducting the census worldwide, throughout history. A surge in the trend of conducting the general census occurred in the first quarter of the nineteenth century, due to increased demand for statistically accurate data, which were very important in the times of rapid industrialization, especially on the European continent. Following the development of basic census postulates, the Ottoman Empire perfected data collection methods and expanded the scope of the enumerated population from Europe to Asia. The tax collection system was improved wherever the census was conducted, contributing significantly to the strengthening of administrative structures and bureaucracy, long-term economic and financial planning (at the level of territorial units), and the strengthening of sovereignty. The latter was especially important in the first half of the nineteenth century for the autonomous regions (Moldova, Vlačka, Serbia - 1834) and the newly formed states (Greece - 1828), which paved

1 ThoughtCo., *The Demographics of Dynastic China*, 2019, available at: <https://www.thoughtco.com/demographics-of-ancient-china-117655> (accessed on: 11 December 2021)

2 UNESCO, *The 1703 Census of Iceland*, 2012, available at: <https://en.unesco.org/memoryoftheworld/registry/200> (accessed on: 11 December 2021)

and built their new way of independent development precisely on the statistical data collected in their territories.

The fact that methodologically different census processes were developed and implemented worldwide throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, exposed the need for standardization in statistical data collection that would not be limited by state borders, but would become universal. However, the path of unification and standardization of methodological principles that would be valid and respected worldwide was extremely long. Although the first serious attempts to standardize the census at the international level can be traced back in the work and commitment of the League of Nations between the two world wars³, this process culminated in the work of its successor - United Nations. New circumstances and order predetermined by the devastating consequences of the World War II, and the need to establish minimum international standards, rules and procedures in various life activities, produced a demand to harmonize the population and housing census process. For this purpose, in 1947 the United Nations Statistics Office was established (within the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs) issuing standards and methods of data collection, assisting national statistical authorities and other official statistics entities in planning and conducting successful population and housing censuses. The body later renamed to *United Nations Statistics Division* has greatly contributed to unification of international standards of the census process, which has meanwhile become a well-established practice worldwide.

3 Frank W. Notestein, *Demographic Work of the United Nations*, Population Index Vol. 16, No. 3, 1950, pg. 183, available at: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2730608> (accessed on: 13 December 2021)

Prompted by the need to develop these standards, in 1958, the United Nations Statistics Division published the first set of recommendations and principles on population and housing census, which would be practiced globally. Despite the fact that the international census framework has evolved, expanded and advanced over time, the guidelines provided by the UN Statistics Division have always included uniform guidelines on key features of the census approach, general instructions on implementation and methods of census, as well as detailed guidelines on the content of the census material. In addition, the Statistics Division has focused on three key areas over its years of engagement:

- 1) Coordination of the universal international census program by issuing (and revising) guidelines and recommendations,
- 2) Provision of technical and logistical assistance to states in census operations and
- 3) Collection and distribution of census results of states (or areas).

These three areas became an integral part and incorporated the basic principles of official statistics approved in 1994 by United Nations member states. In 2014, the General Assembly of the most important international organization officially adopted the *Fundamental principles of official statistics*, as a document validated at the highest political level, enabling objective and reliable information collection on the ground, to serve as a valid basis for decision-making processes, whether at local, national or global levels. In addition to the above, these principles lay the groundwork for adequate and smooth implementation of the data collection process, at the same time providing insight into the core importance of this process, which is precisely the reason why it is important to list them individually (as listed in the *Fundamental principles*⁴):

4 United Nations Statistics Division, *Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics*, 2014, available at: https://unstats.un.org/unsd/dnss/hb/E-fundamental%20principles_A4-WEB.pdf (accessed on: 13 December 2021)

① Relevance, impartiality and equal access

Official statistics provide an indispensable element in the information system of a democratic society, serving the government, the economy and the public with data about the current (and comparative) economic, demographic, social and environmental situation. To this end, official statistics that meet the test of practical utility are to be compiled and made available on an impartial basis by official statistical agencies to honor citizens' entitlement to public information.

② Professional standards and ethics

To retain trust in official statistics, the statistical agencies need to decide according to strictly professional considerations, including scientific principles and professional ethics, on the methods and procedures for the collection, processing, storage and presentation of statistical data.

③ Accountability and transparency

To facilitate a correct interpretation of the data, the statistical agencies are to present information according to scientific standards on the sources, methods and procedures of the statistics.

④ Prevention of misuse

The statistical agencies are entitled to comment on erroneous interpretation and misuse of statistics.

⑤ Sources of official statistics

Data for statistical purposes may be drawn from all types of sources, be they statistical surveys or administrative records. Statistical agencies are to choose the source with regard to quality, timeliness, costs and the burden on respondents.

⑥ Confidentiality

Individual data collected by statistical agencies for statistical compilation, whether they refer to natural or legal persons, are to be strictly confidential and used exclusively for statistical purposes.

⑦ Legislation

The laws, regulations and measures under which the statistical systems operate are to be made public.

⑧ National coordination

Coordination among statistical agencies within countries is essential to achieve consistency and efficiency in the statistical system.

⑨ Use of international standards

The use by statistical agencies in each country of international concepts, classifications and methods promotes the consistency and efficiency of statistical systems at all official levels.

⑩ International cooperation

Bilateral and multilateral cooperation in statistics contributes to the improvement of systems of official statistics in all countries.

Based on the above listed principles, each of the countries conducts a population and housing census in accordance with local circumstances, both in terms of domestic legislation or geographic, socio-economic and cultural predispositions. By using practical guides, the most important being the one issued by the United Nations - *Principles and recommendations for population and housing censuses*⁵, in specific time intervals, statistical agencies worldwide carry out complex activities requiring detailed and careful planning, resources and various endeavors - ranging from mapping the whole country, mobilizing and training a high number of enumerators and conducting public awareness raising campaigns, to surveying of all households, careful monitoring of census activities and analysis, dissemination and use of collected data. Hence, the last revision of the *Principles and recommendations from 2017* accurately and clearly defines the census process as "the total process of planning, collecting, compiling, (re) evaluating, disseminating and analyzing demographic, economic and social data at the smallest geographic level pertaining, at a specified time, to all persons in a country or in a well-delimited part of a country"⁶. The essence of such a simple explanation lies in the key need hiding behind the data collection process, to serve as a **basis for the production and distribution of material wealth**. For long-term and detailed planning of economic and social development, administrative-bureaucratic activities or scientific-research work, it is crucial to have reliable and exhaustive data on the size, distribution and composition of the population in a well-delimited geographical area. Organized over a period of at least ten years, each census should, while collecting data, include the number of people, their spatial distribution, age and gender structure, as well as their

living conditions and other key socio-economic characteristics. In this sense, data collection at the national level should be viewed as an exclusively scientific-statistical process with the ultimate goal of:

- 1) Facilitating the implementation and functioning of public administration,
- 2) Renewing and developing further national statistics (with special reference to the socio-economic components of the information collected), and
- 3) Creating a base for projected research and analysis.

Although perceived as a key reference to plan the future of a country, it is important to emphasize that the census process is also important for the preservation and development of democratic capacities. Deviations resulting from misuse, incompleteness or falsification of data can significantly harm political stability and public order and peace in a country, especially if the population is divided along racial, ethnic, religious, linguistic, or cultural grounds.

Censuses in Kosovo

Despite the fact that, in terms of the number and structure of the population in the modern sense, there were no censuses prior to 1921, history shows that there were attempts to establish the approximate number of residents in Kosovo. Thus, during the Ottoman Empire, and also in Kosovo, during the 19th and 20th centuries, three general censuses had been conducted (1831, 1881/82 and 1905/6), collecting data on place of birth, age, gender, place of residence, occupation / craft, marital status, health status, and religion. As a testament to the importance of census in everyday life, persons enumerated in the Ottoman Empire received the so-called census identity certificates (*tur. nüfus tezkeresi*), an equivalent of modern birth certificates and identity cards, and mandatory to perform state and legal affairs.

5 Department of Economic and Social Affairs Statistics Division, *Principles and Recommendations for Population and Housing Censuses*. Revision 3, 2017, available at: https://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic-social/Standards-and-Methods/files/Principles_and_Recommendations/Population-and-Housing-Censuses/Series_M67rev3-E.pdf (accessed on: 13 December 2021)

6 *Ibid.*, pg. 2

The establishment of a new international order after the end of the World War I, and the sudden demographic changes caused by the devastating consequences of the war and migratory movements, generated a need to collect statistically accurate and comprehensive data. Such data were supposed to serve in drastically changed post-war circumstances as an incentive for socio-economic engineering, which in turn would enable a quick recovery from the consequences of the Great War. In such a state of affairs, the population of Kosovo was enumerated in the intermediary period, during the existence of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, i.e. (since 1929), and the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, during 1921 and 1931. The prelude to the World War II, its duration and consequences made it impossible to properly enumerate the population throughout Europe, and in Kosovo (as a separate territorial unit), now within the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia (FPRY), which is why it was held three years after the end of the war – in 1948. Later on, the censuses conducted in 1953, 1961, 1971, 1981, and 1991 ensued, within the FPRY and SFRY (Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia). In a whirlwind of political disagreements and heated nationalist rhetoric, 1991 census in Kosovo was not conducted in its entirety, due to a boycott by members of the Albanian community, and inter-ethnic and military conflicts in the '90s and frictions during the first decade of the 21st century, conditioning the first census to be held only two decades later, namely in 2011. The chapters below will present the results of the previously mentioned census cycles in Kosovo, between 1921 and 2011.

Censuses Prior to 2011

The census of the inhabitants of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes was conducted in 1921, without collecting data on ethnicity, but exclusively on the mother tongue and religion. The results of the census, published in 1924, showed that 329.502 members of the Islamic religious

community, 93.203 Orthodox, 15.785 Catholic, 427 Jews and 26 Greek Catholics lived in Kosovo. When it comes to the mother tongue, 288.907 citizens spoke Albanian, 114.095 Serbian, 27.915 Turkish, 402 Aromanian (or Cincar), 184 Slovenian, 30 German and 12 Hungarian.

1921

The results of the census, published in 1924, showed that:

- **329.502** members of the Islamic religious community
- **93.203** Orthodox,
- **15.785** Catholic,
- **427** Jews and
- **26** Greek Catholics.

When it comes to the mother tongue:

- **288.907** citizens spoke Albanian,
- **114.095** Serbian,
- **27.915** Turkish,
- **402** Aromanian (or Cincar),
- **184** Slovenian,
- **30** German and
- **12** Hungarian.

Figure 1. Results of the 1921 census, held in the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes on the territory of present-day Kosovo, by religion

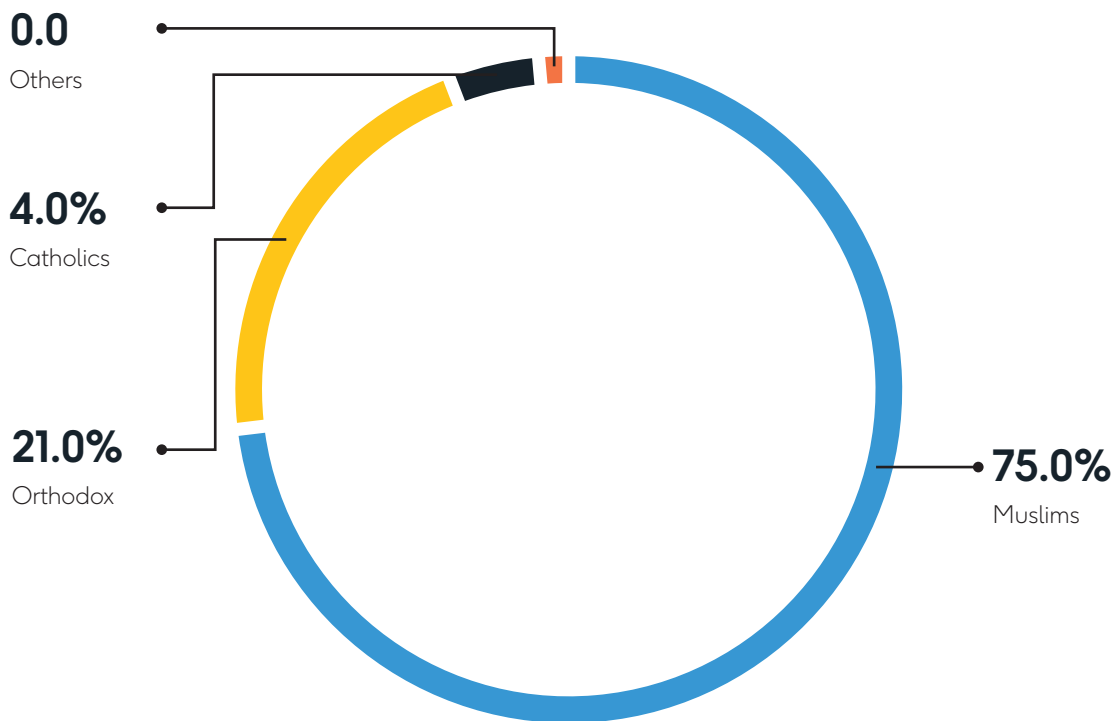


Figure 2. Results of the 1921 census, held in the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes on the territory of present-day Kosovo, by mother tongue

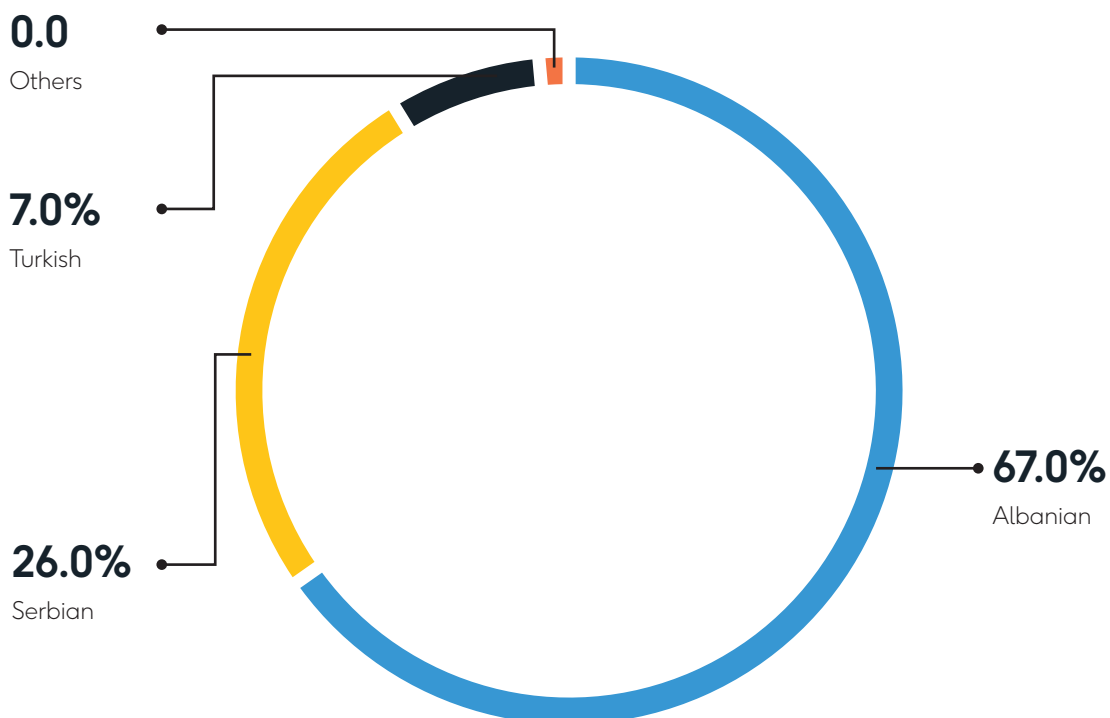
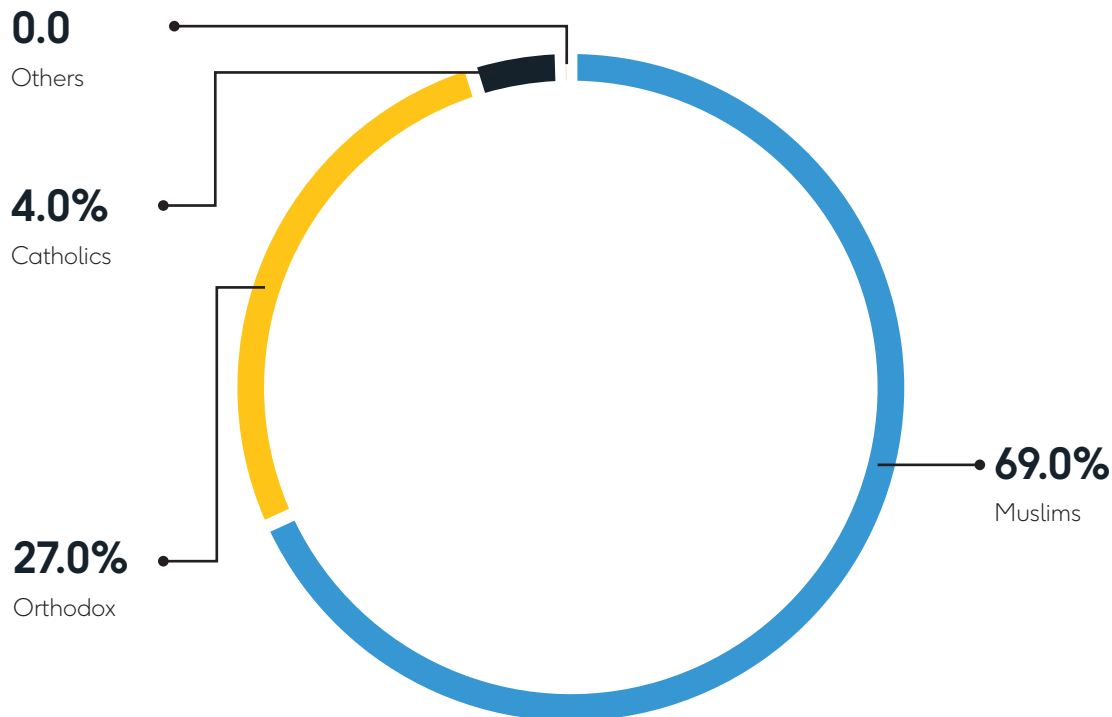


Figure 3. Results of the 1931 census, held in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, on the territory of present-day Kosovo, by religion.



In the 1931 census, citizens were entitled to express their ethnicity. However, during the declaration, the citizens were first offered to confirm whether their nationality was Yugoslavian or else, so only the next question in the questionnaire provided them the possibility of independently writing down their nationality. Such a practice results from propagating the Yugoslav identity, that followed after the country name was changed in 1929 and the change of course concerning the national issue in that multinational creation⁷. According to the results of that census, a total of 552.064 inhabitants lived in Kosovo, of whom by religion: 379.981 Muslims, 150.745 Orthodox, 20.568 Catholics and 770 citizens of other religions.⁸ 331.549 Kosovo

residents spoke Albanian, 180.170 Serbian (and other South Slavic languages)⁹, 426 Hungarian, 241 German, while 38.907 did not declare themselves in detail related to their mother tongue.

● 1931 552,064 INHABITANTS

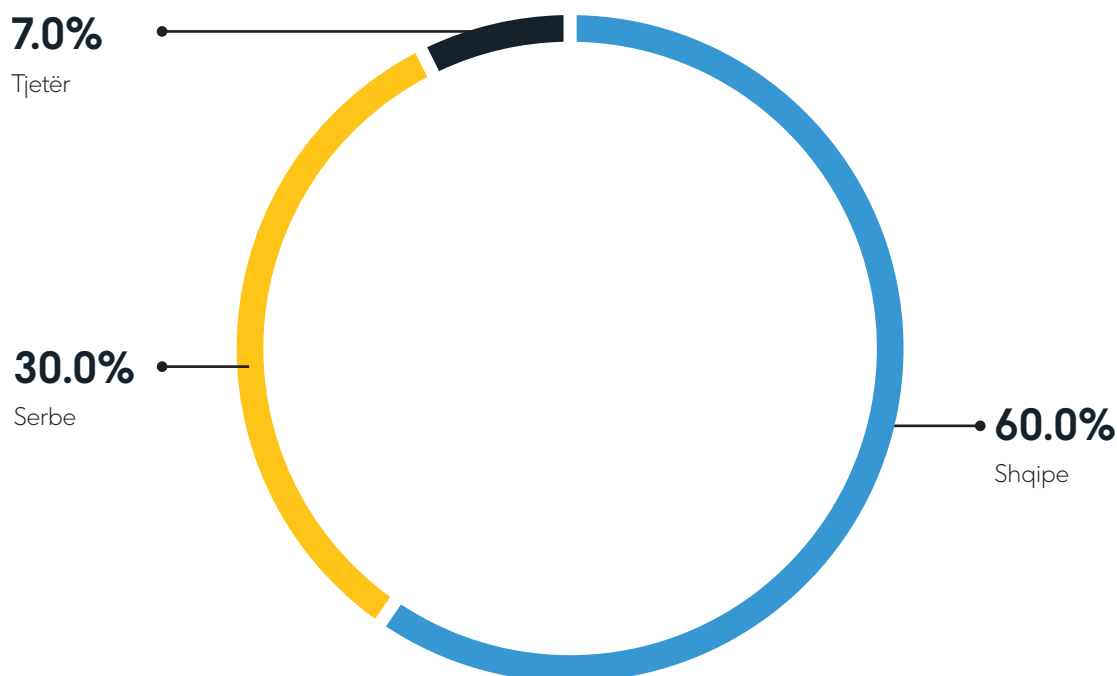
- **379,981** Muslims
- **150,745** Orthodox
- **20,568** Catholic
- **770** Citizens of other religions

⁷ Snežana Mrđen, *Narodnost u popisima. Promjenljiva i nestalna kategorija*, Filozofski fakultet Zadar, 2002, pg. 78, available at: <http://www.doiserbia.nb.rs/img/doi/0038-982X/2002/0038-982X0201077M.pdf> (accessed on: 17 December 2021)

⁸ Republički zavod za statistiku, *Stanovništvo po veroispovesti i maternjem jeziku po popisu od 31. marta 1931. godine*, available at: <http://publikacije.stat.gov.rs/G1931/Pdf/G19314001.pdf> (accessed on: December 21, 2021)

⁹ As it was the case when declaring one's nationality, the choice of mother tongue was conditioned by the choice between *Yugoslav languages* and *others*, which is why the collected data on languages were incomplete, considering that the citizens declared themselves differently and at their own discretion, when it comes to their mother tongue, or did not specify which South Slavic language they used.

Figure 4. Results of the 1931 census, held in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia in the territory of present-day Kosovo, by mother tongue.



In addition to collecting data on the total population and population structure, the 1948 census aimed to assess the extent of the consequences and damage caused by the war on the territory of the entire then Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia. Based on the collected data, it was determined that a total of 727,820 people lived in Kosovo, of whom: Albanians (498,242), Serbs (171,911), Montenegrins (28,050), Roma (11,230), the so-called unaffiliated Muslims (9,679)¹⁰, Croats (5,290), Turks (1,315), Macedonians (526), Slovenes (283), German (197) and others (1,816).¹¹

¹⁰ FPRY citizens of Islamic faith and South Slavic ethnicity were required to select the offered option (Muslim-unaffiliated, Serb-Muslim, Croat-Muslim, Macedonian-Muslim, etc.) in a specific column during the census or write that they are *nationally unaffiliated*.

¹¹ Republički zavod za statistiku, *Stanovništvo narodnosti po popisu od 15. marta 1948. godine*, available at: <http://publikacije.stat.gov.rs/G1948/Pdf/G19484001.pdf> (accessed on: 21 December 2021)

1948 727,820 INHABITANTS

→ Albanians (498,242)

→ Serbs (171,911)

→ Montenegrins (28,050)

→ Roma (11,230)

→ The so-called unaffiliated Muslims (9,679)

→ Croats (5,290)

→ Turks (1,315)

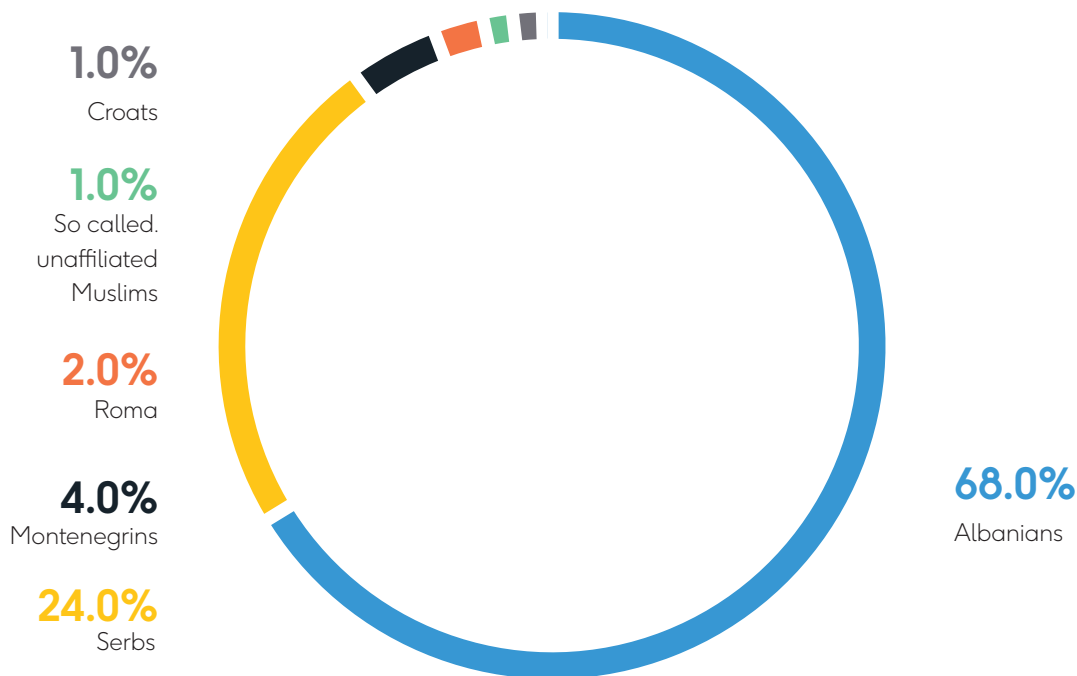
→ Macedonians (526)

→ Slovenians (283)

→ Germans (197)

→ Others (1,816)

Figure 5. Results of the 1948 census, held in the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia on the territory of present-day Kosovo, by ethnicity.



In order to avoid discontinuity in the census and adapt to international practice, the FPRY held a census in 1953, only five years after the previous one. A total of 808,141 inhabitants were enumerated in the territory of Kosovo, and the ethnic structure was as follows: Albanians (524,559), Serbs (189,969), Turks (34,583), Montenegrins (31,343), Roma (11,904), Yugoslavs / unaffiliated (6,241)¹², Croats (6,201), Macedonians (972), Slovenians (511), Others¹³. As was the case with the 1948 census, in 1953, citizens from the South Slavic ethnic corps of the Islamic faith were forced to select one of the offered categories, most often the one

¹² "A person of Yugoslav origin, who is not more closely nationally affiliated, is registered as: Yugoslavian-unaffiliated, and another nationally unaffiliated person shall be registered as: nationally-unaffiliated." (from: Savezni zavod za statistiku, *Popis stanovništva 1953. godine. Knjiga I. Vitalna i etnička obeležja. Konačni rezultati za FNRJ i narodne republike*, Beograd, 1959, pg. 9

¹³ Republički zavod za statistiku, *Stanovništvo po veroispovesti i maternjem jeziku po popisu od 31. marta 1931. godine*, <http://publikacije.stat.gov.rs/G1948/Pdf/G19484001.pdf> (accessed on: 21 December 2021)

● 1953 808,141 INHABITANTS

→ Albanians (524,559)

→ Serbs (189,969)

→ Turks (34,583)

→ Montenegrins (31,343)

→ Roma (11,904)

→ Yugoslavs / unaffiliated (6,241)

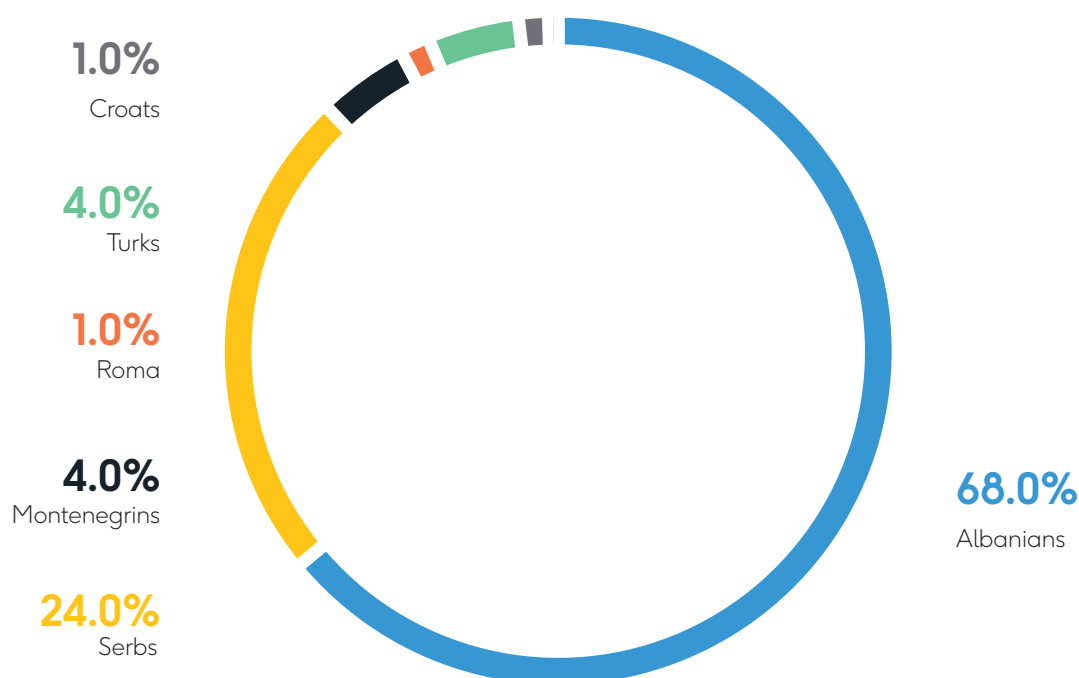
→ Croats (6,201)

→ Macedonians (972)

→ Slovenians (511)

→ Others (1,858)

Figure 6. Results of the 1953 census, held in the FPRY, on the territory of present-day Kosovo, by ethnicity.



of the so-called unaffiliated. On the other hand, in 1953, members of Gorani community, which at that time was still not recognized as a separate ethnic group, in the areas where they traditionally live (today's Dragash/Dragaš municipality), mostly declared themselves as Turks.

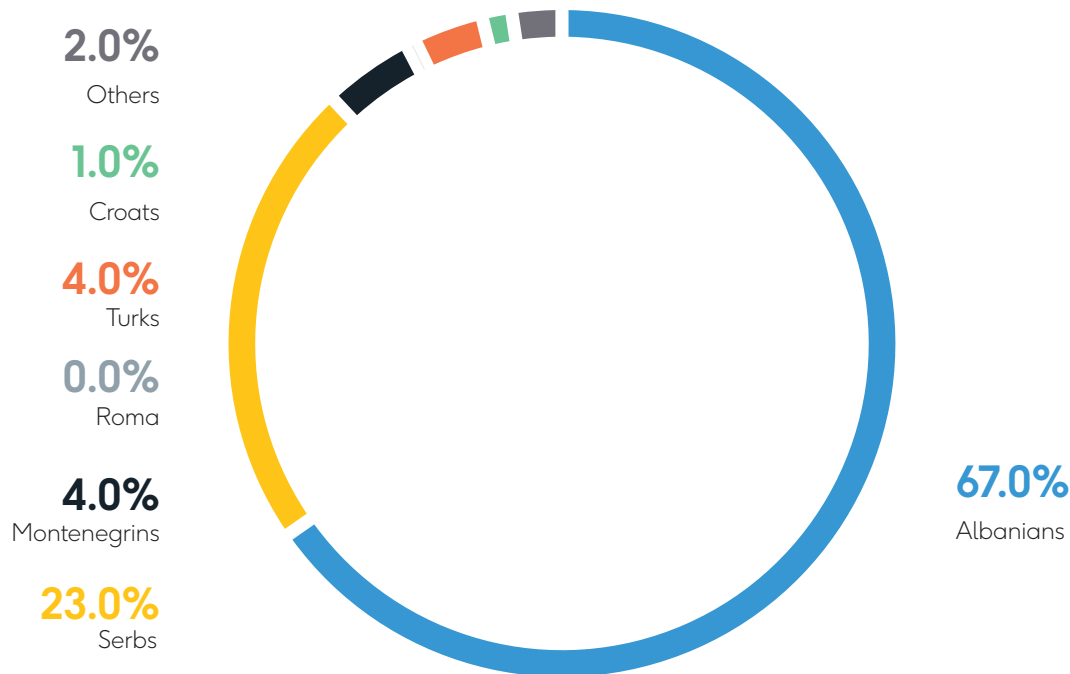
1961 census found that there were 963,959 people living in Kosovo, of whom 646,604 were Albanians, 227,016 Serbs, 37,588 Montenegrins, 25,764 Turks, 8,026 Muslims, 7,251 Croats, 5,206 Yugoslavs, 3,202 Roma, 1,142 Macedonians, and 510 Slovenians, while other ethnic groups counted 1,650 members.¹⁴

¹⁴ Republički zavod za statistiku, *Popis stanovništva, domaćinstava, i stanova u 1961. godini. Nacionalni sastav stanovništva FNR Jugoslavije. Podaci po naseljima i opštinama. Knjiga III*, Beograd, 1994, available at: <http://publikacije.stat.gov.rs/G1961/Pdf/G19614001.pdf> (accessed on: 22 December 2021)

1961 963,959 INHABITANTS

- **646,604** Albanians
- **227,016** Serbs
- **37,588** Montenegrins
- **8,026** Muslims
- **7,251** Croats
- **5,206** Yugoslavs
- **3,202** Roma
- **1,142** Macedonians
- **510** Slovenians
- **1,650** other ethnic groups

Figure 7. Results of the 1961 census, held in the FPRY, on the territory of present-day Kosovo, by ethnicity.



In 1971, the term ethnicity appeared in census materials, i.e., questionnaires, which was not the case in previous data collection cycles (when the term nationality was used). Another novelty is the absence of offering examples of the names of ethnic groups, and each individual was given the opportunity to declare his/her national origin freely (i.e., “as per the statement of the person being enumerated”). The results of the 1971 census indicated a surge in the number of population in Kosovo, which in that year exceeded one million and reached a total of 1.243.693 inhabitants. Albanians had the largest share in the population (916.168), followed by Serbs (228.264), Montenegrins (31.555), Muslims (26.357), Roma (14.953), Turks (12.283), Croats (8.264), Macedonians (1.048), Yugoslavs (920), Slovenians (392), and others (3.489).¹⁵

1971 1,243,693 INHABITANTS

→ **916,168** Albanians

→ **228,264** Serbs

→ **31,555** Montenegrins

→ **26,357** Muslims

→ **14,953** Roma

→ **12,283** Turks

→ **8,264** Croats

→ **1,048** Macedonians

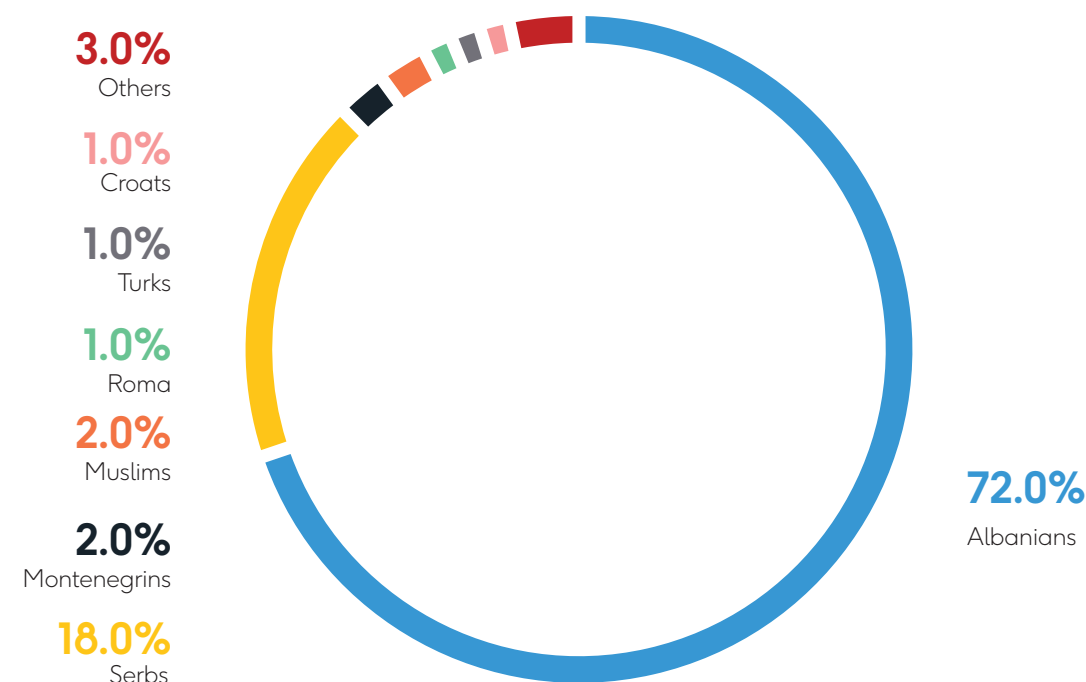
→ **920** Yugoslavs

→ **392** Slovenians

→ **3,489** Others

¹⁵ Republički zavod za statistiku, *Popis stanovništva, domaćinstava, i stanova u 1971. godini. Nacionalni sastav stanovništva SFR Jugoslavije. Podaci po naseljima i opštinama. Knjiga III*, Beograd, 1994, available at: <http://publikacije.stat.gov.rs/G1971/Pdf/G19714001.pdf> (accessed on: 22 December 2021)

Figure 8. Results of the 1971 census, held in the SFRY on the territory of present-day Kosovo, by ethnicity



Compared to 1971, the results of the 1981 census show a significant decline in the share of Serbs in the total population of Kosovo, from 23% to 18%. The population grew for almost a quarter of a million within a decade, reaching 1.584.440 inhabitants. Of these, there were 1.226.736 Albanians, Serbs – 209.497, Muslims – 58.562, Roma – 34.126, Montenegrins – 27.028, Turks – 12.513, Croats – 8.718, Yugoslavs – 2.676, Macedonians – 1.056, Slovenians – 343 and others – 3.185. Unlike all previously conducted data collection cycles, in 1981, for the first time ever, citizens were offered a right not to declare their identity. In addition, this was a census on which South Slavic Muslims had the right to declare themselves according to the ethnic group that had previously become a constitutional category – Muslims.

The unstable political climate generated by the aftermath of the first democratically held elections and growing inter-ethnic animosities in the SFRY, cast a shadow over the 1991 population and housing census. The pressure of ethnocentric political options exerted over their voters to

declare themselves at the census in accordance with their awakened nationalist rhetoric experienced a momentum, and the greatest pressure had been exerted against those who declared themselves as Yugoslavs in the previous cycle.¹⁶

In contrast, widespread dissatisfaction among Kosovo Albanians caused by drastic restrictions of autonomy of AP of Kosovo and Metohija and the consequent decision not to participate in the work of the institutions, resulted in a complete boycott of the census process by this community. Thus, unlike the rest of the then SFRY, the field collection of data on the number and structure of population in Kosovo failed entirely. The then Federal Office of Statistics offered its estimate of the number of members of Albanian community in Kosovo¹⁷, and these incomplete data on ethnic

¹⁶ Snežana Mrđen, *Narodnost u popisima. Promjenljiva i nestalna kategorija*, Filozofski fakultet Zadar, 2002, pg. 90, available at: <http://www.doiserbia.nb.rs/img/doi/0038-982X/2002/0038-982X0201077M.pdf> (accessed on: 12 January 2022)

¹⁷ Republički zavod za statistiku, *Stanovništvo i domaćinstva Republike Srbije prema popisu 1991. godine*, Beograd,

structure were cross-referenced with data collected during 1991, among the part of the population that did not boycott the census.¹⁸ Thus, the numerical and ethnic structure in Kosovo was assessed as follows: Albanians – 1.596.072, Serbs – 194.190, Muslims – 66.189, Roma – 45.745, Montenegrins – 20.365, Croats – 8.062, Yugoslavs – 3.457, and others – 21.933.

2011 Population and Housing Census

Due to the war and NATO intervention in the late '90s, as well as attempts to build peace under the auspices of the international community, there were no basic security, administrative and procedural conditions conducive to 2001 census in Kosovo.

Due to the lack of an institutional and administrative framework for statistical data processing, the Statistical Office of Kosovo (today's Kosovo Agency of Statistics) was established in 2001. This regulatory body (under the UNMIK system) aimed to create the basic preconditions to lay the ground work and subsequently implement a comprehensive census in Kosovo. In cooperation with international stakeholders, in 2003, the Assembly of Kosovo adopted a Law on Population and Housing Census in Kosovo, with the aim of governing the organization and implementation of the census and defining the institutional and administrative framework and competencies of relevant bodies, which would warrant for the preparation, implementation and monitoring of this process, in line with recognized international standards.

Based on the 2003 Law, Kosovo Assembly adopted a new Law on Population and Housing

1995, available at: <https://publikacije.stat.gov.rs/G1995/Pdf/G19954001.pdf> (accessed on: 19 December 2021)

18 Republički zavod za statistiku, *Stanovništvo prema nacionalnoj pripadnosti. Popis 1991.*, available at: <https://www.stat.gov.rs/media/3637/stanovništvo-prema-nacionalnoj-pripadnosti-popis-1991.xlsx> (accessed on: 22 December 2021)

Census in 2010 (no. 03 / L-237),¹⁹ which content-wise did not undergo any major changes, while the very poor quality of translation into Serbian is a constant. Incomprehensibility and ambiguities in the content of the law were not the only reasons why a fully legitimate census was not conducted in 2011. Namely, in four municipalities in the north of Kosovo (Mitrovica North, Leposavić/Leposaviq, Zubin Potok and Zvečan/Zveçan), no census was conducted, while most members of the Serb community living south of the Ibar river boycotted this process to a significant extent. That the boycott was no surprise is also supported by the fact that Kosovo Serbs boycotted also five field preparatory tests for the census, that were held in Serb-majority areas in 2006 and 2008.

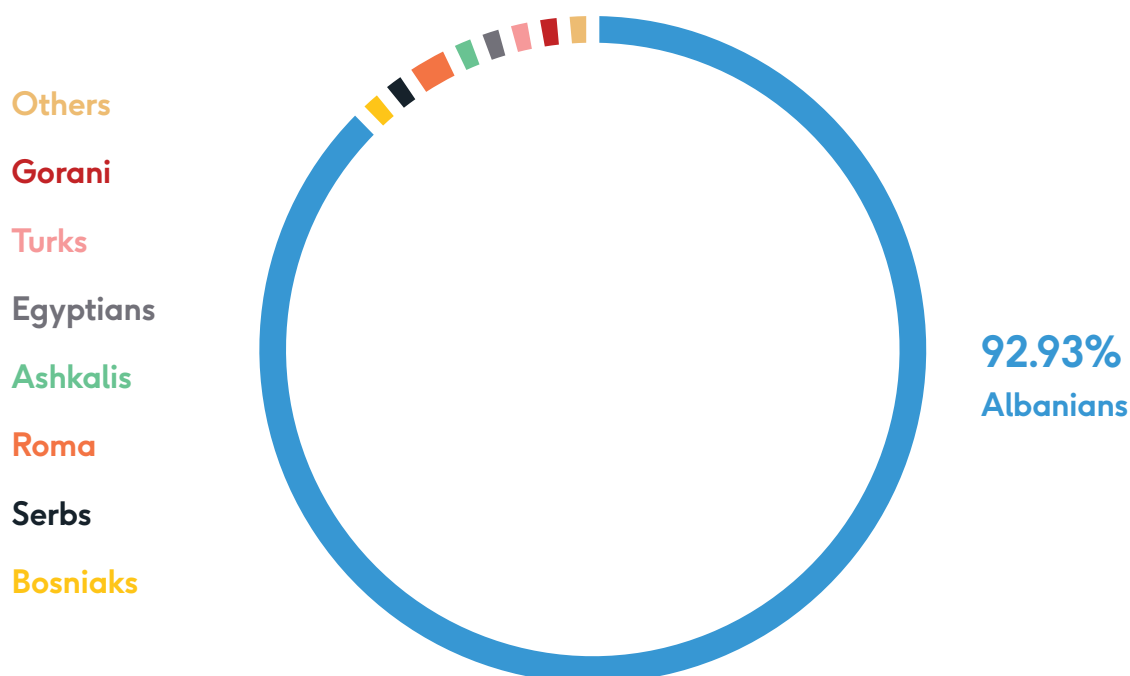
Despite the clearly developed strategy of the Statistical Office of Kosovo (published in 2009)²⁰, that proposed a detailed public campaign plan aimed at informing Serb citizens about the importance of participating in the census, in practice, it attracted little attention and understanding among members of this community. According to the Final report of the Kosovo Agency of Statistics on the conducted census, lack of participation of Kosovo Serbs in the census was highlighted as the major failure, as a consequence of an inappropriate public campaign. However, regardless of the lack of participation of one portion of population, it was assessed that the organization of the census functioned well, and that enumerators achieved a satisfactory level of results²¹. In addition, it was emphasized that the functional data collection and management of census documents made it possible to create a previously inexistent electronic database, which will "significantly facilitate

19 Assembly of Kosovo, *Law on Population and Housing Census, 2010*, available at: <http://old.kuvendikosoves.org/common/docs/ligjet/2010-237-ser.pdf> (accessed on: 21 December 2021)

20 Statistical Office of Kosovo, *Proposal of a Road Map for the Population and Housing Census in Kosovo, 2009*, Prishtinë/Priština

21 Kosovo Agency of Statistics, *Kosovo Population and Housing Census 2011. Final Results, 2011*, pg. 22, available at: https://ask.rks-gov.net/media/2075/final-results_eng.pdf (accessed on: 21 December 2021)

Figure 9. Results of 2011 census in Kosovo, by ethnicity.



the forthcoming census cycle”.

The results of the 2011 census were recognized as legitimate by the general public in Kosovo, as well as the international community. According to these results, the ethnic structure is predominantly made up of Albanians (92.93%), while a significant number of members of non-majority communities includes Bosniaks (1.58%), Serbs (1.58%), Turks (1.08), Ashkalis (0.89%), Egyptians (0.66%), Roma (0.51%) and Gorani (0.59%).²²²³

The limited scope of the 2011 census affected the necessity to estimate the total population in-be-

22 Kosovska agencija za statistiku, *Stanovništvo prema polu i nacionalnosti na nivou naselja, Priština*, 2013, available at: <https://ask.rks-gov.net/media/1615/stanovnistvo-prema-polu-i-nacionalnosti-na-nivou-naselja.pdf> (accessed on: 21 December 2021)

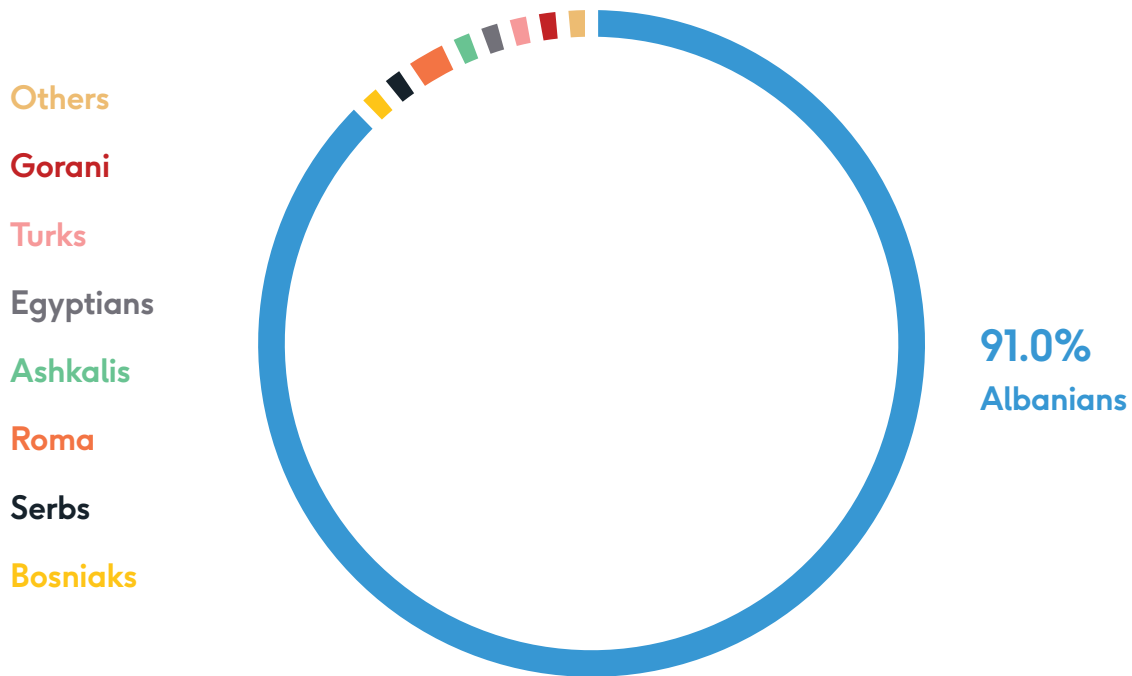
23 In numbers, the results of the 2011 census are as follows: a total of 1.739.825 inhabitants, of whom: Albanians – 1.616.869), Roma – 34.126, Bosniaks – 27.533, Serbs – 25.532, Turks – 18.738, Ashkalis – 15.436, Egyptians – 11.524, Gorani – 10.265, others – 20.225.

tween the two census cycles. In addition to the Kosovo Agency of Statistics, estimates by OSCE and ECMI are considered among the most relevant and approximate. According to this estimate (from 2013), the population structure based on ethnicity looked as follows: Albanians (86.6% - 1.623.419), Serbs (7.8% - 146.128), Bosniaks (1.5% - 28.933), Turks (1% - 18.948), Roma (0.8% - 15.696), Ashkalis (0.8% - 15.546), Egyptians (0.6% - 11.524), and Gorani (0.5% - 10.945).²⁴ Given the sensitive trend and waves of emigration from Kosovo abroad, regardless of nationality, often preceded by internal migration towards larger cities (from rural to urban areas), it is extremely difficult to give an approximate estimate of Kosovo's resident population.

The situation with members of Kosovo Serb community is specific in that it is slightly more

24 European Center for Minority Issues Kosovo, *Communities in Kosovo: A guidebook for professionals working with communities in Kosovo*, Prishtinë/Priština, 2013, available at: <https://www.ecmikosovo.org/uploads/ECMIKosovoDec2013GuidebookforProfessionalsENG.pdf> (accessed on 21 December 2021)

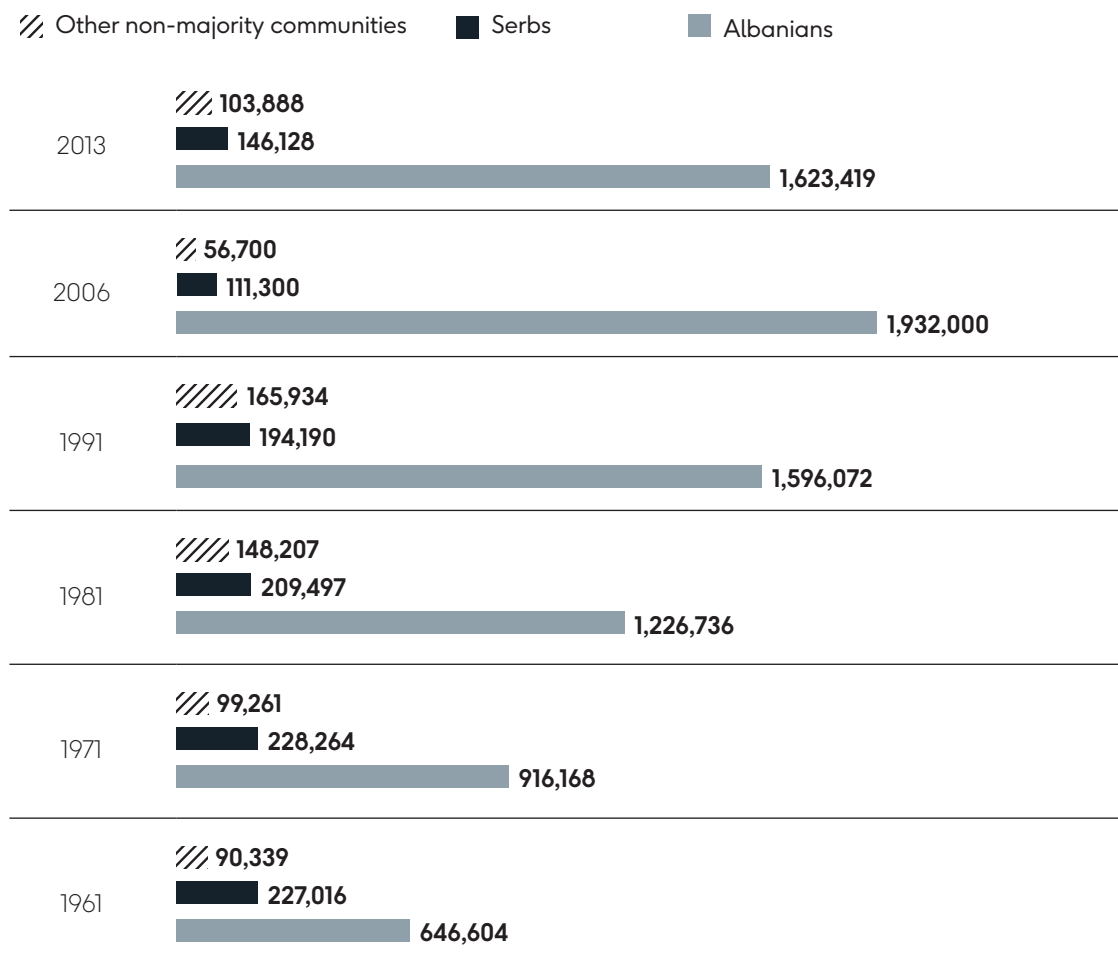
● **Figure 10.** ECMI and OSCE 2013 estimate of Kosovo's population number, by ethnicity



complicated than when it comes to members of the majority community. Lack of personal safety and legal security, a turbulent political environment, strenuous economic situation, as well as social, linguistic and cultural isolation (especially prevalent among Serbs living in enclaves south of the Ibar river), in the circumstances of post conflict transition, hampers the survival of this community in Kosovo. Moreover, the tangible

consequences of the conflicts from the late '90s and March 2004 riots further provoke members of this community to seek a better life outside of Kosovo. With the rapidly growing Kosovo Serb youth leaving Kosovo (temporarily or for good), it is currently impossible to estimate the exact number of members of this non-majority community.

Figure 11. Comparison between the majority, Serb and other non - majority communities in Kosovo based on 1971, 1981, 1991 censuses (estimate²⁵), 2006. (estimate²⁶) and 2013. (estimate²⁷).



Without relying entirely on the above listed arguments, and with the aim of establishing the exact number of residents of four municipalities in the north of Kosovo, a motion was submitted to the Assembly of Kosovo in 2016, for the adoption of the so-called Law on Census in the North²⁸

25 Republički zavod za statistiku, *Stanovništvo i domaćinstva Republike Srbije prema popisu 1991. godine*, Beograd, 1995, available at: <https://publikacije.stat.gov.rs/G1995/Pdf/G19954001.pdf> (accessed on: 11 December 2021)

26 Statistical Office of Kosovo, *Demographic changes in Kosovo between 1948-2006*, 2008, available at: <https://ask.rks-gov.net/media/2065/demografske-promene-kosova-u-periodu-1948-2006.pdf> (accessed on: January 11, 2022)

27 European Center for Minority Issues Kosovo, *Community Profiles, 2016*, available at: <https://www.ecmikosovo.org/en/Community-Profiles> (accessed on: January 11, 2022)

28 KosSev, *Srbi sa Severa neće na kosovski popis i ne veruju da će ga biti*, 2016, available at: <https://kossev.info/srbi-sa-severa-nee-na-kosovski-popis-i-ne-veruju-da-ce-ga-biti-2/> (accessed on: January 11, 2022)

One of the main arguments in favor of conducting the census in four municipalities in the north of Kosovo was to align the real number of residents with their municipal budgets. This Draft Law was not adopted, despite the gap between these two factors, evident also in other municipalities. The failure of this initiative delayed the collection of comprehensive data up to the forthcoming census cycle. Although in 2019, the Kosovo Agency of Statistics announced that, every step and activity was planned in detail, based on Eurostat guidance and international standards, with the aim of conducting the census in 2021 (i.e. 2022) as initially planned, the legal framework that will legally round-up such efforts, has yet to be adopted (May 2022).

2011 census produced practical implications in several areas:

- Lack of data on the total population, as well as an undefined number of Serbs, as the most numerous non-majority community in Kosovo, consequently created a misconception about the real statistical relationship between majority and non-majority communities;
- Uneven budget distribution from the central level to the Serb-majority municipalities (especially those in northern Kosovo), as budget subsidies are calculated based on the population of a specific municipality, thereby hampering their sustainable socio-economic development and operation of local administrations;
- Exclusion of displaced persons (residing in Serbia or Kosovo) and persons living in Kosovo only for specific periods of time (e.g. due to economic conditions) from participating in the census;
- In some cases exclusion of Serbs from the census process, due to possession of personal documents issued by Serbia;
- Further deepening of property and legal issues that have plagued members of the Kosovo Serb community for two decades.

Draft Census Law and Views on Census in Kosovo

The area of organization, implementation and monitoring of the census has always been regulated by the Law on Population and Housing Census. Changed socio-political circumstances and the need to practically regulate the upcoming census cycle demand smooth census operations, with a clear definition of legal rules by the legislature. Meanwhile, apart from individual information launched in the media on the duration of the census (in the period of 30 days, compared to 2011, when it lasted

15),²⁹ indicative available budget (amounting to around EUR 11 million)³⁰ and preparatory actions, the public in Kosovo was not informed in detail about the upcoming census. As stated in the Annual Plan of Official Statistics of the Kosovo Agency of Statistics³¹, draft Law on Population and Housing Census, as well as pilot census were planned to be adopted in 2020. The plan states that these activities will probably be delayed for an indefinite time (due to the pandemic)..

Due to political instability and changes in the ruling coalitions in a short time span, and the spread of COVID-19 in Kosovo, the adoption of a new law that would regulate the census process in detail has been delayed in several instances. It is precisely for these reasons, that on 28 December 2021, the Government submitted the draft Law on Population and Housing Census to the Assembly for review³². After determining the compliance of the draft Law with EU standards³³, the draft was examined by the relevant parliamentary committee, and on 23 February 2022, the Assembly adopted in principle the draft Law (no. 08 / L-114) on the Population and Housing Census³⁴. However, the procedure of final adoption of the law itself was delayed, despite the fact that preparation and implementation of the functional census process requires at least six months. In accordance with

29 KosSev, *Digitalni popis stanovništva na Kosovu ove godine, čeka se usvajanje Zakona*, 2022, available at: <https://kossev.info/digitalni-popis-stanovnistva-na-kosovu-ove-godine-ceka-se-usvajanje-zakona/> (accessed on: 11 January 2022)

30 Ibid.

31 Kosovo Agency of Statistics, *Annual Plan of Official Statistics 2021, 2020*, available at: <https://ask.rks-gov.net/media/5472/plani-vjetor-2021-ke-srb-02062020.pdf> (accessed on: 12 January 2022)

32 Assembly of Kosovo, *DRAFT LAW ON POPULATION AND HOUSING CENSUS*, 2021, available at: https://kuvendikosoves.org/Uploads/Data/Documents/PLperregjistriminepopullsise,ekonomivefamiljaredhebanesave_zsEUCszgXs.pdf (accessed on: 7 March 2022)

33 Assembly of Kosovo, *Legal opinion on the Draft Law on Population and Housing Census*, 2021, available at: https://kuvendikosoves.org/Uploads/Data/Documents/114pravnomisljenje_hXvBD8tpGb.pdf (accessed on: 7 March 2022)

34 Assembly of Kosovo, *Decision on in principle adoption of the Draft Law no. 08/L-114*, 2022, available at: https://kuvendikosoves.org/Uploads/Data/Documents/114Vendimpermiratimneparim_KTc5yrrNEJ.pdf (accessed on: 7 March 2022)

Article 57 of the Assembly Rules of Procedure³⁵, : Following the approval of the Draft-Law in the first reading, the Assembly shall assign for further review the following: Functional Committee as lead committee and Committees: for Legislation and Judiciary; Budget and Finance; European Integrations; and Rights and Interests of Communities and Returns, as main committees. After adopting it in principle, the functional committee is legally obliged to offer the final report with amendments to the draft law not later than two months³⁶ and subsequently submit it to the Assembly for the second hearing in the Assembly.

However, this draft was not finally adopted by the time of publication of this paper, and the latest information publicly available on the progress made in this process³⁷ was that the members of the functional group revised the content of the Draft Law on 5 May 2022. Moreover, regardless of the development of scenarios leading to the final adoption of the law, the plans, steps, and deadlines listed in the Population and Housing Census Guide³⁸ have not been complied with, although the document itself was updated in July 2020 to adapt to the newly created pandemic circumstances. Although during August 2021, the Kosovo Agency of Statistics stated that two of the four stages of preparation and implementation of the census were practically completed, and that the so-called pilot census was conducted (September-October 2020)³⁹, the public was

not informed promptly about the progress in these stages, and not the least about the need to prepare for the upcoming census. Budget adoption, complete digitalization of the process and creation of a series of internal documents by the Kosovo Agency of Statistics are not a sufficient precondition, in light of the fact that citizens have not been informed about this important statistical process.

Prior to that, certain changes had to be made in the above-mentioned Draft, which in fact serves as a legal basis for removing any potential irregularities and assuring quality of the census process. As an act that should accurately and precisely regulate the statistical process of data collection and institutional engagement, it allows a number of ambiguities that in the initial stages of census and end use of collected data may create ambiguities and legal gaps. In this sense, from the perspective of the Serb (and other non-majority communities), individual items and definitions may provide room for various (mis) interpretations:

- **RESIDENT AND NON-RESIDENT POPULATION.** The proposed definition of these two categories does not include persons who left Kosovo as a result of the war in late '90s and after 17 March 2004 and who have refugee status (wherever they currently are). On the other hand, and in light of the right of residents to provide data in the absence of non-resident individuals, the rights of displaced persons in such circumstances are narrowed to the point of lack of access to the census process. The latter can especially be true for areas not inhabited by persons, who can fill in the census questionnaire (on their behalf), in the absence of displaced persons. Moreover, such poorly defined categories of population do not allow the participation of those persons, most often returnees in the Western Kosovo, who stay in Kosovo at certain seasonal intervals. The issue may arise when these intervals do not coincide

35 Assembly of Kosovo, *Rules of Procedure of the Assembly*, 2010, available at: https://www.kuvendikosoves.org/Uploads/Data/Files/6/Rr_K_RK_29_04_2010_3_XRyC2ppcHm.pdf (accessed on: 7 March 2022)

36 The above listed committees may request an additional one-month deadline to submit their report with amendments

37 Assembly of Kosovo, *Draft Law No. 08 / L-114 on the Population and Housing Census, 2022*, available at: <https://kuvendikosoves.org/srb/predlozi-zakona-i-zakoni/predlozi-zakona/?draftlaw=352#info-div> (accessed on: 10 May 2022)

38 Kosovo Agency of Statistics, *2021 KOSOVO CENSUS, Population and Housing Census Guide, 2018*, available at: <https://ask.rks-gov.net/media/5557/serb-harta-rrugore-e-reg-jitrimite-popullsise-me-2021-azhurnuar-ne-korrik-020-srb.pdf> (accessed on: 12 March 2022)

39 AlInfo.ch, *Shtyhet sërish regjistrimi i popullsisë në Kosovë, 2021*, available at: <https://www.alinfo.ch/shtyhet-serish-regjistrimi-i-popullsise-ne-kosove/> (accessed on 21 March 2022)

with the one-month data collection within the census process (when defined).

- **CENSUS OBJECTIVE.** Article 6 of the Draft Law stipulates that “The census includes: population, households and dwellings within the territory of the Republic of Kosovo”. Defined poorly, the objective of the census does not allow, as in the above categories, the inclusion of displaced persons in the census. In addition, the entire Draft Law also offers no modalities to enumerate the demolished or illegally occupied property, currently, numbering 12.823 active cases⁴⁰ in Kosovo.
- **KOSOVO AGENCY OF STATISTICS COMPETENCE.** Notwithstanding the clearly defined role and competencies of the Agency, it is not clear in what way and on the basis of which criteria this body will select enumerators (from the shortlist presented), and when it comes to municipalities with majority or significant presence of non-majority communities members. In addition, it is questionable whether compliance with quotas for members of these communities will be monitored in the oversight bodies, and in whose work will they participate, during the census.
- **MUNICIPAL CENSUS COMMISSIONS.** According to the draft, the municipal commissions will reflect the ethnic composition of the population of each of the self-government units. However, there are no indications whether the structure will be determined based on the results of the previous census or based on the free assessment of local self-governments. In both cases, disproportionate commissions may be established in Kosovo Serb

communities and municipalities, to the detriment of members of this community. Such a scenario is possible taking into account the current practice of using the results of the (previously boycotted) census, as a relevant source for decision-making, especially at the local level. In contrast, the rule that requires the number of members per municipality to be determined based on the total population number published by the Kosovo Agency of Statistics in its annual estimates, is encouraging. However, on the other hand, the right of the Mayor to appoint one civil society representative (as well as other members), as a senior member of the municipal commission, may call into question the objectivity of these bodies, given the potential political interference. The latter can especially raise a red flag if we take into account the fact that municipal commissions have a significant role in selecting enumerators, and coordinate and monitor activities during different stages of enumeration, which may ultimately affect the quality of its proper implementation.

- **MINOR OFFENSE SANCTIONS WITH FINES.** “A person who refuses to give the data required by the enumerator or other authorized person for the census, stipulated under Article 4 of this Law, or knowingly provides incomplete and inaccurate information, shall be fined” in amounts ranging from 30 to 5,000 euros for natural persons or 500 to 20,000 euros for legal persons⁴¹. Lack of clarification related to the levels of violations and subsequent fines may be abused during any of the census stages. In that sense, the categories of displaced persons may be particularly vulnerable, unless they are informed about the exact date of collection of personal data, in case of their physical absence.

40 Stefan Surlić i Igor Marković, *Imovinska prava na Kosovu u okviru sveobuhvatne normalizacije odnosa Beograda i Prištine*, Nacionalni konvent o Evropskoj uniji za poglavlje 35, 2021, pg. 10, available at: http://www.ngoaktiv.org/uploads/files/Imovinska_prava_na_Kosovu_u_okviru_sveobuhvatne_normalizacije_odnosa_Beograda_i_Pristine.pdf (accessed on 14 February 2022)

41 Assembly of Kosovo, *DRAFT LAW ON POPULATION AND HOUSING CENSUS*, Article 23, 2021, available at: https://kuvendikosoves.org/Uploads/Data/Documents/PLperregjistriminpopullise,ekonomivefamiljaredhebanesave_zsEUCszgXs.pdf (accessed on: 7 March 2022)

- **PERSONAL DOCUMENTS.** The draft does not accurately specify based on which personal documents will the enumerated person be identified during the data collection. In this instance, persons who currently have no personal Kosovo documents may be indirectly excluded from the census process.
- **OUTREACH.** Although Article 17 stipulates that the Kosovo Agency of Statistics is responsible to conduct a “broad awareness-raising campaign” on the census process (based on its strategies), the Draft does not offer a solution on the body that will be in charge of quality assurance and information campaign dynamics, especially the one conducted in non-majority community areas. Although, the Office of the Language Commissioner can potentially play a significant role in this process, especially when it comes to verifying the dissemination of information in the mother tongue of communities, the Draft and Strategy however offer no mechanisms for quality assurance and compliance with the rights of non-majority communities to be informed in their mother tongue.

Communities Consultative Council, as an institution that cares about the interests of non-majority communities in Kosovo, submitted its comments on the Draft and offered solutions that would take into account the interests and needs of that part of the population. Among others⁴², this body offered to:

- Expand the data collected during the census to a number of new categories (reason of absence from ordinary place of residence, reason of displacement, education profile, etc.),
- Oblige all relevant institutions to comply with the Law on the Use of Languages during the census process,

- Enter data of non- residents, i.e. former members of households into a special supplementary list (in order to facilitate differentiation between categories of residents),
- Within the Central and Municipal Census Commissions, include at least one representative from non-majority communities,
- Include members of non-majority communities, within at least 10% of census staff,
- Reduce the fines for refusing to participate in the census so that they range between 500 and 1,000 euros, while specifying the exact reason for non-participation and classification of fines.

The aforementioned recommendations and suggestions would potentially improve the conditions for enumerating citizens not belonging to the majority community, and thus at the same time also contribute to more accurate end results.

Without prejudice to the dynamics of approving the Draft in the Assembly and judging by the obligation stipulated in the given proposal (that the time and deadline of the census must be defined nine months prior to the date of the census), it is highly unlikely that the census process itself, at least the regular one, will take place prior to 2023. If you add to that the fact that there will be delays in the census in all stages of preparations, it is quite probable that citizens will witness yet another delay of the census in Kosovo.

42 Communities Consultative Council, *Comments of the Communities Consultative Council on the Draft Law on Population and Housing Census*, Prishtinë/ Prishtina, 2022

5. Positions of Kosovo Serbs on the Upcoming Census

Research Aim and Methodology

As already mentioned, this research aims to complete one of the aspects of the research topics under the 2021 OPEN project, aimed at measuring the openness of Kosovo Serb community. The research focused on positions, interests, wishes and fears of members of Kosovo Serb community when it comes to their (potential) participation in the census, planned to take place in 2022. More specifically, the research attempts to identify key factors that would impact the decision of Kosovo Serbs to participate in the census. In this sense, a comprehensive research approach and methods provide a basis for public insight into the perceptions and views of members of Kosovo Serb community, when it comes to the importance of the census process for their future in Kosovo, from different perspectives and dimensions: socio-economic, political, legal-administrative and identity-cultural. The comprehensiveness of the approach is based on the need of conducting in-depth research in the community, which should serve as a baseline for determining and mapping the authentic positions and needs of this community, when it comes to the census, and in the complete absence of research on this topic. The results of the research in principle indicate the key reasons and arguments of Kosovo Serbs, to which

decision-makers should pay special attention, especially those entities that declaratively or in reality, represent the interests of this non-majority community. In addition to creating the basis for influencing decision-making, the research aims to inform the general public about the hitherto unknown positions of Kosovo Serbs, when it comes to participation in the upcoming census.

This has been achieved through different methodological approaches within quantitative and qualitative research activities. Such an approach required the so-called desk research - legal, document based, statistical and analytical research aimed at analyzing the nature, development, structure and consequences of previous census cycles in Kosovo, but also the current legal framework that (potentially) may predetermine the manner the census would be conducted. Following this research phase, the research partners - NGO AKTIV and CPMZ - conducted qualitative in-depth interviews and focus groups with members of Kosovo Serb community, supplemented by quantitative results collected through public surveys, within OPEN initiative. Precisely on the basis of such a methodological approach, the findings of the conducted research are divided according to quantitative and qualitative aspects.

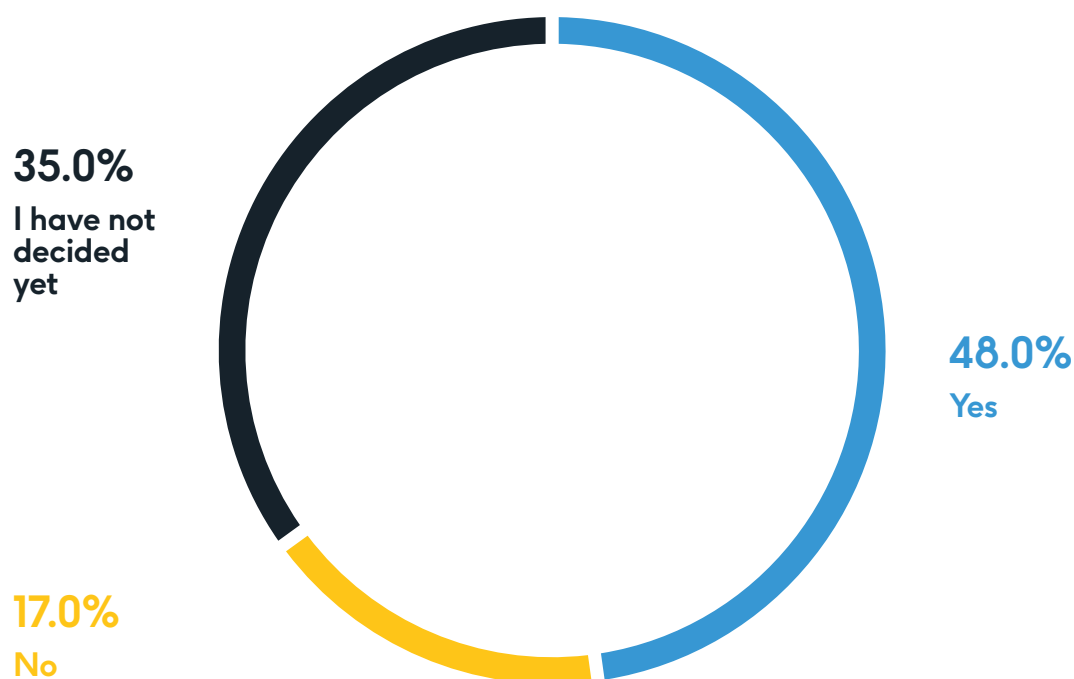
Quantitative Research Findings

As noted above, the OPEN Advocacy Initiative conducted a comprehensive survey of members of the Kosovo Serb community to determine their views on missing persons, ethnic distance, interfaith tolerance, security situation, accountability of political entities, citizen participation in politics and decision-making processes, the work of institutions, freedom of speech, and environmental protection. At the same time, citizens were posed closed-end questions on how

they perceived various factors and elements closely related to the census process. During the survey, citizens were offered options to declare themselves in relation to (possible) participation in the census (and factors that may influence such a decision), and how informed they were about the census process and its purpose.

Judging by the results of the survey, close to half of citizens (**47.6%**) confirmed that they would participate in the upcoming census in Kosovo. One-third of surveyed citizens (**35.4%**), who

● **Figure 12.** Survey question: "Will you participate in the upcoming census in Kosovo?"



● ●

Citizens are aware that if they do not participate in the census, they directly deny themselves the right to many benefits by their non-participation in the census. For example, the budget in Serbian municipalities is conditioned by the number of inhabitants.

- FEMALE STUDENT

have not yet decided whether to boycott the census or not, underline the fact that relevant institutions and political entities need to focus and invest extra efforts and logistics to inform them when it comes to the importance of participation (but also of the fines that may ensue when deciding on the contrary). On the other hand, the personal decision to boycott the census process was disclosed by **17%** of respondents. Focus group participants in the research shared different interpretations of these results. The majority agrees that, in their view, the "high percentage" of those who will (most likely) participate signals significant changes in the Kosovo Serb community, and that, in the words of one woman participant living south of the Ibar river, "in that sense, the process of integration [of Serbs] into the Kosovo system has definitely taken off.

Others, however, expressed fears that such results were in fact a reflection of deep divisions within the community, and significant lack of information of citizens on crucial political and other social developments in Kosovo. One of the observations that could be noticed with a significant number of focus group members was that citizens who had not yet decided, were actually expecting Belgrade to call upon Kosovo Serbs (not) to boycott the census, while those who already decided not to participate in the census included youth ("who are mostly uninformed and uninterested") and people who "still resist integrating into Kosovo institutions". However, the majority of focus group participants doubt the reliability of this result, as, from their perspective, "the percentages in reality differ greatly and do not reflect the authentic views of our community."

In contrast to these views, interviewed experts from different fields of expertise offered uniform responses. Namely, the research found that the collected data do not raise suspicion, and that the above results are of no surprise at all. The key argument, in favor of such a prevalent position among the interviewees, is that the



Such a view of the citizens from northern Kosovo stems from the fact that they still hope that the so-called north would belong to Serbia, while people south of the Ibar river know that the process of institutional integration is a done deal and that they sided with it before the north - more than ten years ago.

- LONGTIME ACTIVIST FROM THE NORTH

census is "still not a priority topic", hence the resulting "relative divergence of opinion among respondents". However, although the question of the possible turnout of citizens was not posed during the interview, several experts stated on their own initiative that it would be positive, ranging between 65% and 90% of Serb citizens.

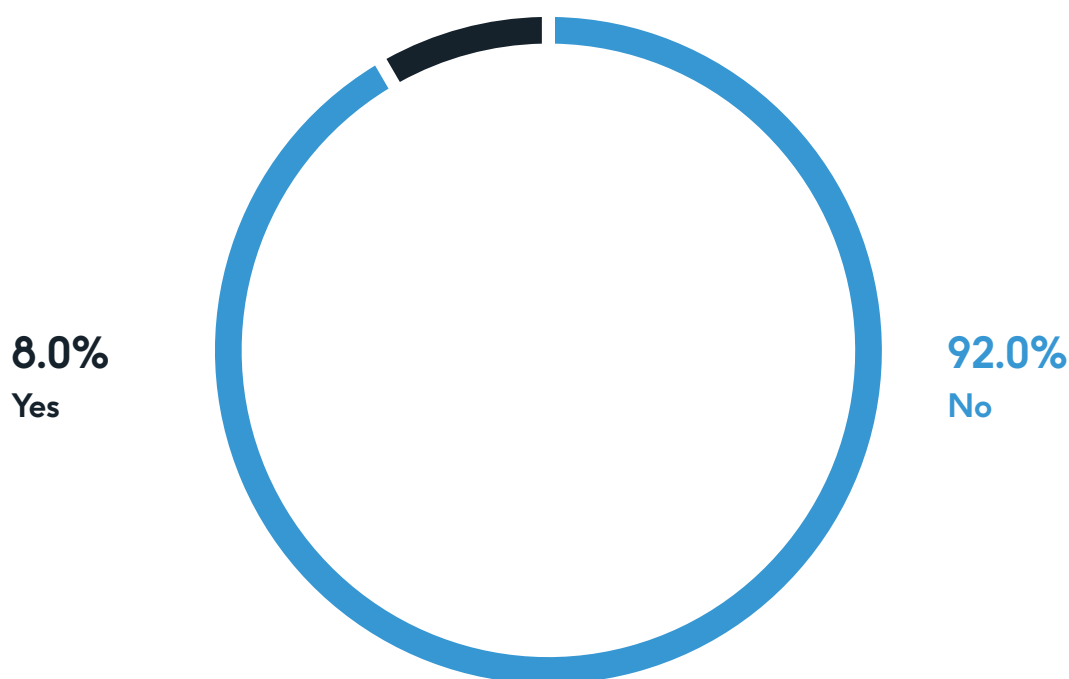
After disaggregating the results of the first survey question on census into different categories, the collected data pointed out to differences in attitudes of specific social groups. Hence, **62.5%** of respondents answered positively to the question about participation in the census among citizens over the age of 66, **12.5% favored the boycott**, while **25%** thereof were indecisive. On the opposite end of the scale, it is important to note that the highest percentages of those who favored boycott are part-time self-employed (**23.5%**) and the unemployed in search of employment (**28.1%**). The difference in the degree of indecisive people was noticed among those with higher education (**42.4%**), those of wealthier economic status (**43.5%**), students (**46.3%**), women (**48.1%**) and housewives (**64%**).

he data exhibiting noticeable differences were found among the responses given by the citizens who live south and north of the Ibar river. While Kosovo Serbs living in the south over-

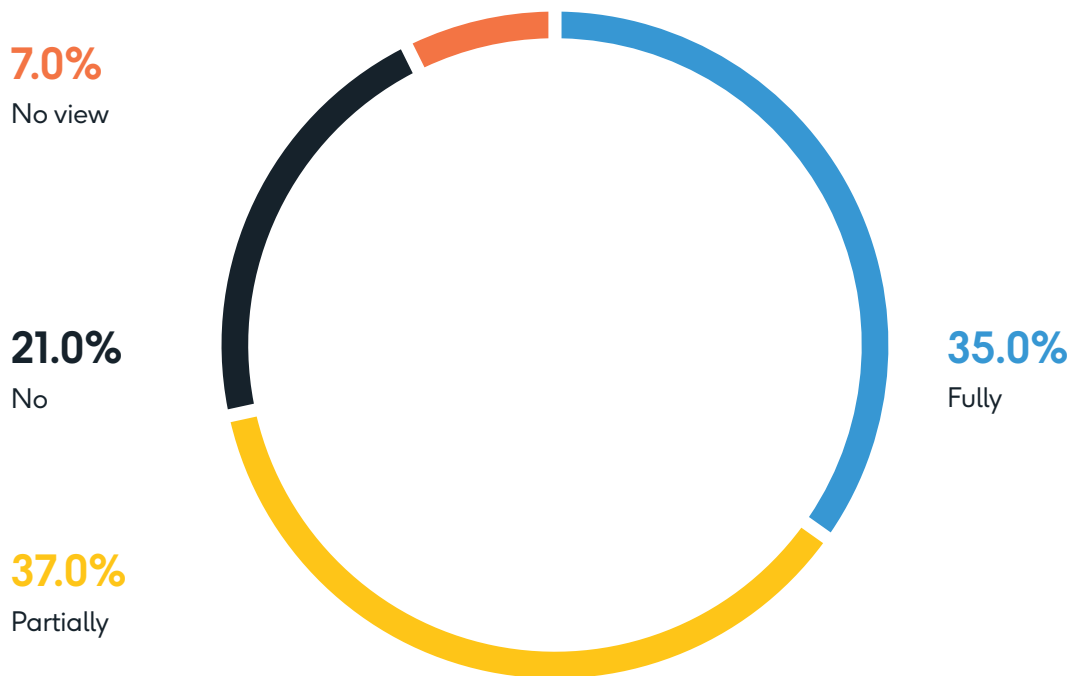
whelmingly supported participation - **73.9%** (13.3% responded negatively, and 12.8% were undecided), their fellow citizens from the north opted for a positive response in a significantly lower percentage - **32.8%**, with **48.1%** of those who were undecided (and 19.1% favoring boycott). A former worker in several international organizations in Kosovo stated that "this difference also existed during the 2011 census, when UNOPS was supposed to conduct the census in northern Kosovo, however the Mayors of four municipalities in northern Kosovo refused to support the census considering it was conducted under Kosovo law. It is clear that the reason for the different majority stances north and south of the Ibar river are primarily rooted in the different political, security and socio-economic realities they live in". The former

university professor also supports this argument, emphasizing that "the essence of the issue lies in the fact that Serbs living south of the Ibar (especially those in enclaves outside Serb-majority municipalities) depend on donations and infrastructure projects of Kosovo institutions, as administrative services are provided within institutions in which Serbs are underrepresented or are not represented at all - implying that they do not decide about their fate entirely." Noticing such a gap between the north and the south, the pertinent and other interlocutors, see a confirmation of their views, in the specific survey result, noting that north of the Ibar citizens rely more on Belgrade's suggestions on any issue, which is why there was a significant number of undecided respondents in four municipalities in northern Kosovo.

Figure 13. Survey question: "Have you been informed about the time and manner in which the upcoming census will be held in Kosovo?"



● **Figure 14.** Survey question: "Do you know why the census is being conducted?"



Confirming the absence of a public campaign and discussions on the census, and the views expressed during interviews and focus groups, drastic differences in percentages when surveying citizens about how (un) informed they are, consistently outline the overall picture. This claim is also supported by the fact that there were not even the slightest deviations between different surveyed categories of citizens, in relation to the overall outcome of the survey.

Focus groups pointed to the fact that the vast majority of respondents have a basic knowledge of the purpose and objectives of holding the census, as a statistical practice used worldwide. The results of the survey showed that Serb citizens in Kosovo are mostly familiar with the basic census functions, as shown by the percentage

of respondents who fully (**34.8%**) and partially (**36.8%**) recognize the essence of that process. However, a significant percentage of those (**20.8%**) who do not have such information, should not be overlooked. Respondents who were completely confident in their response to the question included people of relatively good financial standing ("I can afford most of the things I want") - **59.4%**, while the same response from the opposite side of the economic ladder ("I have issues to provide for myself and my family") marked a different percentage - **12.5%**. Respondents from this economically vulnerable category, **59.4%**, pointed out that they were not aware of the purpose of holding the population census, while the percentage was even higher among persons who did not finish their education - **75%**.

Figure 15. Survey question: "On a scale of 1 to 5 (where 1 is the lowest and 5 the highest score), circle a statement that describes best how the offered factors will influence your decision to participate in the upcoming census?"

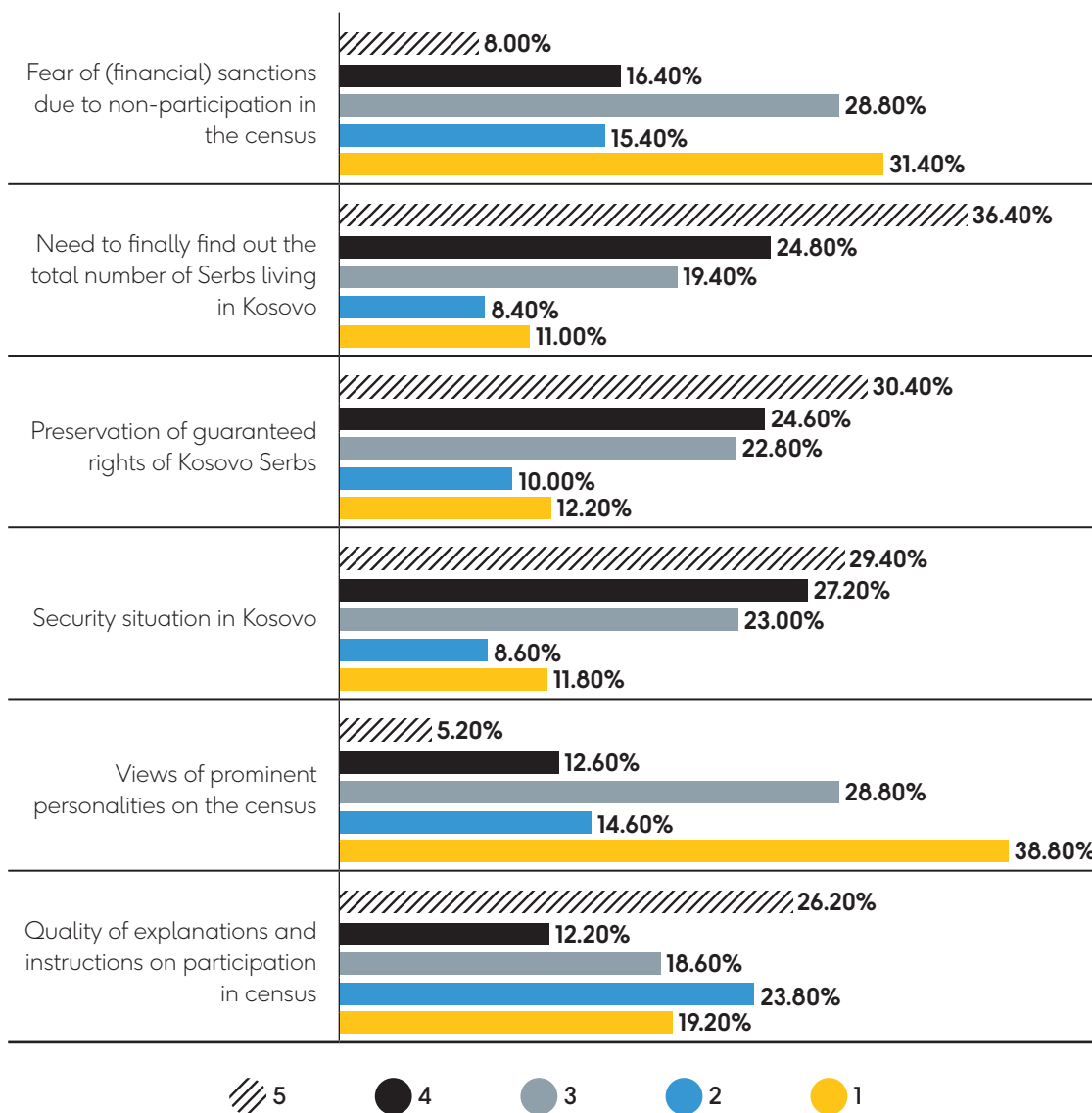
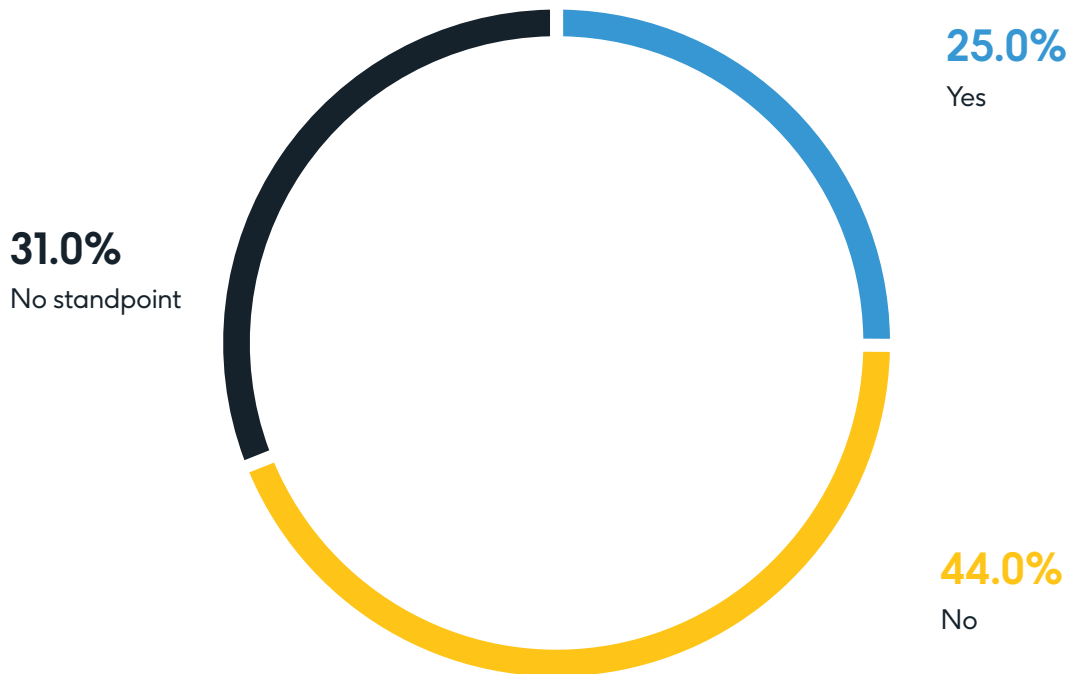


Figure 16. Survey question: "Will your decision to participate in the upcoming census be influenced by Belgrade's official call?"



When it comes to the quality of explanations and instructions on participation in the census, as a factor that would potentially influence the decision of the respondents, the scale of answers is quite diverse and leaves no room for more generalized conclusions and inclinations towards a certain axis. There are differences between the northern and southern parts of Kosovo, where the two lowest scores do not match: North - **29.1%**, South - **67.7%**. When it comes to the influence of personal views on the topic of this research, the highest share answered with a strong negative - **38.8%**, while the percentage of people with higher education reached **49.8%**, and those who refused to comment on their personal economic situation - **80%**. Judging by the results of the

survey, the security situation would have a crucial influence on the decision to participate in the census, as the options on a scale from 3 to 5 were chosen by **79.6%** respondents in total. The highest score among housewives (5) reached **60%**. Inclination towards the highest rating was reflected similarly in the assessment of the effect of the importance of preserving the rights guaranteed by laws and the Constitution - **77.8%**, as well as the need to establish the total number of Serbs living in Kosovo - **80.6%**. The sum of the two lowest ratings - **46.8%** indicates that the fear of fines, resulting from a personal boycott of the census, will not have any significant impact on the decision, compared to other factors offered in the survey.



I think that in general, Belgrade's recommendation will not have much of an impact. There will always be those who will not listen to that recommendation.

- LOCAL MEDIA WORKER

Most respondents (**44.4%**) are of the opinion that Belgrade's call (not) to participate in the upcoming census will not serve as a decisive factor, approximately one third (**31%**) has no position on this issue, while one quarter of respondents (**24.6%**) claim that Belgrade's official call will directly impact their personal decisions. While the responses of the respondents north of the Ibar are closer to the final result (**Yes - 34.1%; No - 39.1%; No view - 26.9%**), the respondents in the south of Kosovo said otherwise - **Yes (7.8%), No (53.9%), No view (38.3%)**. Belgrade's decision has the least potential impact on part-time paid employees - **Yes 7%, No 65.1%**. The generational gap is noticed in the absence of views, led by students with **48.8%**, while pensioners reach the lowest share of **12.3%**, i.e. generations of those over the age of 66 - **15.3%**. Quantitative results significantly coincided with the views of focus group participants. As long as there was a clear (and reasoned) division between those for whom Belgrade's decision would play a key role, the undecided insisted on the right of every person to decide individually, based on different parameters, and not necessarily based on Belgrade's position. Similar views were noticed among the interviewees regarding the absence of Belgrade's statement, on the upcoming census in Kosovo, which can be summarized in a response of an interviewed education worker: "I think that Belgrade will be reserved until the very beginning of the census and will use this issue for calculations in the negotiation process. Kosovo Serb representatives are aware of the consequences produced by lack of turnout on the census, and

hence, in case we see no public call to participate from Belgrade, then at least it will pass with tacit consent."

Qualitative Research Findings

Complementing the quantitative findings with qualitative ones, this research aimed to shed light on the whole spectrum of phenomena that are directly related to the process of seemingly dry, statistical collection of data on the number and structure of population. Eight focus groups and twelve interviews conducted in parts of Kosovo predominantly inhabited by members of Kosovo Serb community served this purpose. The feedback provided during the research activities for the purposes of this publication sometimes resonated with a discrepancy between different and mutually opposing opinions, crosscut with assumptions or abundant in complete absence of views. Thanks to the diversity of opinions expressed during the research, it was possible to deduce the key positions of the Serb community, when it comes to the upcoming census in Kosovo. These positions were broken down into several framework thematic areas, which mostly relied on questions posed during focus groups and interviews.

Boycotted Census in 2011

Compared to the respondents' views on the upcoming census, the issue of boycott of the 2011 census provoked more conflicting views. As it has been pointed out on several occasions, this is primarily a consequence of specific political and security circumstances that predetermined the character of the (partial) failure of the census process. This is precisely the point around which the positions of focus group participants and interviewed experts coincide, who, among other things, emphasized that the decision to boycott caused far-reaching consequences that paved a curvy way for the integration of



Whether it is the 2011 or 2022 census, it certainly does not matter what your position on the boycott is, because in both cases it all depends on whether Belgrade and Prishtinë/Priština, with the mediation of the EU, will agree on unhindered organization and participation of Serbs in the census process.

Serbs into Kosovo's institutional mechanisms. The most prevalent argument in the confrontation of arguments about the advantages and disadvantages of boycotting the census in 2011, was that the municipal budgets were heavily cut, considering that they were based on incomplete census data. While for some the decade-long withholding of significant financial resources was in essence a missed opportunity for economic development and progress, for others it was just one of many issues faced by the Serb community in Kosovo, since the end of the war. In line with the trend that was observed randomly throughout the research process, the nuances in the differences between the views of people living south and north of the Ibar river, also came to light when it comes to the topic of 2011 boycott. The views of the respondents from the four northern municipalities were seemingly in harmony, in terms of absolute support and marking the boycott as a "completely right course of action". On the other hand, their fellow citizens in the south had divided opinions over the boycott, returning to the argument of reduced budgets of Serb-majority local governments. A lawyer from one of those municipalities interviewed during the research pointed to the fact that the latter stems from the "factual time distance of integration processes south

of the Ibar, that were launched much earlier compared to the north", adding that "Belgrade's financial injections in the north of Kosovo virtually mobilized the potential dissatisfaction with the lack of [Kosovo] budget funds in four municipalities".

Participation of Displaced Persons

As one of the most vulnerable categories within the Kosovo Serb community, displaced persons have inevitably been a topic of research activities. Despite the fact that the topic of IDPs participation was suggested in advance in focus group questions and interviews, from the very outset respondents stressed the importance of including IDPs in the census process, no matter where they currently reside. All interviewed experts agreed that it was necessary to find adequate modalities for their participation, which would significantly speed up the return process, which is "largely left aside". In the words of lawyers from the north of Kosovo, who believe that there are currently no basic legal or administrative conditions for the participation of this category of people in the census process, "legal regulations need to be adopted, allowing displaced Serbs and all other citizens of Kosovo to have an equal opportunity to participate in the census." As a crucial argument, research participants pointed out that displaced persons did not leave Kosovo on their own free will, hence their right to be enumerated derives therefrom, which would "in the long run facilitate access to Kosovo documents, private or illegally occupied property, contributing to their sustainable return." Contrary to these claims, one of the interviewed lawyers expressed doubts that it is possible to include displaced persons who do not live and reside in Kosovo in the census process, and that such a practice would possibly become a precedent that would result in a disproportionate ratio of residents and nonresidents. However, he allowed the international community to medi-



I believe that every person who is entitled and meets the conditions to obtain Kosovo documents or has them, should participate and should have the right to participate, regardless of current place of residence or domicile.

- FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANT, PENSIONER

ate in solving the issues that are currently “in a legal vacuum”, if interested in the inclusion of displaced persons.

The Role of the International Community

Asked to comment on the potential role of the international community in the process of preparation, implementation and monitoring of the population and housing census, respondents offered different views, by commenting on the possible advantages and disadvantages of their passive or active role in it. A smaller share of respondents claimed that the excessive role of international organizations in the census could create a negative public image, as their visible presence would support the argument that Kosovo institutions are not ready to properly collect data across Kosovo. As an argument against the involvement of the international community, the same group stated that the population census was not an equivalent to political elections and that there is no need for external intervention of any kind, except in the monitoring process (which is common practice in many Eastern European transition countries).

A high number of respondents held a different opinion, believing that the presence of the international community in any form is necessary for the smooth implementation of the census,

which would not be burdened by the influence of political manipulations and pressure against non-majority communities. This view is supported by a frequently repeated claim that the international community is the only warrant of peace in Kosovo and that it enjoys the trust of virtually all communities in Kosovo. Regularity was the key word associated with the benefits of involving the international community in the census. According to the research participants, the fact that the entire process was digitalized for the first time ever, requires additional precautionary measures, that would contribute to the collection of accurate data, the validity of which no one would ever question. In addition, respondents agreed that the international community could contribute to the census process by providing financial and logistical support for a campaign to raise awareness on the importance of participation, among members of non-majority communities (in their mother tongue). Among other things, several respondents suggested that observers from Serbia also be included in international observation missions, whose task would be to monitor the enumeration of Kosovo Serbs living in remote and isolated places (enclaves).

Expectations from the Census

The forecasts and expectations of the respondents during the research process varied significantly in content and substance. Commonly, the potential results of the census and the possible participation of Kosovo Serbs therein, were linked to the prospects of restricting the rights guaranteed to non-majority communities in Kosovo. Respondents' expectations from the census were grouped into several key (not necessarily matching) views, i.e., statements:

- Low turnout among Kosovo Serbs will directly deny them rights guaranteed to this and other non-majority communities in Kosovo.



I hope that we will prove that there are more of us than it is thought and that our credibility in institutions will consequently increase.

- FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANT

- Regardless of the various possible scenarios encouraged by the (lack of) participation of Serbs in the upcoming census, in general, the issue of everyday life of Serbs in Kosovo will not change drastically. According to one of the participants in the focus group that lives in the enclave south of the Ibar: "Rights have been largely denied for many years now, so I am even less afraid of being denied these rights, as they are almost non-existent."
- There are fears of Albanians prominence in areas where Serbs are a minority, and that the process of "census is not misused in terms of presenting unrealistic data, when it comes to the Serb community, and in favor of the Albanian majority."
- Youth are not particularly interested in the results of the census, due to the fact that young people "certainly do not ask about anything in general, so in that sense, our opinions or our expectations and predictions about the census are completely insignificant." In that sense, most of the young people who participated in the research, did not hold any special expectations.
- It has been emphasized on several occasions that a significant decrease in the total population of Kosovo is expected, and that "if this number is close to the results of the previous census or even higher, I will consider that the census was used for political purposes and that the results achieved thereby are incorrect" (quoted from focus groups held in southern

Kosovo). The main argument to support this claim is the fact that for decades there has been an intense emigration of citizens from the Western Balkans, especially youngsters.

- When discussing the regularity of the upcoming census, the vast majority of respondents agree that, unless there is a political and security crisis and Belgrade "gives the green light to Kosovo Serbs to take part in the census process", the entire process will go without any major obstacles and irregularities. It was emphasized, within these discussions, that in such circumstances, the exact number of Serbs living in Kosovo could finally become known, which would ultimately contribute to "often malicious playing with numbers", said one of the interviewed experts.
- The interviewed experts emphasized that they expect an adequately implemented census (provided we do not see the emergence of a new crisis in the meantime), which, according to their estimates, will show that a large portion of the Serb community members have left Kosovo in the last decade. "It is paradoxical that the final figures will finally show the objective numerical situation, but also reflect the gravity of the mass emigration of Serbs from Kosovo."
- Finally, as far as the turnout itself is concerned, expectations among respondents varied, from predicting a complete boycott, divisions among Kosovo Serbs on the issue, to a sky-high percentage of the community participation in the census process

Estimates of the Current Total Number of Serbs in Kosovo

Although a significant portion of this paper is devoted to previous census cycles in Kosovo and population estimates by relevant institutions (in the absence of properly conducted data collection), the research team considered it appropriate to solicit individual estimates and projections of the current number of non-majority community members, among Kosovo Serbs. According to the respondents, the number of Serbs living in Kosovo ranges as follows (from the most frequent to the least frequently mentioned):

- 100.000 - 110.000 Kosovo Serbs,
- 90.000 - 95.000 Kosovo Serbs,
- 80.000 - 85.000 Kosovo Serbs,
- 120.000 - 130.000 Kosovo Serbs,
- 70.000 - 75.000 Kosovo Serbs,
- 200.000 Kosovo Serbs,
- 150.000 Kosovo Serbs.

Those respondents who emphasized the difference between the numbers of Serbs divided by the Ibar predominantly stated that more members of this community live south of that dividing line.



When it comes to the number of Serbs living in Kosovo today, it is difficult to determine the real state of affairs, as I deem it inhumane to play with numbers and take into account only those who currently live in Kosovo, without including displaced persons who have property in Kosovo and were forced by circumstance to leave their hearths.

- FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANT

Other Decisive Factors Related to the Decision to Participate in the Census

In addition to surveys and questions suggesting factors that would produce practical consequences when it comes to the character and nature of the census, participants in the qualitative part of the survey independently pointed out those prerequisites considered important for the regularity of the census process. As the most important elements and factors that would enable the regularity of this process, the respondents singled out as follows:

- Wealthy political climate that will not fall prey to nationalist discourses (increasingly) noticeable among decision-makers in both Prishtinë/Priština and Belgrade;
- Participation of Kosovo Serbs in the process of preparation, monitoring, census and analysis of collected data;
- Transparency of the work of relevant institutions, agencies and bodies that will be directly involved in census implementation;
- Involvement of Kosovo Serbs who will be enumerating their fellow citizens, due to trust and communication in their mother tongue ("If people from my community are enumerators, turnout will be high");
- Intensive public campaign to inform citizens in Serbian about the importance, procedures and implications of refusing to participate (especially when it comes to stipulated fines);
- Active role of civil society organizations coming from the Serb community, in order to ensure quality monitoring of the implementation of all steps within the data collection process;
- Accurate, grammatically correct, understandable and proofread and edited translation into Serbian of all materials to be found during the entire duration of the census process (and, most importantly - census material);

- Special training of enumerators in the field of digitalization, who will consequently be professionally equipped to explain to the citizens, in a valid and simple way, the novelties introduced into the enumeration practice;
 - Organization of gatherings in public places in areas inhabited by members of Kosovo Serb community, which will
- provide citizens with all the necessary information regarding the census process, with a special focus on senior citizens; and
- Involvement of Kosovo Police in ensuring the regularity of the census process in areas with an observed increase in incidents targeting members of non-majority communities, during the pandemic.



It is crucial to have a campaign with instructions in the mother tongue.
I think it is important that institutions or any other organizations
conduct a public information campaign, on the importance and
manner of participation in the census.

- LONG-TERM SOCIAL ACTIVIST

Recommendations

As one of the most important statistical and demographic exercises, especially in transitional democracies and post-conflict societies, census is a key factor of socio-economic and political development. In that sense, informing and including Kosovo Serbs in the 2022 census would produce long-term (positive) results for the entire Kosovo society and economy. At the same time, a comprehensive picture of demographic data would expose the shortcomings related to the set of legal-institutional, socio-economic and political frameworks in Kosovo. Along that line, it is necessary to undertake a number of concrete steps that would contribute to informing and (possibly more significant) participation of members of Kosovo Serb community in the upcoming census. Based on the conducted quantitative and qualitative research, and especially the suggestions and remarks of the interviewed experts in the field of law, media and politics, a number of recommendations were made, aimed at citizens, institutions, international community and decision makers, to enable:

- Conducting of a public information campaign on the census in the Serbian language, which would provide detailed and understandable information on the importance and details of this process;
- Clearer and unambiguous definition of the scope of the resident population;
- Modalities of the rights of displaced persons to participate in the census process, and in consultation with their representatives, define the framework and conditions in which these persons, but also returnees who do not stay in Kosovo at certain times of the year (especially during the winter months), can participate in the census;
- Ways for impartial recording and inventory of illegally occupied and unoccupied property of displaced persons;
- Adequate translation of accompanying census material and adaptation of digitalized census to persons who are not digitally literate;
- Active participation and election of representatives of Kosovo Serbs and non-governmental organizations from this community, as members of the Central and Municipal Census Commissions, as key bodies to monitor the regularity of the census;
- Minimum monitoring mechanisms by the international community which will in turn contribute to the collection of data that will not be subject to suspicion and create room for speculation;
- Include legal experts from the Serb community in the adoption of the new Law on Population and Housing Census, while at the same time, ensuring adequate translation (and proofreading) of the final document into Serbian;
- Legally prevent inclusion of illegally occupied private property in the same category as property not subject to a property dispute, and ensure its special classification and specification (in order to further systematize and solve the issue of illegally occupied property);
- Distancing of key political stakeholders from right-wing narratives, deepening of inter-ethnic distance and pressuring the population to express themselves in the manner favorable for them;
- Belgrade's unequivocal and official statement on whether it will support, prevent or allow Kosovo Serbs to decide on their own, in terms of participating in the census.

The Open initiative is supported by KFOS

