

A decorative graphic in the top-left corner consisting of multiple thin, red, curved lines that overlap and create a sense of movement, resembling a stylized wave or a series of overlapping loops.

KOSOVO'S 2021 LOCAL ELECTIONS:

ANALYSIS OF INCLUSION AND INFORMATION INTEGRITY

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Post-Election Analysis, 2021 Local Elections

On October 17, 2021, Kosovo's voters went to the polls for the fourth local election in 13 years since independence in 2008. The vote elected the mayors and members of assemblies in 38 municipalities, with the post of mayor changing parties in thirteen municipalities. The Self Determination Movement (LVV) did not capitalize on its support gained in the parliamentary elections in February 2021. The Democratic Party of Kosovo (PDK) and the Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK) won the most mayoral posts and seats in the local assemblies, reversing their decline seen in the February elections. This briefing reviews the challenges of inclusion and threats from information disorders to Kosovo's democracy during the fall 2021 local elections.

Information disorders permeated the campaign, promoting political division and misogyny, while Kremlin-based media promoted false and misleading information. False and manipulated information and inflammatory language that circulated online were produced domestically and widely shared through social media.

While still far from gender parity, a record 14 women ran for mayor, the percentage of women running for local councilor rose, and more women were in the first position on their political party's list than ever before in Kosovo. The Srpska List (SL) mayoral candidates won in all 10 municipalities with Serb majorities, mostly without opposition, solidifying its growing political monopoly in Kosovo Serbian communities. A record two women were elected mayor, both in Serb majority municipalities. One mayor from the Turkish community was elected, but no mayors from other non-Serb communities won. Non-Serb, non-majority communities remain underrepresented as candidates, mayors, and members of municipal assemblies. There was some progress in recruiting people with disabilities as candidates and accommodations for them. Overall, women and vulnerable groups still face obstacles in politics, including lack of access to funding and party infrastructures.

Key findings include:

- **Fair and free, low turnout.** Kosovo organized fair, free, and competitive elections, meeting international standards, according to the EU Election Observation Mission. However, these local elections mark a decline in voter turnout, at 42.5 percent of registered voters, compared to local elections in 2013 and 2017.
- **Gender progress but women remain underrepresented.** Compared to previous elections, more women ran for mayor, were in the first position on their political party's list, were elected to local assemblies, and were elected without the quota. However, local governance remains far from gender parity, with the non-majority, non-Serb communities even further from this mark given the additional barriers they face.
- **Women in politics continue to confront misogyny and violence, including online.** Women candidates were subject to misogynistic and physical attacks, verbal abuse, and online abuse. The shift to online campaigning due to restrictions on gathering related to the Covid-19 pandemic led to a high exposure to online violence.

- **Under representation of women in the media.** Women in the media remained significantly underrepresented as candidates, analysts, and journalists, with men making up 90 percent of participants in TV debates and election panels.
- **Persons with disabilities were not recruited to run, supported as candidates, nor accommodated in polling stations in accordance with election guidelines.** Political parties and election authorities did not sufficiently support people with disabilities. With rare exceptions, accommodations for campaign events and with respect to voting procedures were insufficient according to international assessments. Eleven persons with disabilities ran for local assemblies, three of whom were elected.
- **Platforms not inclusive.** Largely, political parties' platforms did not address gender parity, youth, the needs of persons with disabilities, the elderly, the LGBTQI+ community, or non-majority communities. However, women were more vocal in calling for inclusion policies.
- **Weak information integrity, foreign influence.** Information disorders were widely present during the local election campaign, instigating political division, harsh language, misogynistic attacks and false or skewed information. Kremlin-sponsored, Serbian language media was active with narratives dominating in the north of Kosovo.
- **Covid-19 measures not respected.** Political parties and candidates held rallies larger than permitted by government measures, often without masks, and voting locations had lax mask enforcement.

I. Overall election results

Overall, according to the EU Election Observation Mission, the elections were well-administered, transparent, and competitive, despite several shortcomings.¹ According to the Central Election Commission (CEC), voter turnout for the first round of the 2021 local elections was 42.5 percent out of 1.9 million voters, a lower turnout compared to local elections held in 2017 and 2013.²

Table 1: Lower turnout compared to previous local elections

Year of Elections	How many voted	Trend (based on total voter turnout)	Percentage of turnout
2021	799,958	Decrease	42.5%
2017	811,650	Decrease	44.1%
2013	830,371	Increase	46.3%

Source: Central Election Commission: *Municipal Elections 2021, 2017 and 2013*

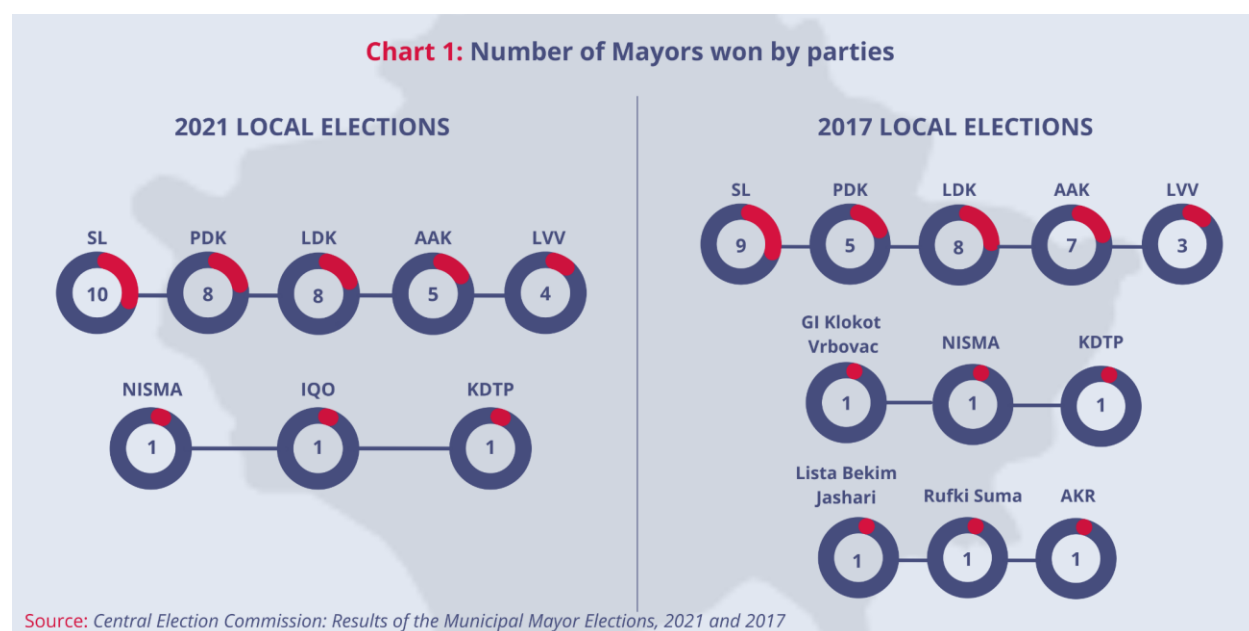
¹ [EU Election Observation Mission in Kosovo 2021: Final Report](#), February, 2022.

² See Central Election Commission: [Local Elections - Republic of Kosovo](#), 2021, 2017 and 2013.

Local elections were organized eight months after the snap parliamentary elections of February 14, 2021 in which LVV won an unprecedented result of 50.28 percent of votes cast. However, LVV did not capitalize on that win during the local elections. While it gained one additional mayor in the country (bringing it to four total), LVV lost the mayors in both of the two largest municipalities of Prishtina/Pristina and Prizren/Prizren and did not gain control of any additional local assemblies.³ LVV won fewer mayors than the other major Kosovo Albanian political parties: the Alliance for the Future of Kosovo (AAK), the Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK), or the Democratic Party of Kosovo (PDK).⁴ In the first round of the local elections, 17 mayors won, nine of whom were from the Kosovo Serb community. Another 21 municipalities saw runoff mayoral elections on November 14, 2021. LVV did not win any mayoral races in the first round.

Candidates from the Serb community campaigned almost exclusively in their respective communities. The Serbian List (SL) has monopolized the political life of Serb communities in Kosovo, negatively impacting political pluralism in those communities.

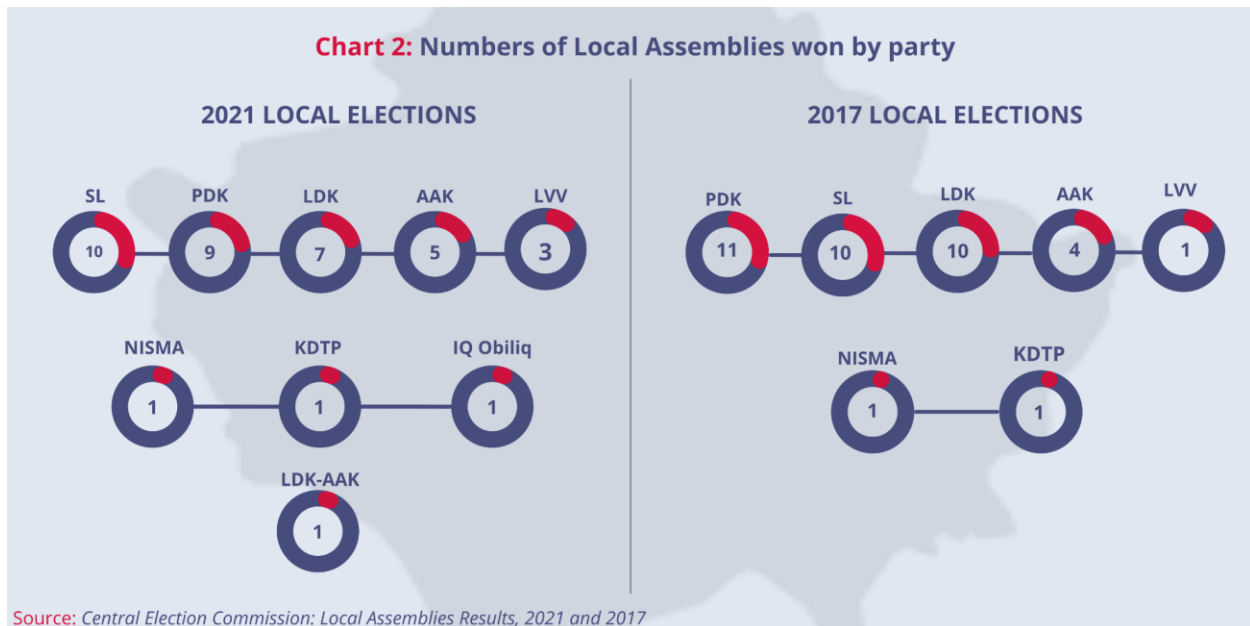
As outlined in Chart 1, among majority community political parties, LDK and PDK won the most mayors, with eight each. PDK picked up an additional three mayors as compared to the 2017 elections. AAK won five mayorships, a decrease of two; LVV won four, gaining one; and the Social Democratic Initiative (NISMA), Civic Initiative Obiliq (IQO), and Kosovo Democratic Turkish Party (KDTP) earned one mayor each. SL won mayors in all 10 Kosovo Serb-majority municipalities, a gain of one mayor from 2017.⁵



³ LVV candidates won in 2017 in Prishtina/Pristina, Prizren, and Kamenica; however, the mayors of Prishtina/Pristina and Kamenica subsequently left LVV and joined the Social Democratic Party (PSD). In 2021, LVV won in Gjilan/Gnjilane, Kamenica, Podujeva/Podujevo, and Shtime/Stimlje.

⁴ See Central Election Commission: [Results of the Municipal Mayor Elections](#), November 2021.

⁵ Election results in the Chart 1 are taken from Central Election Commission: [Results of the Municipal Mayor Elections](#), 2021 and 2017.



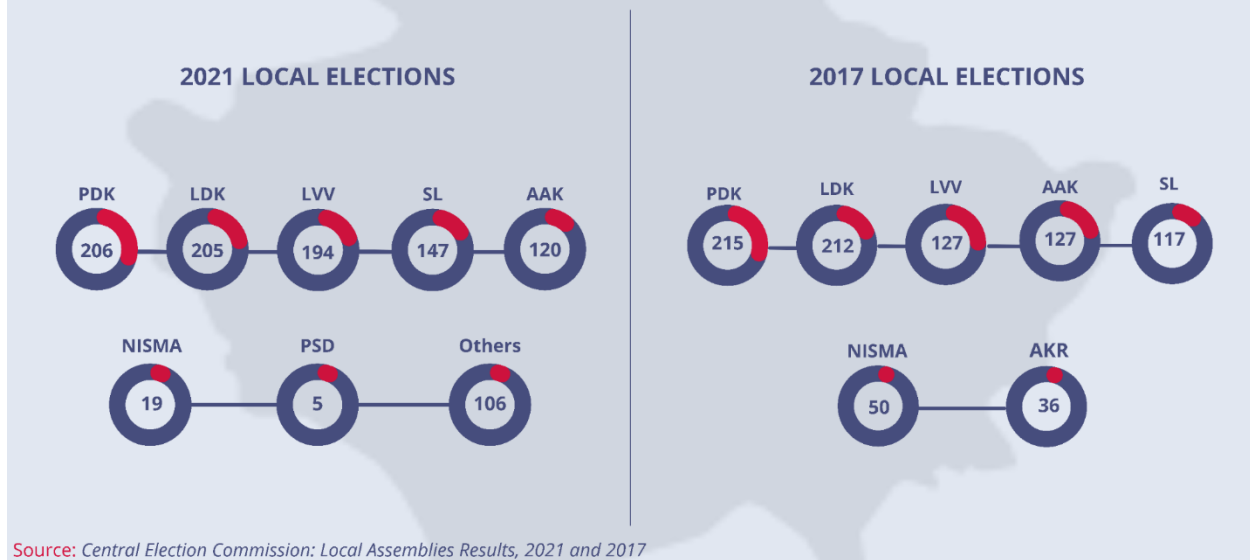
As detailed in Chart 2, among majority community parties, PDK and LDK won the most, seats in nine and seven local assemblies respectively. PDK lost seats in two local assemblies and LDK lost in three compared to previous elections.⁶ LVV and AAK won the most seats in three and five local assemblies. In comparison to 2017, LVV gained the most seats in two additional local assemblies while AAK gained most seats in one additional local assembly. SL maintained control of the same 10 local assemblies as in 2017. In some municipalities, the mayor and the majority party in the local assembly are not the same. For instance, LDK won the mayor in Prishtina/Pristina,⁷ but LVV won the most seats in the local assembly. While LVV won the mayor races in both Gjilan/Gnjilane and Podujeve/Podujevo, LDK won most seats in both local assemblies.

As summarized in Chart 3, the distribution of the 1,002 local councilors elected by party is: PDK 206, LDK 205, LVV 194, SL 147, AAK 120, NISMA 19, and PSD 5. The remaining 106 were elected from other small Albanian and non-Serb, non-majority parties. Of those 106, non-SL, non-majority political parties secured 44 seats. None of the 12 independent candidates who ran for mayor and local councilor won.

⁶ Election results in the Charts 2 and 3 are taken from Central Election Commission: [Results of the Municipal Elections for Local Assemblies](#), 2021 and 2017.

⁷ The names of all cities are listed in both Albanian and Serbian languages.

Chart 3: Number of Assembly seats won by party



NDI observed minor shortcomings included violations of the requirement for electoral silence on the last day of the campaign and on election day based on its monitoring of media. Per that same analysis, it was clear that campaigns did not fully respect Covid-19 prevention measures, as political rallies were often larger than allowed and masks were not always worn. NDI anecdotal observation found that on election day many officials and voters wore masks, not all did so continuously.

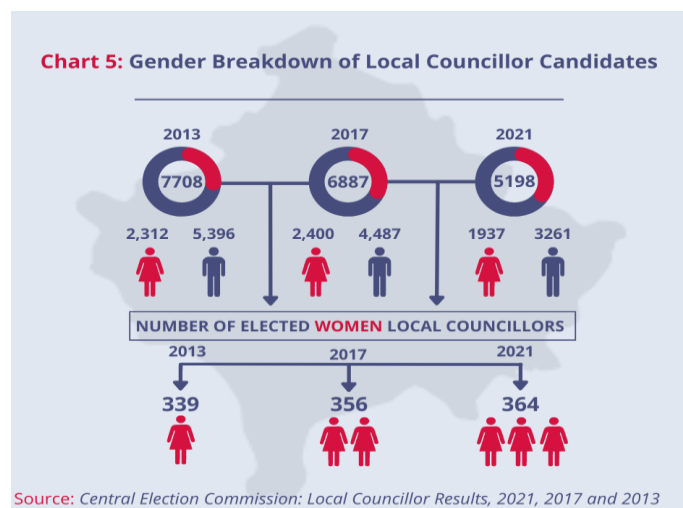
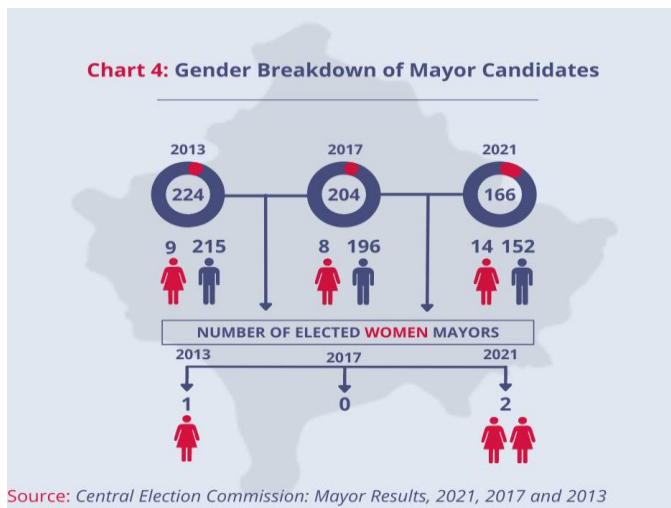
II. Challenges for women, non-majority communities, and vulnerable communities

The participation of women in politics is critical for a healthy democracy. While there have been signs of progress compared to previous local elections, Kosovo is far from attaining full parity in women running for office and holding office. Progress was made in terms of the overall number of women candidates and in the media, compared to previous local elections held in 2017 and 2013. However, women remained underrepresented compared to their male counterparts both as candidates and in ultimately holding office (see Charts 9 and 10 in the Annex). For instance, only in Ranillug/Ranilug (52 percent) and Shterpce/Strpce (50 percent), did women make up 50 percent or more of the candidates. Both are Serb majority municipalities. In no municipality did women make up less than 32 percent of the candidates. Only in Ranillug/Ranilug were women the majority of the winning candidates (53 percent), while in two municipalities, less than 30 percent of the winning candidates were women: Zubin Potok (26 percent) and Fushe Kosove/Kosovo Polje (29 percent). Political parties slightly surpassed the requirement that at least 30 percent of the lesser represented gender comprise the candidate lists for local councilors, per the Law on General and Local Elections. Only the Democratic Ashkanli Party of Kosovo (PDAK) met the 50 percent

gender representation mark, the Law on Gender Equality. This underscores the inconsistency between the two laws, which advocates argue should be harmonized.⁸

Women's representation as candidates has gradually increased over the years. In the 2021 local elections, there were 14 women mayoral candidates out of 166, (eight percent).⁹ Two women ran for mayor in the municipalities of Decan/Decani, Gjakova/Dakovica, Glllogoc/Glogovac, Peja/Pec, while one ran in Dragash/Drigas, Ferizaj/Urosevac, Gjilan/Gnjilane, Gracanica, Podujeva/Podujevo, Ranillug/Ranilug, and Zvecan.

A record two women were elected mayor, both from the Serb community, in Gracanica/Gracanica with 77.71 percent of the vote, in Ranillug/Ranilug with 100 percent. Both won in the first round, reflecting the lack of competition in the Kosovo Serb community.¹⁰ Non-SL candidates in the Kosovo Serb community were almost completely marginalized. With two newly elected women mayors, Kosovo has still elected only three women mayors in its history.



There were 1,937 women candidates for local councillor, out of 5,198, (37 percent). A record 36 percent of the 1,002 candidates were elected (364 in total), marking a slight increase compared to 35 percent elected in 2017, and 30 percent in 2013. Out of the 364 women elected as local councillors, 220 (60.5 percent) secured their seats without the quota, compared to the 144 (39.5 percent) councillors elected with the application of the quota.¹¹ Three elected women were replaced with a male candidate to meet the quota of 30 percent representation of the

⁸ See CEC elections results 2021: The breakdown of women candidates per party was: PDAK - 50 percent, IRDK - 42 percent, KDTP- 40 percent, AAK - 38 percent, SL- 38 percent, LVV - 37 percent, PDK -37 percent, LDK - 36 percent, NDS - 35 percent, IBJ - 33 percent, PLE - 33 percent, VAKAT - 32 percent, JGP - 32 percent, SDU -31 percent, PAI - 30 percent.

⁹ Election results in the Chart 4 are taken from Central Election Commission: [Results of the Municipal Mayor Elections](#), 2021, 2017 and 2013.

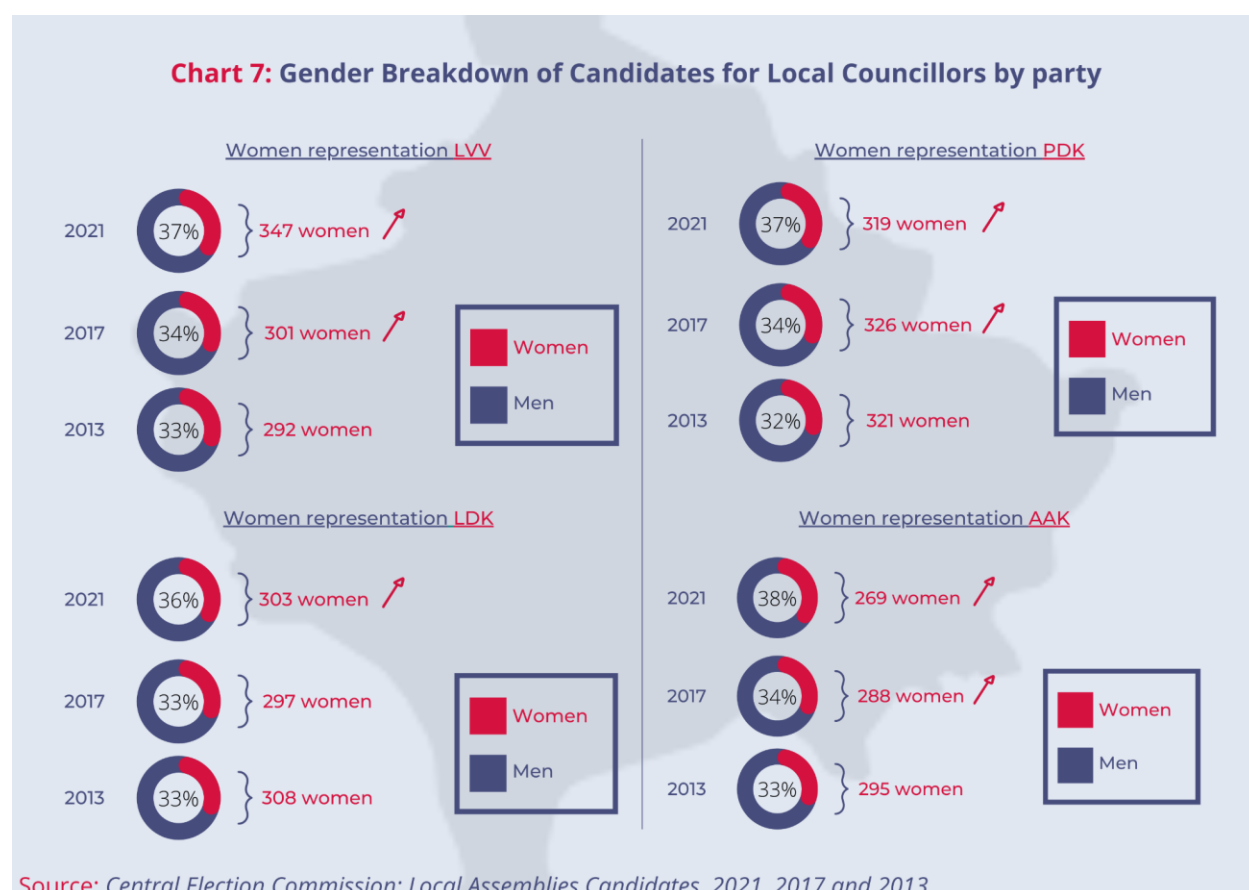
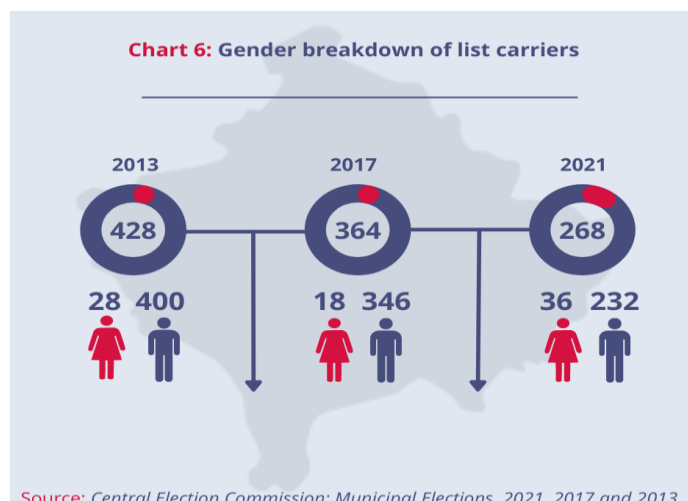
¹⁰ See CEC elections results 2021.

¹¹ Election results in the Chart 5 are taken from Central Election Commission: [Results of the Municipal Assembly Election](#), 2021, 2017 and 2013.

underrepresented gender in Fushe Kosove/Kosovo Polje, Kacanik, and Partesh/Partes municipalities.

While still far from parity, additional improvement was made regarding women “carriers of the lists.”¹² As shown in Chart 6, 36 women were nominated as list carriers out of 268 total nominees (13 percent), compared to five percent in 2017 and six percent in 2013.

As Chart 7 shows, every major political party increased the number of women candidates for local councilor by three or four percent, although all remain far from parity. The percentages of women candidates in the major parties were: AAK (38 percent), PDK (37 percent), LVV (37 percent), and LDK (36 percent).¹³



¹² Parties choose who is listed first on their ballot as “carriers of the list.” The carriers of the list are guaranteed one vote from each voter who supports that party, as such, they are guaranteed election if the party passes the threshold.

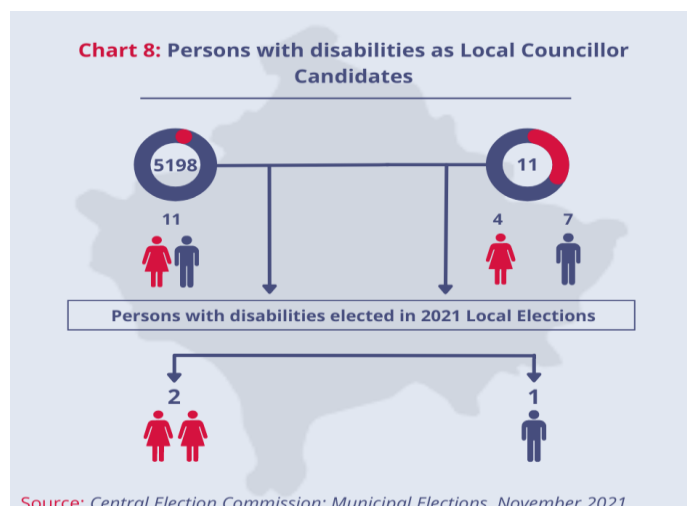
¹³ Election results in the Chart 7 are taken from Central Election Commission: [Municipal Assembly Election](#), 2021, 2017 and 2013.

Moreover, some women candidates were supported by the leadership of the party: some political party leaders and sitting ministers joined women on the campaign trail. Women in office also campaigned with women candidates, demonstrating sisterhood, which tends to be rare in Kosovo.

Violence against women running for office occurred in these elections. As detailed below, political debates in the media and the shift to online campaigning due to Covid-19 measures amplified violence against women in politics (VAW-P), especially harsh language and misogynistic attacks, and fueled women's concerns about engaging in politics. Women mayor candidates were physically attacked, while women candidates were subject to misogynistic narratives, such as being criticized for their personal life choices and their appearances. For instance, one candidate for local councilor, was subject to misogyny online accusing her of prostitution. In a tweet she complained that "this is the reason why women are reluctant to get higher positions, as there will be men without identity like this one who will offend in the lowest possible way."

Persons with disabilities

Candidate lists included a minimal number of persons with disabilities.¹⁴ Eleven persons with disabilities ran for local councilor; three were elected, two women and one man. PDK included the most persons with disabilities (five), two of whom won; the third elected was from LDK. According to the European Network of Election Monitoring Organizations (ENEMO), physical accessibility of polling stations remains one of the main obstacles for persons with disabilities to independently vote at polling stations. It also noted that "neither the Law on General Elections nor the CEC's



regulation establish any requirements regarding physical accessibility of polling stations.”¹⁵ According to the EU Election Observation Mission's report, 67 percent of polling stations and centers were accessible for voters with reduced mobility in the first round (65 percent in second round), 78 percent for people in wheelchairs (85 percent in second round), and tactile ballots were not available in 33 percent of polling stations observed.¹⁶

Non-majority communities

Of the 191 seats won by non-majority candidates, SL won the most: 147 seats. Non-majority, non-Serb parties now hold 44 seats. The number of women elected as local councilors from non-majority, non-Serb communities remains low. While women secured 364 seats as local councilors,

¹⁴ Election results in the Chart 4 are taken from Central Election Commission: [Municipal Assembly Election](#), November 2021.

¹⁵ European Network of Election Monitoring Organizations: [Statement of Preliminary Findings and Conclusions](#), October 2021.

¹⁶ See [CEC Special Needs Voting](#) guidelines and the [EU's Election Observation Mission Kosovo 2021](#).

68 of them are from non-majority communities, 58 of whom are from the Serb community. The other 10 seats from non-majority communities include six Turkish councilors, and one each from the Ashkali, Bosniak, Egyptian, and Gorani communities. No women Roma candidates won. As noted above, women make up a majority in one municipality, the Kosovo Serbian majority community of Ranillug/Ranilug (52 percent) as shown in Chart 10 of the Annex, an increase from 33 percent. In some municipalities, members of non-majority communities ran together in the lists with Albanian parties.

Platforms and priorities

Overall, candidates' platforms resonated with the citizens' needs, as well as priorities within their respective municipalities on education, health care, economy, youth, culture, tourism, and agriculture. Candidates largely focused on infrastructure, with incumbents focusing on their record. Political parties did not publish policy platforms during the local elections, and the candidates generally did not address the needs of women, minorities, people with disabilities, or the LGBTQI+ community, reflecting society's neglect of these vulnerable groups. However, in comparison to their male counterparts, women candidates were more attentive to all groups of society and had an inclusive approach when presenting their plans for the municipality. Women were more vocal in calling for inclusion policies, environmental policies, access to healthcare, the integration of children with disabilities in schools, ensuring meals in schools, and public accessibility for people with physical disabilities.

Specifically, some of the policies proposed by women candidates during their campaign include the construction of a day center for people with special needs which will provide speech therapy and psychological services,¹⁷ and enabling at least one person with a disability to be employed in every public or private institution.¹⁸ Women vowed to implement the process of recycling waste, encourage citizens to classify waste, and subsidize private companies that are engaged in recycling.¹⁹ Women candidates also promised to commit to ensuring a more steady supply of medicines, expanding the list of essential medicines, and improving administration of primary health care centers.²⁰

Media as an opportunity and hindrance

Women's political representation in the media during both the 2021 parliamentary and local elections did improve. Even so, women were underrepresented in the media during both campaigns. During the local elections, women journalists and analysts were underrepresented during debates and campaign or election coverage compared to their male counterparts. As Table 2 demonstrates, debates hosted by major TV stations largely included men, with a minimal number (13 percent) of women.²¹ Televised debates tended toward "manels", during which only men participated. During debates, male candidates often used inappropriate and harsh language to discredit or belittle their women counterparts. One woman running for mayor was belittled in a debate as "very talkative and doesn't stop at anything." Another one faced the misogynistic

¹⁷ Source: [Facebook link](#), October 2021.

¹⁸ Source: [Facebook link](#), September 2021.

¹⁹ Source: [Facebook link](#), October 2021.

²⁰ Election Debate, [Edicioni zgjedhor](#), September 2021.

²¹ Musliu, Vjosa and Visoka, Gezim: [Male Panels are Normalizing Inequality](#), Kosovo 2.0, October 2021.

question “What do you know?” insinuating that she did not know the matter being discussed because she was a woman.

Table 2: Representation of women in TV election debates

Women participation in TV debates	Male participants	Female participants
Zgjedhjet Lokale and Analiza on RTK	80	20
Zgjedhjet ne Kohe on KTV	25	3
Rubikon on Klan Kosova	35	3
Pressing on T7	63	9
Context on ATV	21	1
Debat Plus on TV Dukagjini	58	1

Source: *Kosovo 2.0*

III. Weak information integrity

Election integrity is intertwined with the ability of citizens to make informed decisions. In Kosovo’s local elections, information disorders were widely present in online portals and social media, instigating political division, harsh language and misogynistic attacks.²² NDI’s monitoring of the media—focused on political division, misogyny, and external influence—found that information integrity among the traditional media (televised political shows and debates) was satisfactory, whereas information disorders were largely present in online portals and on social media. Political party officials and candidates mainly promoted their campaign activities on social media. False and manipulated information and inflammatory language that circulated online were produced domestically and widely shared through social media. Meanwhile, Kremlin-based information disorders proliferated, mainly in the Serbian language media. A tense political environment following a series of violent incidents in Serb-dominated regions of northern Kosovo before and during the election campaign affected the Serb political candidates’ campaign, overshadowing coverage of the overall electoral process in Serb-majority municipalities. Due to these tensions before the elections, SL candidates engaged less in campaign activities compared to previous elections.

²² For the purpose of this report, the term information disorder is language promoting political division, harassment, harsh and sexist language, hate speech, as well as false context, false, skewed, manipulated, fabricated and misleading content. For more information see [INFORMATION DISORDER: Toward an interdisciplinary framework for research and policy making](#). Deliberately blurred lines between truth and fiction amplify voter confusion and devalue fact-based political debate. Rumors, hearsay, and online harassment are used to damage political reputations, exacerbate social divisions, mobilize supporters, marginalize women and minority groups, and undermine the impact of change-makers. For more information see: [Disinformation and Electoral Integrity, A Guidance Document for NDI Elections Programs](#), May 2019.

Fueling political divisions

NDI's found a high degree of baseless attacks among political candidates, as well as false and skewed narratives reported in the media without the proper context. Sponsored articles containing information disorders weeks prior to the elections attacked different political candidates, especially those competing in the largest cities. In the sample Albanian language content that NDI monitored, several Facebook pages and groups were created prior to the election. A majority of these claimed to be fan pages of certain political parties, and they often shared false and skewed narratives through sponsored posts.

In the Serbian language sample, news items focused in the north of Kosovo focused almost solely on narratives related to tensions in the north of Kosovo around license plates and anti-smuggling police operations, with nearly zero mention of upcoming elections.²³ Serbian language coverage in the south of Kosovo was also flooded with narratives about these tensions, but included more coverage of the upcoming elections. As the tensions grew, media narratives focused on the developments around the license plate agreement and incidents at the barricade and less on the campaign and elections. In the Serbian language sample, narratives tended to be statements in support of SL from key politicians in Serbia, and articles promoting the argument that the SL is the bulwark defense of Kosovo Serb interests. The coverage of Kosovo Serb opposition party candidates was negligible.

Examples

- A political party leader used words such as “retarded,” “stupid,” “house of fools,” and “a person with mental problems,” while criticizing the government and government officials. This narrative was published in two articles by the same news portal. They had a combined reach of 64,037, generated 771 reactions, 508 comments, and were shared 12 times.
- A manipulated image of a billboard was published in online portals and Facebook showing half of the actual image, inaccurately implying that LVV was using only Prime Minister Albin Kurti in its campaign in Prizren/Prizren. The news articles generated a reach of 2,361, with 25 reactions, 108 comments and two shares.²⁴ The related Facebook post had 2,700 reactions, 15 comments and was shared 36 times. The post on

E bëjnë edhe këtë VV'ja, Kurti ia zë vendin Mytes në posterin e vendosur në Prizren

13/10/2021 | 15:31



VV does this also, Kurti is placed instead of Myta in the billboard in Prizren

²³ On September 20, 2021, the national government announced that it will be requiring all Serbian drivers to have temporary vehicle registration plates upon entry to Kosovo. Then, on October 13th, Kosovo police conducted an organized raid to fight smuggling on several locations in municipalities of Prishtina/Pristina, Peja/Pec, South Mitrovica and North Mitrovica.

²⁴ Reach is defined for online news in portals by a click on an article. For social media, a reach is measured by whether a post is viewed or opened. However, in regards to Facebook images (videos and photos) found by NDI's

Twitter was retweeted 11 times, had 75 likes and 44 comments.

- In an article published in the Serbian language media, narratives regarding the incidents in the northern municipalities contained information disorders, harsh language and conspiracy theories using heightened nationalistic discourse and talk of war. This article had a reach of 122,900+ and 90 shares.

Misogyny

Women candidates were subject to misogynistic and physical attacks that included verbal and online abuse. Women were criticized for their personal life choices and their appearances. Online news portals and social media reported and spread inappropriate comments about women candidates. As NDI's research found, violence against women in politics (VAW-P) takes many forms—including online, physical, psychological, and sexual violence—and remains a pervasive problem, which, left unaddressed, can discourage women's political participation.²⁵

Women mayor candidates reported being subject to physical and online attacks. The candidate for mayor of Gjakova, Mimoza Kusari Lila, was repeatedly the brunt of misogynistic narratives. For instance, a photo of her was circulated that included a peach emoji. Moreover, Kusari Lila was interrupted by her opponent in a television debate while discussing the budget's implementation and called a "blabbermouth."

The PDK candidate Ardiana Qorraj and the LDK candidate Hyri Dobrunaj publicly stated that they were physically attacked during the campaign because they were women and running for mayor. Qorraj added that a fierce online campaign against her had been launched and that women candidates receive no support in Decan/Decani. Dobrunaj emphasized that for three days her family was attacked on social media. She stated that she will report all the allegations against her to the police; however, these attacks are hindering women's political participation overall.



Former MP gets dressed as a bride, the dress she wore enlightens her beauty

Additionally, misogynistic language was part of the online public discourse. Following the publication of articles and posts related to women candidates on Facebook—the most used social media platform in Kosovo²⁶—there were a number of sexist and offensive comments, which constitutes online violence against women. Democracy for Development's report on online and social media monitoring shows that out of 5,567 comments on 373 posts regarding 11 women candidates, 1,614 contained misogynistic language.²⁷ NDI's public

manual review, the methodology used tracked only the number of views and interaction (comments, reactions, and shares) as a reference of reach for videos, and tracked only interactions for photos.

²⁵ National Democratic Institute (NDI): [Kosovo's Vibrant Democracy: Closing the Deficit to Women's Full Participation.](#) See also NDI's report [#Notthecost](#) on its campaign to stop violence against women in politics.

²⁶ Kamp, Simon [DIGITAL 2021: Kosovo, DATAREPORTAL](#), February 2021.

²⁷ Democracy for Development (D4D): [Election Campaign Under Scrutiny: Do information disorders threaten election integrity?](#) December 2021.

opinion research found that the majority of respondents agree that violence against women is widespread in Kosovo and that online harassment targets woman politicians and discourages women's political participation.²⁸

Examples

- An article that initially was published several years ago, was republished targeting former mayor and MP Mimoza Kusari-Lila. The article contained manipulated photos, offensive language towards Kusari-Lila, and was taken out of context. The article has generated 425 interactions of which 164 likes, 54 shares, 118 comments and 89 other interactions.²⁹
- An article was published with a manipulated image of the LDK candidate for Mayor of Ferizaj, Sibel Halimi, taking out of context her promise to use electric scooters in this municipality. The article was shared eight times on Facebook and had a total of 1,862 interactions of which 552 were likes, 676 comments, and 623 more other interactions. There were also comments that contained insults, misogynistic, and sexist language.³⁰
- Former member of parliament and political analyst, Donika Kadaj Bujupi, was subject to misogynistic language in one portal, with the headline *"The former MP gets ready as a bride, the dress she has worn amplifies her beauty."* The article had a reach of 529, 19 likes, one comment, and no shares.



Halimi: Në Ferizaj do të fusim në përdorim edhe trotinetët elektrik

Halimi: In Ferizaj we will start using electric bikes

External influence

Russian-sponsored Serbian language media was active in the local elections in Kosovo, through *Sputnik.rs*, *Vostok* and *Russia Today*.³¹ Primarily, the Russia-based narratives urged Kosovo and Serbia to turn their backs on western countries and seek support from Russia and China. In addition, the majority of the social media coverage of the events in the north regarding the license plates portrayed the events as an attempt by Prime Minister Albin Kurti to maintain power through nationalistic decisions. These items claimed that the local elections would reflect the support on Kurti's politics and the successful "defending" of 10 Kosovo Serb majority municipalities. Public statements by international officials, especially by the EU and US, regarding the incidents in the north were distorted by the Russian media.

²⁸ National Democratic Institute (NDI): [Public Opinion Poll](#), April 2021.

²⁹ Democracy for Development (D4D), "[Election Campaign Under Scrutiny: Do information disorders threaten election integrity?](#)" December 2021.

³⁰ Democracy for Development (D4D), "[Election Campaign Under Scrutiny: Do information disorders threaten election integrity?](#)" December 2021.

³¹ Russian sponsored media outlets based in Serbia or regularly translated in Serbian language by local media.

In most cases, the *Sputnik.rs* narratives were widely shared and replicated among Serbian language portals and Facebook pages, without being identified as Russian-origin information.

Examples

- An article in *Sputnik.rs*, titled “*Mentors of Kosovo's independence are pushing for radicalization - and this is not the end*,” falsely claimed the events in the north were proof of the dangerous plot by western countries to radicalize and speed up the independence of Kosovo. This article had a reach of 57,200+ and 12 shares.
- An article in *Sputnik.rs* with the headline “*Sunday's Battle in Kosovo: Kurti Referendum and Defense of Ten Serb Municipalities - Two Keys*,” published a skewed narrative portraying local elections as a referendum on Prime Minister Kurti, as well as pointing out the need to “defend” the Serb majority municipalities from some undefined threat. This article had a reach of 50,700+ and 35 shares.

Mentori kosovske nezavisnosti guraju radikalizaciju – i ovo nije kraj

22:18 13.10.2021 (Osvetlbeno: 09:43 14.10.2021)



Mentors of Kosovo's independence are pushing for radicalization - and this is not the end

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IV. Annex: Gender Breakdown of Candidates for and Elected Local Assembly

Chart 9: Gender Breakdown of Candidates for Local Councillors by Municipality



Source: Central Election Commission: Municipal Elections, November 2021

Chart 10: Gender Breakdown of Elected Local Councillors by Municipality



Source: Central Election Commission: Municipal Elections, November 2021

List of Acronyms

Alliance for the Future of Kosovo (AAK)
Central Election Commission (CEC)
Civic Initiative Obiliq (IQO)
Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK)
Democratic Party of Kosovo (PDK)
Democratic Ashkanli Party of Kosovo (PDAK)
European Union (EU)
European Network of Election Monitoring Organizations (ENEMO)
Kosovo Democratic Turkish Party (KDTP)
Member of parliament (MP)
National Democratic Institute (NDI)
Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queerx/questioning and intersex (LGBTQI+)
Srpska List (SL)
Self-determination Movement (LVV)
Social Democratic Initiative (NISMA)
Social Democratic Party of Kosovo (PSD)
United States (US)
United States Agency for International Development (USAID)
Violence Against Women in Politics (VAW-P)

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