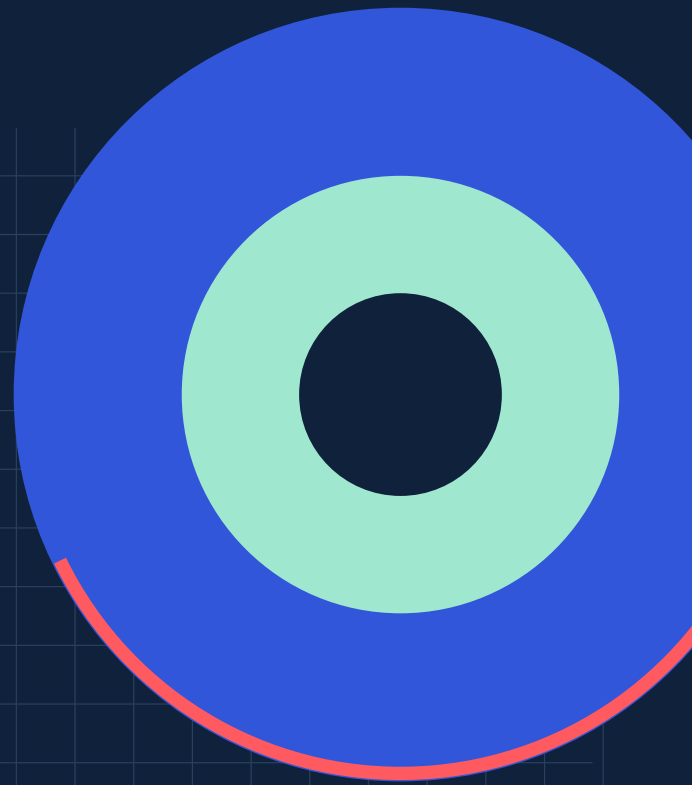




CENTER FOR POLICIES AND ADVOCACY
QENDRA E POLITIKAVE DHE AVOKIM



FROM PROTECTION TO PRACTICE

Workplace discrimination, reporting
and enforcement in Kosovo

LAW ■ TRUST ■ ENFORCEMENT

ALIC BROWN

Center for Policies and Advocacy (CPA)





Author: Alic Brown

Published by: Center for Policies and Advocacy

www.qpa-rks.org

cpa.kosova@gmail.com

+383 (0) 38 226 530

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READ FIRST

00

Executive summary

76.5%SAY DISCRIMINATION IS COMMON
OR VERY COMMON**1,065**RESPONDENTS IN THE MARCH
2026 QPA SURVEY**04**PRACTICAL STEPS TO IMPROVE
REPORTING AND ENFORCEMENT

Kosovo has an established legal framework to protect workers from workplace discrimination, but legal protections alone do not guarantee effective enforcement. Many workers choose not to report discrimination because they fear retaliation, lack confidence in institutions, or are unsure how the reporting process works. When discrimination goes unreported, institutions have fewer opportunities to investigate complaints and enforce the protections already established in law.

This brief draws on findings from the March 2026 Qendra për Politika dhe Avokim (QPA) Omnibus Survey and existing research on workplace discrimination in Kosovo. The findings show that workplace discrimination is widely perceived as a problem, women and young workers are viewed as the groups most affected, and underreporting continues to limit enforcement.

This brief recommends four practical steps. These include increasing public awareness of reporting procedures, establishing consistent standards for handling discrimination complaints, improving coordination between institutions by building on the National Platform for Protection against Discrimination, and publishing a joint annual report on workplace discrimination enforcement. Together, these recommendations aim to strengthen reporting, improve institutional coordination, and build public trust needed for effective enforcement.

SECTION

01

Introduction

Workplace discrimination remains a concern in Kosovo despite legal protections that prohibit it and provide workers with several avenues for seeking remedies. The primary issue is not whether legal protections exist, but whether workers trust the institutions responsible for enforcing them. When workers worry about retaliation, doubt that their complaints will be kept private, or think that reporting will not lead to real action, many cases of workplace discrimination go unreported to the institutions designed to investigate them.

This brief examines workplace discrimination from an enforcement perspective using findings from the March 2026 Qendra për Politika dhe Avokim (QPA) Omnibus Survey and existing research. It explores how the public perceives workplace discrimination, which groups respondents believe are most affected, and the barriers that discourage workers from reporting discrimination. The findings suggest that effective enforcement depends on more than legal protections alone. Institutions can only investigate and respond to discrimination when workers trust the reporting process enough to come forward. Understanding why workers choose not to report discrimination is essential to strengthening enforcement.

SECTION

02

Legal and enforcement context in Kosovo

Kosovo's legal framework prohibits workplace discrimination and provides workers with avenues for seeking remedies when discrimination occurs. Protection from discrimination is reflected in several provisions of the Constitution, such as Articles 7, 24, 58, and 59 (Constitution of the Republic of Kosovo, 2008). The Constitution also incorporates international human rights protections directly into Kosovo's domestic law. Article 22 states that international human rights instruments are "directly applicable in the Republic of Kosovo and, in the case of conflict, have priority over provisions of laws and other acts of public institutions" (Constitution of the Republic of Kosovo, 2008, Art. 22). These constitutional provisions establish the legal foundation for protecting workers from discrimination.

The constitutional protections against discrimination are implemented primarily through the Law on Protection from Discrimination and the Law on Labour. The Law on Protection from Discrimination establishes "a general framework for preventing and fighting discrimination" (Law No. 05/L-021 on Protection from Discrimination, 2015). The Law on Labour outlines the legal framework for employment relationships, workers' rights, and employers' responsibilities in Kosovo (Law No. 03/L-212 on Labour, 2010). These laws define workplace rights, responsibilities of institutions, and how discrimination complaints should be handled (Law No. 03/L-212 on Labour, 2010; Law No. 05/L-021 on Protection from Discrimination, 2015; Office for Good Governance, 2023a).

Responsibility for implementing these protections is divided among several institutions. According to the Office for Good Governance (2023a), the mechanisms for protection from discrimination include the Ombudsperson Institution, relevant courts, the Office for Good Governance, ministries and municipalities with designated anti-discrimination officials, the State Prosecutor, the Kosovo Police, and other institutions

under special regulations. In workplaces, the Central Labor Inspectorate oversees compliance with labor laws and investigates violations of workers' rights (Ministry of Finance, Labour and Transfers, n.d.). Research on workplace discrimination has shown that labor inspectors receive very few discrimination-related complaints, suggesting that underreporting and limited complaint activity may interfere with enforcement opportunities (Banjska et al., 2022). Reporting mechanisms include the National Platform for Protection against Discrimination, through which complaints may go to the Kosovo Police, courts, the Ombudsperson Institution, and other responsible institutions (Office for Good Governance, 2023b). Reflecting these legal and institutional protections, the Ombudsperson Institution of Kosovo (2025) notes that "the Republic of Kosovo has a consolidated legal framework for protection from discrimination" (p. 12). Despite these protections, concerns remain about how effectively they are implemented. Murati (2023) argues that Kosovo has generally aligned its anti-discrimination legislation with international standards but states that "Kosovo must make continuous efforts in the applicability of the legislation in practice" (p. 346). This distinction highlights that legal protections alone do not ensure effective enforcement.

The effectiveness of anti-discrimination protections depends on whether institutions can receive, investigate, and resolve complaints. The Ex-Post Evaluation of the Law on Protection from Discrimination found that "some institutional mechanisms have not been functionalized in accordance with the requirements of the LPD" (Office for Good Governance, 2023a, p. 24). The evaluation also found that institutions face "serious difficulties in legal, institutional and functional terms, as well as significant lack of financial capacity and human resources" (Office for Good Governance, 2023a, p. 30). Findings from the Ombudsperson Institution support these concerns regarding implementation and institutional capacity. In 2025, the Ombudsperson requested information on discrimination complaints and implementation of the Law on Protection from Discrimination from 93 institutions, bodies, and authorities, but only 50 responded while 43 failed to provide information (Ombudsperson Institution of Kosovo, 2025). This suggests that implementation challenges may limit the effectiveness of anti-discrimination protections even when formal legal remedies exist.

2025 OMBUDSPERSON INFORMATION REQUEST

93

institutions
contacted

50

responses
received

43

did not
respond

Oversight reports highlight issues with how discrimination complaints are recorded and monitored. The Ombudsperson Institution of Kosovo (2025) reports that it investigated 61 cases involving allegations of discrimination during 2024, opening 41 cases for investigation and determining that 20 complaints were unfounded. However, the report also notes that "the absence of consolidated institutional mechanisms and standardized procedures for identifying and documenting cases of discrimination makes it difficult to create a clear and comprehensive picture of discrimination" (p. 5). The report notes that institutions in Kosovo generally do not maintain comprehensive records of discrimination complaints and cases (Ombudsperson Institution of Kosovo, 2025). The Ex-Post Evaluation similarly identified a lack of statistical data and inconsistent reporting practices among institutions responsible for implementing the law (Office for Good Governance, 2023a). These limitations make it harder for institutions to monitor patterns of discrimination, evaluate enforcement efforts, and determine if anti-discrimination protections are being effectively utilized.

Kosovo has established legal protections against workplace discrimination, but implementation remains a significant challenge. Government evaluations, oversight reports, and academic research consistently show that legal protections alone are not enough to ensure effective enforcement.

RESEARCH DESIGN

03

Methodology

01 / SAMPLE

1,065

respondents

02 / FIELDWORK

MAR 2026

Kosovo

03 / READ AS

PERCEPTION

not prevalence

This brief primarily uses findings from the QPA Omnibus Survey conducted in Kosovo during March 2026. The survey of 1,065 respondents examined perceptions of workplace discrimination, personal experiences with discrimination, groups viewed as most vulnerable to discrimination, and barriers discouraging workers from reporting discriminatory behavior. The analysis examines public perceptions of discrimination, identifies groups viewed as particularly vulnerable, and explores barriers to reporting discrimination. It also considers whether views and experiences vary by gender, age, and location.

The survey captures views from the general public rather than only individuals who have reported discrimination or engaged with enforcement bodies. This makes it possible to examine concerns and reporting barriers that may not appear in official complaint statistics. Workers who do not report discrimination are unlikely to appear in official data, making survey findings useful for understanding potential gaps in enforcement.

The survey focuses on perceptions and self-reported experiences, not verified instances of discrimination. Because of this, the findings cannot determine the actual prevalence of discrimination or establish cause-and-effect relationships. Instead, they give insight into how respondents understand and experience discrimination. These limitations should be considered when interpreting the findings.

SURVEY SIGNAL

04A

Public perceptions of workplace discrimination

How common is workplace discrimination?

QPA OMNIBUS SURVEY / MARCH 2026

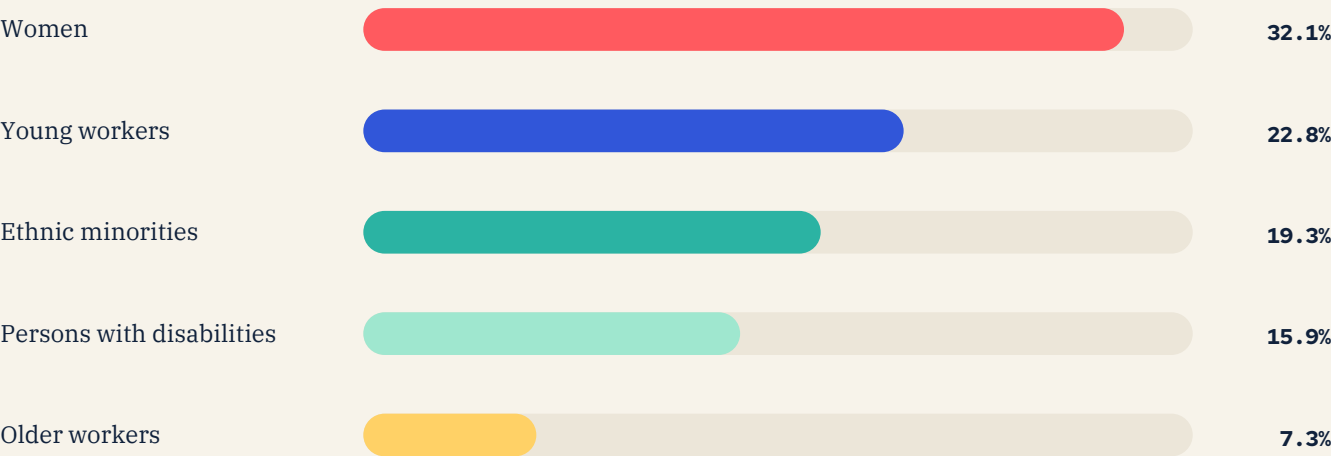


● VERY COMMON ● COMMON IN SOME SECTORS ● RARE ● NOT A PROBLEM

76.5% combined: common or very common

Groups perceived as most affected

Share of respondents selecting each group



SECTION

04A

What the public sees

Workplace discrimination has been documented across multiple stages of employment in Kosovo, including recruitment, hiring, promotion, maternity-related treatment, workplace sexual harassment, and other forms of discrimination (Banjska et al., 2022; Institute GAP, 2023; UN Women & International Labour Organization, 2023). Government evaluations have found that implementation and enforcement remain ongoing challenges (Office for Good Governance, 2023a).

The QPA Omnibus Survey reveals a similar trend. More than three-quarters of respondents said that workplace discrimination is either very common (37.8%) or common in certain workplaces and sectors (38.7%), while only 20.1% described discrimination as rare and 3.4% reported that it is not a problem (QPA, 2026). These perceptions are consistent with previous research on discrimination in recruitment, hiring, promotion, maternity-related treatment, and workplace harassment (Banjska et al., 2022; Institute GAP, 2023; UN Women & International Labour Organization, 2023). They suggest that concerns about workplace discrimination go beyond isolated incidents and are reflected in how many people view the labor market. While perceptions do not measure the actual prevalence of discrimination, they do indicate that many respondents see discrimination as a common workplace issue.

Perceptions of workplace discrimination vary across Kosovo. Urban respondents were more likely to report that workplace discrimination is very common, with 45.9% selecting this response compared with 32.2% of rural respondents (QPA, 2026). The survey does not explain why urban and rural respondents viewed workplace discrimination differently, and the findings should not imply that discrimination occurs more frequently in one setting than the other. The difference suggests that perceptions of workplace discrimination are not the same across Kosovo. Differences in how people view workplace discrimination may also affect

how institutions communicate information about workplace rights and reporting procedures.

Respondents were asked which groups they believed experience the greatest workplace discrimination in Kosovo. Women were identified most frequently (32.1%), followed by young workers (22.8%), ethnic minorities (19.3%), and persons with disabilities (15.9%), while older workers were selected less frequently (7.3%) (QPA, 2026). Women accounted for nearly one-third of all responses, making them the group respondents most often identified as experiencing workplace discrimination. This suggests that respondents view women as the group most affected by workplace discrimination.

Young workers were the second group respondents viewed as especially vulnerable. Shannon (2025) found that employers often favor more experienced applicants, even for entry-level positions, and that stereotypes about younger workers contribute to discriminatory hiring practices and workplace exploitation. Many young people face discrimination before they are hired, which helps explain why respondents viewed young workers as especially vulnerable. Respondents also identified ethnic minorities (19.3%) and persons with disabilities (15.9%), suggesting that workplace discrimination is viewed as affecting multiple groups rather than a single population. This is consistent with research documenting discrimination in recruitment, hiring, promotion, and workplace conditions (Banjska et al., 2022).

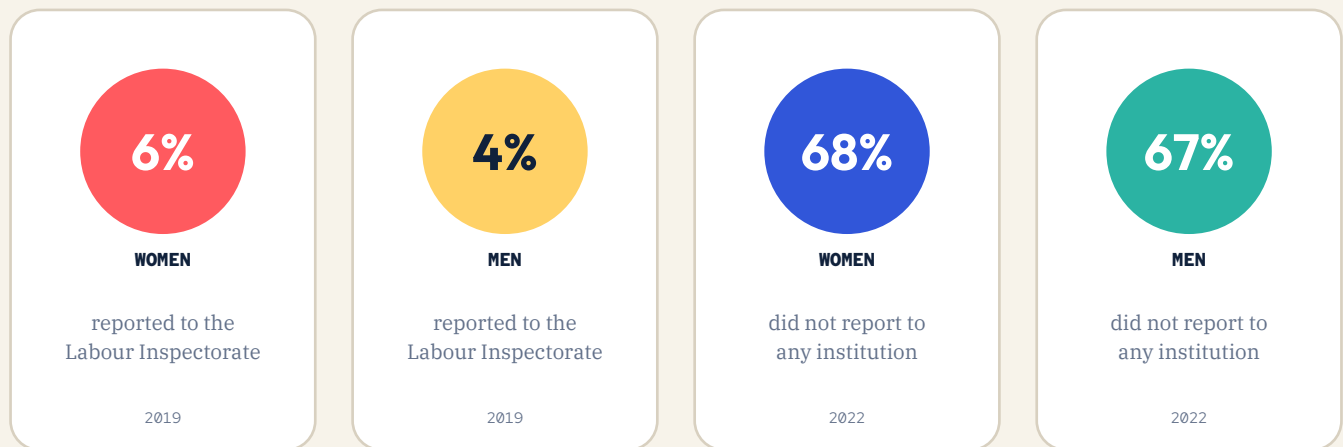
FROM EXPERIENCE TO COMPLAINT

04B

Reporting barriers

The reporting gap

Two studies, one persistent enforcement problem



FEAR OF JOB LOSS

CONFIDENTIALITY

DIFFICULT TO PROVE

DISTRUST

UNCLEAR PROCEDURE

Barriers identified in the research reviewed by the paper.

SECTION

04B

Why cases stay outside the system

Barriers to reporting make these findings relevant for a focus on enforcement. Earlier research found that among workers who experienced gender-based discrimination, only 6% of women and 4% of men reported the incident to the Labour Inspectorate (Banjska et al., 2019). More recent research shows underreporting remains a major issue. Banjska et al. (2022) found that 68% of women and 67% of men who experienced gender-based discrimination did not report it to any institution. The report identified several reasons for non-reporting, such as fear of losing employment, concerns regarding anonymity, difficulties proving discrimination, distrust in institutions, and limited awareness of reporting procedures (Banjska et al., 2022). UN Women and the International Labour Organization (2023) identified fear of job loss, underreporting, and weaknesses in workplace reporting mechanisms as barriers that limit the effectiveness of workplace protections. Many workers face barriers that discourage them from reporting, meaning complaints reaching institutions are unlikely to represent the majority of cases.

As a result, enforcement agencies may be responding to only a fraction of workplace discrimination cases occurring in practice. Low reporting rates create challenges for institutions responsible for enforcing anti-discrimination protections. Banjska et al. (2022) found that labor inspectors encountered relatively few discrimination complaints and did not consistently prioritize gender-based discrimination. The study also found that courts and other institutions had limited practical experience handling discrimination cases. While some institutions appeared knowledgeable about the law, they had few opportunities to apply it in practice because relatively few cases reached them. Government evaluations and oversight reports similarly identify implementation challenges, limited institutional resources, and weaknesses in complaint monitoring and documentation systems (Office for Good Governance, 2023a; Ombudsperson Institution of Kosovo, 2025). When discrimination complaints rarely enter the formal system, enforcement bodies

have a more difficult time identifying patterns of discrimination, investigating violations, and developing consistent enforcement practices. Perception data and self-reported experiences therefore provide important context that may not be reflected by administrative records.

Reporting discrimination often requires workers to take personal and professional risks. Fear of retaliation, concerns about confidentiality, limited awareness of reporting options, and uncertainty about institutional responses discourage many workers from pursuing formal complaints (Banjska et al., 2022; UN Women & International Labour Organization, 2023; European Labour Authority, 2024). Workers described difficulties documenting discrimination, navigating complaint procedures, and knowing which institutions are responsible for handling complaints (Banjska et al., 2022). These barriers help explain why many cases of workplace discrimination never reach the formal enforcement system. If workers decide reporting is not worth the risk, many cases remain outside the formal system.

Trust affects whether people use reporting systems. Workers may hesitate to report discrimination if they doubt that their complaints will remain confidential or be handled fairly. The European Labour Authority (2024) identifies confidentiality protections, accessible reporting channels, and safeguards against retaliation as important features of effective reporting systems. The Office for Good Governance (2023b) emphasizes secure reporting channels and referral mechanisms within Kosovo's National Platform for Protection from Discrimination. Reporting mechanisms only work if workers trust they will protect them.

Access to legal protections depends partly on whether workers understand how to use them. Workers who are unfamiliar with their rights, feel unsure about reporting procedures, or are unaware of the institutions that handle complaints are less likely to seek these formal remedies (Banjska et al., 2022). The Ex-Post Evaluation of the Law on Protection from Discrimination raised concerns about public awareness and coordination among institutions (Office for Good Governance, 2023a). Workers cannot use legal protections if they do not know where to report discrimination or what rights they have.

GOVERNANCE LENS

05

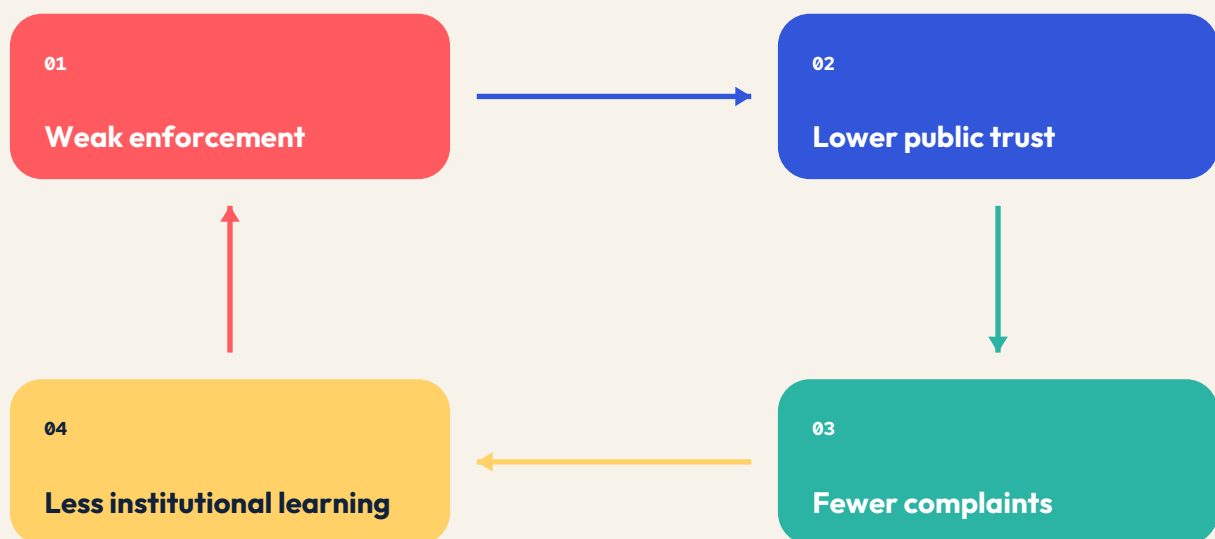
Implications for enforcement and policy

“

Public trust is not just an outcome of effective enforcement. It is one of the conditions that allows institutions to protect workplace rights.

The enforcement–trust loop

The paper's central governance argument, mapped as a reinforcing cycle



SECTION

05

The credibility of protection

Effective enforcement depends on more than strong anti-discrimination laws. It also depends on whether workers trust the institutions responsible for enforcing them. When workers feel their complaints will be treated fairly and kept confidential, they are more likely to report discrimination. If they fear retaliation or believe reporting will not lead to meaningful action, many choose not to report the discrimination. This makes trust a necessary part of enforcement because institutions can only investigate discrimination and apply existing legal protections when workers are willing to use the reporting system.

These enforcement gaps raise a broader governance concern. Laws represent more than rights written on paper. They reflect a public commitment that institutions will protect those rights in practice. When workers cannot safely or effectively use those protections, the gap between legislation and lived experience can weaken confidence not only in labor-rights enforcement but also in the wider relationship between citizens and public institutions.

Locke's account of political authority helps explain why this matters. In *Second Treatise of Government*, political authority rests on people's consent to a government formed to protect their rights (Locke, 1690/1980). Applied to workplace discrimination in Kosovo, the point is not that every failure of enforcement breaks the social contract. When there is a persistent gap between the rights workers have in law and the protections they can actually access, people have less reason to trust that institutions will do what they were created to do. People accept the authority of public institutions with the expectation that those institutions will protect their rights.

The gap between legal protections and implementation creates a wider risk for Kosovo. If laws are adopted while implementation remains weak, legislation may come to be seen as symbolic rather than protective. That perception can worsen underreporting because workers who expect little action are less likely to report discrimination, leaving

institutions with fewer opportunities to build enforcement practice. This creates a cycle. Weak enforcement reduces trust, making workers less likely to report discrimination. With fewer complaints, institutions have fewer opportunities to strengthen enforcement. Strengthening complaint handling is not just a labor-rights issue. It is part of maintaining the credibility of the social contract between people and the state.

Institutions may have the legal authority to protect workplace rights, but they cannot fulfill that responsibility if workers decide not to use the reporting system. They depend on workers reporting discrimination to investigate complaints, recognize patterns, and enforce existing protections. When workers choose not to report discrimination, institutions lose opportunities to apply the protections established in law and demonstrate that reporting can lead to action. Underreporting also limits what institutions can learn because complaints provide much of the information needed to investigate discrimination and enforce the law. If workers rarely see complaints investigated or discrimination addressed, they have fewer reasons to believe that reporting will make a difference.

Complaints give institutions information they would not otherwise have. They help identify patterns of discrimination and show whether existing legal protections are working in practice. When workers decide not to report discrimination, institutions lose much of that information. That makes it harder to identify recurring problems, focus enforcement where it is needed most, and understand whether existing protections are reaching the workers they were meant to protect. Low complaint numbers should not be interpreted as evidence that discrimination is rare. They may instead reflect a lack of trust in the institutions responsible for protecting workplace rights.

Official complaint data should also be interpreted carefully. Administrative data only reflects the cases that enter the enforcement system. If workers choose not to report discrimination because they do not trust the institutions responsible for handling complaints, official statistics are unlikely to reflect the full extent of workplace discrimination. Complaint data show the cases that reach institutions, while survey data shows concerns and experiences that may never be reported. Looking at both provides a more complete picture of workplace discrimination in Kosovo.

Improving enforcement depends on more than maintaining legal protections. It requires institutions

that workers trust enough to use. Without that trust, workers are less likely to report discrimination, making it harder for institutions to identify violations and enforce the protections already established in law. Public trust is not just an outcome of effective enforcement. It is one of the conditions that allows institutions to protect workplace rights and fulfill their intended purpose.

READING THE GAP



RIGHTS

REACH

01

COMPLAINT DATA

Shows the cases that enter the formal enforcement system.

02

SURVEY DATA

Reveals concerns and experiences that may never be reported.

03

PUBLIC TRUST

Connects legal protection to workers' willingness to use it.

Low complaint numbers may reflect low confidence—not low incidence.



ACTION AGENDA

06

Policy recommendations

Kosovo already has laws to protect workers from discrimination at work. The challenge is ensuring that workers know their rights and that institutions respond effectively when discrimination is reported. The recommendations below focus on practical steps that can improve reporting and enforcement without needing major legislative changes.

01

Make reporting visible

National awareness campaign

02

Make handling consistent

Common standards and timelines

03

Make coordination work

Build on the National Platform

04

Make results public

Joint annual enforcement report

RECOMMENDATION

R1

Develop a national awareness campaign on workplace discrimination reporting

ACTION DESIGN

R1

01 Explain workers' rights

02 Show where to report

03 Use accessible languages

The Government of Kosovo should collaborate with the Office for Good Governance, the Ombudsperson Institution, and the Central Labour Inspectorate to create a national awareness campaign about workers' rights under the Law on Protection from Discrimination and how to report workplace discrimination. The campaign should explain where to submit complaints, which institutions handle different types of complaints, and promote existing reporting tools, including the National Platform for Protection against Discrimination.

The campaign should use various methods to reach workers. Information could be distributed through employers, employment offices, municipalities, universities, trade unions, and online platforms. Employers should also display reporting information in workplaces alongside other required labor notices. Materials should be written in simple language and available in the languages commonly used throughout Kosovo so workers can easily understand the reporting process. Limited awareness of reporting options has been highlighted as a barrier stopping workers from reporting discrimination. Easier access to reporting information could encourage more workers to report discrimination.

RECOMMENDATION

R2

Establish consistent standards for handling discrimination complaints

ACTION DESIGN

R2

01 Protect confidentiality

02 Clarify referrals

03 Set response timelines

Government evaluations have found weaknesses in how institutions coordinate when handling discrimination complaints. Institutions responsible for workplace discrimination cases should create common standards for processing complaints. These standards should include confidentiality protections, referral procedures, and reasonable timelines for responses. Having common standards would improve coordination between institutions and make the reporting process easier for workers to understand.

Workers should not have to guess which institution is responsible for their complaint or wonder what happens after it is submitted. Institutions should clearly explain each step of the process, inform complainants when cases are referred elsewhere, and provide updates as complaints move through the system. A more consistent process would make the reporting system easier to navigate and reduce unnecessary delays.

Most of these improvements could be made through administrative changes rather than new legislation. A clear and more predictable reporting process might encourage more workers to report discrimination. Workers would be better able to use the legal protections already available instead of avoiding the reporting system completely.

RECOMMENDATION

R3

Build on the National Platform to strengthen complaint coordination

ACTION DESIGN

R3

01 Use common procedures**02 Improve documentation****03 Identify patterns**

The Government of Kosovo should build on the National Platform for Protection against Discrimination to improve coordination between the institutions responsible for handling workplace discrimination complaints. Using common reporting procedures would reduce confusion when complaints are referred between institutions and improve how complaint information is documented and shared.

Common reporting procedures would also make it easier to identify patterns of workplace discrimination and monitor how complaints move through the reporting system. This would give institutions a better understanding of where enforcement efforts should be focused while reducing unnecessary duplication.

Building on the National Platform would not solve underreporting by itself, but it would help institutions make better use of the complaints they do receive. Better information would strengthen institutions' ability to respond to discrimination and improve enforcement over time.

RECOMMENDATION

R4

Publish an annual report on workplace discrimination enforcement

ACTION DESIGN

R4

01 Standardize information**02 Report outcomes****03 Protect complainants**

Institutions responsible for enforcing anti-discrimination protections should publish a joint annual report on workplace discrimination while protecting the confidentiality of complainants. The report should use standardized information from each institution so findings can be compared over time. Instead of only reporting how many complaints were received, it should explain what those complaints show about how the system is functioning. Bringing this information together in one report would make it easier to identify where reporting breaks down, how institutions respond to complaints, and where enforcement can be strengthened. It would also give policymakers, employers, and civil society organizations a clearer picture of how workplace discrimination is being addressed across Kosovo.

Publishing this information would increase transparency. Workers would be able to see that complaints are documented, investigated, and acted upon. Seeing that complaints are investigated and addressed can build confidence in the institutions responsible for enforcing workplace protections. Over time, increased confidence may lead more workers to report discrimination, allowing institutions to better understand where discrimination occurs and creating a stronger base for enforcing protections already established by law.

CLOSING ARGUMENT

07

Conclusion

Kosovo has created a legal framework that prohibits workplace discrimination and offers workers several ways to seek help. The findings presented in this brief suggest that the greater challenge is ensuring those protections are used and enforced in practice. Many respondents see workplace discrimination as widespread. However, the evidence shows that many workers do not report discrimination because they fear retaliation, have concerns about confidentiality, or do not know how to report it.

These barriers affect more than individual workers. Institutions rely on complaints to identify violations, investigate cases, and enforce the laws in place. When discrimination is not reported, institutions lose opportunities to apply those protections, spot patterns of discrimination, and show that reporting can lead to real action. Low complaint numbers should not be interpreted as evidence that workplace discrimination is uncommon. Instead, they may indicate a lack of confidence in the institutions tasked with upholding workplace rights.

Building public trust in the institutions responsible for enforcing workplace rights is necessary for effective enforcement. Trust is what connects the legal protections established in law to their use in practice. Without it, many cases of workplace discrimination remain outside the formal reporting system, making it more difficult for institutions to identify violations and enforce the protections already available to workers. Strengthening public trust is part of effective enforcement because it allows institutions to fulfill the purpose they were created to serve.

“

Trust is what connects the legal protections established in law to their use in practice.

SECTION



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