

Youth attitudes towards war and war crimes in Kosovo

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Key Findings

The data from this study confirms the main assumption that memories of war events have a significant impact on the attitudes of Kosovar youth.

Although the vast majority of respondents (84%) does not have personal experience of the war and most of them (81.2%) reported having no loss of any close family member during the war, the 'second-hand memory' of war still affected youth attitudes.

Survey data highlights differences in responses between Kosovo-Albanian and Kosovo-Serb youth regarding attitudes toward war, prosecution of war crimes, and the role of the youth in reconciliation, and peace agreements.

The data also suggests a very strong correlation between addressing the past and improving inter-ethnic relations, suggesting a need for transitional justice actions.

There are overall no significant variations in the opinions, level of satisfaction and beliefs among other demographic categories, like gender, age, education or type of settlement, on the issue of war events and war crimes prosecution.

The overall patterns across Kosovo's regions were similar, with minor differences on only a few topics.

The majority of respondents were dissatisfied with how schools addressed war events, indicating a need for better education on the topic.

There is a strong consensus among all age, gender, ethnic and socio-economic groups that war crimes should be prosecuted, regardless of the ethnicity of the victims and the perpetrators.

The conversations with parents and close family members are the main source of information about the war for a vast majority of youth respondents.

Introduction

The fall of communism and the rise of ethnonationalism in Yugoslavia led to armed conflicts in many of its former parts, including Kosovo, which was severely affected by the war. The memories of this violent past are omnipresent in society and often used to justify certain political and ideological beliefs. As a result, Kosovar society, especially the youth, is exposed to different perspectives and attitudes about the war, which sometimes leads to prejudices and animosity towards other ethnic groups. The disputes over who is responsible for war crimes often lead to the denial of these crimes by members of one's ethnic group.

The different memories and narratives about the past in postwar societies require significant efforts to rebuild trust and peace among these communities. The wartime memories and traumatic experiences of the youth in post-conflict society, such as the loss of family members, witnessing atrocities, and displacement, play a crucial role in shaping their political attitudes, inter-ethnic relations, and the process of peacebuilding (Barber, 2009).

Even though the war in Kosovo ended over twenty-five years ago, its impact continues to affect the socio-political discourse and the attitudes of the younger generation. Kosovo, known for having the youngest population in Europe, is dominated by the population who were born during or after the war and therefore who have little to no personal experiences from that time. This generational legacy, often referred to as 'second-hand memory' or 'postmemory', describes the passing down of experiences and memories to those too young to have directly witnessed certain events, such as war (Olick, 2011).

The contradictory views on war and war memory have diverse impacts on society. They can lead to division among ethnic group and victimisation. It can also present challenges to efforts for democratisation, reconciliation, and to improve inter-ethnic relations. Younger generations are particularly affected by biased narratives of war and war crimes, which they encounter through various means such as narratives, memorials, social media, and history textbooks. Those born in Kosovo in the late 1990s and early 2000s are especially influenced by the war in different ways. Their perspectives are shaped not only by public memorialization and narratives but also by family experiences and memories.

These narratives of past violent events have a dual effect on younger generations: they reinforce ethnic sentiments and political attitudes, and they provoke distrust towards other ethnic groups. As a result, it becomes very challenging to appropriately address mass atrocities and war crimes, as well as to achieve transitional justice, reconciliation, and peacebuilding.

In Kosovo, the current narratives and memorial practices about the war pose significant challenges to improving ethnic relations, reconciliation, and transitional justice. In particular, addressing the past, which includes war crimes, atrocities, and traumas, is especially difficult. However, younger generations have the potential to overcome ethnic divisions and promote a culture of shared remembrance through an adequate handling of the past.

This study provides empirical data and insights from a survey to enhance our understanding of how war experiences and memories shape the attitudes and perspectives of Kosovo's youth. Furthermore, this research project is groundbreaking in its exploration of the relationships between political attitudes, knowledge about war and war crimes, and their impact on inter-ethnic relations and trust building. This can help dispel numerous prejudices, build trust, and promote solidarity within society.

Considering that it is a pioneering study of the perceptions of war and war crimes and how these affect youth's political and inter-ethnic attitudes, there are some limitations in this research regarding the explanation of casualties, addressing contextually driven factors that influence these relations. Additionally, the lack of previous empirical data makes it impossible to compare trends and changes. Further research would be needed to better understand this complexity and the potential contributions of the youth to promote transitional justice, reconciliation and mutual trust.

Objectives

The analysis focuses on the impact of war memory in Kosovo, examining its influence on political, regional, and gender perspectives across different ethnic groups and social categories. It also explores how these attitudes vary based on factors such as age, gender, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, settlement type, and regional affiliation.

By examining the influence of war experiences and crimes on Kosovo's younger generations from various social groups, this study aims to provide a better understanding of the current situation and its implications. It seeks to shed light on the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead for Kosovo and its youth.

Further, the study aims to provide valuable insights for policymakers by examining political attitudes, sources of information, levels of knowledge about war and war crimes, and their impact on inter-ethnic relations.

The key findings of this analysis are expected to fill the gap in understanding the relationship between war memories and the overall attitudes of youth in Kosovo.

Moreover, it provides crucial data for policymakers and stakeholders in fostering educational programs and youth initiatives to promote peace, mutual trust and transitional justice incentives among young people of different ages, genders, ethnicity, and educational backgrounds.

Methodology

The research methodology is based on a survey conducted using a structured questionnaire with closed-ended questions. The analysis is derived from data provided by the survey conducted by IPSOS for the Youth Initiative for Human Rights in Kosovo between April and May 2024 with a total of 807 (N) respondents.

The data was collected through door-to-door interviews with a sample of young people aged 18 to 30 from diverse age groups, genders, ethnicities, socio-economic statuses, and geographic backgrounds across Kosovo. This ensured that the sample was diverse and represented different segments of the population.

The survey aimed to gather information on various aspects of youth, including their perceptions of the war, knowledge of war crimes, and their opinions on how the memory of the past war affects ethnic relations, peace, and reconciliation.

The respondents were predominantly young people aged 18 to 30, with a mean age of 23.8. The survey had a slightly higher proportion of male respondents (51.4%) compared to female respondents (48.6%). Additionally, the majority of respondents were from rural areas (62.8%) as compared to urban areas (37.2%), reflecting the demographic distribution of the Kosovo population. Furthermore, 80.1% of the respondents reported living in the same household as their parents, with variations across gender (88.5% male compared to 71.2% female), age group (91.1% for 18-22 compared to 60.7% for 27-30), and ethnic categories (80.7% for Kosovo-Albanian compared to 67.5% Kosovo-Serb and 75% to other ethnic communities like Bosnian, Turk and Roma).

The gender, regional, and ethnic distribution of the sample were proportionally represented in line with the population structure.

The tables are to be read as follows; Row marked with Sum- represents the sum of percentages of negative whereas with Sum of percentages on positive grade. Cells of the table are coloured in blue if values they contain are considerably above the average and in red if they contain values below the average. Three shades of blue or red are used for the degrees of significance.

Sources of Information About the War

A majority of the respondents as shown in figure nr.1, (65.5%) indicated that they have some form of knowledge of war crimes. Among them, 18.3% stated that they have a lot of knowledge, while 54.1% stated that they have some knowledge. Most of the respondents from both ethnic groups (around 89.1% of Kosovo-Albanian and 71.9% of Kosovo-Serbs) reported receiving information about the war from their parents and close family members. This suggests that attitudes toward war may be influenced not only by factors such as age, gender, and socio-economic status but also by different experiences based on their community and the region they live in.

Only 15.7% of respondents reported personal experience during the war in Kosovo. This indicates that a small proportion of respondents had direct experience of the war, which may have influenced their attitudes about the war, its impact, and ethnic relations. Additionally, it suggests that there may be varying levels of agreement and disagreement on key issues related to war events and their impact on political attitudes and reconciliation among different age groups.

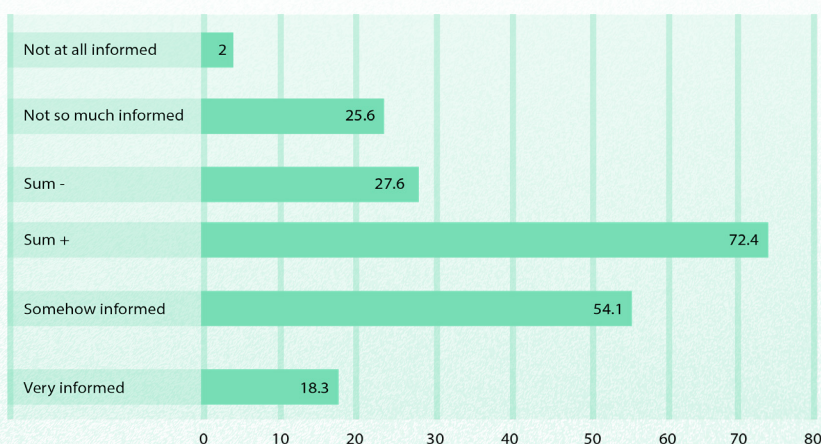


Fig.1) How informed are you about the war and war crimes in Kosovo?

Visits to war memorial sites, conversations with people who experienced war first-hand, and exposure to media such as TV and radio were significant sources of information. In contrast, respondents from other ethnic communities (25%) reported generally lower levels of information from these above-mentioned sources. Women generally rely more on family members for information about the war, while men tend to depend on social networks, internet portals, and international sources. In comparison, films, documentaries, and civil society organisations had less influence as common sources of information. These results indicate that the youth are informed about war events mainly through media, internet portals and social networks because of the absence of influential films and documentaries or limited interest and engagement in civil society initiatives and efforts. In general, the data shows that the primary source of information for all respondents regardless of ethnicity, age, gender or region was through conversations with the parents and close family members with 88.2%.

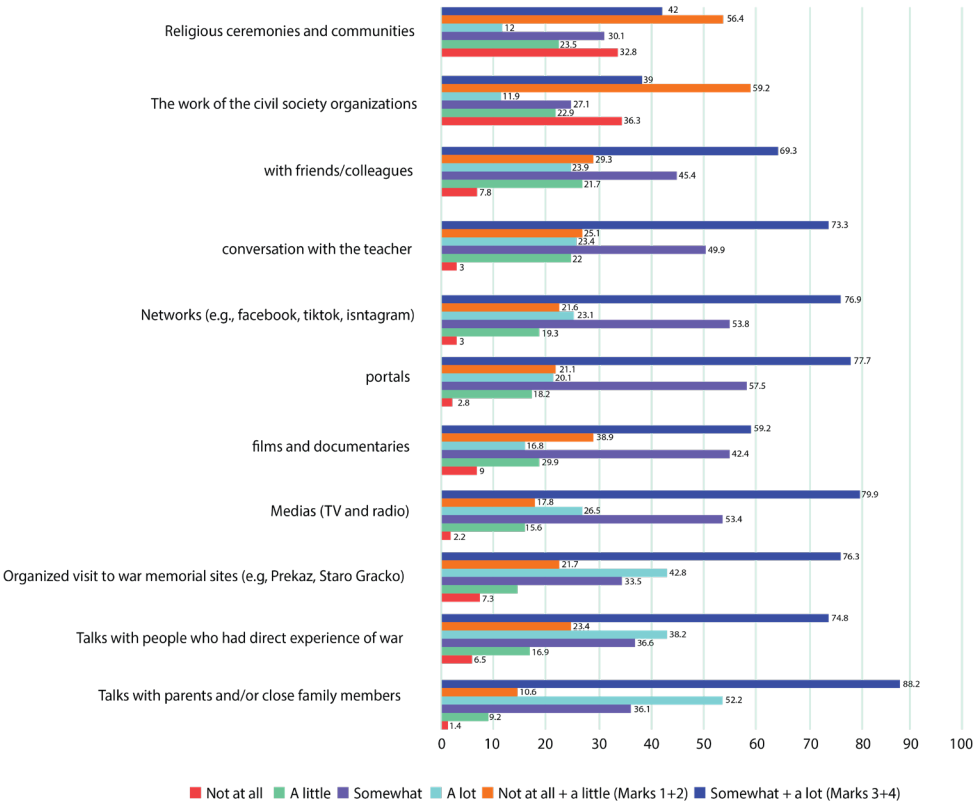


Fig.2) What contributed to your information on the war events?

The survey results show that while there are no major differences among different regions, people in urban areas and with higher levels of education have better access to information. This seems to affect how they view war crimes compared to people in rural areas, who may have been more directly affected by war events. Overall, the main sources of information about war for the respondents are their parents, close family members, and the media.

Knowledge of War Events

The survey results indicated that the respondents displayed a higher level of awareness regarding certain war events, including the Reçak massacre, the entry of KFOR in Kosovo, and the NATO bombing. The data revealed that 79.1% of Kosovo-Albanian respondents were knowledgeable about the Reçak massacre, while 74.5% and 74.8% had better information about the entry of KFOR and the NATO bombing, respectively.

In contrast, lower percentages of both Kosovo-Albanian and Kosovo-Serb respondents reported being familiar with or having information about war events that affected other ethnic groups, such as the Staro Gradsko massacre (11.8%) and war crimes against non-majority communities (39.2% for Kosovo-Albanian respondents).

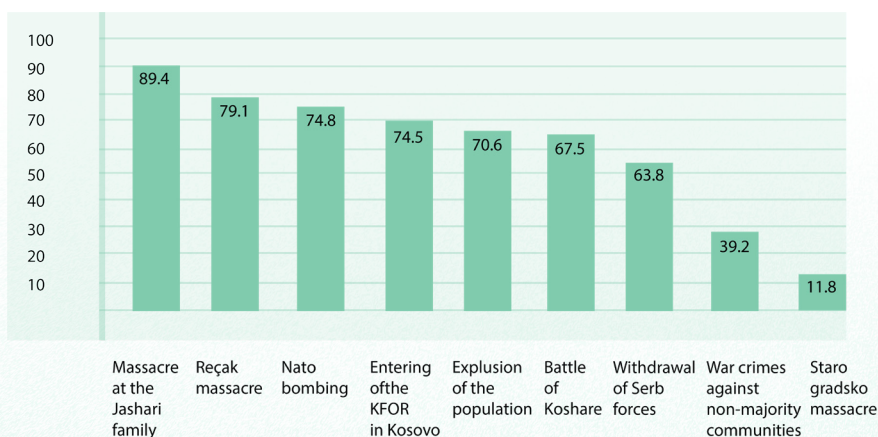


Fig.3) For which of the following war events do you have better knowledge/information?

The survey results suggest that the respondents were more informed about certain specific events, likely due to their prominence in the media, public discussions, and narratives within their ethnic community. On the contrary, other war events and crimes against different communities are often overlooked or less well-documented, therefore they are not well known by the youth respondents.

The data also indicated discrepancies in awareness levels between respondents of Kosovo-Albanian and Kosovo-Serb ethnicity for certain events, such as the Jashari family massacre and the Reçak massacre. However, respondents of all ethnicities showed better knowledge about NATO intervention and the entry of KFOR in Kosovo compared to other war events, likely due to their prominence in the media, public discourse, and public memorials.

While the level of education, socio-economic status, and demographic categories do not seem to have a significant correlation with knowledge about specific war events, significant discrepancies were revealed in the ethnic composition, particularly between Kosovo-Albanian and Kosovo-Serb youth respondents, as shown in the table below.

War Events	Total	Ethnicity		
		K-Albanian	K-Serb	Other
Massacre at the Jashari family	89.4	93.5	14.1	25
Reçak massacre	79.1	82.3	19.9	25
NATO bombing	74.8	74.8	84.2	50
Entering of the KFOR in Kosovo	74.5	75.4	71.5	25
Expulsion of the population	70.6	71.3	71.3	25
Battle of Koshare	67.5	68.5	58.5	25
Withdrawal of Serb forces	63.8	63.6	83.6	25
War crimes against non-majority communities	39.2	39.2	44.5	25
Staro gradsko massacre	11.8	11.2	61.4	

Table 1) War events comparison based on the categorical variable of ethnicity.

In response to the question: “Are you satisfied with how the memory of the war is presented to the public from the following sources?” Survey results revealed that the majority of respondents are highly satisfied with the presentation of the memory of the war through commemoration days (80.4%) and memorial sites (78.2%). On the other hand, satisfaction levels were lower for museums (46%) and exhibitions (48.9%). To ascertain why satisfaction levels are so much lower for museums and exhibitions requires another, larger study.

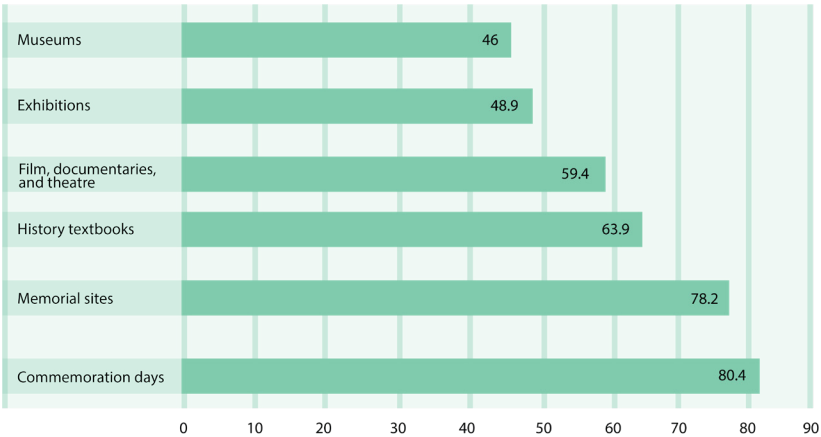


Fig.4) Are you satisfied with how the memory of the war is presented to the public from the following sources?

There are some slight differences in satisfaction levels across regions, gender, and ethnicity. For example, men are more satisfied with how the memory of the war is presented to the public in commemoration days and memorial sites. On the other hand, women are more satisfied with how the memory of the war is presented to the public through history textbooks, films, documentaries, and theatre. To understand why these gender differences occurred would require focus group interviews, this study did not have the scope to conduct this sort of research. Further research into how gender differences impact satisfaction levels regarding how war is presented to the public could be useful.

Similarly, respondents in the 27-30 age group are generally more satisfied with commemorations and memorial sites compared to other age groups of Kosovo's youth. This suggests that the older generations with some personal experience and exposure to the violent events of the war are most likely to be influenced by these events and commemorate them accordingly more than other age groups.

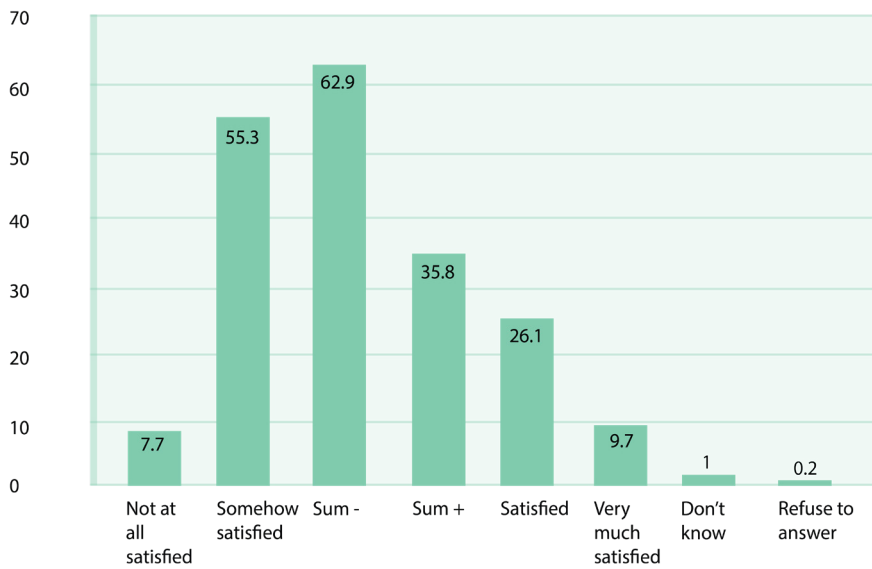


Fig.5) Are you satisfied with how schools contributed to the formation of your knowledge about war events?

The survey data revealed that a significant proportion of respondents, comprising 55.3% and 26.1%, expressed satisfaction and somewhat satisfaction, respectively, with the role of schools in shaping their understanding of war events. It was further observed that the 18-22 age group exhibited the highest, while the 27-30 age group displayed the lowest level of satisfaction in this regard. This disparity may stem from variations in school curricula, educational system, or the evolving prominence of war events in academic subjects over time. But it could be also as a result of the direct personal experience of the 27-30 age group that affected their dissatisfaction.

Notably, distinct regional variations were evident in respondents' sentiments regarding the contribution of schools to their knowledge of war events. Individuals from the Ferizaj region reported notably higher satisfaction levels (93.8%) compared to their counterparts from the region of Gjakova 81.3% and Mitrovica with 73.1% that were highly unsatisfied. These findings underscore the inadequate role played by the educational system and schools in fostering an informed understanding of war and its historical significance among younger generations. But also, this data reveals that respondents from regions more affected by the war tend to be more critical toward schools and public institutions in this regard.

Attitudes Towards the War Crimes

The levels of awareness about the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) and also known as the Hague Tribunal, among respondents vary across different categories. Among respondents aged 27-30, 68.2% claimed to be informed. Similarly, 66.8% of respondents with higher education levels stated that they were informed, and in the Prizren region, 70.1% claimed to be informed or very informed. For this age group the prosecution of war crimes began earlier, they were more familiar during this period with a lot of the cases and also commonly more educated respondents tend to have more interest on the issues of transitional justice and dealing with the past.

Regarding ethnic communities, there were no significant differences in awareness. 56.6% of Kosovo-Albanian and 56.3% of Kosovo-Serb respondents indicated that they were aware of the International Criminal Tribunal.

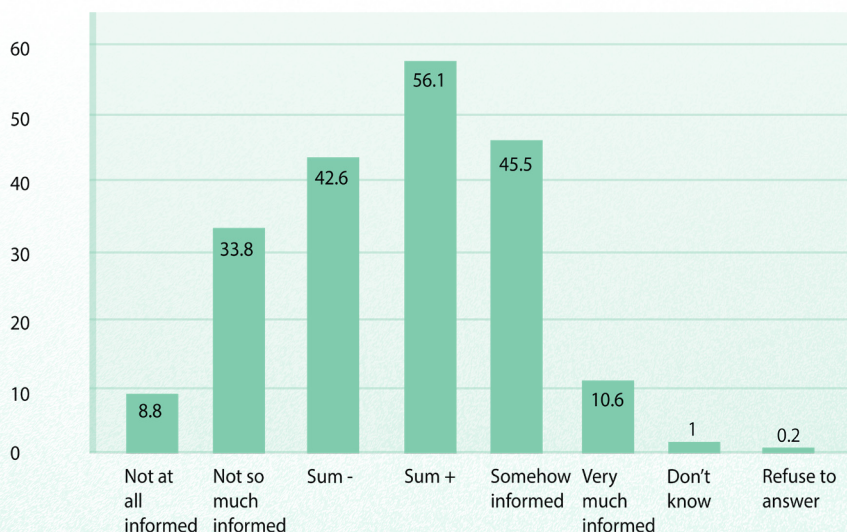


Fig.7) How informed are you about the International Criminal Tribunal, known also as the Hague Court?

A majority of the respondents (71.3%) believe that the Hague Tribunal should have prosecuted every war crime and/or atrocity committed during and immediately after the war in Kosovo. However, there are differences in the level of support for prosecution between the ethnic groups, with 73.4% of Kosovo-Albanian respondents supporting it compared to 48% of Kosovo-Serb respondents. The contrast is even more significant when asked if prosecuting war crimes can contribute to peace and democracy, with 74% of Kosovo-Albanian respondents believing so compared to only 29.1% of Kosovo-Serb respondents. This data indicates that these ethnic groups have different views on the war events, in this sense Kosovo-Albanians believe to be more affected by the war events and crimes and thus expect the prosecution of war crimes to bring accountability and justice for them. While the Kosovo-Serb respondents are more sceptical on the prosecution process, on the Tribunal itself and its outcomes, perceiving this as the potential threat for blaming, negative perceptions or accusations for war crimes. Consequently, these perceptions influence what role addressing the past atrocities and transitional justice plays for each ethnicity.

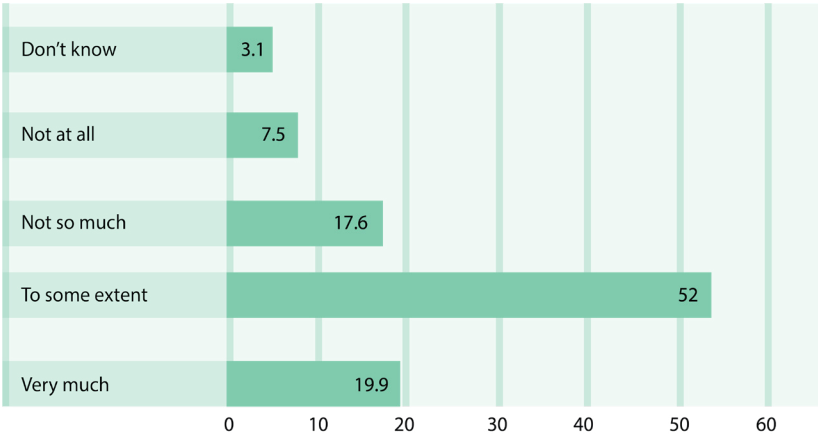


Fig.8) To what extent do you think that prosecuting war crimes can contribute to peace and democracy?

Even when asked whether prosecuting war crimes can contribute to improving inter-ethnic relations, there is a notable difference in opinion between Kosovo-Albanian and Kosovo-Serb respondents, with 64.8% of Kosovo-Albanians agreeing compared to only 33.1% of Kosovo-Serbs. According to the survey data, young people in Kosovo, regardless of their ethnicity, gender, social status, and educational background, are well-informed and have a significant level of awareness about the International Criminal Tribunal and its efforts to punish war crimes.

The opinions of the young participants in the survey regarding the prosecution of war crimes by the Hague Tribunal show a slight variation based on gender. Females are more likely to support the prosecution of war crimes, with 72.8% in favour, compared to male respondents at 69.9%. This small difference of female respondents in favour of prosecution may reflect a different view on justice compared to male respondents, having more empathy with victims and having unique experiences as a woman shaped by the war, which may lead to stronger advocacy for justice.

Additionally, older respondents aged 27-30 are more likely to support the prosecution, with 75.9% in favour, compared to 69.3% and 69.7% for other age groups within the youth population. There is also variation among respondents from rural areas, with 75.9% supporting the Tribunal's prosecution of war crimes compared to 63.3% of urban youth respondents. These differences could be attributed to several factors like; direct personal memories and life experience of older youth population, but also information sources, level of awareness and living environment between urban and rural respondents that might influence opinions on this matter.

	Total	Ethnicity		
		K-Albanian	K-Serb	Other
It is necessary to punish all those who committed war crimes against the Albanian civil population	88.5	91.1	38.8	50
Kosovo was a victim of the imposed war and aggression and that is why it is unfair to associate war veterans with war crime	86.8	89.6	23	75
Every war crime should be punished, regardless of the ethnic origin of the victim and the perpetrator	80.1	80.7	68.4	75
In my opinion, even when our veterans are convicted of war crimes, they should be treated as heroes and not criminals	70.4	72.6	33.7	25
It is necessary to punish all those who committed war crimes against the Serb civil population	50.6	49.3	82.4	50
I am ashamed that war crimes committed by Kosovo-Albanian civilians or UCK members remain unprosecuted	41.1	40.9	62.5	

Table 3) To what extent do you agree with the following statements, on a scale from 1 to 4 (1- strongly disagree; 2- disagree; 3- agree; 4- strongly agree)? – Agree (Marks 3+4)

The data from the table above shows a significant difference in attitudes towards condemning war crimes and perceptions about the perpetrators across ethnic groups. When asked if veterans of their own ethnic groups who had been convicted of war crimes should be treated as heroes, 72.6% of Kosovo-Albanian respondents agreed and only 33.7% Kosovo-Serb agreed with this question. Respondents were also asked whether war crimes against Kosovo-Serb civilians should be prosecuted, 49.3% of Kosovo-Albanian respondents and 82.4% of Kosovo-Serb respondents said they should, whereas 91.1% Kosovo-Albanian and 38.8% Kosovo-Serb respondents supported war crimes against Kosovo-Albanian civilians being prosecuted.

There is not only an ethnic bias in these results, but also denial of the war crimes committed by the members of their respective ethnic groups, as well as a strong sense of victimhood among the members of this same ethnic group. In other words, Kosovo-Albanians respondents believe to be the only victims of the war and that the members of their ethnicity did not commit any war crimes. Similarly, the respondents of Kosovo-Serb community believed exactly same for their co-ethnics.

These findings emphasise the importance of considering these ethnic differences among young people, their attitudes when examining transitional justice and the need to promote an inclusive approach when dealing with the violent past.

	Total	Ethnicity		
		K-Albanian	K-Serb	Other
Serbia should make an apology for the war crimes in Kosovo in order to achieve peace and reconciliation between both people	88.7	92	21.6	50
International courts (e.g., Hague Court) should prosecute war crimes regardless of state or ethnic origin	78.2	79.2	62.2	50
Kosovo courts, including the Special Court, should prosecute war crimes regardless of state or ethnic origin	78	79.3	55.9	50
Both Kosovo and Serbia should apologize for war crimes committed during and after the war	43.6	44	40.2	25

Table 4) To what extent do you agree with the following statements, on a scale from 1 to 4 (1- strongly disagree; 2- disagree; 3- agree; 4- strongly agree)? - Agree (Marks 3+4)

Based on the figures in the table above, there is a significant difference in the opinions of respondents regarding the responsibility of the respective states for the war crimes committed in Kosovo, depending on the ethnic background of the respondents. The differences between the ethnic communities are even greater when asked about the role of the youth in dealing with the violent past.

About 68% of the Kosovo-Albanian and only 12.4% of Kosovo-Serb respondents believe that young people in Kosovo are more ready to address violent past and war crimes compared to older generations. When asked about the impact of youth in improving inter-ethnic relations, the difference between Kosovo-Albanian (38.7%) and Kosovo-Serb respondents (19.2%) is evident. Additionally, 56.6% of Kosovo-Albanian and 27.5% of Kosovo-Serb youth reported supporting the idea that a potential peace agreement between Kosovo and Serbia might contribute to dealing with the violent past and reconciliation.

The majority of respondents (78.6%) believe that educational programs and cultural exchange initiatives contribute to promoting peace and mutual understanding, with 88% of Kosovo-Albanian and 33.1% of Kosovo-Serb respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing.

In total, most of the young Kosovars interviewed in this survey perceive the youth as having a considerable impact on building trust and improving ethnic relations. Additionally, the majority of young respondents agree that educational programs and cultural exchange initiatives contribute to promoting peace and reconciliation.

		K-Albanian	K-Serb	Other
Very high impact	14.3	14.5	4.5	25
High impact	23.4	24.1	14.6	
To some extent	40.6	40.4	30.4	75
Low impact	13.8	13.4	29.3	
Very low impact	5.1	4.6	19.4	
Don't know	2.4	2.4	1.9	
Refuse to answer	0.5	0.5		

Table 5) What impact does the youth have on building trust and improving relations between ethnic groups?

When asked about the extent to which they believe Kosovo institutions have made sufficient efforts to promote transitional justice and address the violent past, 68.3% of the total youth population interviewed in the survey responded positively. The responses varied significantly between different groups, with 70.8% of Kosovo-Albanian youth giving positive answers, while only 2.4% of Kosovo-Serb youth respondents did so. Additionally, there was a difference between urban (44.9%) and rural (61.4%) respondents.

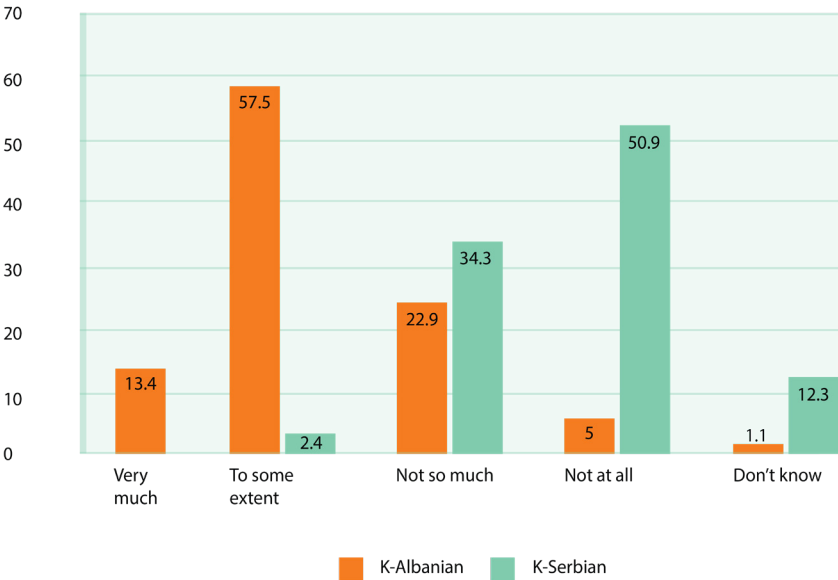


Fig. 9) To what extent do you think that the Kosovo institutions have made sufficient efforts to promote transitional justice and address the violent past?

The data presented above shows a correlation between the severity of war crimes experienced by each ethnic group and their level of support for prosecuting war crimes and transitional justice. Ethnic Kosovo-Albanian respondents, who have experienced war more severely in terms of victims, material damages and traumas, are more likely to support prosecution and addressing the past atrocities. On the other hand, Kosovo-Serb respondents are less likely to support prosecution and consequently believe that prosecuting war crimes would contribute less to reconciliation. This gap in beliefs about contribution of Kosovo institution

in transitional justice highlights a challenge for peace-building efforts and stability. Addressing these divergent views on transitional justice and improving the role of the institutions to promote inter-ethnic relations and reconciliation efforts is crucial to overcome these dipartites and contribute to sustainable peace.

Youth Attitudes and Ethnic Relations

The younger generation's influence on building trust and improving relationships between ethnic groups is perceived to be moderate. Approximately 38.7% of respondents believe it has a high impact, while 44% consider it to have a very high impact. This perception may stem from limited youth involvement in inter-ethnic dialogue, joint educational initiatives, participation in civil society organisations, and engagement in community activities. These activities can play a crucial role in nurturing a shared identity and fostering dialogue and cooperation among different ethnic groups.

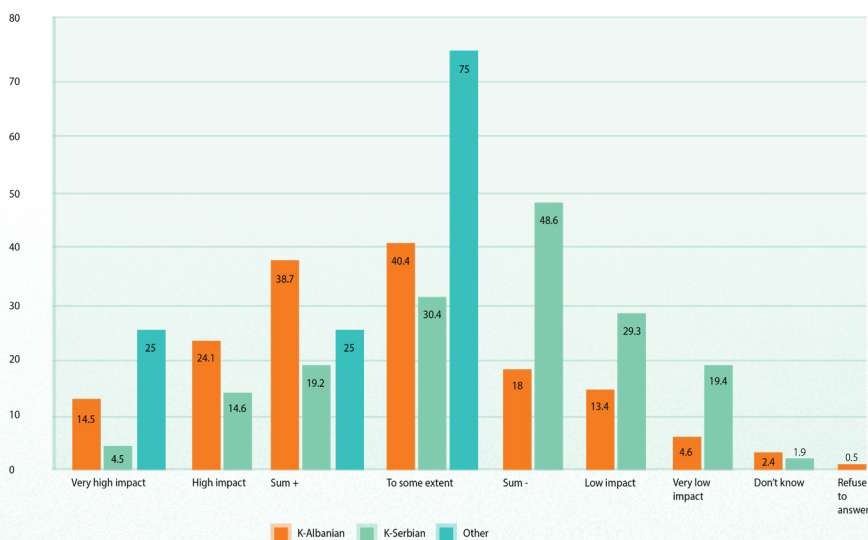


Fig. 6) What impact does the youth have on building trust and improving relations between ethnic groups?

According to the survey data, as shown in the figure nr.2, educational programs and cultural exchange initiatives play a significant role in promoting peace and mutual understanding. Specifically, 78.6% of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed with this statement. However, there is a noticeable difference between ethnic groups. While 80.1% of Kosovo-Albanian respondents were positive about the impact of these programs, only 33.1% of Kosovo-Serb respondents agreed with this.

	Total	Ethnicity		
		K-Albanian	K-Serb	Other
Strongly agree	18.8	19.7	4.5	
Agree	59.8	60.4	28.6	100
Sum +	78.6	80.1	33.1	100
Sum -	18.5	17.4	53.1	
Do not agree	14.8	13.9	42.3	
Strongly do not agree	3.8	3.5	10.8	
Don't know	2.8	2.4	13.8	
Refuse to answer	0.1	0.1		

Table 2) Do you agree that educational programs and cultural exchange initiatives contribute to promote peace and mutual understanding among the youth in Kosovo?

Furthermore, the survey data indicates that Kosovo-Albanian and Kosovo-Serb youth have different political attitudes influenced by war events. 21.7% of Kosovo-Albanian respondents stated that war events have greatly influenced their political attitudes, and 50.8% said it influenced them to some extent. On the other hand, 36.5% of Kosovo-Serb respondents stated that war events have greatly influenced their political attitudes, and 33.6% reported that they influenced them to some extent. Respondents from other ethnic communities had very different opinions on this issue, with 50% indicating that war events did not influence their

political attitudes much, and 25% stating that it did not influence their political attitudes at all, in sum, 75% of other ethnic communities do not consider the war having influence in their political attitudes.

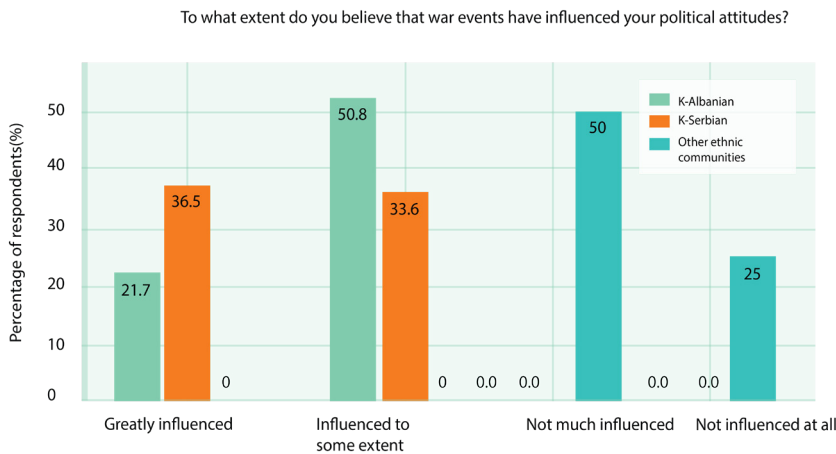


Fig.5) To what extent do you believe that war events have influenced your political attitudes?

The data presents significant parallels in the way Kosovo-Albanians and Kosovo-Serbs perceive the impact of war events on their attitudes toward each other. A large percentage of both Kosovo-Albanian and Kosovo-Serb respondents acknowledged that war events have influenced their attitudes toward the Kosovo-Serb and Kosovo-Albanian ethnic communities to some extent. In contrast, only 25% of respondents from other ethnic communities reported that their attitudes toward another ethnicity were influenced by war experiences and events.

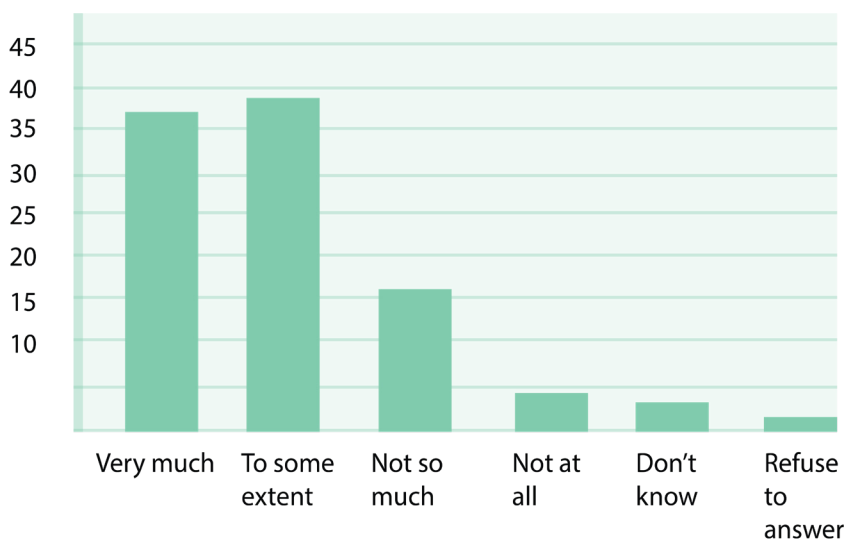


Fig.6) To what extent do you believe that war events have influenced your attitude toward another ethnicity? (Kosovo Serb ethnic group or in the case of interviews with Kosovo-Serb respondents the question is asked toward the Kosovo-Albanian community)

The different demographic categories incorporated in the survey—such as age, education level, location, socio-economic status, and gender—do not show significant differences in this context.

However, there are slight regional variations in the impact of memories of the war on ethnic relations. The prevalence is highest in the Gjilan region (94.1%), Prizren (89,9%) and Gjakova (84.7%) and lowest in the Ferizaj region (64.2%) followed by Peja (66.5%), Prishtina (69.3%) and Mitrovica (71.8%). These differences can be explained by the war casualties and damages, but also by the political processes in the post-war period as for example decentralization of the local government that in some regions has had more impact than in others.

Results

The main thesis of the research is that memories of war events continue to have a significant impact on the attitudes of the Kosovar youth. This is largely confirmed by the data obtained.

Conversations with parents, close family members and people with direct war experience are the most impactful sources of information about the war events. Traditional mass media, as well as online sources also play a significant role in the understanding of war among the youth respondents.

These generational differences, among other factors, also demonstrate the evolving nature of information consumption and its impact on shaping collective memory and understanding of past war events.

The survey data highlights significant differences in responses between Kosovo-Albanian and Kosovo-Serb respondents, providing insights into the youth's attitudes toward war, their knowledge of war crimes, and their opinions on peace agreements and inter-ethnic relations.

The data suggests that Kosovo-Albanian and Kosovo-Serb youth have different political attitudes influenced by war events, while the majority of respondents from other ethnic communities believe that war events have had little influence on their political attitudes (75%).

Respondents whose families experienced violence or war-related events or losing a family member have tendencies to be influenced more also on attitudes toward inter-ethnic relations.

However, other than notable variations in the data based on ethnicity, there were no significant differences or large discrepancies in the responses based on variables like type of settlement, age group, gender, education, or socio-economic status regarding attitudes toward war and initiatives for peace and mutual understanding.

Despite minor differences, overall patterns across all seven regions in Kosovo were similar. The regions of Mitrovica and Peja gave more consistent responses, particularly regarding the importance of prosecuting war crimes and the issue of educational initiatives in promoting peace and reconciliation. Some regional variations may indicate a degree of proximity and impact of the war in these areas, potentially influenced by their demographic, social, and historical context.

The survey data suggests a correlation between addressing the violent past and prosecuting war crimes with improving inter-ethnic relations, building trust, and reconciliation. Additionally, young respondents believe they have an impact on building trust and improving inter-ethnic relations, with the age group of 18-22-year-olds more likely to view the youth's contribution positively.

Furthermore, women are also more likely to believe that the youth have a high impact on improving relations between ethnic groups, which is one of the most significant gender differences in this survey.

Most of the respondents were not satisfied with how schools contributed to their knowledge about war events. This suggests that the education system and public institutions, in general, must provide better knowledge, models, and incentives about war events and memory presentation.

The data suggests a strong consensus that war crimes should be punished and that the Hague court should prosecute them, regardless of ethnic origin.

Respondents are generally more informed about war crimes committed against their ethnic groups compared to those against the civil population of another ethnicity.

Overall, the data highlight the interplay between information sources, age, gender, and regional and ethnic differences in shaping youth attitudes toward war and war crimes over time.

Recommendations

Governmental institutions


- To develop a comprehensive strategy for the politics of memory focusing on war-related events and experiences;
- To incorporate more inclusive and fact-based educational programs in schools and universities to ensure that students gain a better understanding of the war events;
- To encourage discussions about missing persons, promote student exchanges and projects with schools of other communities such as: organising school visits to war memorial sites.

Media

- To enhance media coverage of war-related events and war crimes in Kosovo to ensure that the public is better informed. This can include more comprehensive, fact-based and non-discriminatory reporting and documentaries, social media campaigns to engage with youth on these topics;
- To create informative content about war memory and engage with the youth public through online or podcast discussions.


Civil Society Organizations

- To facilitate dialogues among youth and organise diverse workshops on peace, transitional justice and reconciliation;
- To encourage youth participation in their work to promote a deeper understanding of the war and its impact, it includes volunteering, workshops and participating in community events;



To enhance engaging youth in dialogue and transitional justice initiatives that may foster positive attitudes, and mutual understanding and improve social cohesion.

International community



To provide active and long-term support to civil society organisations, media and other actors engaged in research and documentation of war-related issues, in facilitating truth and reconciliation commissions, and fostering joint projects and exchange programs between youth of different ethnicities.

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