

Women in Kosovo – Facts and Figures

During the 1990s Kosovo went through a deep social and economic crisis with negative consequences for its society, and in particular for women. While the situation has improved since 1999, women in Kosovo still face numerous obstacles.

Women in the economy:

- The overall illiteracy rate among adults in Kosovo is 5.8 per cent. It is, however, significantly higher for women (12.5 per cent) than for men (3.4 per cent). Illiteracy and low skills are the main barriers for women in Kosovo to find employment.
- The average unemployment rate in Kosovo is 42.4 per cent, but among women, unemployment is at 69.4 per cent.
- On average, women earn 14 per cent less than men, despite legislation that stipulates wage parity for women and men.
- Women in Kosovo have traditionally worked in agriculture, industry, administration, education and health care.
- Only 2 per cent of businesses in Kosovo are owned by women. One of the main reasons is women's lack of direct access to financial support and bank loans, because their family assets are mainly registered under the name of male members of the family. Inheritance of assets in Kosovo is often regulated by internal agreements within the family and based on traditional cultural norms.

Women in politics and public service:

- In line with the requirements of a quota, women constitute 30 per cent of members in Kosovo's Assembly, but few are in influential decision-making roles. Only one of 15 ministers is a woman, and there is only one female deputy minister.
- Only 10 per cent of decision-making roles in public administration are held by women.
- In the police service, 15 per cent are women.

Gender equality legislation:

The main provisions on gender equality are contained in the Kosovo Action Plan for the Achievement of Gender Equality and the Law on Gender Equality. The Kosovo Action Plan for the Achievement of Gender Equality was adopted in 2003, after extensive consultations with parliamentarians, the government, civil society and technical experts to ensure that it reflects the needs of women in Kosovo. UNIFEM, together with the Office of Gender Affairs in the UN Interim Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) and the UN Development Programme (UNDP), supported the development of the Action Plan.

The Law on Gender Equality, promulgated on 7 June 2004, contains provisions on gender equality with regard to political parties, the economy, property, and employment, and it defines monitoring mechanisms and sanctions in case of violations of the law. While both documents spell out the full range of measures, benchmarks and provisions to achieve gender equality, effective implementation remains a challenge.

Women's movement:

From its early beginnings in the 1990s, the women's movement in Kosovo has developed into one of the strongest movements in the Balkan countries. The number of women's organizations, covering areas such as women's human rights, health, education, economy empowerment and violence against women, increased significantly after the war in 1999. This is due to the fact that it was no longer prohibited for Albanians to organize and also a result of the extensive foreign aid that has been channelled to women's empowerment projects in Kosovo. Some 85 women's organizations from different ethnic groups and regions of Kosovo are associated with the Kosovo Women's Network, an important umbrella organization and UNIFEM partner.