

Exploring Hate Speech in northern Kosovo: Findings and Recommendation



Disclaimer:

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Exploring Hate Speech in northern Kosovo*:
Findings and Recommendation

Advocacy Center for Democratic Culture

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* All references to Kosovo, whether the territory, institutions or population, in this text shall be understood in full compliance with United Nations' Security Council Resolution 1244 and without prejudice to the status of Kosovo

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Introduction:

Hate speech is a societal issue that profoundly affects individuals and communities, undermining social harmony, progress, and the realization of fundamental human rights. In the specific context of northern Kosovo, hate speech has become deeply entrenched, influenced by socio-cultural and predominantly political factors.

The study on hate speech in northern Kosovo seeks to explore the intricate layers of verbal and written expressions that propagate hate speech and animosity. It involves an in-depth analysis of the experiences of individuals from diverse backgrounds, including Serbian, Albanian, and community members residing in the area. This research aims to examine the prevalence and impact of hate speech across various aspects of daily life, encompassing public discourse, social interactions, and engagements with institutional representatives. By delving into these dynamics, the research will strive to uncover residents' perceptions of the prevalence of hate speech, its repercussions on community cohesion, and potential strategies for addressing its harmful effects and fostering mutual understanding.

This exploration into hate speech in northern Kosovo is founded on a data collection process, incorporating interviews, desk research, and an online survey. These diverse methods were employed to thoroughly investigate the prevailing issues of hate speech and its impacts in the northern Kosovo. The insights gathered from these varied data sources provided a solid basis for this study, aiming to delve deeper into the complexities surrounding hate speech in northern Kosovo.

The online survey was designed to assess citizens' perceptions, experiences, and attitudes toward hate speech. It explored various dimensions of hate speech, including ethnicity, language, religion, gender, and other potential factors contributing to discriminatory rhetoric and social marginalization. The survey collected quantitative data to illuminate the prevalence and forms of hate speech, as well as individuals' personal encounters with hateful discourse.

In addition to the survey, desk research was conducted to thoroughly examine existing legislation relevant to hate speech in northern Kosovo. The desk research aimed to understand the legal provisions, mechanisms, and remedies available to individuals affected by hate speech and the obligations of relevant institutions in enforcing and upholding these laws.



Furthermore, interviews were conducted with citizens, including representatives from civil society organizations, legal experts, and local institutions. These interviews aimed to gather qualitative data and perspectives on hate speech in northern Kosovo, the efficacy of existing legislation, and potential obstacles in combating hate speech. The interviews provided valuable insights into the practical implications of the legal framework and shed light on systemic barriers, implementation gaps, and potential avenues for improvement. Through face-to-face interviews, participants were encouraged to share their personal encounters and shed light on the various forms and manifestations of hate speech they have faced or they have witnessed.

The research outcomes will contribute to informing evidence-based strategies and policies aimed at addressing hate speech, promoting inclusivity, social justice, reconciliation, promotion of the rule of law in the region and fostering social cohesion.

Background:

The current political landscape in northern Kosovo is deeply intertwined with the broader context of the Belgrade-Pristina dialogue and the rights of the non-majority population in Kosovo. The ongoing dialogue between the Serbia and Kosovo seeks to address longstanding disputes and establish a sustainable framework for normalization. However, these negotiations have encountered significant hurdles, particularly concerning the rights and representation of the non-majority population in northern Kosovo.

The non-majority population in northern Kosovo, predominantly comprised of ethnic Serbs, confronts specific challenges related to their rights, representation, and integration into the broader Kosovo context. Autonomy and/or self-governance for Serb-majority areas presented as Association of Serb Majority Municipalities (ASM) have been contentious issues in the dialogue. The unresolved issues surrounding the rights and representation of the non-majority population in northern Kosovo have fuelled a political crisis and ongoing tensions in the region. These tensions have impeded efforts to foster interethnic dialogue, reconciliation, and the development of a shared vision for the future of northern Kosovo.

The international community, including the European Union, and other relevant stakeholders, has actively participated in mediating the Belgrade-Pristina dialogue and supporting initiatives to address the rights of the non-majority population.



Legal Framework:

The legal framework in Kosovo designed to protect against hate speech and promote equality as fundamental rights for all individuals is largely in place. The Constitution of Kosovo serves as the highest law, guaranteeing fundamental rights and freedoms irrespective of ethnicity, language, religion, or other characteristics. It upholds principles of equality, non-discrimination, and equal protection under the law. While the Constitution does not directly regulate hate speech, it prohibits discrimination and guarantees freedom of expression. However, it imposes limitations on freedom of expression in cases where it incites violence or hostility based on nationality, race, ethnic background, or religion. The Constitution also ensures media freedom and pluralism but permits restrictions on content that incites violence or enmity. Hate speech is regulated through the Criminal Code, the Law on Protection from Discrimination, and the Law on the Independent Media Commission[†]. The Criminal Code sanctions hate speech under the crime of "Inciting Discord and Intolerance." The Press Code of Kosovo establishes ethical standards for journalists and publishers, prohibiting hate speech and promoting diversity in reporting. Guidelines for the Press Code further reinforce these principles.

To combat hate speech and ensure equality, Kosovo has enacted specific laws and regulations. The Law on Protection from Discrimination is a key legal instrument, establishing a framework to address hate speech across various domains such as public discourse, media, online platforms, and public gatherings. The Law establishes a general framework for preventing and combating discrimination and provides an exhaustive list of protected personal characteristics.[‡] The law reads that the following personal characteristics are protected by law: *nationality, or in relation to any community, social origin, race, ethnicity, color, birth, origin, sex, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, language, citizenship, religion and religious belief, political affiliation, political or other opinion, social or personal status, age, family or marital status, pregnancy, maternity,*

[†] 5 Law no. 05/L-021 on protection against discrimination, Official Gazette of the Republic of Kosovo/ no. 16 / June 26, 2015, Pristina, available at: https://equineteurope.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Annex-LAW_NO_05_L-021_ON_THE_PROTECTION_FROM_DISCRIMINATION.pdf

[‡] Article 1 of the Law on Protection from Discrimination, available at <https://gzk.rks-gov.net/ActDetail.aspx?ActID=10924>



wealth, health status, disability, genetic inheritance or any other grounds, to implement the principle of equal treatment.[§]

In addition to the above law, the Criminal Code of Kosovo also provides punishments for violations of guaranteed human rights, including various forms of hate speech. On this note, Article 141.1 reads the following: o this matter, Article 141 paragraph 1, states that: *Whoever publicly incites or publicly spreads hatred, discord and intolerance between national, racial, religious, ethnic, and other groups or based on sexual orientation, identity gender identity and other personal characteristics, in a manner which is likely to disturb the public order shall be punished by a fine or imprisonment of up to five (5) years.***

Despite these legal provisions, challenges persist in effectively implementing and enforcing the framework, particularly in northern Kosovo. Factors such as limited awareness of rights, institutional capacity constraints, and socio-political tensions may hinder the full realization of legal protections against hate speech.

Furthermore, Kosovo also adopted a strategy for the Advancement of the Rights of the Roma and Ashkali Communities which outlines objectives and activities for combating hate speech. However, this remains the only comprehensive strategy addressing hate speech in Kosovo.

Finally, there is an institutional framework in place to use for prevention and combating hate speech. In addition to the judicial system the Ombudsman Institution Kosovo (OIK) plays a crucial role in promoting freedom and rights, including protection against hate speech. It conducts investigations, issues recommendations, and publishes reports to safeguard individuals' rights and freedoms. The OIK also monitors the general situation of human rights in Kosovo and engages in awareness-raising activities.

E) International Commitments: Kosovo is committed to upholding international human rights standards through treaties such as the ICCPR, CERD, and ECHR. These commitments provide additional protections against hate speech, reinforcing Kosovo's legal framework and promoting and protecting human rights, including combating hate speech.

[§] Ibid.

** 21 Criminal Code of the Republic of Kosovo (Code No. 06/L-074), Article 141 paragraph 1 (OG, No. 2/2019, 14 January 2019), available at <https://md.rks-gov.net/desk/inc/media/A5713395-507E-4538-BED6-2FA2510F3FCD.pdf>

Despite the comprehensive legal framework, challenges persist in effectively implementing and enforcing hate speech laws, particularly in regions like northern Kosovo. Efforts are ongoing to address these challenges and ensure the effective protection of individuals' rights and the promotion of equality throughout Kosovo.

Research analysis

Methodology of quantitative research


The quantitative aspect of this study employed an online survey methodology to investigate perceptions and understanding regarding hate speech among individuals in Northern Kosovo. The survey aimed to capture a diverse range of perspectives by providing an accessible platform for respondents to share their views and experiences. This section outlines the key aspects of the survey methodology, emphasizing the online nature of the survey and the voluntary participation of respondents.

The survey was designed as an online questionnaire and was made available to the public in Northern Kosovo in both Serbian and Albanian languages. Utilizing online survey tools, the research team developed a user-friendly questionnaire to enable respondents to participate at their convenience. While efforts were made to target specific demographics, the majority of respondents were volunteers who self-selected to participate in the survey.

The survey was open to all individuals in Northern Kosovo, regardless of their background or affiliations. By adopting an open participation approach, the research aimed to collect a wide range of perspectives on hate speech within the local context. This methodology facilitated the inclusion of individuals who may not have traditionally been represented in research studies, thus fostering a more comprehensive understanding of the issue. The voluntary nature of participation ensured that respondents were motivated to contribute their insights and experiences willingly.

Data collection was carried out entirely online, allowing respondents to complete the survey remotely and anonymously. This approach aimed to encourage honest responses by ensuring the confidentiality of participants.

Sample size: 280 respondents



Sample type: Stratified representative random sample, based only on the municipality of residence
Post stratification: Age, level of education, and employment status

Methodology of qualitative research

In addition to the quantitative survey, this research utilized a qualitative approach to gain comprehensive insights into the issue of hate speech in Kosovo. The qualitative component involved conducting 12 interviews with citizens, including representatives from civil society organizations, international organizations, local institutions, and citizens. This section outlines the key aspects of the qualitative methodology, including the selection of interviewees, the interview process, and the analysis of interview data.

The selection of interviewees aimed to capture a diverse range of perspectives and experiences related to hate speech in northern Kosovo. The interviewees included representatives from civil society organizations actively working on issues of hate speech, individuals from international organizations involved in promoting human rights and equality, local stakeholders with relevant expertise or involvement in addressing hate speech, and citizens who may have personal experiences or insights to share. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with each participant to explore their perspectives, experiences, and knowledge regarding hate speech. The interview questions covered a wide range of topics, including perceptions of hate speech, challenges faced in addressing the issue, existing initiatives or programs, and recommendations for combating hate speech. The interviews were conducted in-person, allowing for more in-depth discussions and the opportunity to address specific incidents, such as alleged instances of excessive force by police members and cases of expropriation in northern Kosovo.

The qualitative findings were used to complement and compliment the quantitative survey data, providing a deeper understanding of the experiences, perceptions, and challenges related to hate speech. Analysis of the interview data involved identifying common themes, patterns, and insights emerging from the interviews. These findings contributed to a comprehensive understanding of the issue and informed evidence-based recommendations for addressing hate speech and promoting equality.



Demography

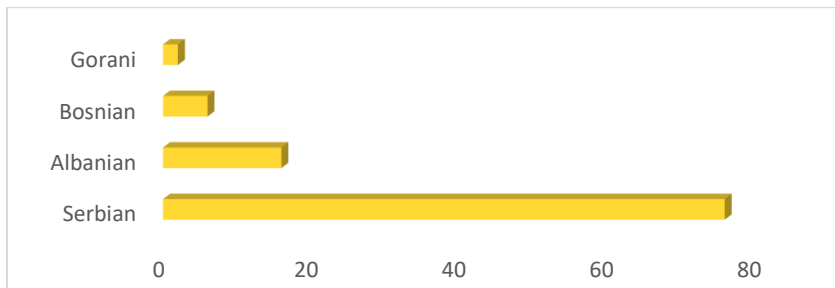


58%

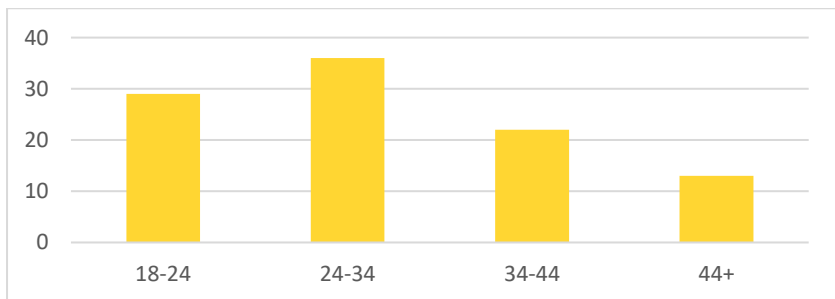
42%

The demographic composition of the respondents is as follows: men, constituting 58% of the sample compared to 42% women.

Within this demographic breakdown, the majority identified as belonging to the Serbian community (76%), followed by the Albanian community (16%), Bosniak (6%), and Gorani (2%) communities.

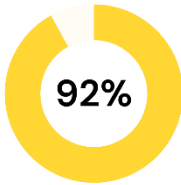


In terms of age distribution, the survey predominantly captured responses from younger citizens, with 29% falling in the 18-24 age bracket, 36% in the 25-34 age bracket, 22% in the 35-44 age bracket, and 13% in the 45 and above category. This distribution aligns with expectations, as the survey was conducted online, where younger age groups are more active.



Experience with the Hate speech

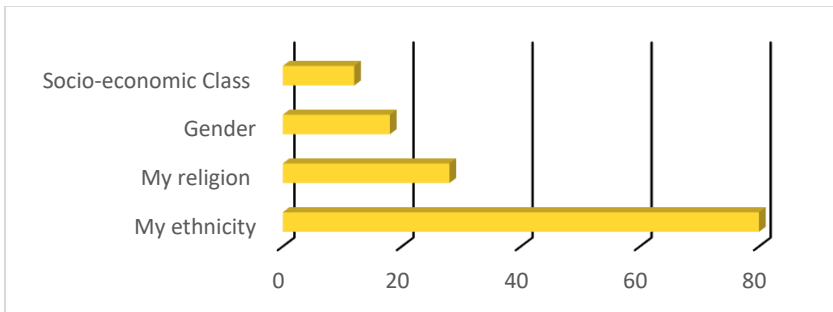
Have you ever encountered hate speech on the Internet?



A significant majority, constituting 92% of the respondents, report having encountered hate speech in various forms. This finding underscores the pervasive nature of hate speech within society and highlights the widespread impact it has on individuals from diverse backgrounds. The high prevalence of hate speech among the respondents suggests a pressing need for comprehensive measures to address this issue effectively and promote tolerance and respect for all.

A smaller segment, comprising 8% of the respondents, indicate that they have not encountered hate speech. While this proportion is relatively low, it is essential to acknowledge their experiences and perspectives. Their lack of exposure to hate speech may be attributed to various factors, including the specific online platforms they use or the social circles they engage with.

Have you personally been the target of hate speech in the past few months? If so, what aspect of your identity do you feel was targeted?



Among the respondents who reported experiencing hate speech in the past few months:

Socio-economic Class: A smaller percentage, approximately 12.5% of respondents, identified their socio-economic class as a target of hate speech. While less prevalent

compared to other aspects of identity, this indicates that discrimination based on socio-economic status is still a concern for some individuals.

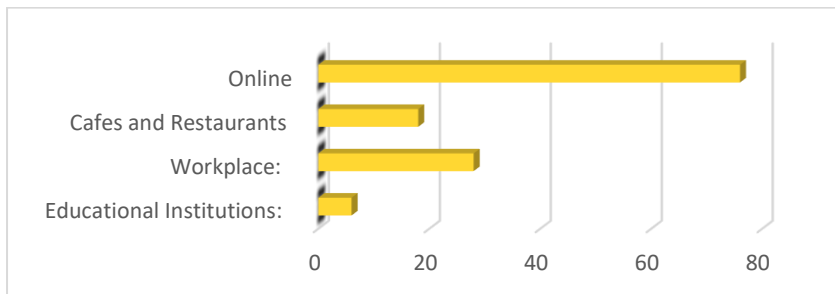
Gender: About 18% of respondents stated that their gender was the focus of hate speech directed towards them. This finding underscores the persistence of gender-based discrimination and the importance of advancing gender equality and combating misogyny in society.

Religion: Approximately 28% of respondents reported that their religion was targeted in instances of hate speech. This indicates a notable proportion of individuals who have experienced religious-based discrimination, emphasizing the need for efforts to promote religious tolerance and respect for diverse religious beliefs.

Ethnicity: A significant majority, accounting for 80% of respondents, identified their ethnicity as the primary aspect of their identity targeted by hate speech. This finding highlights the prevalence of ethnic-based discrimination and underscores the challenges faced by individuals due to their ethnic background

It's important to note that respondents had the opportunity to select multiple answers, indicating that individuals may have experienced hate speech targeting multiple aspects of their identity simultaneously.

Where have you experienced hate speech?



When asked where they have experienced hate speech, respondents provided the following distribution of locations:



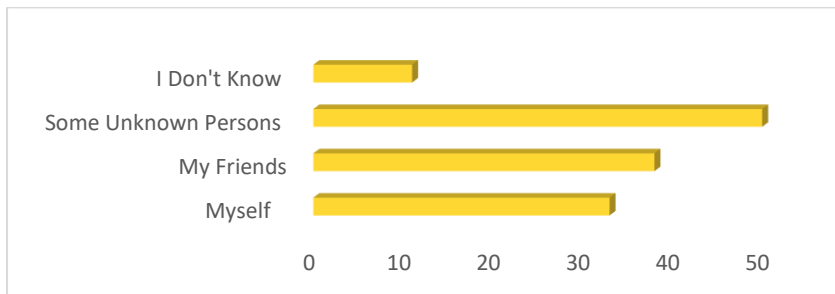
Online: The majority of respondents, accounting for 76%, indicated that they have experienced hate speech online. This highlights the pervasive nature of online hate speech and the challenges associated with addressing discriminatory behavior in digital spaces.

Cafes and Restaurants: Nearly 18.8% of respondents reported experiencing hate speech in cafes and restaurants. These public spaces, where individuals gather for social interactions, should be conducive to mutual respect and dignity.

Workplace: A significant proportion, comprising 23% of respondents, identified their workplace as a location where they have encountered hate speech. This underscores the importance of fostering inclusive and respectful work environments free from discrimination.

Educational Institutions: Approximately 6.5% of respondents reported experiencing hate speech in educational institutions. This finding suggests that educational environments, which should ideally promote tolerance and respect, are not immune to incidents of hate speech.

Who were the targets of hate speech on the Internet?



I Don't Know (11%): The percentage of respondents who indicated uncertainty about the targets of hate speech on the Internet reflects a lack of awareness or understanding regarding the prevalence and impact of online hate speech. This may indicate a need for further education and awareness-raising initiatives to help individuals recognize and respond to instances of hate speech online, thereby fostering a safer and more inclusive online environment for all users.

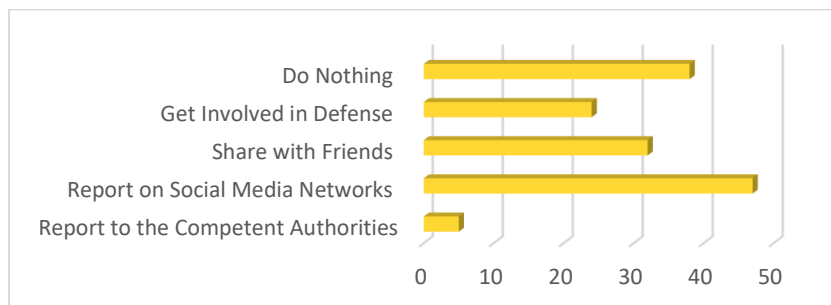
Some Unknown Persons (50%): This response underscores the pervasive nature of online hate speech, indicating that it is not limited to specific individuals or known targets. The

fact that respondents perceive hate speech directed towards unknown persons suggests that hate speech may be prevalent across various online platforms and communities, affecting individuals regardless of their personal identity or affiliation.

My Friends (38.9%): The high percentage of respondents indicating that their friends were targets of hate speech highlights the ripple effect of online hate speech within social circles. This suggests that hate speech not only affects individuals directly but also indirectly impacts their social connections and relationships, potentially leading to feelings of distress and vulnerability among friends who are targeted.

Myself (33.3%): This response indicates that a significant portion of respondents personally experienced hate speech directed towards them online. It suggests that individuals are directly impacted by online hate speech, which can have various negative effects on their well-being, mental health, and sense of safety while engaging in online activities.

How do you respond to the hate speech?



Do Nothing (38.9%): A notable percentage of respondents indicate that they choose not to take any specific action in response to hate speech. This response highlights the complexity of addressing hate speech and the various factors that may influence individuals' decisions to intervene or remain passive. It underscores the need for further education, awareness-raising, and support mechanisms to empower individuals to respond effectively to hate speech and contribute to creating a safer and more respectful online environment.

Get Involved in Defense (24.7%): A significant portion of respondents express a willingness to actively engage in defending themselves or others against hate speech.



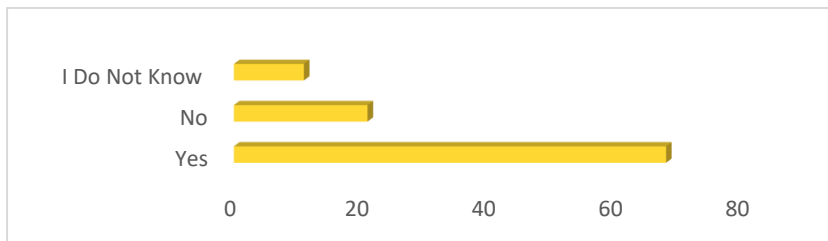
This may involve speaking out against hate speech, advocating for tolerance and respect, or participating in community initiatives aimed at combating hate speech and promoting inclusivity.

Share with Friends (32%): Many respondents choose to confide in their friends about their experiences with hate speech. Sharing personal experiences of hate speech with friends can provide emotional support, validation, and solidarity, allowing individuals to cope with the negative impact of hate speech and seek guidance on how to address it effectively.

Report on Social Media Networks (47.3%): The majority of respondents opt to report instances of hate speech directly to the social media platforms or online communities where they encounter such content. Reporting hate speech on social media networks can lead to the removal of offensive content and the suspension or banning of accounts responsible for spreading hate speech.

Report to the Competent Authorities (5.8%): This response indicates that a small percentage of respondents choose to take formal action by reporting instances of hate speech to the appropriate authorities or regulatory bodies. Reporting hate speech to competent authorities can be a proactive step in seeking legal recourse and holding perpetrators accountable for their actions.

Have you ever felt personally threatened or offended by hate speech online?

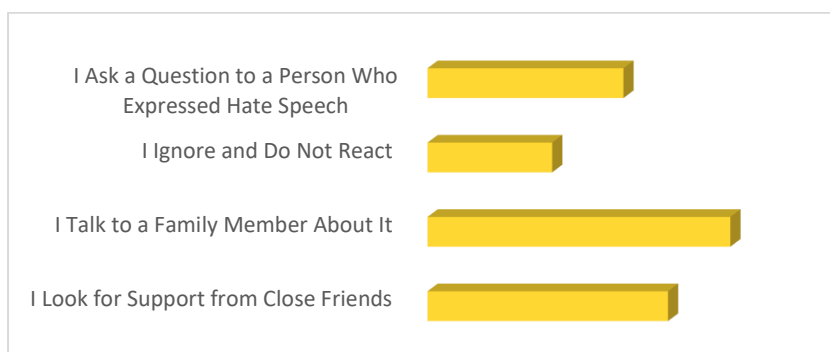


I Do Not Know (11.1%): A minority of respondents indicate uncertainty about whether they have felt personally threatened or offended by hate speech online. This response may reflect ambiguity or confusion about what constitutes hate speech, as well as the subjective nature of individual experiences with online content. It also highlights the need for greater awareness and education about the impact of hate speech and the resources available to address it.

No (21.3%): A smaller percentage of respondents report that they have not felt personally threatened or offended by hate speech online. This may suggest that some individuals have not encountered hate speech directed towards them personally or that they perceive hate speech differently, perhaps attributing less significance to online interactions or feeling less affected by negative online content.

Yes (68.6%): A significant majority of respondents indicate that they have felt personally threatened or offended by hate speech encountered online. This response underscores the harmful impact of hate speech on individuals' emotional well-being and sense of safety in online spaces. Feeling threatened or offended by hate speech can lead to psychological distress, anxiety, and a diminished sense of belonging in digital communities.

If so, what did you do?



I Ask a Question to a Person Who Expressed Hate Speech (22.9%): A significant portion of respondents reported that they engage with individuals who have expressed hate speech by asking them questions. This approach may be aimed at fostering dialogue, challenging prejudiced beliefs, or seeking understanding. By asking questions, individuals may encourage reflection, empathy, or accountability in those who perpetrate hate speech, potentially promoting awareness and change.

I Ignore and Do Not React (14.9%): A minority of respondents indicate that they choose to ignore and not react to hate speech encountered online. This response may stem from a desire to avoid confrontation, minimize conflict, or disengage from potentially harmful

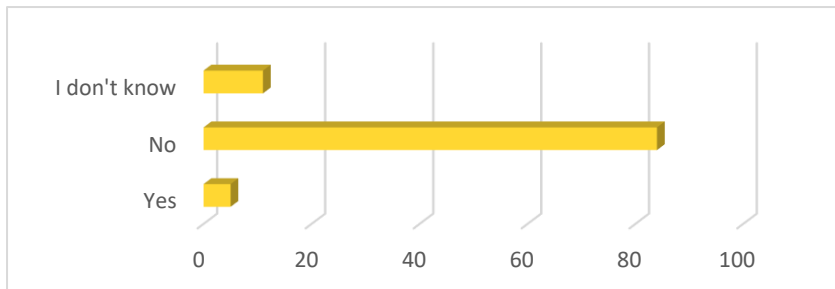


interactions. However, choosing not to react may also reflect feelings of powerlessness, resignation, or a lack of confidence in the effectiveness of responding to hate speech.

I Talk to a Family Member About It (34.4%): A significant percentage of respondents report that they discuss their experience of encountering hate speech with a family member. Sharing experiences with family members can foster a sense of connection, understanding, and familial support. Family members may offer perspective, guidance, or encouragement, contributing to a sense of solidarity and resilience in addressing hate speech.

I Look for Support from Close Friends (27.8%): A notable proportion of respondents indicate that they seek support from their close friends when encountering hate speech online. Turning to friends for support can provide emotional validation, comfort, and reassurance during distressing situations. Friends may offer empathy, advice, or solidarity, helping individuals cope with the negative effects of hate speech and feel less isolated in their experiences.

Have you ever posted or sent content online that could be considered hate speech?



I Do Not Know (11%): A notable proportion of respondents express uncertainty about whether they have posted or sent content online that could be considered hate speech. This response suggests a lack of awareness or reflection regarding one's own online behavior and its potential implications. It underscores the need for education, self-reflection, and critical thinking skills to help individuals recognize and mitigate the spread of hate speech in online spaces.

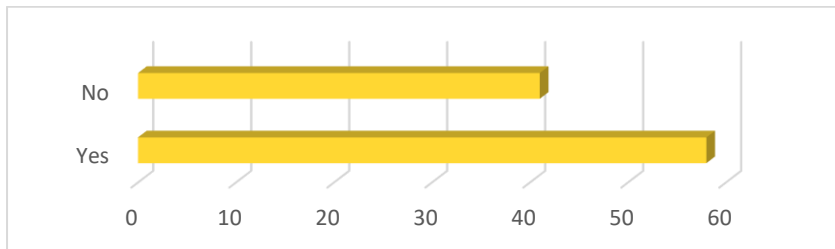
No (84%): The majority of respondents indicate that they have not posted or sent content online that could be considered hate speech. This response suggests a commitment to responsible online behavior, respect for others, and adherence to ethical standards in

digital communication. It may also reflect a conscious effort to contribute positively to online discourse and avoid perpetuating harmful attitudes or stereotypes.

Yes (5%): A small percentage of respondents acknowledge that they have posted or sent content online that could be considered hate speech. This admission raises concerns about the prevalence of hate speech perpetration among some individuals within the online community. It underscores the importance of promoting awareness, accountability, and responsible online citizenship to prevent the dissemination of harmful content and foster a culture of respect and tolerance online.

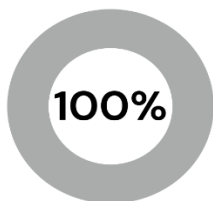
Hate speech in northern Kosovo

In the past three months, have you ever seen or heard situations of hate speech in person (face to face)?



No (41.2%): A significant minority of respondents indicate that they have not encountered situations of hate speech in person over the past three months. While this percentage is lower than those who have witnessed hate speech, it still represents a considerable portion of the sample. The absence of such experiences may reflect differences in social circles, geographic location, or individual exposure to diverse environments where hate speech may occur less frequently.

Yes (58.8%): A majority of respondents acknowledge having witnessed or heard instances of hate speech in person during the specified timeframe. This indicates that hate speech is not confined to online platforms but also occurs in real-life settings, such as public spaces, workplaces, educational institutions, and social gatherings. The frequency and context of these encounters may vary, but the prevalence suggests a notable presence of hate speech within interpersonal interactions.



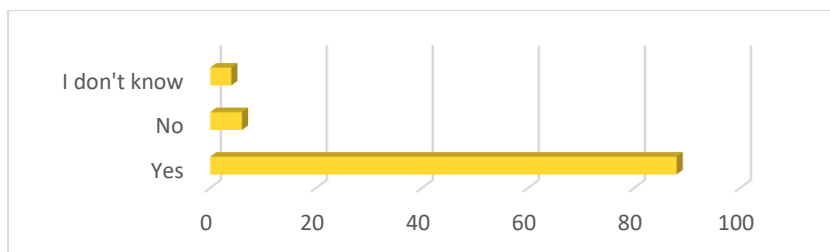
Yes

Are you aware of the term "hate speech"?

All respondents are aware of the term "hate speech," indicating a universal understanding among the surveyed population regarding this concept. This high level of awareness suggests a recognition of the significance and impact of hate speech within society. It implies that individuals are familiar with the terminology and

likely possess at least a basic understanding of what constitutes hate speech and its potential consequences. This collective awareness provides a solid foundation for efforts aimed at addressing and combatting hate speech, as it indicates a readiness among the population to engage in discussions and initiatives aimed at promoting tolerance, respect, and mutual understanding.

Do you think that hate speech is a problem in the north of Kosovo?



The high percentage of respondents, 88.9%, recognizing hate speech as a significant problem in northern Kosovo indicates a widespread awareness of the issue's severity. This awareness suggests that people in the community have likely witnessed or experienced hate speech themselves or have seen its effects on others.

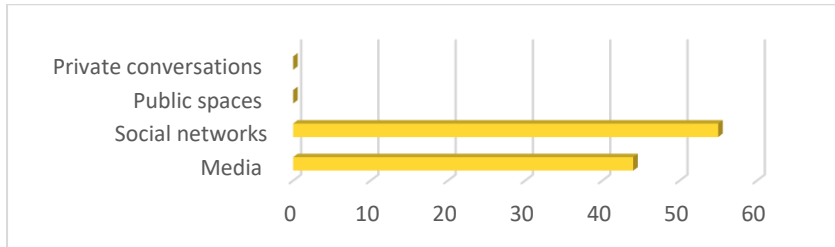
Acknowledging hate speech as a problem is the first step towards addressing it effectively. It indicates that there is a collective understanding of the need to combat hateful rhetoric and promote a more inclusive and respectful society.

The small percentages of respondents who answered "No" (6.8%) or "I do not know" (4.3%) to whether hate speech is a problem in northern Kosovo suggest a need for further exploration and awareness-raising efforts. For those who answered "No," it may indicate

either a lack of personal experience with hate speech or a perception that it is not a significant issue in their immediate surroundings.

As for those who responded with "I do not know," it may indicate a lack of clarity or information about the prevalence and effects of hate speech in the region.

Where do you most often come into contact with information or hate speech?



The responses to this question indicate that the majority of respondents (55.6%) most often encounter information or hate speech on social networks, highlighting the significant role of online platforms in disseminating such content. This finding underscores the importance of addressing hate speech within digital spaces and implementing effective strategies to combat its spread on social media platforms.

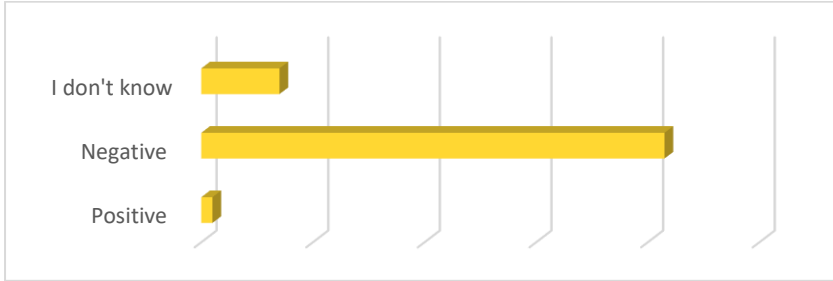
Additionally, 44.4% of respondents reported encountering information or hate speech through the media, indicating that traditional media channels also play a significant role in shaping perceptions and disseminating content related to hate speech. While digital platforms may dominate in terms of frequency, the influence of traditional media should not be overlooked in efforts to address hate speech comprehensively.

Notably, none of the respondents indicated public spaces or private conversations as primary sources of encountering hate speech. This suggests that hate speech is predominantly encountered in mediated environments, whether online or through traditional media channels.

Perception and assessment of measures against hate speech



How do you assess the effectiveness of the current measures taken against hate speech?



The responses to this question reveal a notable skepticism regarding the effectiveness of current measures taken against hate speech, with 83.3% of respondents expressing a negative assessment. This sentiment suggests a widespread perception among respondents that existing efforts to combat hate speech are inadequate or insufficient in addressing the problem effectively.

The lack of a single positive assessments indicates a significant gap between the perceived effectiveness of current measures and the expectations or standards desired by respondents. This highlights the need for a reevaluation of existing strategies and the implementation of more robust and comprehensive approaches to address hate speech.

Furthermore, 14% of respondents indicated uncertainty or lack of knowledge regarding the effectiveness of current measures. Enhancing transparency and communication about measures taken against hate speech may help alleviate uncertainties and foster greater confidence in the effectiveness of such measures among the public.

Do you think that people who express hate speech should be held accountable for their words?



The unanimity of respondents in advocating for the accountability of individuals who express hate speech is striking. With 100% agreement on this matter, it reflects a strong consensus among the surveyed population regarding the importance of holding perpetrators accountable for their words and actions. This resounding affirmation underscores the belief that

there should be consequences for those who engage in hate speech, signaling a collective commitment to promoting tolerance, respect, and inclusivity within the community.


Recommendations by the respondents for overcoming this issue:


1. **Increased Punishment Measures:** Respondents emphasize the need for stronger penalties for individuals and entities involved in spreading hate speech. This includes advocating for stricter legal measures to deter such behavior.
2. **Honest Dialogue:** There's a call for open and honest dialogue about the reality of hate speech, involving the entire society in finding solutions. This entails fostering understanding, empathy, and collective responsibility in combating hate speech.
3. **Full Application of the Law:** Some respondents suggest abolishing existing legal provisions related to hate speech and ensuring that the law is applied uniformly without exceptions. This highlights the importance of consistency and accountability in enforcing laws against hate speech.
4. **Education:** There's an emphasis on the role of education in addressing hate speech, starting with self-education, educating children, and reevaluating societal values. This involves promoting values of tolerance, respect, and cooperation to counteract hate speech.
5. **Communication and Integration:** Respondents stress the need for improved communication, integration, and cooperation within society to foster understanding and unity. Overcoming language barriers and working together regardless of differences are seen as essential for societal progress.
6. **Punishment for Hate Speech:** Recommendations include implementing prison sentences for media outlets that propagate hate speech and introducing laws specifically aimed at protecting individuals from hate speech. This underscores the importance of holding responsible parties accountable for their actions.



7. **Police Action:** There's a suggestion for authorities to issue warnings and take active measures against hate speech, with a particular emphasis on law enforcement agencies to monitor and address instances of hate speech.
8. **Social Network Monitoring:** Strengthening monitoring efforts on social networks is proposed to detect and combat hate speech online. This involves collaboration between authorities and social media platforms to ensure a safer online environment.

The interviews conducted with 12 participants, representing various communities and sectors within Kosovo, provided valuable insights into the issue of hate speech in the Mitrovica region.

1. **Communities and Employment:** The participants encompassed diverse backgrounds, with the majority being Kosovo Serbs (K-Serb), followed by Kosovo Albanians (K-Albanian) and one from the Bosniak community. Their employment was spread across different sectors, including local institutions, civil society, media, and educational institutions, reflecting a broad perspective on the issue.
 2. **Recognition of Hate Speech Issue:** All participants agreed that hate speech is a significant problem in Kosovo. They highlighted the detrimental impact it has on societal cohesion and stability, emphasizing the urgent need for action to address it effectively.
 3. **Politicians' Responsibility:** Participants pointed out the role of politicians in exacerbating the problem of hate speech. They noted that politicians often use divisive rhetoric to score political points, targeting the opposing ethnic group to incite animosity and reinforce divisions within society. This behavior was particularly evident among Kosovo Serb and Kosovo Albanian politicians, who exploit their platforms to spread hate speech against each other's communities.
 4. **Media and Social Media Influence:** The interviews underscored the role of media and social media platforms as key drivers of hate speech. Participants expressed concern about the dissemination of inflammatory content through these channels, which amplifies tensions and fosters polarization among different ethnic groups. They emphasized the need for greater accountability and responsible reporting within the media landscape.
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5. **Critique of International Community:** Many participants criticized the international community for its perceived inaction in addressing the issue of hate speech in Kosovo. They expressed disappointment that international actors have not taken a more proactive stance in condemning hate speech and supporting efforts to combat it. Participants felt that the lack of intervention from the international community allows hate speech to proliferate unchecked, exacerbating tensions and undermining peacebuilding efforts.
 6. **Call for Action:** Overall, the interviews highlighted a consensus among participants regarding the urgent need for action to tackle hate speech in Kosovo. They stressed the importance of political accountability, responsible media reporting, and international engagement in addressing the root causes of hate speech and fostering a more inclusive and tolerant society. The interviews served as a call to action for all stakeholders to work together towards combating hate speech and promoting reconciliation and understanding among Kosovo's diverse communities.
 7. **Examples of hate speech mentioned by the interviewees:**
 1. Derogative narrative in the media for Kosovo Albanians – “šiptar”. This was mentioned as an example from the TV shows and newspaper articles from Serbia which depicts Kosovo Albanians in a derogative manner.
 2. “Criminals from the north” – Often used phrase by the K-Albanian politician when describing population from northern Kosovo.
 3. “Gang members who do not pay for electricity” – Often used in media by the central level politicians when they want to point out some happenings in the north regarding Serbian community.
 3. “Poturice” – This phrase was used online to offend Bosniaks and present them as Serbs who have been Islamized.
 4. “Škije” – The derogative name for the Serbs often used in social media on the comment section.
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Conclusion

Overall, the comprehensive study on hate speech in Kosovo reveals a deeply concerning prevalence of divisive rhetoric and discriminatory language within the region. The findings, drawn from surveys, interviews, and participant recommendations, shed light on the multifaceted nature of the issue and its far-reaching implications for societal cohesion, stability, and individual well-being.

Key findings from the survey indicate that hate speech is pervasive, particularly online, with a significant percentage of respondents reporting personal encounters with hateful content. Specific identities, such as ethnicity, religion, and gender, are frequently targeted, reflecting a pattern of discrimination and intolerance within the community. Moreover, the majority of respondents express feelings of personal threat or offense as a result of encountering hate speech online, underscoring its detrimental impact on individual psychosocial health and sense of safety.

The interviews with diverse participants further underscore the complexity of the issue, highlighting the role of politicians, media, and social media platforms in perpetuating hate speech narratives and exacerbating interethnic tensions. Criticism of the international community's perceived inaction underscores the need for greater external support and intervention to address hate speech effectively.

In conclusion, addressing the pervasive issue of hate speech in Kosovo requires a multifaceted approach that engages all relevant stakeholders, including local institutions and the international community. The findings of the study underscore the urgent need for coordinated action to combat hate speech and promote tolerance and understanding among diverse communities. It is imperative that both local institutions and the international community are actively involved in resolving this pressing issue to ensure lasting progress and stability in the region.

Overall, the study serves as a stark reminder of the urgent need to address hate speech as a critical barrier to peace and stability in Kosovo



Recommendations:

For Local and Central Authorities:

- Local and central authorities should work together to strengthen existing laws and regulations to explicitly prohibit hate speech.
- Ensure that legal frameworks provide clear definitions and guidelines for identifying and addressing hate speech.
- Allocate resources for the effective enforcement of hate speech laws, including training for law enforcement agencies and judiciary personnel.
- Hold local and central politicians accountable for their public statements and actions, especially regarding hate speech.
- Encourage political leaders to refrain from using hate speech for political gain and instead promote inclusive and respectful dialogue.
- Establish mechanisms for monitoring and addressing hate speech within governmental institutions, ensuring a zero-tolerance policy towards discriminatory behavior.

For Civil Society Organizations (CSOs):

- Provide support and resources to CSOs working to combat hate speech and promote interethnic dialogue and understanding.
- Foster collaboration between CSOs, government agencies, and international partners to develop and implement community-based interventions and awareness campaigns.
- Empower grassroots initiatives to monitor hate speech online and offline, mobilizing communities to respond effectively and promote tolerance and respect for diversity.

- Implement educational programs to enhance digital literacy and media literacy skills among vulnerable populations, equipping them with the knowledge and critical thinking skills needed to recognize and counter hate speech.
- Support initiatives that promote responsible journalism and ethical reporting, encouraging media outlets to refrain from disseminating hateful or discriminatory content.
- Collaborate with social media platforms to develop and implement policies and mechanisms for detecting, monitoring, and removing hate speech from their platforms.

For the International Community:

- Encourage the international community to actively engage in addressing hate speech in Kosovo, providing support and resources for initiatives aimed at promoting tolerance and inclusivity.
- Facilitate dialogue and cooperation between Kosovo and neighboring countries to address regional issues related to hate speech and interethnic tensions.
- Call upon international organizations and diplomatic missions to monitor hate speech and advocate for policies and interventions to combat it effectively.
- Advocate for the inclusion of hate speech prevention and mitigation efforts in international agendas and agreements related to human rights and conflict resolution.
- Use diplomatic channels to urge Kosovo's government to take decisive action against hate speech and promote interethnic dialogue and reconciliation.

The document provides a detailed analysis of hate speech in northern Kosovo, focusing on its prevalence, impact, and underlying factors. Through surveys and interviews with diverse participants, the study explores hate speech in northern Kosovo by examining its prevalence, impact on identity, common locations, responses, and the role of media, and social platforms.

The document also includes recommendations for local authorities, civil society organizations, and the international community to address hate speech effectively and promote tolerance and understanding among communities in Kosovo.

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