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# KOSOVO RURAL YOUTH

## Employment Opportunities, Barriers, and Needs

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## LIST OF ACRONYMS

**FES** – Friedrich Ebert Stiftung

**IMF** – International Monetary Fund

**KAS** – Kosovo Agency of Statistics

**MCYS** - Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports

**MEST** – Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology

**MFAF** – Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland

**MLSW** – Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare

**MTI** - Ministry of Trade and Industry

**NEET** – Number of youth that are not employed, nor in education or training

**OSCE** – Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

**PES** – Public Employment Services

**RAE** – Roma, Ashkali, and Egyptian

**WB** – World Bank

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# **KOSOVO RURAL YOUTH**

**Employment Opportunities, Barriers, and Needs**

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This study attempts to shed light on the current situation of youth in the rural areas with a view of identifying key issues which represent barriers, opportunities, and needs for their inclusion in the social and labor market in Kosovo. In doing so, this study with a sample of 602 participants aged 15-24 in 17 Kosovo municipalities may be helpful to design strategies that will help increase the participation of young people in rural areas in the labor market in Kosovo.



Figure 1. Sample presentation

The key findings of this study show that young people in rural areas do not have proper access to information about jobs in Kosovo. With only 158 (24.62%) employed and 436 (75.8) unemployed, it also shows that most young people believe that skills are not the most relevant criterion in getting employment, as recommendation, family and social ties are the most frequent ways to find a job in Kosovo.

In terms of unemployment by gender results show that females stand worse than males in the labor market, with 80.5% of young rural females being unemployed compared to 67.6% of unemployed males.

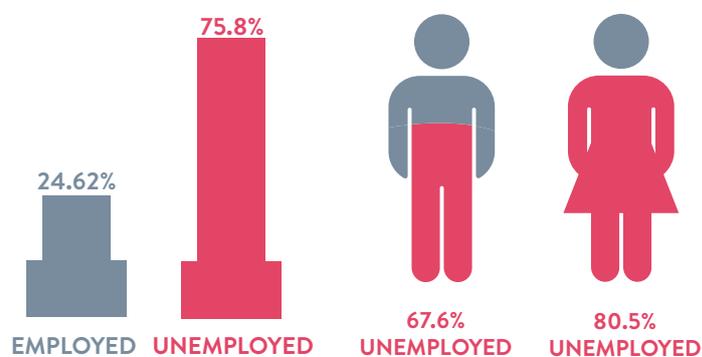


Figure 2. Sample presentation in terms of employment and gender

This study shows that there is no typical situation which would impact youth employment. For example, both higher employment and unemployment rate can be found in smaller municipalities. Accordingly, the employment rate is highest in Lipjan with 58.1% of respondents employed, followed by Hani i Elezit with 50% of respondents employed, and by Kaçanik with 46.2% of rural youth employed. The worst performing municipalities in terms of rural youth employment rate include: Skënderaj (9.7%), Malisheva (10.4%), Kamenicë (10.7%), and Deçan (13.3%).<sup>3</sup>

The study also reveals a positive relationship between the level of education attained by respondents and their employment rate. This explains why young people seek study opportunities to increase their chances for employment, with the majority of young people embarking on university studies, and with 60% of youngsters having between 14 to 18 years of education.<sup>4</sup>

On the other side, the study has identified that the skill deficit in job opportunities, and a mismatch between training followed and jobs available in rural areas makes employment of young people problematic. As stipulated by other studies (LENS, 2016) there is a mismatch between students' skills and qualifications and the needs of the labor market.

With regards to community representation in the labor market, there is a huge gap between Albanian community with a high 28% employment rate and smaller communities such as RAE, with only 10.7% employment rate.

Existence of the lack of inclusion of marginalized ethnic communities in education and labor market especially among Roma, Ashkali, and Egyptian communities suggests serious structural problems which influence marginalization of smaller ethnic communities in Kosovo.

Results also reveal that those who started work at a later stage of their life, did so because they were oriented to higher levels of education. However, the study also reveals that the likelihood of remaining unemployed for over a year increases with age.

The role of Public Employment Offices (PES) in employment remains marginal, with most frequent ways in finding jobs being recommendations, family ties, and other connections. Accordingly, the majority of respondents strongly believe that acquaintances and connections with people in power are the best means of finding a job.

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3 It must be noted that the findings for Lipjan are consistent with the findings in the Municipal Competitiveness Index by Riinvest Institute.

4 These figures also match the findings from LENS' previous study, which suggested that young people prefer jobs that require higher qualifications.

Barriers in finding jobs are diverse, including lack of appropriate opportunities, lack of part-time jobs (for students), lack of flexible working schedule (students and young parents), lack of adequate transport and lack of appropriate skills being in the last place. Transportation and connection to urban centers is not a pivotal factor for employment, as majority of respondents have access to public or private transport.

The results reveal that the majority of respondents are satisfied with their current jobs. However, more than half of employed respondents work without contracts. Majority of respondents have stated that their village does not offer good job opportunities. However, they live in well-organized communities in a healthy environment and with good connections to urban centers, which makes job seeking easier.

Although the living conditions of rural youth despite their high unemployment rate result to be considerably satisfactory, the level of dependence on family support is quite high. This dependence may be strengthened by remittances from abroad and from social assistance schemes. With such support, although unemployment is high, almost all respondents have mobile phones, computers and laptops, TV sets, personal and/or family cars and other home appliances. Salary is not the main motivating factor for most of the rural youth interviewed.

The working environment and freedom of expression are ranked as the main motivating factors, followed by good colleagues, working schedule, opportunities for professional advancement, and with salary level being ranked as the 5th motivating factor.

Most unemployed youth in rural areas need a job, followed by skills such as writing a CV, evaluation of their skills, IT and internet usage, career advice, facilitation of employment and other. This is consistent with previous research in which soft skills, such as communication skills, openness to social activities, and openness to organizational culture in enterprises are the most relevant skills required by employers.

The study conducted by LENS during this summer could help young people, public institutions and private entrepreneurs to find ways in matching their needs and requirements in a way which would foster the employment of young people, especially those living in rural areas of Kosovo.

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## LITERATURE REVIEW

The aim of this study is to identify the barriers, opportunities, and needs of young people in rural areas of Kosovo for better inclusion in the labor market. Last, but not least, its purpose is to offer insights which could be helpful for relevant stakeholders to reduce rural youth unemployment in Kosovo. The unemployment rate is a key indicator of the conditions on the labor market, and can safely be used as a proxy to measure the overall health of an economy. Indeed, as Rutkowski argues, high rates of unemployment over a long period of time indicate deep-rooted structural problems (Rutkowski, 2006, p.19).

On the other side, as Farčnik (2007) contends, unemployment has negative influence on both the government and society on one side, and the unemployed on the other. While unemployment is unhealthy for the government budget part of which is spent on unemployment schemes, it is also harmful for jobseekers as it often leads to erosion of skills and morale (Farčnik, 2007).

Hence, high rates of unemployment require immediate attention which justifies the significance of the inclusion of unemployment as a key part of the economic agenda of a country. In the context of Kosovo, however, regardless of the steady growth of the economy in the last few years, the unemployment rate has remained stubbornly high around 30% (KAS, 2018; Riinvest Institute, 2017).

The most frequent causes of persistent high rates of unemployment in the West Balkans, including Kosovo, are related, but not limited to the labor market rigidities, misalignment of the education system with the labor market needs, high rates of economic informality, ethnic marginalization, and social exclusion (World Bank, 2012; IMF, 2012, p.83; OSCE, 2013, p.12).

Around two-thirds of Kosovo's population is of working age i.e. 15 – 64 years old; and the number is expected to grow over the next decade as more young people enter the labor force (KAS et al., 2015). The lowest rate of unemployment is among people aged 55-64 years old with an estimated rate of unemployment of 15.2%. In contrast, the highest rates of unemployment are among people of the age group 15-24 years old estimated at 61% (KAS et al., 2015). Accordingly, the ratio of youth to adult unemployment in Kosovo is 2.0, which indicates that young people in Kosovo are twice less likely to get employed compared to adults (KAS et al., 2015).

Therefore, young people represent the most vulnerable group with regards to employment in Kosovo. Youth unemployment refers to the unemployment of people aged 15–24 years, and reached a rate as high as 52.7% in 2017 (KAS, 2018). Such high rates of youth unemployment have broader ramifications for the socio-economic and political stability of the country at large. Surely, this will have a negative impact on the overall sustainable development of the country, and is particularly harmful for the social, economic, and demographic structure in Kosovo.

Due to the lack of specialized jobs, Kosovo is already facing major issues stemming from youth unemployment such as the risk of ‘brain drain’ where high-skilled workers are leaving the country in search for better economic conditions and professional advancement. In addition, young people in general seek every opportunity to leave Kosovo, as shown in the 2014-2015 torment towards the EU countries (B. Qirezi, 2015).

Evidence suggests that a high 55% of young Kosovars claim an intent to leave the country if given the opportunity (Flere et al., 2015, p.42). Kosovo also faces a high rate of NEET (the number of young people (15-24 years old who are not employed, and are not enrolled in education neither in training) which accounts for 27.4% of the total youth population (KAS, 2018). A large portion of NEET, apart from becoming discouraged workers, are often engaged in the informal economy and as such are subject to unsatisfactory working conditions such as lack of safety at work, salaries below the minimal wage, no benefits for illness, or retirement (Farčnik, 2007).

However, a notable and probably the most positive manner young population have responded to the adversity of labor market in Kosovo is by staying longer in the education system, thus delaying their entrance in the labor force, and at the same time increasing their chances of getting employed by attaining higher levels of education (LENS, 2015).

Indeed, nowadays unemployment has become a normal stage in the process of youth ‘school to work’ transition. However, some young people seem to be more affected by unemployment than others. Plethora of research on youth unemployment has remained focused on youth living in urban areas, and although the majority of problems faced by urban youth can also be applied to rural youth, the latter still face additional barriers and issues stemming from their limited opportunities and remote position (Cartmel & Furlong, 2000, p.1; Shucksmith, 2004, p.45).

## Who Are Rural Youth

There is no agreed definition of rural youth; nevertheless all definitions are based on two key criteria: age and location. While several definitions of youth population cover various ranges of age, this study adopts the United Nations' definition of youth including all individuals aged between 15 and 24 years old.

The term 'rural' is much more complex as different people have different stands on what the terms 'urban' and 'rural' encompass. Moreover, it has been largely debated that the academic definitions of these terms differ considerably from people's understanding of the concepts, and may only cause further confusion (Jacob and Lubloff, 1995; Pahl, 1996). As a result, in order to be more inclusive 'rural' encapsulates a range of different geographic positions (Cartmel and Furlong, 2000, p. 2). Hence, various types of rural areas have been identified as follows:

- i. traditional rural areas which are geographically isolated;
- ii. urban fringe areas where employment is affected by proximity to more densely populated areas;
- iii. seasonal areas in which jobs in a significant sector are available on seasonal basis (e.g. tourism, agriculture) ;
- iv. ex-industrial rural areas in which the withdrawal of manufacturing or extractive industries has declined significantly in recent years. (Cartmel & Furlong, 2000, p.2)

In Kosovo, 64.8% of young people live in rural areas (KAS, 2018). As per the aforementioned, youth living in rural areas face additional obstacles in employment and education compared to their urban counterparts. Education and vocational training in rural areas in Kosovo have remained largely underdeveloped (Bajema et al., 2002), which is the case with Kosovo as well (FES, 2016, p.9).

Additionally, rural youth also face lack of opportunities for social networking, lack of decent job opportunities, poor public transport, and high cost of housing in urban areas (Cartmel & Furlong, 2000, p.2). Research has shown that over the long run these barriers lead to social marginalization and exclusion of rural youth which further diminishes their employment opportunities (Cartmel & Furlong, 2002). Therefore, it is highly significant to reduce the urban-rural divide, and enhance the connection of rural areas to economic development.

## Overview of Previous Research on Rural Youth by LENS

The population of Kosovo is largely rural with more than 60% living in rural areas (KAS, 2018). Therefore, the unemployment of rural youth represents the bulk of unemployed young people in the job market. Previous research by LENS has identified rural youth as the most affected by unemployment, which is considered to stem from its marginalized position and restricted access with regards to vocational training and jobs (LENS, 2015). Thus, lack of development of the rural economy in Kosovo has been identified as the main obstacle in the effective tackling of the employment of young people in rural areas.

Cognizant of the fact that Kosovo's economy is largely service based, with trade and construction being the main sectors of economic operation and which are largely based in urban areas, and due to scarcity of jobs in agriculture, food processing and other sectors relevant for the employment of rural youth, there is a need for innovative approaches in fostering industries relevant for rural development and enhancing economic opportunities for, and social engagement of, young people in rural areas. With this view, LENS, with the support of Friedrich Ebert Stiftung Kosovo Office, has undertaken a research to place this question into a bottom up perspective, in order for these approaches to consider the needs and issues expressed by young people from rural areas themselves.

LENS has conducted research on youth unemployment in Kosovo with data collected in the period between February and June 2015. The aim of the research was to find out specific issues affecting youth unemployment in the national context, to discover social innovation practices that would foster employment of young people and to identify the most marginalized groups of young people in terms of employment and social activity.

This research drew on documents of the government of Kosovo, including three ministries that deal with employment – Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare (MLSW), Ministry of Trade and Industry (MTI) and Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports (MCYS). In addition, it collected data from in-depth interviews with business owners on one side, and young people on the other.

Three relevant findings from the documents reviewed in this study are that the MLSW, which deals with employment programs, does not have a specific target on youth employment; that the most vulnerable group of young people are women, particularly with regard to maternity leave, which makes them less desirable target for employers due to the financial burden for the private sector created by the legal provisions on maternity leave<sup>3</sup>; ), and that the low absorption capacity of the labor market coupled with low level skills of young people after formal education, makes the employment of young people rather difficult.

At both ends (unemployed youth and employers), there are challenges in filling reciprocal needs. While unemployed youth face difficulties in finding jobs, employers frequently find it difficult to identify employable young people with necessary skills for the job. This could be remedied partly with better organization of demand and supply information about jobs (LENS, 2015, p.16).

Inexperienced young jobseekers have particularly high difficulty in finding jobs as employers usually seek skills that do not match job positions advertised even for basic positions (LENS, 2015, p. 17). There is also a gap between the skills required and the salaries offered by employers, especially in the private sector (LENS, 2015, p. 17).

Employers, on the other side, complain that the education system does not prepare young people for the industry needs. However, they also do not offer on the job training although lack of experience is one of the major issues identified by them. Furthermore, employers also complain about a cultural issue among youth, which is “wrong attitude for work” (LENS, 2015, p. 17). This means that there is a special need for soft skills development of young people, including social and cultural skills, such as written and verbal communication and similar.

Skills mostly required by employers are those that would make future employees fit for the organization such as: interpersonal skills, prior work experience, reliability, adaptability, whereas technical skills can be taught on the job (LENS, 2015, p. 18). Therefore, training programs offering these skills are necessary for matching job market needs.

With regards to opportunities and means of finding a job, young jobseekers believe that family ties or corruption are the most effective ways to find job in Kosovo (p. 19). In the private sector, family ties and not qualifications are the most important criterion to hire someone, while in the public sector jobs are scarce anyway (LENS, 2015, p. 19).

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<sup>3</sup> Maternity leave in Kosovo is regulated by Law No.03/L –212 on Labor, Article 49 which sets the maternity leave at a maximum of twelve (12) months. , the first 6 months compensated by employers with 70% of basic salary, the following 3 months paid by the Government of Kosovo with compensation of 50% of the average salary in Kosovo, and the last three months are provided as unpaid leave for employees who wish to extend their leave (Law No.03/L –212 on Labor, 2010, p. Article 49)

Public Employment Services (PES) are not attractive institutions for employment for jobseekers and employers alike. Most registered jobseekers in PES are people with inadequate qualifications or social cases who register to get social benefits and as a precondition to get vocational training. Around 30,000 families are recipients of social assistance. There is general belief that these offices do not provide good opportunities for jobseekers and for employers alike.

On the other hand, opening one's own business is somewhat difficult mainly due to corruption and difficult administrative procedures and is usually expected to occur after the entrepreneur has had some years of experience as an employee (LENS, 2015, p. 20).

Previous research reported that young people do not have information about job opportunities, career choices and education (LENS, 2015, p. 20). Various reports fail to offer proper career guidance for youngsters, whereas graduates have particular difficulty to find jobs and thus embark on pursuit of higher degrees while they remain inexperienced workforce (LENS, 2015, p. 21).

On the other side, young people seem to dislike jobs that do not require qualifications, including jobs in construction, cleaning, or babysitting. This may be a consequence of the government policy to wide-open doors of universities and private colleges to young people without proper, or at all, merit-based admission procedures.

Research highlights that young people are not active due to lack of incentives. Thus, low income or social assistance family youths remain socially excluded and cannot participate in trainings and engage actively in the job market. Accordingly, women and single mothers are marginalized due to cultural issues and the lack of capacity/willingness of the private sector to provide maternity leave which requires 6 months pay from the employer (LENS, 2015, p. 23).

Furthermore, ethnic minorities are also marginalized as they do not have access to PES. Otherwise, there is no discrimination in the selection by businesses, because minorities represent a low-paid workforce (24). However, public prejudice towards other ethnic groups influences decisions of businesses to employ workers from other ethnic groups (LENS, 2015, p. 24). There is also unwillingness by other workers to work both with RAE and other ethnic groups, as well as with people with disabilities (LENS, 2015, p. 24-25).

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## METHODOLOGY

The main objective of this study is to identify opportunities, barriers, and needs for active labor measures for the labor market of young people aged 15- 24 in rural areas of Kosovo. Therefore, the findings of this study will be used to design policies and provide recommendations that would advance the position of rural youth in the labor market of Kosovo and in the economy at large.

The term youth is used according to the UNESCO (2017) definition for persons between 15-24 years old. “The UN, for statistical consistency across regions, defines ‘youth’, as those persons between the ages of 15 and 24 years, without prejudice to other definitions by Member States. All United Nations (UN) statistics on youth are based on this definition, as illustrated by the annual yearbooks of statistics published by the UN system on demography, education, employment and health.” This definition is complex and does not explain other contextual factors that shape youth problems and their transitions to adulthood.

For example, the Law on education and training of adults considers a person an adult when reaching the age of 15 with expectations that these persons complete obligatory education and can engage in work. The Family Law, Labour Law and Election Law consider an adult every person who reaches the age of 18 with the right to get married, work and vote. These definitions are legal interpretations because they do not include other indicators, such as independence (residential and financial), family creation, and other dramatic events such as living in poverty, facing wars, losing caregivers , illness and other demographic and cultural factors.

This study is based on primary research conducted through a structured questionnaire with youth aged 15-24 years old living in rural areas, which corresponds with the population of this study. The questionnaire is conducted in rural residences of cities with more than 60% of population living in rural areas. It should, however, be noted that the only exception is the case of Fushë Kosova which has been selected for its ethnic diversity as it includes different minorities and marginalized groups which contribute to the representativeness of the sample. Additionally, the study also incorporates data from secondary sources to compare with, or triangulate the findings.

Bearing in mind the difficulty and cost of interviewing the whole population a sample has been designed through stratified probability sampling method. The study includes a sample of 603 respondents which is representative of the target population.

Annex 1, shows the number of the target population (youth aged 15-24 years old) in selected municipalities and the numbers determined for the sample. As previously stated, the sample includes municipalities wherein more than 60% of youth population lives in rural areas, and the number of respondents has been determined based on their number of rural youth population, with a 4.0 margin of error.

## Data Collection

Data was collected through a structured questionnaire administered by an interviewer. Participation in the survey was conducted willingly; the respondents remained anonymous and were granted confidentiality of information. The selection of respondents from the selected municipalities was done randomly using the following principles:

- Only rural residences (villages) were included in the sample. Possibly minimum three villages of different radius from urban centres.
- The selection of houses was performed in accordance to the density of houses and the number of respondents. Therefore, the selection did not include randomly every fifth house, nor were houses chosen one after another. Similarly, clusters of young people found in one place were also not selected.
- When access for interview was granted, the households were asked if any of their family members belonged to the target age. If more than one member were of the target age, the interviewer selected the respondent whose birthday was closest following the day of interview as in the following example:

Date of interview: 27/6/2018  
Family 1:  
R1 (25, April); R2 (20, October); R3 (17 July).  
Select respondent 3 (17 July)

The rationale of such selection is to avoid interviewing only in one household and to ensure random selection.

## Quality procedures

The questionnaire included various types of questions such as: yes/no questions, multiple choice questions, open questions, and likert scale questions. Skip logic was used for education and employment related questions when a question or a series of questions did not apply to the respondent. Initially, the questionnaire was piloted with two people from the target group, and interviewers were trained on how to conduct the interviews.

Monitoring was done by the data manager to ensure that researchers were collecting data in rural areas according to the predetermined criteria. In addition, random telephone calls were conducted as follow up with respondents to ensure the verity of the questionnaire.

Data entry and quality were also monitored and data cleansing was performed prior to data analysis. Quantitative data was subsequently transferred to the SPSS software according to pre-coding scheme and was analysed. Measures of centrality and spread were used to derive the mean and standard deviation of the sample and were later used for ranking in likert scale questions.

Cross-tabs were used to analyse categorical data and explore the composition of various responses. Finally, Pearson's correlation was used determine whether correlation existed between the level of education attained by respondents and their parents' levels of education. The results were then triangulated with secondary data as additional support for drawing conclusions.

# **KOSOVO RURAL YOUTH**

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## RURAL YOUTH EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

The young people interviewed were divided into two main age groups: the first group belonging to ages 15-18 with 249 or 41.4% of participants, and the second one belonging to the age group 19-24 with 352 or 58.6% of participants. Of the total sample, 54.8% were males, and 44.7% females.

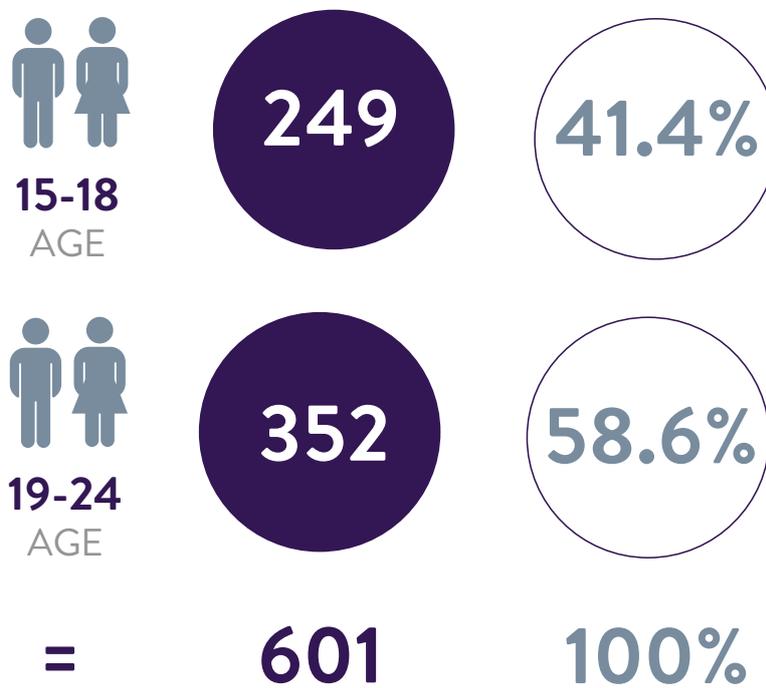


Figure 3. Sample presentation in terms of age groups

## Employment by age and gender

Results present the second age group in better position in terms of employment with an employment rate of 38.3%, whereas the first group showed an employment rate of only 10.1%. Figure 4. shows the distribution of employment according to age groups.

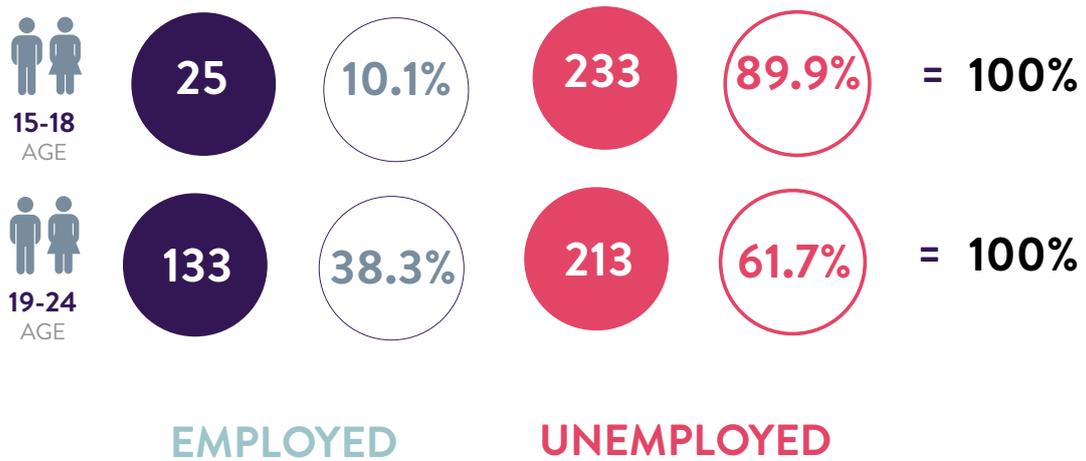


Figure 4. Employment according to age groups



Figure 5. Employment rate in terms of age groups

The figures of unemployment will increase alarmingly for the total number of young people interviewed, with only 158 (24.62%) employed and 436 (75.8) unemployed.

In terms of unemployment by gender results show that females stand worse than males in the labor market, with 80.5% of young rural females being unemployed compared to 67.6% of unemployed males.



Figure 6. Unemployment of rural youth by gender

## Employment by Municipality

The employment rate according to municipalities puts Lipjan as the top performer with 58.1% of respondents employed, followed by Hani i Elezit with 50% of respondents employed, and by Kaçanik with 46.2% of rural youth employed.

The worst performing municipalities in terms of rural youth employment rate include: Skënderaj (9.7%), Malisheva (10.4%), Kamenicë (10.7%), and Deçan (13.3%).

It must be noted that the findings for Lipjan are consistent with the findings in the Municipal Competitiveness Index by Riinvest Institute which assesses the ease of doing business and the role of economic governance in ensuring a favorable business environment at the municipal level, in which Lipjan has been ranked as the top performer.

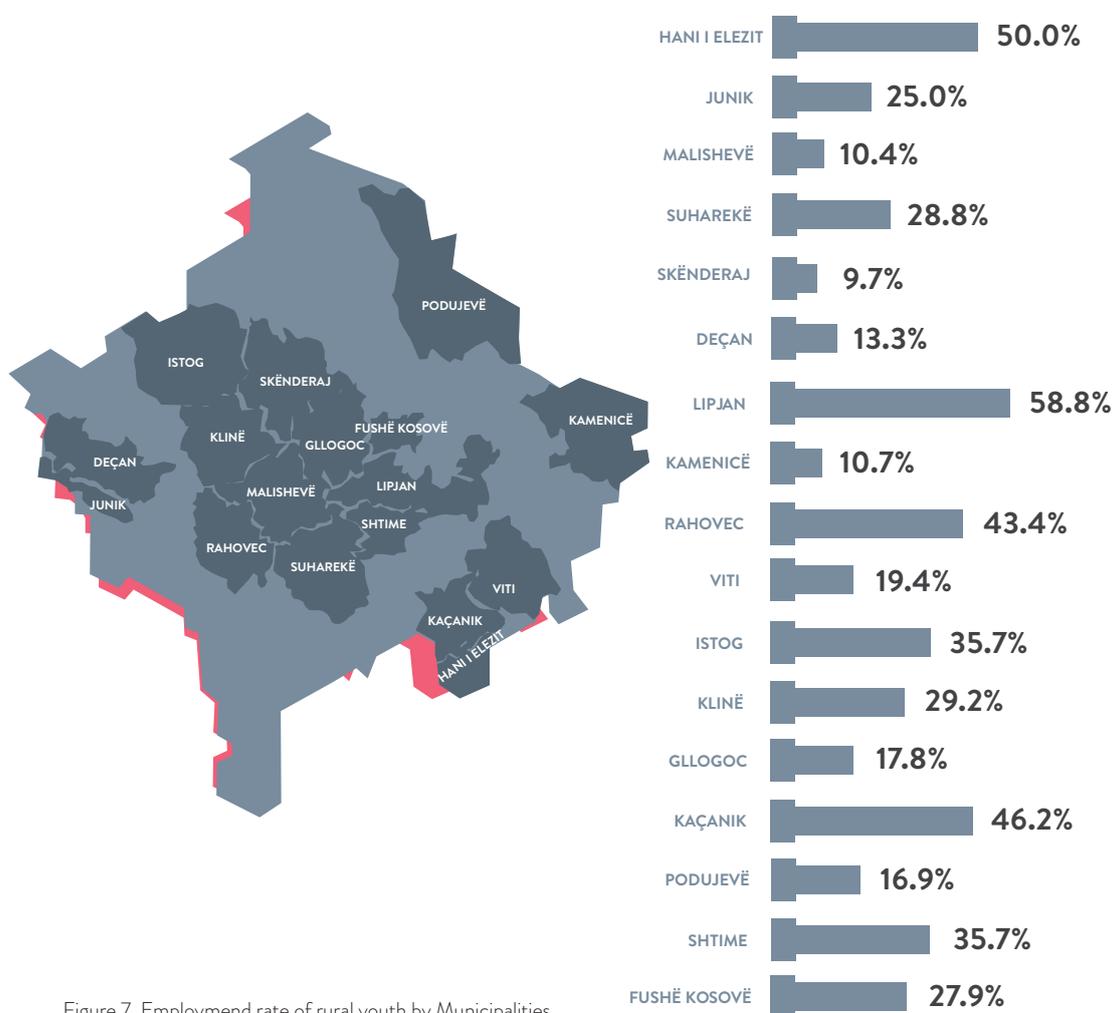


Figure 7. Employment rate of rural youth by Municipalities

## Education and Employment

Figures also show that the larger the level of education attained by respondents the higher the rate of employment. As for the level of education, 1.7% of respondents do not have any formal education whatsoever, while a total of 16% have finished only primary education. Here, we need to explain that primary education in Kosovo is finished at the age of 14 -15, therefore both group ages are grouped together in this question.

The majority or 46.7% are enrolled in, or have finished secondary education. However, what yields more important information is the number of respondents aged 19-24 whose highest level of education attained is secondary education. These constitute 32.8% of this age group and only 43.4% are employed, and a high remaining 56.6% belong to NEET.

Additionally, 23.3% of respondents have 14 years of formal education, which implies two years of university studies, and 8.6% have 16 years of completed education, implying the possession of a BA degree. Furthermore, a total of 3.7% have 18 years of completed education, which indicates possession of an MA degree. The study also explored the correlation between parents' level of education with that of their children, and the results show a weak uphill (positive) linear relationship (Pearson's  $r = .329$ , and Pearson's  $r = .289$  for correlation with fathers' and mothers' education respectively,  $p=0.01$ ). It is worth to mention that these results are largely impacted by the large number of students who are still enrolled in education and those who have just graduated. As a result, data on their level of education attainment is not completely reliable as one does not know whether they intend to pursue undergraduate studies. With regards to employment and consistent with previous research by Farcnik (2007), results show that higher levels of education attained increase the chances of employment.

Data also suggests that the majority of young people embark on university studies, with 36.5% of youngsters having between 14 to 18 years of education. These figures also match the findings from LENS' previous study, which suggested that young people prefer jobs that require higher qualifications. Of course, these figures are also linked to the Kosovo Government policy of increasing the number of students in the newly established public universities as well as in the private providers of higher education in an attempt to reduce the pressure for employment and reduce youth unemployment since youth enrolled in studies do not count towards unemployment (Qirezi, 2017).

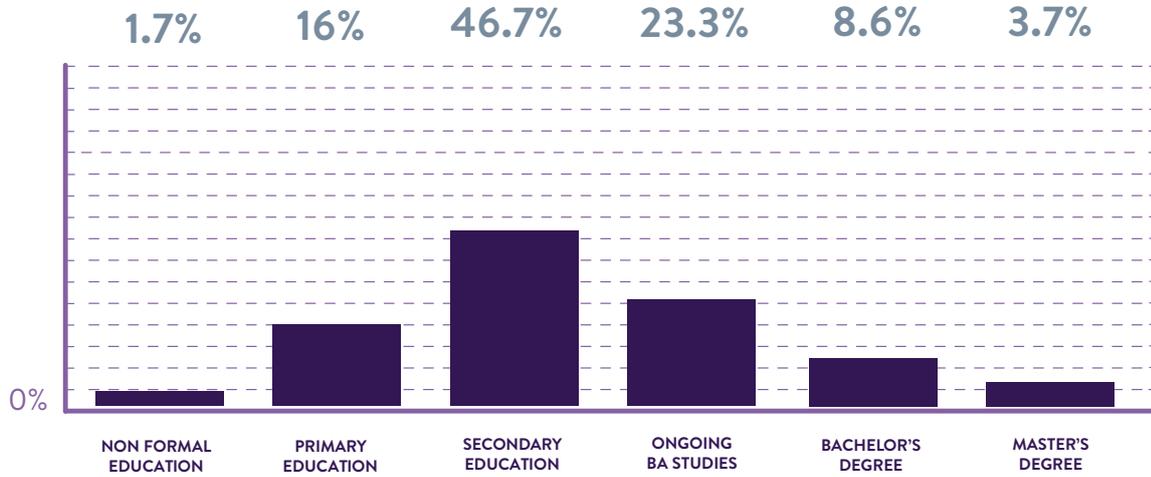


Figure 8. Level of education attainment of rural youth

## EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT

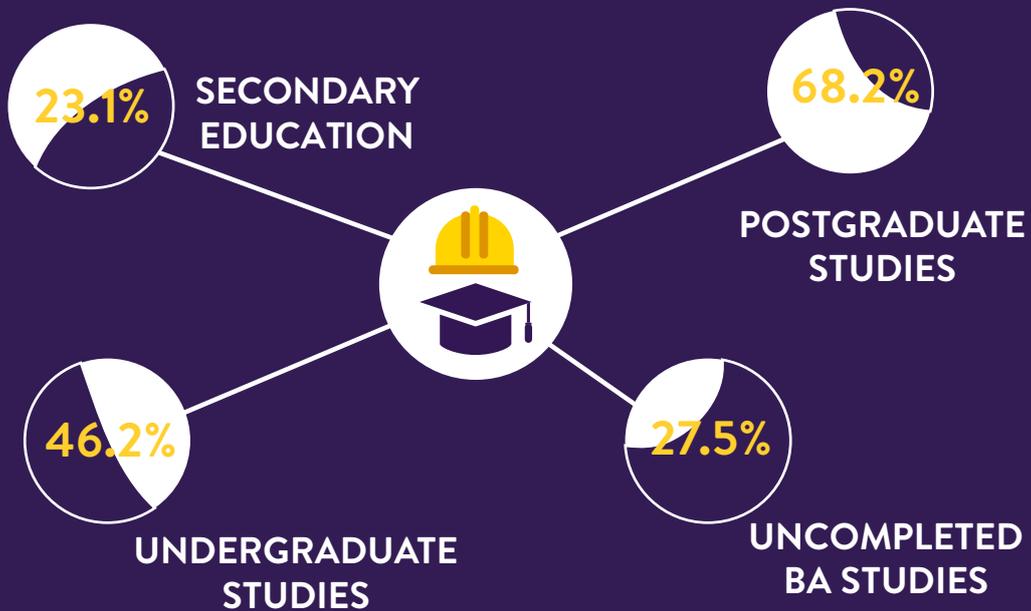


Figure 9. Employment according to educational attainment

## Married and Unemployed

With regards to the marital status, the vast majority of respondents (87.7%) are single, 10.8% live with their partners but are not married legally, and 0.3% are divorced. From the group of legally married, more than 50% have completed only secondary education. This might indicate that rural youth often choose marriage as the only route to pursue due to lack of educational or job opportunities.

## Marginalized ethnic communities

As far as community representation in education is concerned, out of 560 interviewed Albanians, only 4 do not have any formal education, 87 have finished primary education, and the majority, or 261 have completed secondary education. All these categories, representing 62% of the sample, fall in the unqualified workforce.

From the remaining 38%, 24.2% are enrolled in university studies, 9.1% have a bachelor's degree, and 3.9% have completed MA studies. In contrast, out of 19 Roma, Ashkali, and Egyptian (RAE) participants, 26.3% have no education whatsoever, 31.5% have completed primary education, 36.8% have completed secondary education, and only one is an undergraduate student. No participant representing these communities has a higher level of education completed.

Bearing in mind that primary education is compulsory, a rate of 26.3% uneducated youth is alarming, as it points to serious structural problems especially with regards to the inclusion of these marginalized communities in education.

With regards to community representation in the labor market, the Albanian community shows a 28% employment rate which almost the same as the overall employment rate in Kosovo of 26.9% (KAS et al., 2014). The Albanian community represents the majority of Kosovo's population and as such is better represented in the labor market.

The RAE community on the other hand has a very low employment rate of 10.7%, which can be attributed to their marginalized position and to social barriers faced by this community (LENS, 2015).

With regards to the age when the respondents started their first job, the majority of respondents stated they started working at 18 years old, while 14.7% started their first job before the age of 15.

Results also reveal that those who started to work at a later stage of their life, did so because they were oriented to higher levels of education.

## Income as an indicator of job market

Another key aspect related to youth in the labor market is the salary. Results reveal that the majority of employed respondents are paid around 200 to 349€, 17% are paid below 199€, and 27% are paid from 350 to 499€. At the other end of the spectrum, 10.5% of respondents are paid around 500 to 699€, and 3.2% are paid in the salary range of 700 to 1,000€ and both groups have completed education levels above secondary education which explains their high salaries.

A thorough analysis of salaries in terms of sectors reveals that the private sector hires the largest part of youth, with 87.8% being employed in this sector. The private sector also pays the highest salaries including all cases of 500-1000€ salaries in this study.

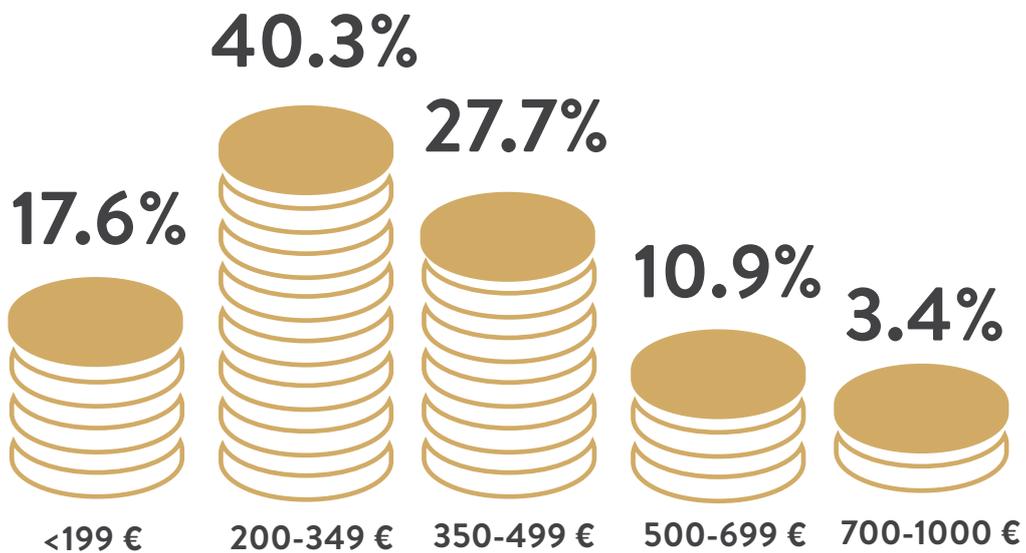


Figure 10. Rural youth earnings

## Job-hunting Strategies and Options for Rural Youth

The study also explored the duration of unemployment of rural youth, their means of finding a job, and their information on PES, as well as the barriers they face when searching for job opportunities.

Respondents were asked how long they had been actively seeking for employment, and the results show that the vast majority or 73.6% had been looking for a job for 0 – 6 months prior to getting employed. On the other hand, 13.2 % of respondents claim to have actively searched for a job for 6-12 months prior to employment, and the remaining states they searched for a job for longer than 12 months.

From respondents whose active job search had lasted longer than 6 months, 78.5% belonged to the age group of 22-24 years old. This finding is in agreement with research conducted by KAS, MFAF, and WB (2014) who suggested that the likelihood of remaining unemployed over a year increases with age. Another significant matter with respect to youth employment is the manner in which they search for and find jobs.

The most frequent ways in which rural youth in Kosovo seek employment is through online job application (36.2%), recommendations 29.2%, jobs advertised in social media 23.3%, jobs abroad 15.3%, vacancies advertised on local newspapers 17.3%, and 13.0% have applied directly to companies.

On the other hand, 22.6% have enrolled in studies, 10.6% have participated in trainings, 8% have applied for immigration, 0.7% contacted mobile hiring teams, and only 3.3% applied through PES.

However, in terms of their means of employment, 17.4% of employed respondents claimed they were hired through recommendations, and 38.1% reported they were employed through family acquaintances and connections. Additionally, 31% of respondents claimed they were employed through job applications for vacancies, and a very small rate of 2.6% were employed through PES.

These findings are consistent with previous research which argues that around 56% of young people in Kosovo strongly believe that acquaintances and connections with people in power are the best means of finding a job (Flere et al., 2015; Rrumbullaku, 2018).

Accordingly employers also claim that the most frequent means of hiring they use include: recommendations from friends or business partners (33%), vacancy announcements (24%), family connections and acquaintances (23%), social media (12%), and Employment offices (8%) (Riinvest Institute, 2017).



Figure 11. Duration of job search according to employed rural youth

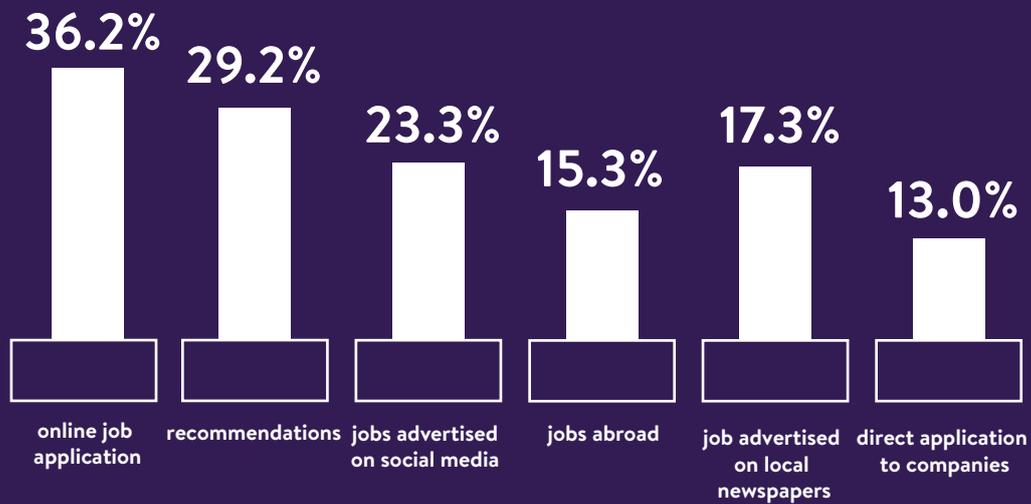


Figure 12. Rural youth job seeking channels

## BARRIERS TO EMPLOYMENT FOR RURAL YOUTH

With regards to barriers that hinder rural youth employment the most common barriers seem to be: lack of appropriate job opportunities (17.9%), lack of part time jobs (14.3%), lack of schedule flexibility (14.3%), lack of adequate transport to work (14.3%), followed by the inability to work due to family and child care duties (14.2%). Other barriers ranked lower are related to lack of self-confidence to perform a job (10.7%), lack of support from family (7.1%), as well as inadequate qualification (7.1%).

The majority of respondents claimed they commute around 20-30 minutes to go to work. A total of 73.4% of participants have regular access to public transport, 15.6% own their own cars, whereas 71.6% use their family transport vehicles. Transportation, therefore, is not a pivotal factor for employment for rural youth. This is consistent with research by R.A. Malatest & Associates Ltd (2002) who claim that rural youth do not generally have any trepidation or reluctance about moving to urban areas.

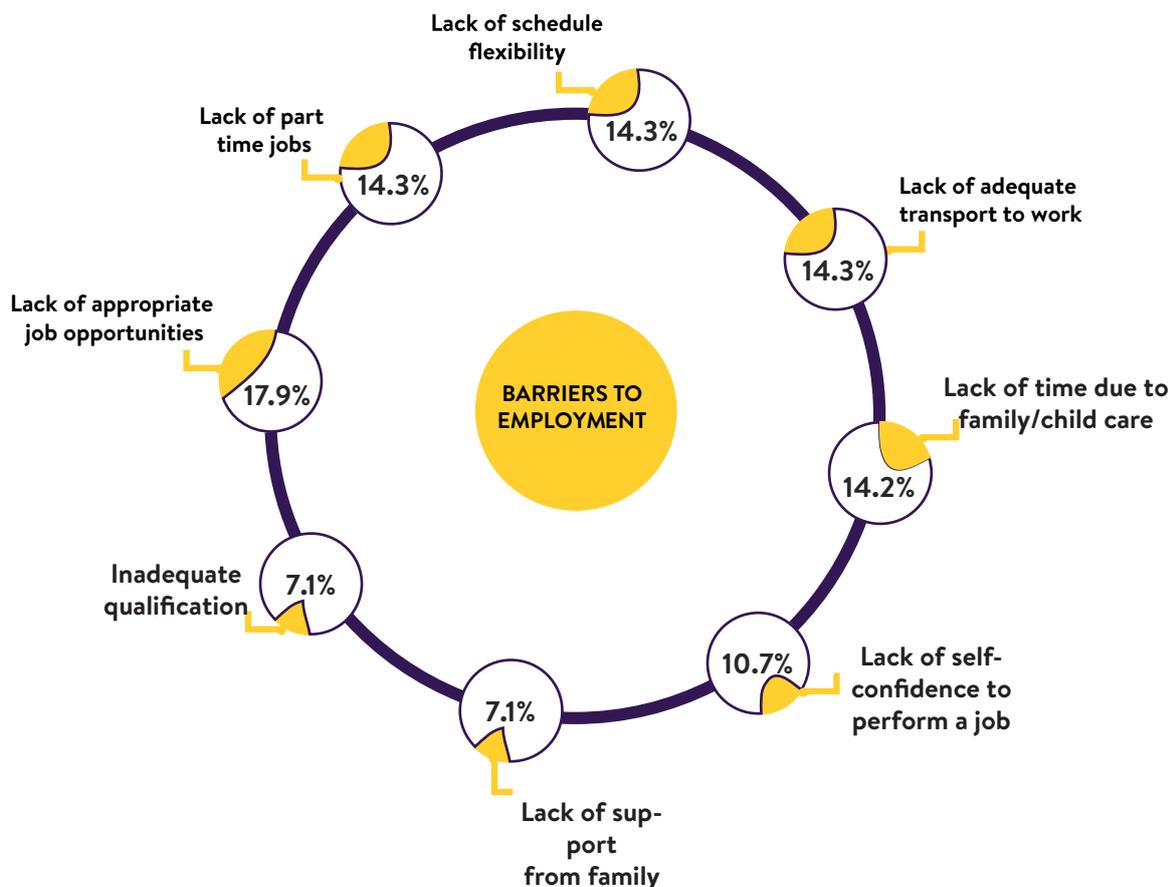


Figure 13. Barriers to employment faced by rural youth

## Mismatch between field of specialization and job opportunities

As to the profile of education the largest number of students i.e. 28.5% pursue their studies in the field of Economy and Administration, followed by Mathematics, Informatics, and Telecommunication with 11.8%, and Law with 11.5%. Other notable educational profiles include: Architecture (4.2%), Agriculture (3.5%), Chemistry & Biotechnology (2.8%), and Education (2.8%).

This orientation highlights a mismatch between field of education pursued by young people and best opportunities to find jobs.

While rural youth would prefer occupations in the field of economics (17.3%), mathematics & informatics (15%), health & social services (9.6%), law (6.3%), and education (5%), the job opportunities available in their villages include:

agriculture & forestry (56.5%), construction (44.4%), trade (21.1%), tourism (19.4%), food processing (9.4%), clothing (8.6%), and carpentry (9.4%).

Therefore, as previously discussed young people consider that their villages lack decent job opportunities because they are seeking for jobs which require higher qualifications which corroborates with the same findings by LENS.

This also is a clear indicator of the mismatch between students' skills and qualifications and the needs of the labor market and is in agreement with Shahini's idea that due to this mismatch a large number of graduates remain unemployed or face difficulties in getting a job (2017, p.8).

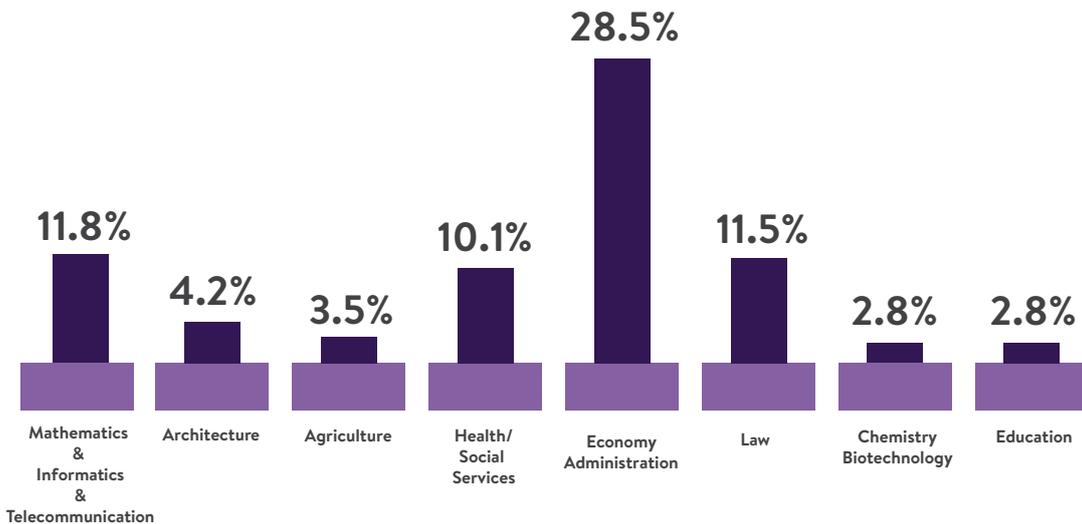
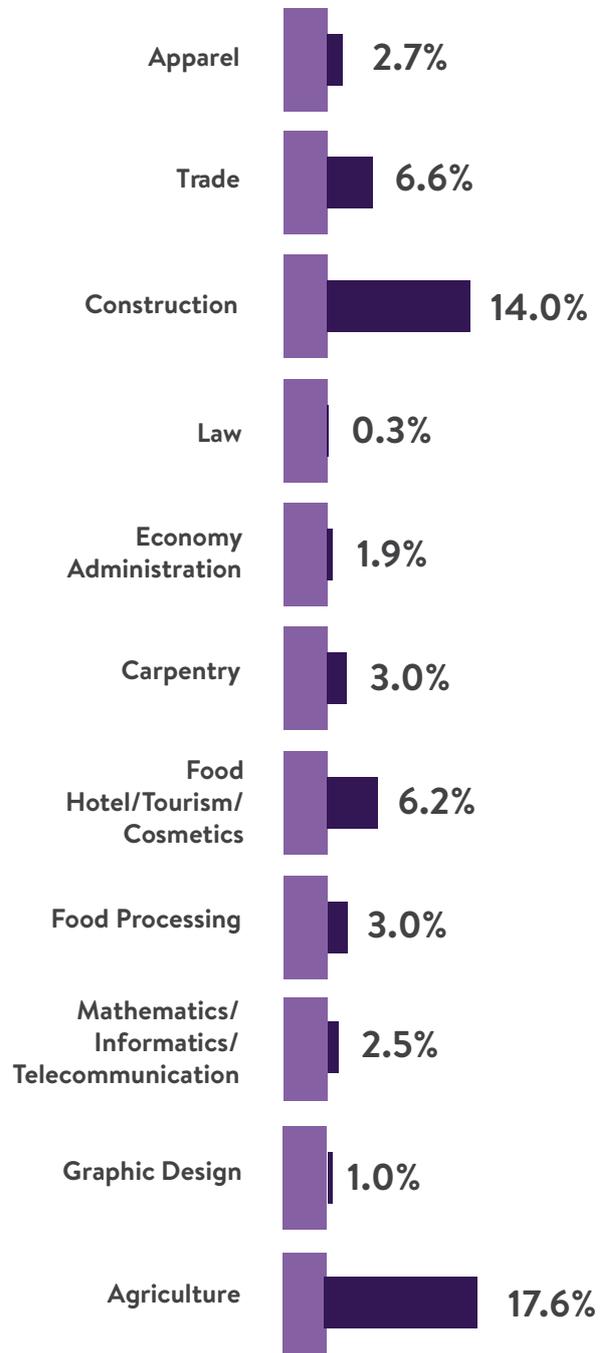
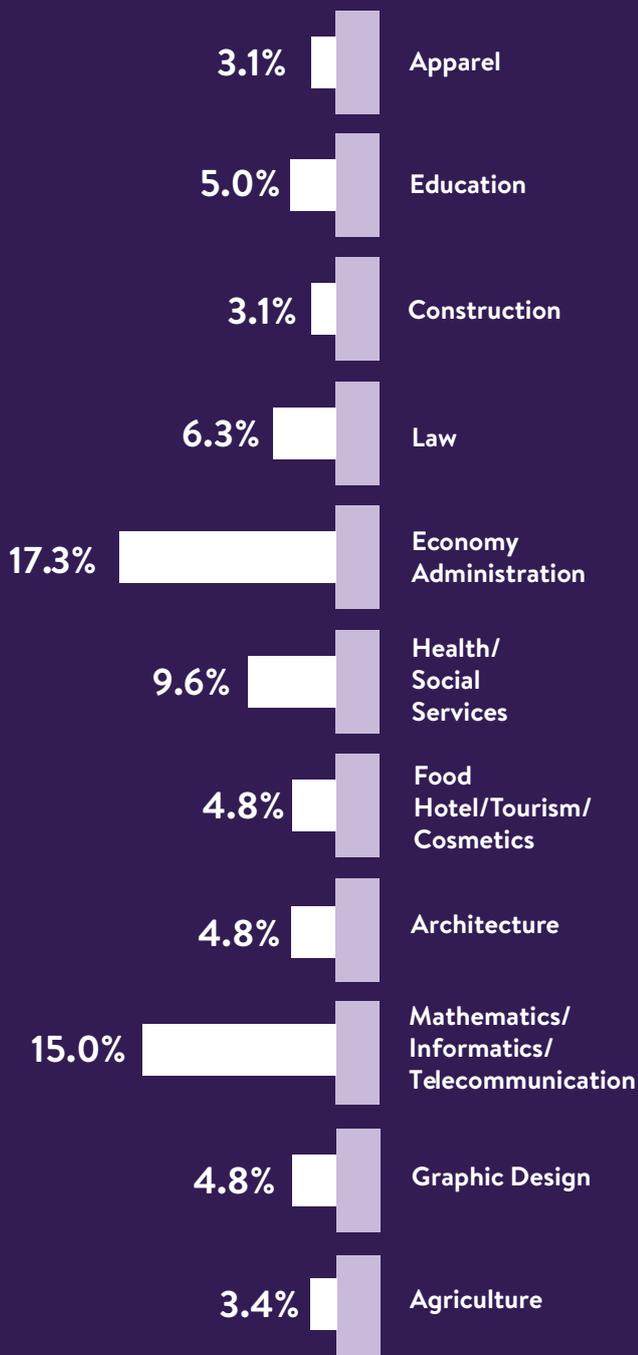


Figure 14. Rural youth's major profiles of education

# PREFERENCES



# OPPORTUNITIES

Figure 15. The discrepancy between job preferences of rural youth and available job opportunities

## Job Security and Informal Employment

Respondents were asked to rate the level of satisfaction with their current job, and to explain the reasons of changing their previous jobs if applied. The results reveal that 58% of respondents are satisfied with their current jobs, 12.9% are unsatisfied, whereas a large percentage of 28% claimed to feel neutral for their current job.

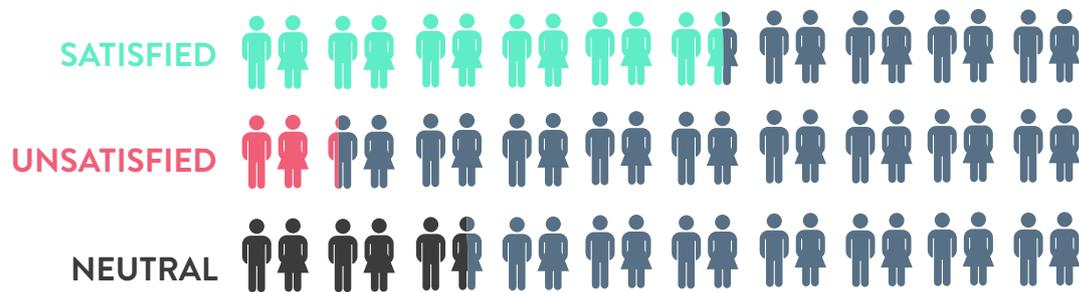


Figure 16. Level of job satisfaction with current position

With regards to the reasons for changing previous jobs, the most prevalent reasons include: better remuneration and better working conditions. This way, those who have changed their job due to compensation issues reported that they felt more satisfied with their current job, 22% of those who had changed their previous job in search for better working conditions remain unsatisfied with their current job, and 50% feel more satisfied with the conditions in their current job.

Respondents also answered on how concerned they felt about losing their job, with 41.1% stating they were very concerned, 32.3% were not concerned, and 26.2 felt neutral. One of the most significant factors which provides security for employees jobs are contracts. Therefore, the relationship between fear of losing one's job and type of contract was closely examined, and results show that from the group of those who were very concerned about losing their job, 57.7% did not have a working contract.

The most relaxed and not concerned about job loss were youth who: work online, are self-employed, have fixed term contracts, work part time, and those who work in family businesses.

## Family and Financial Dependency

Youth's perception on their residences (rural areas) match previous results from this study, with only 29% of 172 respondents considering that their village provides good job opportunities. This is in line with research by Lindsay et al. (2003) who highlight the almost universal perception that lack of opportunities is the biggest obstacle that hinders employment of rural youth.



Figure 17. Rural Youth perception on their residence

Other prevalent perceptions of youth on rural areas include: the place has a large number of diaspora (88.9%), the community is well organized (83%), clean environment (77.3%), and good connections to the urban center (79.2%). Therefore, location does not present significant barrier for rural youth.



Figure 17.1. Rural Youth perception on their residence

A total of 81.4% of unemployed respondents list their parents as the main source of income in the family, 7.8% list their siblings, 3.5% their partner's parents, whereas 9.2% get their income from remittances, and 5.7% from social assistance, and 4.9% receive income from their partners. The number of youth that are still dependent from their parents is very high. However it must be noted that it is largely related to the culture in Kosovo, where the majority of youth live with their families even after marriage (Flere et al., 2015).



Figure 18. Family and financial dependency of rural youth

The living conditions of rural youth despite their high unemployment rate result to be considerably satisfactory with 93% of youth owning a personal mobile phone, 82% of respondents owning a computer/laptop, 96% having internet at home, 99.5% having a TV at home, 86.5% having a personal or family automobile, 98.5% having a washing machine at home, and 65.7% having a dishwasher at home.

## Access of Rural Youth to Active Labor Measures

The extremely small percentage of youth employed through PES is also worrying and draws attention to the effectiveness of policies and the contribution of the government in reducing unemployment. Respondents were therefore asked on their information with regards to the role of PES, and surprisingly 231 respondents or 33.7% claim they do not know the role of these offices.

The rest give the following answers: employment offices register the unemployed (19.1%), facilitate employment (13.7%), announce vacancies (17.1%), organize trainings (9.6%), and advise the unemployed (6.6%). Lack of information on the role of PES and lack of promotion of the latter might be the key factor why young people do not seek help for employment at PES.



Figure 19. Rural youth awareness about public employment services

This study also explored the access of rural youth to different incentives, grants, and opportunities for professional development. The findings reveal that only 12% of respondents have benefited from education grants schemes (scholarships), only 6.4% have attended professional training, whereas 34.9% declared they attended trainings at their workplace. In addition, only 8% received grants for equipment and startups but did not start their own businesses due to being part of a family business, and 70.3% participated in internships, however 61.7% still remain unemployed. In other words, out of 141 respondents who participated in an internship program, only 54 or 38.3% are employed.

## NEEDS FOR RURAL YOUTH DEVELOPMENT AND EMPLOYMENT

### Job Preferences of Rural Youth

Regarding factors which motivate young jobseekers, the latter seem to mostly appreciate a working space where they can express themselves freely (77.2%), followed by good co-workers (76.0%), fixed schedule (75.4%), opportunities for professional advancement (74.3%), and high salary surprisingly coming out 5th (73.6%).

Additionally, the findings also show that working in one's professional field is less appreciated than the previously mentioned factors (72.4%), and it can be justified as a logical response to lack of appropriate job opportunities.

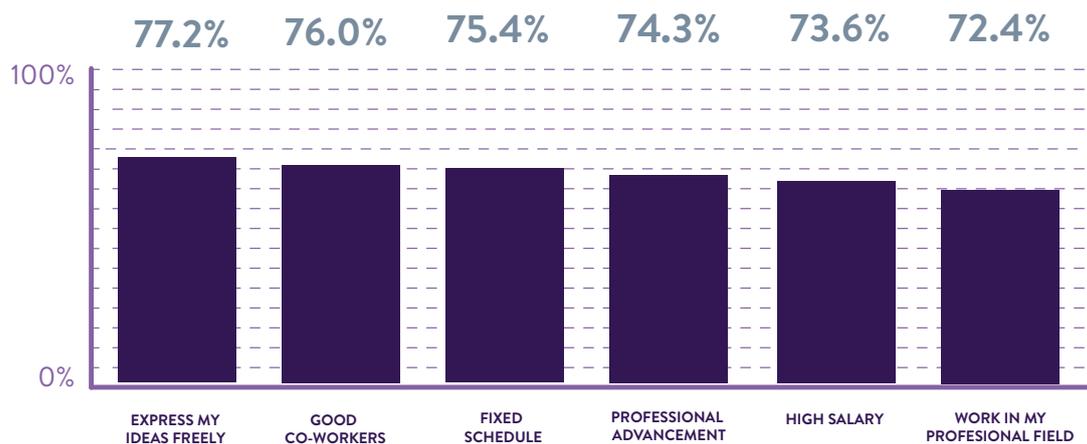


Figure 20. Motivational factors for employment

## Soft Skills Development

Different people have different needs when it comes to employment. Rural youth population appears to be mostly in need to find jobs (54.6%), write a CV (42.9%), evaluate their own skills (69.4%), use a computer (35.1%), use internet to find a job (38.5%), to obtain career advice (56.6%), facilitation for employment (45.4%), open a business (33.8%), expand business (9.8%), learn to work in agriculture (14.2%), and learn to take care of animals (19,1%).

From the group of unemployed youth 90.6% claim to be in need of a job, 87% need to write a CV, 87.6% need facilitation for employment, 86.5% need to use a computer, 85% need to use internet to find a job, and 76% need to evaluate and advance their skills. On the other hand, the needs of employed youth differ to some degree as 23% of them claim they mostly need to evaluate and advance their skills, 29.3% need to open a business, and 51.8% to expand a business (see figure 21).

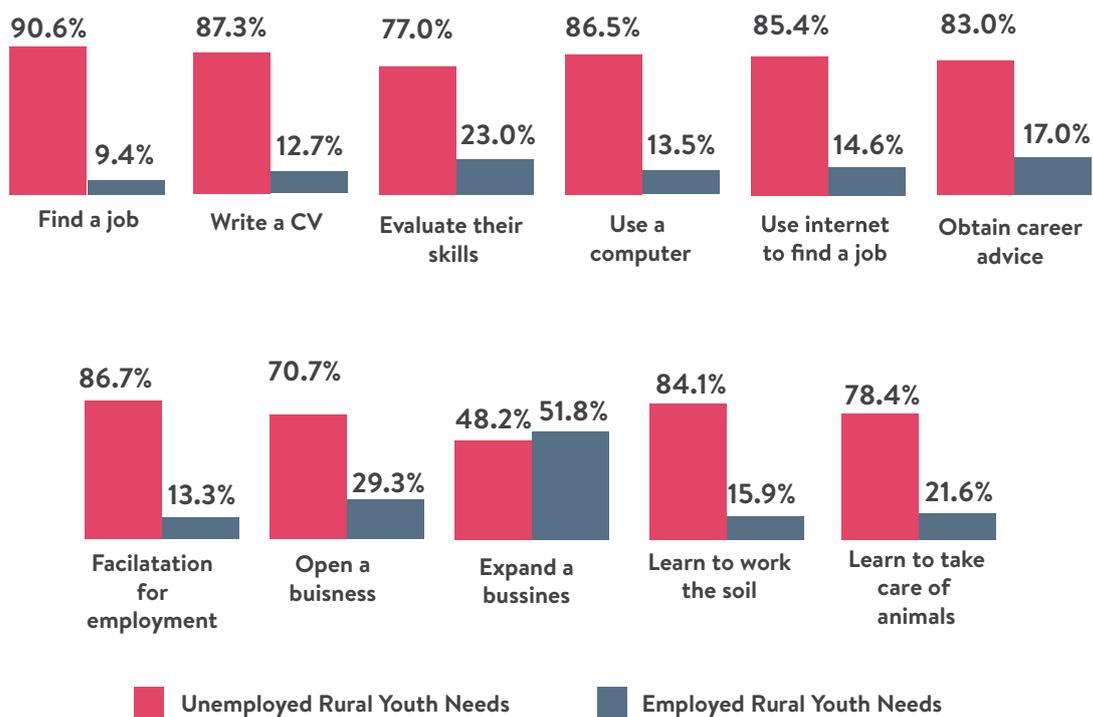


Figure 21. Needs of employed and unemployed rural youth

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## RECOMMENDATIONS

Cognizant of the challenges faced by rural youth and their disadvantaged position in the labor market, it is crucial to design policies and strategies that enhance their integration in the labor market and economy at large, and alleviate youth unemployment rate in Kosovo. Based on the findings of this report the following recommendations have been drawn:

1. While location and access to travel have not been listed as major issues, improvement of public transport and access to affordable public transport may increase both rural youth mobility and independence from family. Although access to urban areas is facilitated by improvement of road infrastructure, reliable and secure transport may increase the readiness of youth to search for jobs further from their home, which is particularly important for females.
2. It is recommended that employers ensure working contracts and use more flexible working schedules to increase inclusion of rural youth. This is especially important to activate students and particularly females in taking jobs outside their local area.
3. The Government should take measures to monitor implementation of labor law to prevent informal employment.
4. The Government should also incentivize rural areas and increase their integration in the economic development of the country through designing adequate active labor measures that align with potential for economic development in different areas.
5. Due to the small number of youth that are aware of the role of Public Employment Services and the low rate of employment through these centers, it is highly recommended to promote PES and raise awareness for better utilization.
6. Local businesses should also be incentivized to increase cooperation with Public Employment Services in order to generate more jobs which then would be announced through PES offices.
7. Rural youth needs places that ensure social, cultural and recreational activities and develop generic skills that may help them search and maintain jobs.

8. Provision of professional training in schools including training on how to write a CV, how to search for a job, how to apply for a job, and development of other soft skills is crucial to improve youth transition to labor market.
9. Organization of events that promote both social and professional networking of youth from rural areas in order to mitigate social exclusion.
10. While there is evidence of lack of information on opportunities and mismatch in education and labor supply, information dissemination of skill and labor demand is necessary in order to orient and facilitate youth transition from school to the job market.
11. Active labor measures for rural youth should consider innovative approaches that include both local opportunities and youth mobility. It is surprising that although a great number of young people have done an internship that did not necessarily result in securing a job. Therefore, a special program for youth employment, including rural youth should be designed in order to adequately tackle youth employment. (Qirezi, 2017)

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Municipality	Urban	Rural	Age 15-19	Age 20-24	Total	%	SAMPLE 602 RESPONDENTS (4.0% ERROR MARGIN)
Hani Elezit	0.0%	100.0%	900	831	1,731	1.13%	7
Junik	0.0%	100.0%	572	552	1,124	0.74%	4
Malishevë	14.0%	86.0%	6121	5231	11,352	7.43%	50
Suharekë	18.0%	82.0%	6466	5784	12,250	8.02%	48
Skenderaj	20.0%	80.0%	5243	5088	10,331	6.76%	40
Deçan	22.0%	78.0%	4181	3876	8,057	5.27%	30
Lipjan	24.0%	76.0%	5704	5468	11,172	7.31%	43
Kamenicë	28.0%	72.0%	3752	3295	7,047	4.61%	28
Rahovec	28.0%	72.0%	6253	5380	11,633	7.61%	53
Viti	28.0%	72.0%	5130	4124	9,254	6.06%	36
Istog	29.0%	71.0%	4151	3538	7,689	5.03%	28
Klinë	30.0%	70.0%	4265	3788	8,053	5.27%	27
Glllogoc	31.0%	69.0%	5886	6230	12,116	7.93%	45
Kaçanik	33.0%	67.0%	3395	3161	6,556	4.29%	26
Podujevë	36.0%	64.0%	8499	8277	16,776	10.98%	65
Shtime	38.0%	62.0%	2971	2490	5,461	3.57%	28
Fushë Kosovo	53.0%	47.0%	3207	3133	6,340	4.15%	44
<b>TOTAL</b>			79743	73053	152,796	100%	602

### Annex 1. Metodology of sample selection





KOSOVA  
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## Kosovo Rural Youth Employment Opportunities, Barriers, and Needs

**FRIEDRICH  
EBERT   
STIFTUNG**

*Büro Kosovo*