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Deconstructing Election Trends 2000-2010

Prishtina
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Democracy for Development Institute (D4D)

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In the first decade of elections, the electoral system, process and management have experienced a decline. International experts and observation missions have highlighted a worsening trend of Kosovo's electoral processes.

Few countries make as many changes in their electoral system within 10 years: moved from open to closed lists and vice versa, introduced a 5% threshold, introduced directly elected mayors in a major revision of the system of local government, and almost every year debated whether the gender quota should be kept and if geographic districts should be introduced.

The impression may be created that Kosovo genuinely deliberates the changes, but the processes are usually carefully choreographed so as to absorb the energy for changes and justify keeping the simplest formulae that gives most predictability to the political landscape in Kosovo.

Excessive dependence on the international community and a slow learning curve by the Kosovar institutions define the decade-long experience. The 'kosovarization' of the last two sets of elections basically meant that Kosovo started to pay for elections from its budget, assume responsibility for failure, but little transfer of know-how has occurred from the much more experienced international partners.

That Kosovo makes frequent changes is understandable for any new process requires time and reflection to settle. Some parties are struggling to understand how to deal with the changes, while some parties have mastered the system fairly well, too well some would say.

The most recent deliberation sees strong direction by the international community and the main leadership to introduce features that would consolidate the current political scene. This occurred in the past with the introduction of the threshold, but Kosovars were far from ready for consolidation. Quite the opposite, they were desperately searching for new alternatives which subsequently let them down.

In terms of trends, Kosovo's electorate almost doubled, mostly due to the registration of the diaspora and the Serb community in the early years. However, the electorate has continued to grow by an average of 50,000 persons annually, which is more than double the rate of natural growth. A comparison with the 2011 population count concludes that over 330,000 persons from the voter's lists either are not among living, or reside abroad, and this number will only grow each year.

Over the years, the political party scene has revolved around the more established parties. PDK has kept a consistent electoral base. LDK saw a decline while in power, fell sharply when several groups splintered halving its electorate in 2007, but has marked a mild rebound recently. AAK's trend line is a clear barometer of the presence of its leader in the country. The share of all the three major parties as a proportion of the total has decreased, first reducing the turnout and later went to various new parties which joined the competition. Several new parties captured the angry voters who stayed away from the three main parties, but none has managed to keep them, losing them to other new

parties. The most recent elections in 2010 not only mark the end of the first decade of Kosovar experiments with democracy, but also brings three novelties:

- (a) The end of LDK's downward trend;
- (b) The rise of another new party that differs significantly from previous 'new' options and is here to stay;
- (c) The end of the status-related trend of the Serb vote and its long-term return.

The rate of women elected by merit has decreased from 2007 to 2010, and this needs to be further explored. The possibility to monitor the rate of their election by merit will indicate when Kosovo is ready to elect women by themselves and will give greater legitimacy at least to those women who entered the Parliament by themselves.

Given the choice of five names in the ballot, over two-thirds of the voters marked the party leader as well. This may indicate the fact that a single district benefits the leadership, but it is interesting that of all parties, the only major party not run by the founding President has given the highest proportion of the votes to its leader.

The simplicity of the electoral system has plenty to say about ballot design. Kosovo is often advised to go for a simple electoral system but designed very complicated ballots. It is crucial that the system is simple for the voters (i.e. with names in the ballot), even if it becomes more complicated for the election management. Given enough time, the CEC could be brought up to speed. The single district has meant that names cannot appear in the ballot and its combined use with the preferential vote has meant that voters left many names blank, which party commissioners duly saw useful to fill out.

The high rate of invalid ballots in 2007 should serve as a lesson not to hold multiple elections on the same day. At the same time, the rate of invalid ballots has fallen over the years, hence, it is only the preferential vote that is the problem. Almost half of MPs of major parties were elected thanks to open lists only, a clear indication of the diverging preferences of voters and the preference how the parties would rank their candidates.

We hope this first attempt to analyze trends after 2010 will add to the quantity and quality of the public discourse on ongoing election reforms. Disaggregating such trends is time consuming since the data published by the authorities is often incomplete and is presented in different format from year to year.

The data presented in this paper is only the beginning of a comprehensive study that needs to take place to inform political parties on the gaps and bottlenecks, as well as advantages and disadvantages of various electoral tools that Kosovo has tried in the past. Short of such a detailed reflection, election authorities and decision-makers will be inadequately equipped to avoid pitfalls that may be lurking ahead of future rounds of our democratic exercises.

INTRODUCTION

Kosovo has completed a decade of elections. From 2000 to 2010, Kosovo saw four elections for the National Assembly, four elections for municipal assemblies and two mayoral elections. Ten years is a short period of time to observe electoral processes, but Kosovo's experience during this period was tumultuous and saw numerous changes. Kosovo's electoral democracy has not built solid ground yet, while the changes were introduced so frequently that it is difficult to discern and isolate their effects from other intervening factors.

The sequence of twelve elections (in seven election years) provides a basis for initial analysis. A careful look at trends may be useful to initiate a discussion that is well grounded on facts and figures. Trends can illustrate processes and outcomes that cannot be spotted with a naked eye. We hope this first attempt to analyze trends after 2010 will add to the quantity and quality of the public discourse on ongoing election reforms.

EC's assessments of Kosovo's election authority as having made 'limited progress' in the past three years are worrisome as are the numerous cases of violations. Other independent voices were even more critical, hence there is no doubt that the election management institutions must be much more attentive to repairing at least the weak spots that have been well documented.

Data provided by the CEC is often incomplete and presented in formats that make comparison difficult, expensive and time consuming. Few organizations can afford to type mountains of figures from unfriendly PDFs with missing data to quantitative databases hence the dearth of studies that help understand our electoral experience.

The trend analysis presented below takes into consideration changes over the years that have affected the electoral process most. The study starts by looking at the most fundamental aspects of the electoral process such as movements in electorate, voters' list maintenance, and moves to analyze overall trends of invalid, spoiled, by-mail and conditional ballots. Overall party trends are analyzed next, followed by a review of their dependence on leaders, the effect of open lists and finally compares the rate of female MPs elected by merit versus the quota.

The data presented in this paper is only the beginning of a comprehensive study that needs to take place to inform political parties on the gaps and bottlenecks, as well as advantages and disadvantages of various electoral tools that Kosovo has tried in the past. Short of such a detailed reflection, election authorities and decision-makers will be inadequately equipped to avoid pitfalls that may be lurking ahead of future rounds of our democratic exercises.

D4D will continue to delve much deeper and present more findings in future publications. Trends that are presented here should instigate a more qualitative discussion on what reforms Kosovo needs in the future, for its electoral system as well as for the process.

A DECADE OF DEMOCRACY

In October 2000, the first elections for local government were organized in Kosovo, then under UNMIK administration. At the time OSCE, the third pillar of UNMIK, took the leading role to organize, finance and administer the elections that would establish the first democratically local government authorities in Kosovo. Local assemblies have passed through the electoral test for three more rounds since then (2002, 2007, and 2009). The first local assembly elections after the declaration of independence in 2009 resulted with the establishment of new municipalities in Gracanica, Ranilug, Klokot, Junik, Mamusha, Hani Elezit.

The first national elections that gave rise to Kosovo's first National Assembly were held in November 2001, followed by subsequent elections in 2004, 2007 and most recently in 2010. All four legislatures had gender quotas. The voters' possibility to influence the party lists has been a major irritation to party leaders, and Kosovo again faces threatening pressures to do away with the open lists.

Elections 2000-2010			
Year	National Elections	Municipal Assembly Elections	Mayoral Elections
2000		X	
2001	X		
2002		X	
2004	X		
2007	X	X	X
2009		X	X
2010	X		

Kosovo's Electoral (r)Evolution

A massive campaign to change the electoral system occurred in 2003-2004, leading to major changes in the election framework in 2007. A turning point in the elections happened in 2007 when for the first time Kosovo introduced open lists for assembly elections and directly elected mayors. Except these improvements that the civil society advocated vigorously for, Kosovo also suffered setbacks. The introduction of a 5% threshold (since 2007) started a consolidation of parties when Kosovo needed more vigorous dynamics and further changes. Short of districts, it was right to introduce multiple choices (preferential ballot), but insufficient safeguards were introduced to prevent vote-theft.

The last two sets of elections (2009 local elections and 2010 national elections) were funded by Kosovo's budget and have seen greater domestic role. No longer funding elections, OSCE's efforts have remained essential but only in the background and without official responsibility. Incidentally, these two sets of elections were also followed by some of the worst irregularities and the publication of election results were prolonged due to re-voting in selected municipalities, verification of conditional ballots and adjudication of numerous violations. In 2009 local elections, CEC ordered re-voting in four (4) municipalities (119 voting centers), Prizren, Lipjan, Gjilan, Mitrovica whereas in 2010 CEC ordered re-voting in 4 municipalities (94 voting centers), Skenderaj, Drenas, Mitrovica, Decan, Malisheva.

Post war elections started with an open list system for the first local assembly race of 2000. Voters had the option of choosing one candidate from a list of their favored party, while this option was

closed for the next two sets of elections when Kosovo saw the introduction of unpopular closed lists. Public pressure expressed a distinct distaste to allow leaders of parties that have no internal democracy to decide on the list of MPs that are to populate the next Parliament. The main transformation came prior to 2007 when open lists and directly elected mayors were introduced. This practice was followed for the local elections of 2009 and national elections of 2010, but saw a reduction of the number of choices in the preferential system from 10 to 1.

	2000	2001	2002	2004	2007	2009	2010
Type of Elections	Municipal Assembly	National	Municipal Assembly	Municipal Assembly	Municipal Assembly Mayoral	Municipal Assembly Mayoral	National
Lists	Open Lists	Closed lists			Open Lists		
Choices	Single Choice				1+10 choices	1+1 choices	5 choices
Threshold	None				5% (for National)	None	5%
Mayor	By the Assembly	N/A	By the Assembly	N/A	Directly Elected		N/A
Districts	N/A	Single District	N/A	Single District		N/A	Single District

While political parties put up for electoral races a full list of candidates for local assemblies and National Assembly, voters were given the choice of voting for a single candidate on the local elections of 2000. After a stint of closed lists from 2001 to 2004, open lists were reintroduced in 2007. Short of political appetite to introduce geographic districts, the open lists were seen as inadequate if only a single mark was allowed. The perception of the electorate as being obsessed with their leaders lead to the conclusion that local candidates would find it challenging to compete. Short of their ability to have adequate media exposure, access to funds, or run in specific districts, it was decided that national and local assembly elections in 2007 would allow voters to mark up to 10 different candidates of the same party. Since three sets of elections were held at the same time, voters could make up to 23 marks (1 mayor, 1 party + 10 candidates for national elections, and 1 party + 10 candidates for municipal elections). Gender representation was an additional consideration that helped keep the unpopular multiple vote for two more sets of elections. However, these will almost surely be done away with, since the last elections proved that the preferential vote paved the way for massive vote-theft within political parties that disillusioned not only regular voters, but many party loyalists too.

For the first two mandates, municipal assemblies elected their own Presidents, while the next two mandates starting in 2007 saw the introduction of executive mayors (instead of previous CEOs) and their direct election by public voters. Mayors are elected in a two-round system, where the two candidates with the highest number of votes continue in the run-off.

ELECTORATE AND TURNOUT

Doubling of the Electorate

The size of the electorate has consistently been one of the most controversial issues. In 2010 the electorate numbered 1,632,276 registered voters (people 18 years of age and above) and was 75.6% larger than the electorate in the first elections of 2000. This does not correctly represent the number of eligible people to vote mainly due to the fact that many deceased persons persistently appear in the Voters List, as do members of the diaspora. The first two

Size of the Electorate

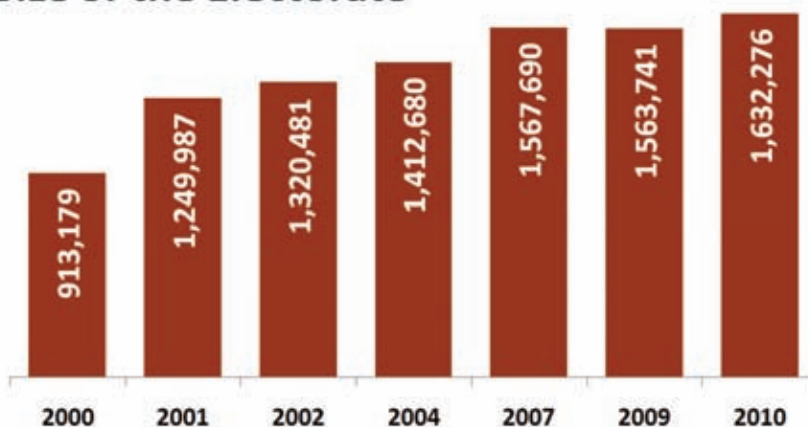


Figure 1: The total number of persons eligible to vote.

years saw a major increase of the electorate with over 400,000 new voters registered mostly to be attributed to the registration of members of the diaspora and the Serb community, in addition to the natural rate of population growth reaching voting age. Throughout these years the Voters List grew faster than normally primarily because it only added new voters and very few names of deceased persons were removed.

Development of Electorate over the Years		
2001-2000	336,808	Registration of Diaspora and part of the Serb community
2002-2001	70,494	
2003-2002	46,099	New registred voters with very little clean up of deceased (the number of deceased is accumulated over time, as the clean-up does not update the municipal civil registry)
2004-2003	46,099	
2005-2004	51,670	
2006-2005	51,670	
2007-2006	51,670	Removal of the deceased in some municipalities
2008-2007	-1,975	
2009-2008	-1,975	New registred voters without clean up of the deceased
2010-2009	68,535	

The subsequent rate of increase between 2002 and 2004 indicates the natural growth (which demographers put to be around 30,000 a year) and over 15,000 others most probably names of deceased that were never removed. The increase is almost twice higher than the rate of Kosovars who reach voting age.

Municipalities maintain their record of civil registry which feeds the Central Register at the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA). In preparation for elections, the Central Election Committee receives it from the MIA. The names of deceased that were cleaned from the voters list were not updated in municipal registers that were used in subsequent elections. Hence the electorate continued to increase even more, from an average of 46,099

(2002-2004), to 51,670 (2004-2006) and to a record high of 68,535 (2009-2010). This is an indication that some of the people taken off the voters list in 2009 appeared back in the 2010 voters list.

The only year that the CEC did a better clean up the list from names of deceased was 2009. However, the following year, in preparation for national elections, most of the people that were taken off the list must have appeared again for an increase of nearly 70,000 within a year (more than twice

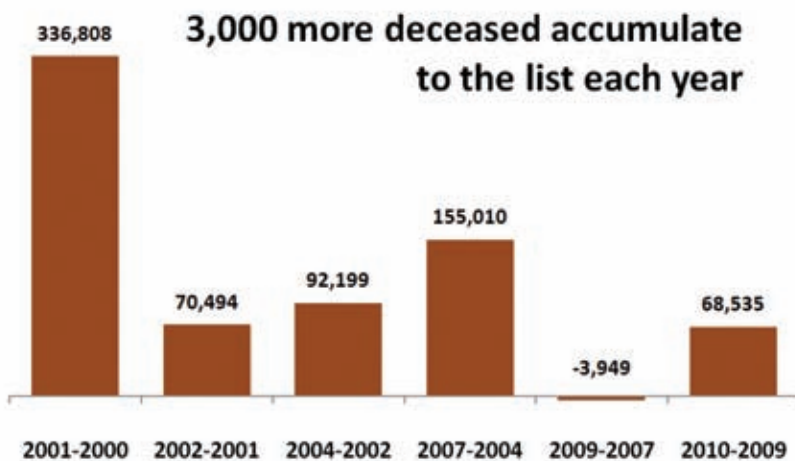


Figure 2: Annualized difference in electorate from 2000 to 2010.

and on top of the names of previously deceased persons that were carried in the Voters List from year to year. The Statistical Office of Kosovo reports around 7,000 deaths annually, which means that around 4,000 are probably removed by municipalities, and 3,000 remain.

Not all municipalities saw a drop in the electorate in 2009. In fact some saw an increase of about 4%, which indicates that the clean-up was uneven across municipalities. Prishtina had around 12% or more than 21,000 voters taken off the list, Kaçanik and Peja saw a decrease of nearly 6,000. Twelve municipalities experienced growth in the electorate even after the cleanup, with Glllogovc and Malisheva experiencing the highest growth of all the municipalities, +3.9% in electorate each.

Mismatch with the Population Count

The conduct of the population count in spring 2011 and the preliminary data indicate further discrepancies when compared with the Voters List. The differences evidenced by the new popula-

the number of births) names cannot be explained otherwise. It can be concluded that the CEC did not send the cleaned list back to the MIA and municipalities for update, and renewed clean-up by the CEC is inefficient and ineffective.

These estimations yield that around 3,000 newly deceased persons were added to the voters list on top of the young voters who reached voting age

Residing in Kosovo > 18 years old		
	1,733,872	Registered persons by population count (excludes Serbs from the north and diaspora)
-	476,815	Under 18 years of age (25-30%) estimates
=	1,257,057	Estimated size of active electorate excluding Serbs from the north
Electoral Inflation		
	1,632,276	Electorate in 2010 from the voters' list
-	1,257,057	Estimated size of electorate without northern Serbs
-	≈ 40000	Serbs from northern Kosovo
=	335,219	Calculated number of persons who figure out in the Voters List but do not vote (deceased and diaspora)

tion census indicate there are serious problems with the voters list, and potentially also with the census data. The total number of people accounted for in the census is 1,733,872; this is only 6% larger than the 2010 Voters List (which unlike the population count does not include those under 18). While the Serbian population in northern Kosovo boycotted the census and the diaspora was not counted in the census, this result clearly shows that the electorate is significantly smaller than the 2010 Voters List presents it.

Despite some of the problems associated with the 2011 population count conducted in April this year, it is an indication of the major difference compared to the Voters List. Demographers estimate that anywhere between 25-30% of the population is under the age of 18, thus not eligible to vote. If this proportion is subtracted from the total population registered, the estimated size of the electorate yields around 1,250,000 (excluding the approximately 40,000 Serbs from the North who did not take part in the census). This estimation leads to the conclusion that the 2010 Voters List of 2010 was inflated by more than 335,000 people, which is largely composed of members of the Diaspora and names of deceased persons who have not been taken off the lists over the period of ten years (2000-2010).

Turnout: A Function of High Politics

The most worrisome trend for Kosovo’s elections has long been the decreasing turnout. The first elections organized after the war, local elections of 2000 saw a 79% turnout, a rate that was achieved mainly because the size of the electorate was very small. This is the reason why we chose to present turnout primarily in absolute numbers (although it should generally present percentage share of the electorate). As the electorate grew disproportionately in the first two years, even the improved turnout in 2001 (in absolute numbers) shows as a sharp drop when presented in percentage figures. In 2001, more than 60,000 Serbs living in Serbia and Montenegro voted for the national elections of Kosovo in 2001 and the electorate counted more than 105,000 such registered voters.

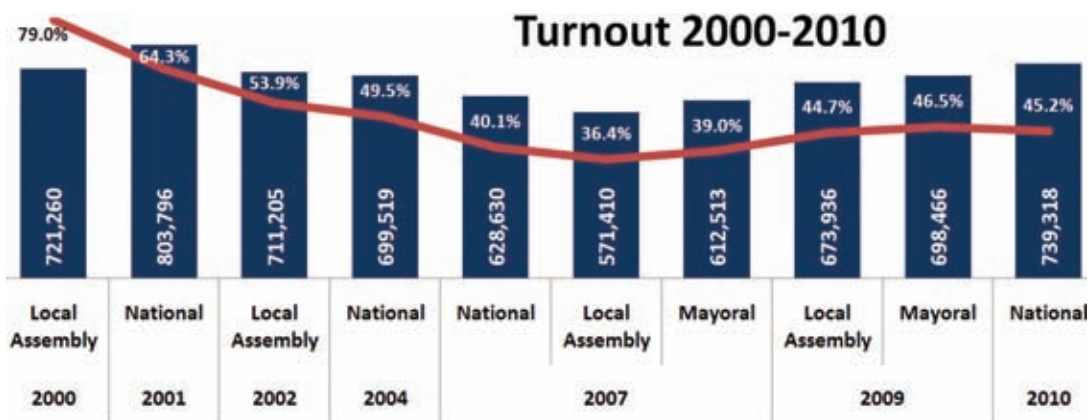


Figure 3: Number of votes for local, mayoral and national elections.

A sharp worrisome drop, even in absolute numbers, arrives from 2002 and continues until 2007. The lowest turnout dropped below 40% of registered voters explained by massive dissatisfaction with governance and lack of progress of Kosovo’s statehood. It is interesting to observe that the 2007 elections were held on the same day, but there is a difference of nearly 60,000 votes between the turnout for national elections when compared to that for local assembly elections. Evidence is inconclusive but there are few possibilities that can explain such massive discrepancy except vote theft.

Voter turnout picked up somewhat in the first elections after the declaration of independence, however in terms of numbers it was still lower than the number of voters in 2001 or 2002.

In 2010 national elections, 15 municipalities experienced a decline in their voter turnout with Mitrovica experiencing the largest decrease by 7.8% compared to the turnout of 2009 Local Assembly elections. On the other hand, voter turnout increased in 21 municipalities with the largest turnout increase seen in Prishtina (9.8%). Novo Brdo and Gračanica had the largest increase of voter turnout in 2010, 24.8% and 22.5% respectively, explained by a change of attitude among Kosovo Serbs who voted in highest numbers since 2001. The highest increase in turnout in the last three sets of elections (2007-2010) was marked in Skenderaj, Glogovc, Lipjan, Kacanik and Prishtina (three of them have seen re-runs in their process, Skenderaj and Glogovc in 2009 and 2010, and Lipjan in 2009 local elections). However, even after the repetition of voting in Skenderaj and Glogovc, their turnout has reached near 60%, significantly higher than the national average.

There is a difference of nearly 60,000 votes between the turnout for national elections when compared to that for local assembly elections held in the same day.

PARTY RESULTS

The brief overview of party performance over the ten years presented below does not do justice to the level of interest that these trends raise, but the scope of this publication does not allow more a more in-depth study at this stage.

PDK: Consistency

The party that has been able to retain its voters in the most disciplined fashion over the last decade is the Democratic Party of Kosovo (PDK). Although its electorate has ranged from around 188,000 voters when it ran for elections in 2000 to more than 235,000 voters in mayoral elections in 2009, it is the only party that generally sees a consistent flat trend-line. PDK also saw a down-turn in 2007, but the drop was milder than the overall fall of turnout, hence its performance as share of total was higher. PDK's electorate has clearly been more consistent and turned out to vote even when the rest of the electorate saw high dissatisfaction. The general low turnout has given PDK the edge and it used its stay in opposition from 2004 to 2007 to win elections in 2007.

Oddly, PDK's years in the power resulted with higher votes too. Widespread dissatisfaction reported by UNDP's Early Warning reports prove that the higher votes did not come as a result of good governance but a direct effect its ability to use government resources and promises for unrealistic capital investments to turn them into electoral asset. In the last two sets of elections PDK boosted its numbers significantly despite the annulment of votes in several municipalities.

The most success PDK showed in gaining votes was for its mayoral races in 2009 where collectively in all municipalities it had about 11,000 more votes than for its local assembly races of the same year. This is mostly due to better performance of its candidates in Prizren, Vushtrri, Skenderaj and Podujeva.

Core Supporters

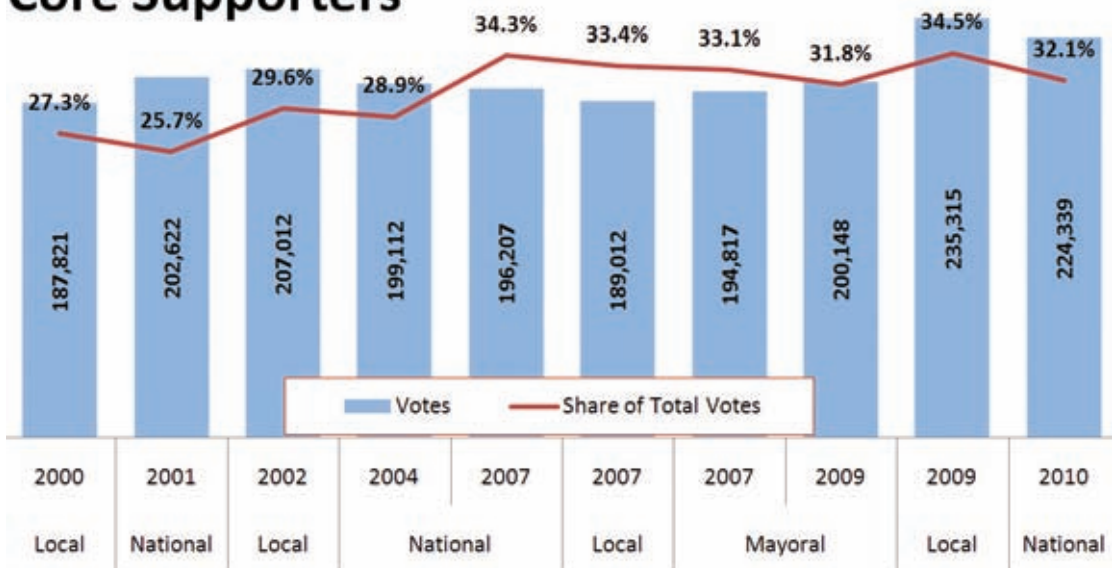


Figure 4: The number of vote cast for PDK and their proportional share of total votes.

LDK: Slow Revival after the Plunge

The party that took than half of all the electorate after the war (55.3%) saw a constant decline since then, with a small rebound in 2009 and 2010. LDK's initial decline from 2000-2004 was very slow (399,000 in 2000 to 313,000 in 2004). In 2007, LDK lost more than half of its electorate, largely gained by the Democratic League of Dardania, a LDK splinter faction, and the newly created parties, the Alliance for New Kosovo and the Reformist Party ORA. For the first time, LDK became the second political force in the country, falling behind PDK. The absence of LDK's founding leader, Mr. Ibrahim Rugova, undoubtedly contributed to LDK's split in 2007, but the loss of electorate started under Rugova's watch.

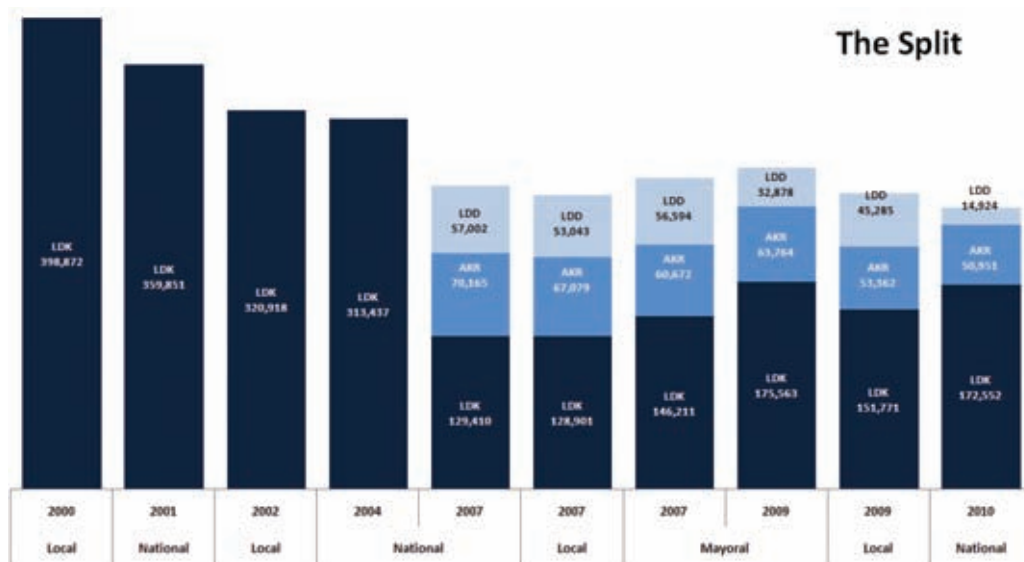


Figure 5: Number of votes won by LDK, LDD, AKR from 2000-2010.

In 2007, local branches performed better than the national structures with around 20,000 more votes for mayoral than for the national contest (PDK's reverse trend). This may partly be explained by the weakness of AKR's and LDD's local branches, both only a year into their formation. It was not until local elections of 2009 when LDK started to regain some of its lost electorate as LDD and AKR weakened and the turnout increased. Around 23,000 more votes were gained at the local assembly races of 2009 as compared with the same race in 2007 (it can be explained that major parties are more likely to score high in mayoral races since it produces a majoritarian effect). The numbers were boosted by the much stronger mayoral race in Prishtina, where Isa Mustafa managed to get around 10,000 more votes than LDK in the local assembly, but also in other municipalities such as Podujeva, Gjilan, Istog, Fushe Kosova.

In 2010, LDK retained the electorate it regained in 2009 and it must have won some additional voters back from LDD and AKR. It is debatable how much its position in the government from 2007-2010 effected LDK's performance but it was Mustafa's performance in Prishtina that accounts for almost half of the regained electoral base. His positioning in opposition to the Government may have helped the perception of LDK as the main opposition alternative and concentrate some anti-PDK votes there. Compared to the 2007 national race, in 2010 LDK increased its electorate in 19 municipalities, with the highest increase in Prishtina (13.4%) and Kamenica (12.6%) but it lost electorate in 11 other municipalities with the most electorate lost in Suhareka (-12.4%) and Shterpece (-8.0%).

After its split from LDK, LDD managed to get a core of its voters and pass the 5% threshold. LDD and AKR in their first performance in 2007 received more than 50,000 and 70,000 votes, respectively. This successful start for LDD and AKR was due to a certain extent to the breakup of LDK. It was evident that voters were searching for new alternatives, but the newly created parties failed to build new leadership in this context. In the last national elections LDD lost more than two-thirds of its electorate. AKR has suffered a similar trend, from its superb first performance in 2007, it barely passed the threshold in 2010, and only with the help of a wide coalition, most importantly with the Justice Party (which in the national elections in 2007 had close to 10,000 votes on its own). The AKR trend is discussed later when considering new party effects.

AAK: Struggle to Break the Regional Barrier

The success of the Alliance for the Future of Kosovo (AAK) has been linked very much with its leader. During the first years, AAK had a stable electorate mostly coming from the municipalities of Dukagjijn region, but with a modest growth in the share of total votes. In the 2007 race for national assembly it had only 1,200 more votes than when it first started out in 2000. AAK’s share in the government from 2004 to 2007 kept the numbers flat, despite the absence of its leader and despite its association with mismanagement. Haradinaj’s return in 2009 came on time to boost its electorate for the 2009 local elections, doubling the vote for the mayoral races and adding around 35,000 votes for local assemblies in a short period of time. The national elections of 2010 found AAK with its leader in retreat and its electorate fell drastically again. These trends clearly show that AAK’s leader was the most important factor in its gain of support among the electorate during its short leadership in the government. Its electorate has an obvious potential given the ability of its leader to campaign in an electoral process.

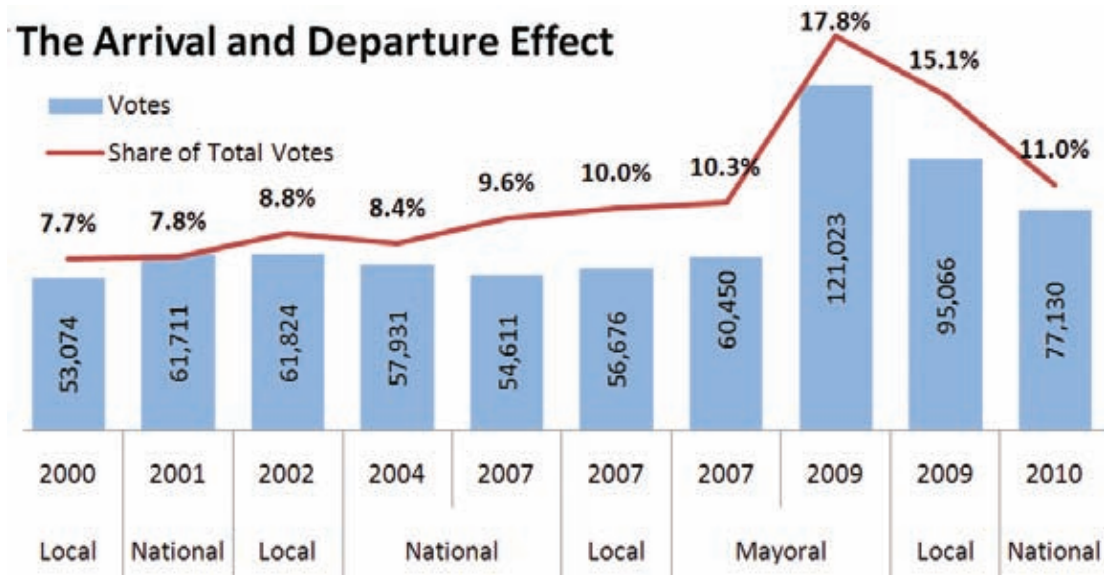


Figure 6: The number of votes won by AAK and its proportional share of total votes from 2000 to 2010.

The 2009 spike in AAK’s performance is easily explained by the return of its leader who was part of the 2009 local election campaign. Perceived as one of the three major parties, AAK was also a beneficiary of the majoritarian effect of mayoral elections, and in 2007, it had more votes for mayoral

and local assembly races than at the national level by a difference of around 6,000 votes. In 2009, this effect was even higher. Despite having reached the highest levels it ever received, AAK gathered 30,000 more votes for the mayoral race than for the local assembly one. The strong mayoral candidates in Gjakova, Suhareka, Vushtrri, Peja and even Glogoc, helped AAK grow in electorate.

New Parties No Longer New

The fall of the three main parties is partly explained by the lower turnout, but also by a massive chunk of angry voters who were flocking to new options. New parties emerged with vigor pointing out to a Kosovar perception that the political scene has not consolidated and that a flux is desirable. Despite the threshold, the votes won by new parties that emerged at each election cycle, indicate that a respectable part of the Kosovo electorate is regularly seeking new alternatives to counter the three big and well established parties (LDK, PDK and AAK).

Three significant political forces entered the Parliament with a punch, only to see their voter base diminish in the next elections. Explanations for their decline abound, from their inability to set up a branch network, to the explanation that D4D espouses that short of a distinct profile, being new is quickly displaced by newer parties that emerge. Some parties may internalize some of the angry votes as their loyal voters, but short of the sense that they found the right party, most voters will abandon the parties for new fresh options.

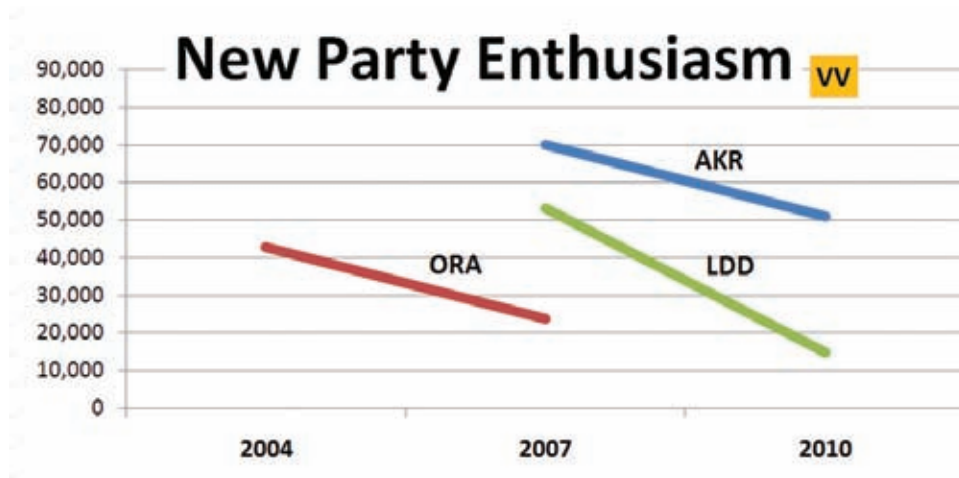


Figure 7: Trends of three new political parties whose performance faded after a stellar first.

The Reformist Party ORA ran for the first time in 2004 and managed to receive more than 43,000 votes (6.2% share of the votes). The next elections in 2007 saw the establishment of AKR and LDD, so ORA lost half of the original votes it received in 2004. Some voters probably chose ORA for the specific program but most chose it due to its appeal of novelty, representation of groups who felt unrepresented and the perceived potential of change. Three years took the shine off ORA and the appeal of the new next time went largely to AKR. Unfortunately for ORA, the introduction of the 5% threshold left them out of Parliament.

The entry of the New Kosovo Alliance (AKR) into the electoral race in 2007 changed somewhat the balance of political parties. Even though it did not manage to enter the Government coalition, AKR did come out as the third biggest party at 12.3% of the national vote, overtaking AAK. AKR is also one of the clear beneficiaries of LDK's crisis. However, despite AKR being in opposition it

did not help boost its ranks or even helped retain the electorate it had gained in 2007. In 2009 local assembly elections, within two years, it lost close to 10,000 votes (compared with 2007 local assembly race). The decline continued, and AKR would have had the same fate as LDD had it not reached out to form a wide coalition with five smaller parties and popular individuals from various backgrounds. The resulting Coalition for New Kosovo – KKR still had around 3,000 less votes than previously AKR had in 2009. AKR gained electorate only in two municipalities, Gjakova and Rahovec.

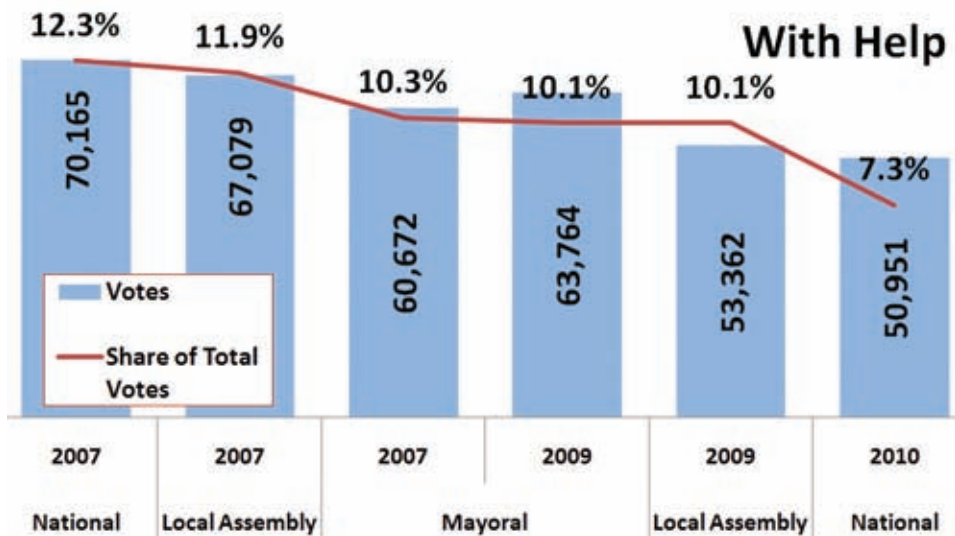


Figure 8: AKR and Its proportional share of votes.

AKR is also the only party that won fewer votes in the mayoral elections in 2007 than in the races for local assemblies. Its weaker performance with mayors is probably a direct result of loss of majoritarian effect, where the major parties have an advantage. Noticing the weakness, AKR agreed with LDD to support each other’s candidates for mayor. AKR ran 13 mayoral races with the support of LDD and LDD ran 11 mayoral races with the support of AKR, whereas in four they ran against each other. This informal coalition for mayoral races brought in about 13% of the total vote for AKR and LDD.

In the last national elections of 2010, the “Vetëvendosje” Movement exceeded the performance of the previously new parties, and does not show the signs of fatigue that previous parties did. More than 88,000 votes (12% of the total share) made them the third biggest party in the country. While “Vetëvendosje” is credited to having more established and developed local branches, it remains to be seen if flexible voters will still be seen as an alternative to the more established parties that they have seen since 2000.

THE FIGHT FOR THE LAST RESERVED SEATS

The trends of the number of Serb voters during the period the decade of elections show drastic shifts depending on the political situation. No Serb parties ran in 2000. The first national elections of 2001 saw the first turnout of over 31,000 Serb voters, mostly to be attributed to the formation of “Koalicija Povratak”. The total of Serb and the other minorities accounted for 6.9% of the vote in 2001. The registration of more Serb and the local character of the 2002 elections boosted turnout to the highest levels of Serb participation.

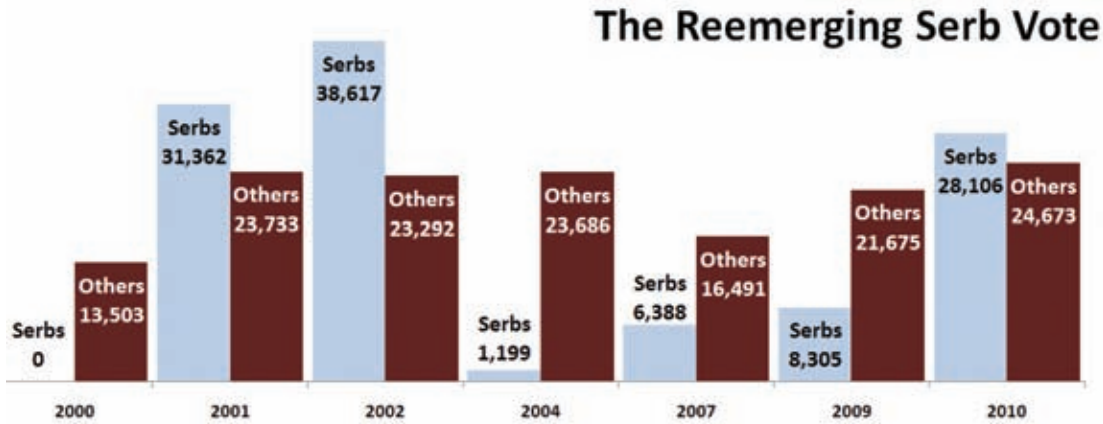


Figure 9: The total number of votes of the serbian community and other communities from 2000 to 2010.

Following the 2004 riots, the Serb vote plummeted to below 1,200. The 2007 elections saw a minor increase as elections occurred just before Kosovo’s expected declaration of independence.

The 2010 elections saw the highest turnout of non-Serb communities and the third highest for the Serb community. It is interesting to observe that Serbian turnout for the first time does not follow the political and status related trends, but is a trend that can only grow in the future. The increase in 2009 was generally a result of the decentralization process. A perception that Kosovo’s independence is irreversible has led to a motivation to secure a control of power in their midst. A number of Serb mayors were elected in the 2009 local elections, contributing to higher turnout in 2010.

EFFECTS OF MAIN POLICY CHOICES

Fewer Meritorious Women

A 30% gender quota has long been a feature of Kosovo elections. While the gender quotas have stayed in place, the electoral system has moved from closed lists to open lists and from one choice to multiple choices for candidates, which has complicated the application of the gender quota.

Kosovo's politics is dominated by men, but the introduction of the gender quota has not been a subject of controversy. The recent controversies raised by selected members of the international community focus around the fact that the replacement of men with more votes by women with fewer votes is problematic. It is interesting to note that this controversy was never raised by 21-24 male politicians who may have dropped out to women with fewer votes.

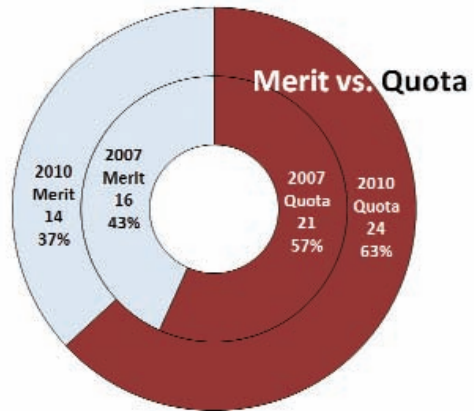


Figure 10: Number of women elected by quota and by merit on 2007 and 2010.

Since the application of open lists, it is possible to measure the rate of female MPs who win by merit as opposed to the quota. The election results of 2007 national elections show that 16 women MPs (out of a total of 37) were elected by merit whereas the other 21 women MPs took a seat in the Assembly of Kosovo because of the gender quota. In 2010, three more women than in 2007 benefited from women quotas whereas only 14 women MPs were elected by merit.

A closer look on women's performance by party shows that only LDK and to a lesser extent SLS had an improving trend of women elected merit. In 2007, four (out of eight) LDK's female MPs were elected by merit. In 2010, this increased to over three quarters (7 out of 9). AAK saw one female MP elected in each election (1 out of 3 in 2007, and 1 out of 4 in 2010). Over half of PDK's 12 MPs were elected by merit in 2007, which marked the sharpest drop to only 2 in 2010. AKR 3 female MPs elected in 2007 dropped to only one in 2010. The champion of meritorious women was Jedinstvena Srpska Lista with both female MPs elected by merit.

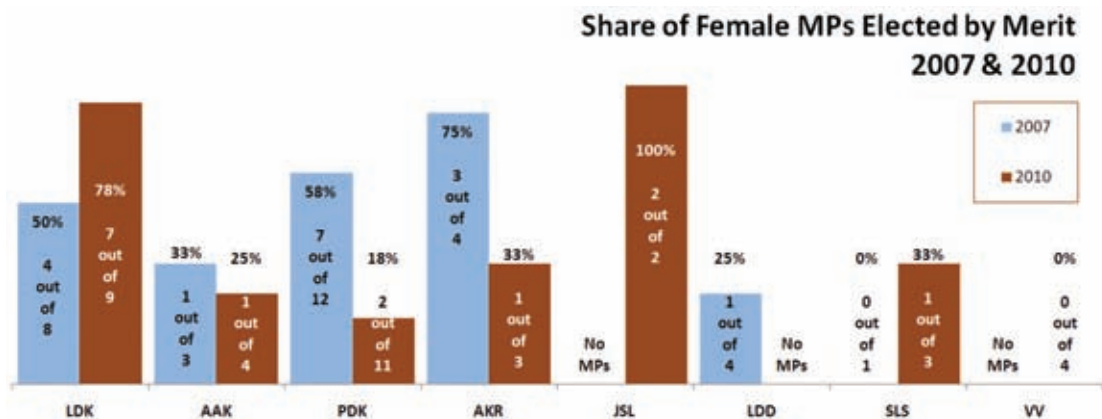


Figure 11: Share and number of female MPs by merit.

Leadership Gravity

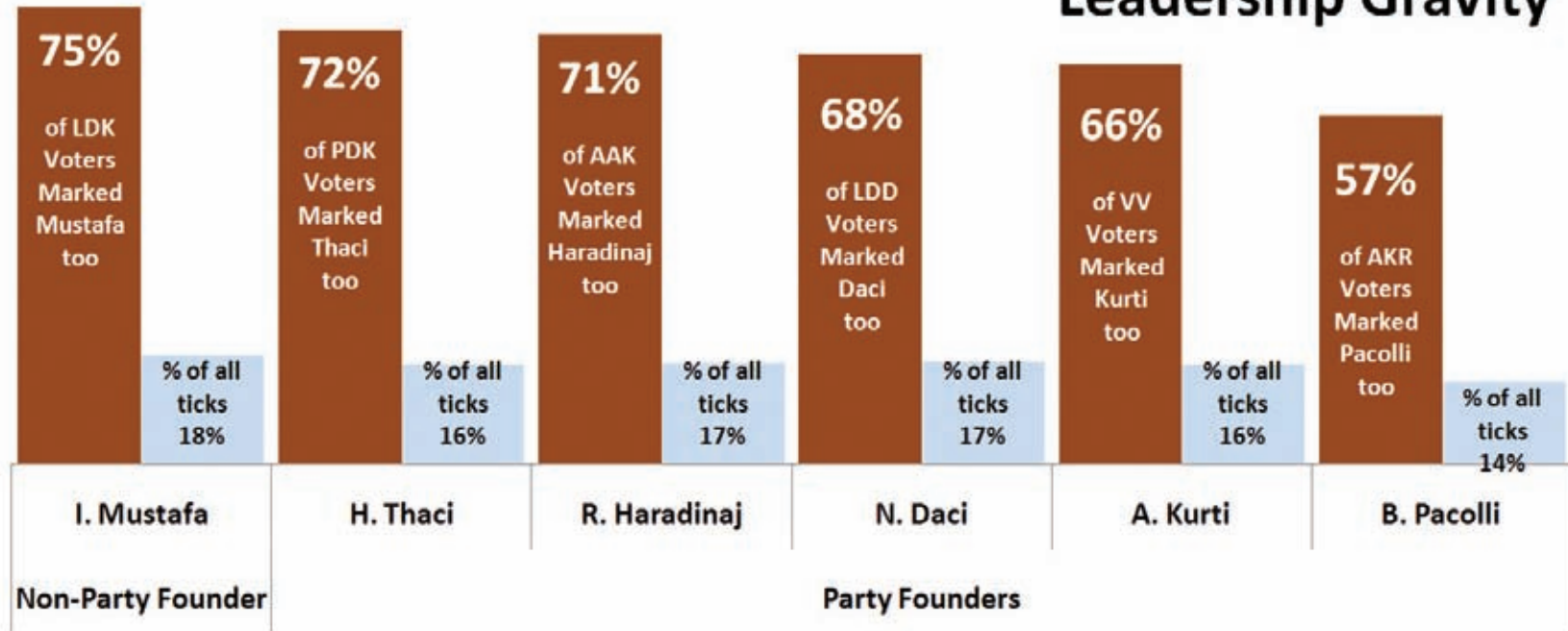


Figure 12: First bar: the proportion of voters who marked the President of the party as one of the 5 names. Second bar: the votes of the President as percentage of all votes won by all candidates collectively.

Still Leader Dependent

The identity of political parties in the last decade has been strongly linked to the identity of their leader. Kosovo's parties are new and devoid of political ideology, hence they are prone to control and their performance is accredited to the success of their leader.

However, not all leaders still control the parties they established, with LDK having gone through tumultuous process but has recently elected a new leader that has managed to reverse the trend. All except one party are still run by their founders, LDK's is the only one run by a President who was not the founder, but who won in an internally democratic process. It is interesting then to note that it is the only non-founding President who won the highest proportion of the party vote of all as it captured some lost ground for the party overall. In the last national elections of 2010, three out of four LDK voters marked the new leader, Isa Mustafa, as one of the five possible ticks that voters choose to be a candidate for the Assembly of Kosovo. More than 18% of all the marks (treating each mark for an individual candidate as one) of the LDK electorate were for Isa Mustafa. This is an indication that LDK electorate largely approved of the new leader but it may also indicate that LDK is very dependent on its leader since such a large part of its electorate voted for him. It remains to be seen if this trend presages that LDK remains just as dependent on the leader with a different name, or perhaps that after Rugova's death, the parties must become more democratic to survive and now LDK has started to somewhat reap the benefits of this process.

The leaders of PDK and AAK managed to get the vote of more than 70% of their parties' electorate. They have remained unchallenged since the establishment of their party and are certainly not losing ground. Haradinaj and Thaci received respectively 17% and 16% of all the marks of their party vote and this is an indication that the leader accounts for much of their vote.

Even the leader of the newly created party, Vetëvendosje Movement, was voted by 66% of all of its electorate and similarly as Thaci and Haradinaj received around 16% of all the marks of the electorate. However, Vetëvendosje is a party that proclaims to have consensual decision-making and a consistent policy platform, which may serve as an alternative motive for the gravity of the party, instead of the leadership. AKR's leader, Behxhet Pacolli, was voted by 57% of the voters who voted for the Coalition for New Kosovo (KKR), which is explained by the nature of it being a coalition of six parties on 2010 and it is only natural that voters of the smaller parties have marked their favorites.

Ballot Design Considerations

These trends can also be explained by the technical nature of the ballot design and some of the effects that directly emanate from the electoral system chosen. An open-list system which treats Kosovo as a single district is bound to benefit the leadership disproportionately. With 110 spots blank boxes in the ballots (whereas voters have to check the booklet to see which box corresponds to which name) it makes it convenient to go for the top leadership instead.

Short of districts, the ability to mark more than one person was introduced to prevent voters from being in a dilemma to vote the party head and their local favorite. A single choice system would have put the central leadership against various regional influential leaders.

It was deemed that more choices would prevent unhealthy internal competition as well as increase the likelihood for women and local leaders to gather a substantial amount of votes. However, the current system still disproportionately benefits the powerful leadership with access to mass media and funding and practically creates a two-level contest.

Voters Increasingly Appreciate Open Lists

Open lists were introduced in 2007 elections and they have affected the way many candidates are elected, how they campaign, and how they position in Parliament once elected. Open lists have been an opportunity for the voter to decide which political party representatives to represent them.

The data presented shows that open lists have had a fair impact enabling close to 40% of Members of Parliament to get elected thanks to open lists only. This still leaves over 60% who would have been elected through either system, open or closed. The effect is more accentuated for the large parties, with 48% of the MPs of large parties elected thanks to open lists.

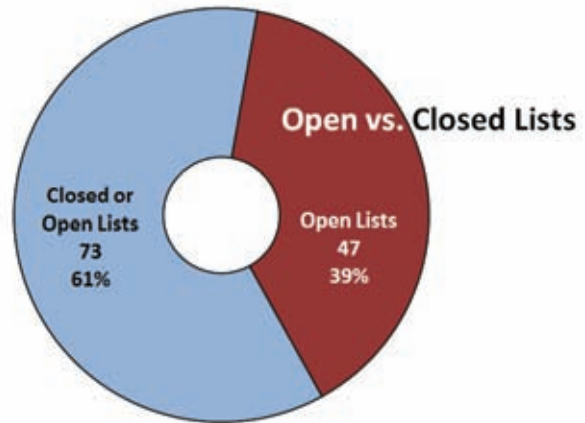


Figure 13: Number of MPs elected thanks to open lists vs. those who would have been elected with closed lists too (2010).

Almost half of MPs of four large parties would not have been elected if the party lists were according to their preference of the party leader.

The number of MPs elected through open lists is clearly in the increase among the main parties. LDK had the largest share of MPs elected by open lists in 2007, which is understandable considering the contested leadership LDK was going through. LDK's share of MPs elected through the open list increased from 7 (out of 25) to 11 (out of 27). PDK's share of open list winners has doubled from 9 top 18 (24% to 53%), which means that voter preference did not heed the party preference. Voters' choices seemed more aligned with the assessments of AAK and AKR lists who, respectively, only 1 and 2 of their MPs were elected due to open lists. AAK's voters have made the sharpest open list progress, from 10% (one MP out of 10) to 45% (5 MPs out of 11). The only party that saw fewer open-list winners in 2010 was AKR, probably due to its dwindling size. It is clear that the impact of open lists is higher when more seats are distributed, so the effect is smaller as the size of parties' falls.

More Open List Winners

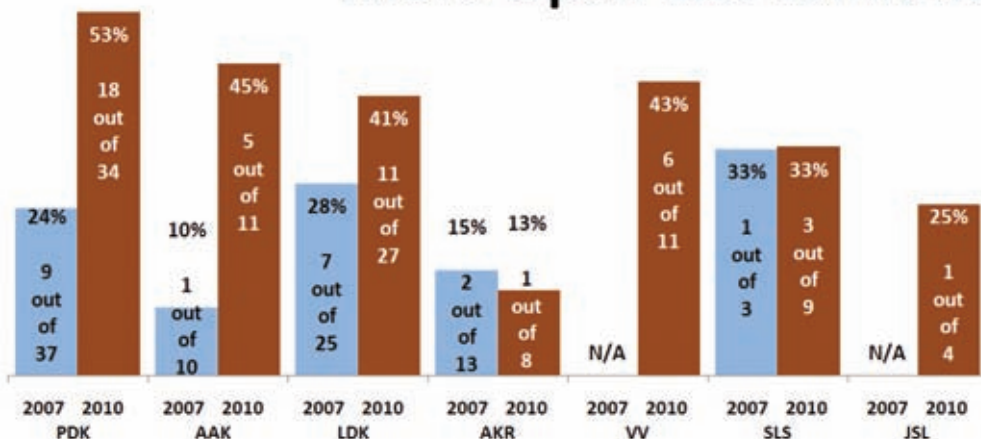


Figure 14: Share of MPs elected thanks to open lists - 2007 and 2010.

Vetëvendosje stands at around the same rate of open-list winner as LDK and AAK with 6 out of 11 of its MPs having been elected through open lists.

The 'Multiple' Ticks and Spoiled Ballots

Not all voters used the possibility to make five marks on their ballot. Several videos and countless stories indicate that this option was abused by party commissioners to boost their own party favorites. Ballots are considered valid even if they had just one name marked, or even if they had none, as long as the choice for the party was clearly marked. Naturally, some ballots had fewer than five marks for candidates.

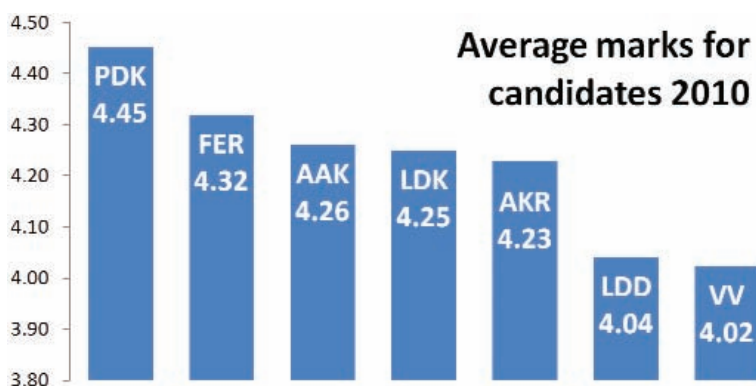


Figure 15: Out of the five possible marks for MP candidates.

A closer look shows that, on average, some political parties had more marks than others with the main parties ranging from 4.02 marks to 4.45 marks per valid ballot. Some parties may have had more motivated and literate voters, but this may also indicate that some parties had more commissioners who could add marks. The Democratic Party of Kosovo results to have the highest average of 4.45 marks per ballot, which means that an incredible 9 out of 10 PDK votes marked all five candidates. Excluding FER, the higher the share of the party commissioners (follows the size of parties), the higher the average marks for candidates of that party. With fewer commissioners, LDD and VV had around 4 marks on average. This is a major area in need of improvement that falls under direct responsibility of the CEC which should explore possibilities to send commissioners from areas other than the location they manage.

In 2009, the CEC for the first time started to report spoiled ballots. Prior to 2009, spoiled ballots were mostly likely included with the invalid ballots so this category cannot be compared with the earlier elections. In the last elections of 2010, spoiled ballots present a relatively low average of spoiled ballots, specifically 0.17% of all votes casted.

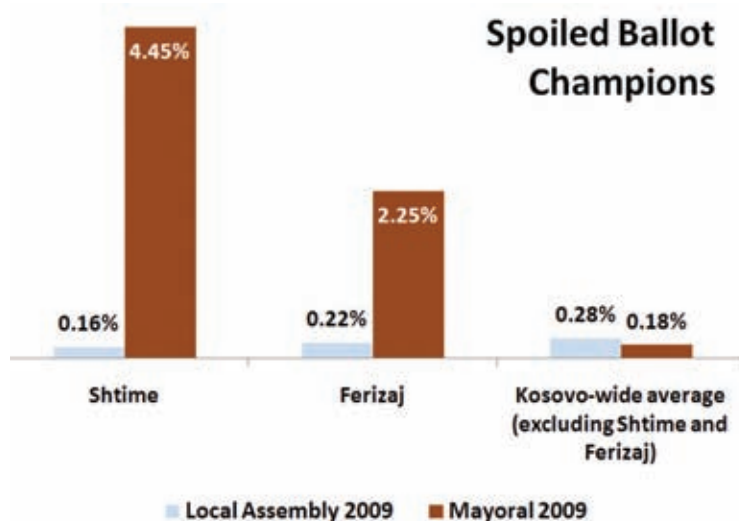


Figure 16: The unusually high rate of spoiled ballots for mayoral elections in Shtime and Ferizaj.

A closer look at the 2009 spoiled ballots of local elections clearly shows vandalism with mayoral ballots in 2009. Logically, there should be more spoiled ballots for the local assembly since they are more complicated than the mayoral ballots.

Overall, the mayoral elections in 2009 saw a higher rate of spoiled ballots (0.35%) compared to those for local assemblies (0.27%). Except Shtime and Ferizaj, all other municipalities had a lower number of spoiled mayoral ballots than local assembly ballots. In Shtime and Ferizaj spoiled mayoral ballots were several times the Kosovo average. Nearly 4.5% of all votes cast for the mayoral candidates of Shtime were spoiled. That there is nothing wrong with the literacy of the voters from Shtime is proven by the fact that in local assembly elections, spoiled ballots were lower than the Kosovo average. The same phenomenon occurred in Ferizaj and their geographic proximity may also explain a learning curve that hopefully will not spread to other municipalities in the future. This shows clearly that in these two municipalities there were organized groups of a party that spoiled ballots of other parties.

Invalid ballots: A Learning Curve

The rate of invalid ballots has seen fluctuations and at times reached alarming levels. Invalid ballots also can be a sensitive issue for they are a sign disenfranchisement of semi-illiterate voters, and they indicate their potential abuse. The changes in electoral regulations over the last decade have had a sharp effect on the rate of invalid ballots. As the system became more complex, the rate of invalid ballots increased, but when certain voting processes were continued, the rate of invalid ballots decreased. It does not help that authorities have often changed the definition of what constitutes an invalid ballot.

Invalid ballots				
Election years		Avg.	Highest	Lowest
Local	2000	4.7%	Fushe Kosove (9.7%)	Istog (2.5%)
National	2001	1.5%	Leposavic (2.7%)	Decan (0.9%)
Local	2002	1.2%	Dragash (3.4%)	Decan (0.8%)
National	2004	1.0%	Dragash (2.0%)	Decan (0.6%)
National	2007	5.6%	Ferizaj (7.7%)	Glogovc (3.6%)
Local	2009	7.9%	Ferizaj (11.7%)	Novobrdo (3.6%)
Mayoral	2009	1.5%	Glogovc (5.6%)	Vushtrri (0.6%)
National	2010	3.8%	Ranilug (7.6%)	Istog (2.5%)

It is not a surprise that invalid ballots reached nearly 5% in 2000 primarily because these were the very first elections. The rate of invalid ballots fell in 2001, 2002 and 2004, primarily because of the introduction of closed lists, but also because of the learning effect.

The elections in 2007 saw unprecedented rates of invalid ballots, for two main reasons: (a) three sets of elections were held at the same time, and (b) introduction of open lists with 10 choices. Close to 57,000 (or 6.1% of turnout) ballots were pronounced invalid and nearly 22,000 ballots were blank, comprising 3.8% of the turnout.

Lists were kept open for 2009, but the number of marks was reduced to 5. Nevertheless, the rate of invalid ballots increased to 8.4% while blank ballots fell to 2.1%. The rate of invalid ballots is much higher in conditional voting.

Mayoral elections at the same electoral cycle (2009) saw four times fewer invalid ballots (2.3% including the blank ballots). The most recent elections in 2010 saw the rate of invalid ballots fall in half, generally explained by the use of the same system, and since only one set of elections were organized. Invalid ballots can no longer be used as an argument against open lists.

Blank Ballots				
Election years		Avg.	Highest	Lowest
National	2001	0.44%	Leposavic (0.9%)	Prishtine (0.3%)
Local	2002	0.45%	Podujeve (2.0%)	Prishtine (0.2%)
National	2004	0.39%	Malisheve (2.3%)	Glllogovc (0.08%)
National	2007	3.50%	Lipjan (7.4%)	Skenderaj (0.4%)
Local	2009	1.95%	Junik (4.3%)	Ranilug (0.18%)
Mayoral	2009	0.64%	Klllokot (32.9%)	Skenderaj (0.2%)
National	2010	0.63%	Junik (1.5%)	Ranilug (0.12%)

Blank ballots have seen a suspicious spike from the regular rate of 0.4-0.6% up to 3.5% average among municipalities. The Municipality of Prishtina initially had one of the lowest rates of blank ballots, but this prestigious reward now goes to the efficient commissioners of Skenderaj.

Invalid & Blank Ballots

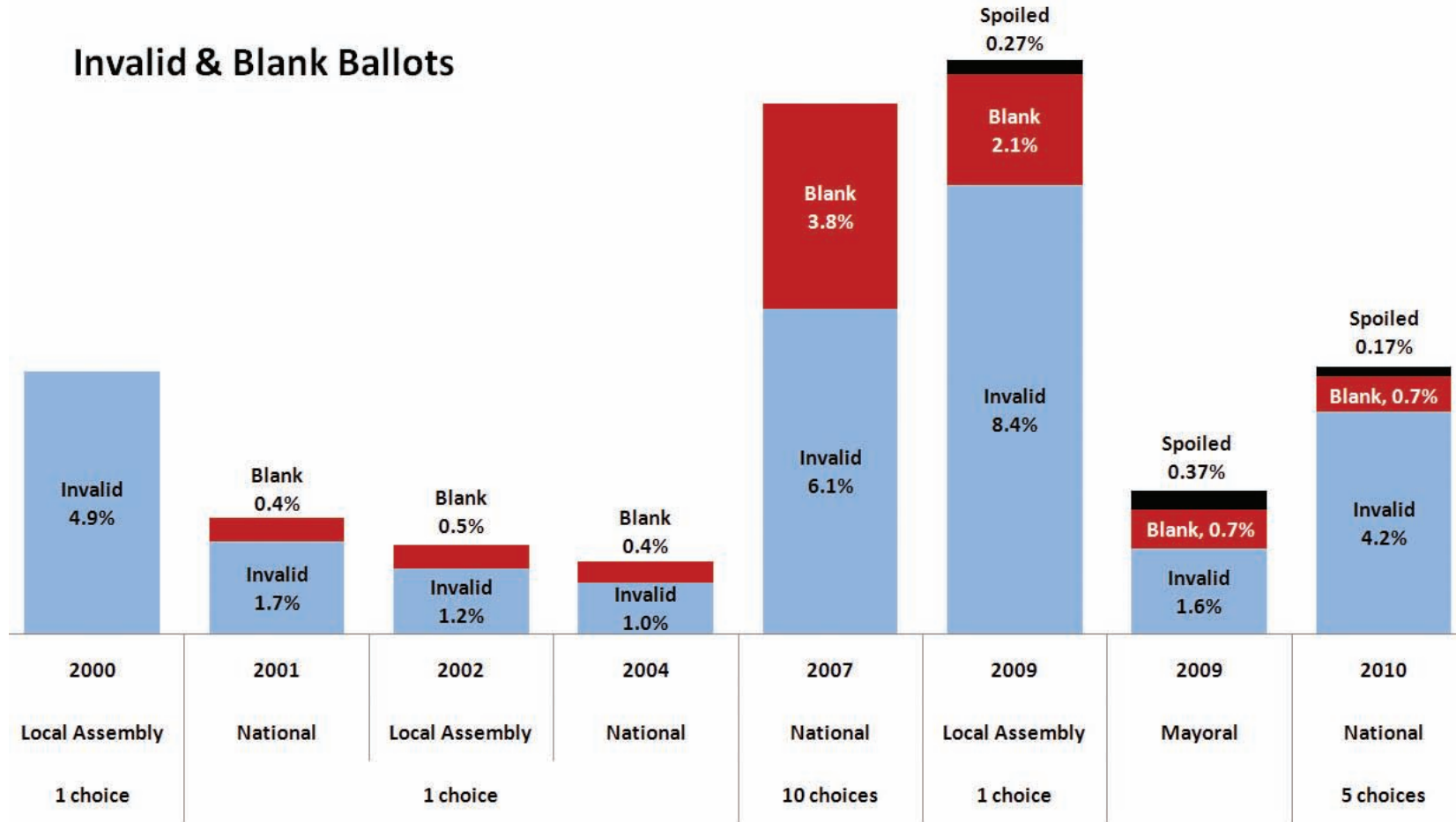


Figure 17: Share of invalid and blank ballots from 2000 to 2011.

WHY DO WE STILL NEED CONDITIONAL AND BY-MAIL BALLOTS?

Voices that defend conditional votes are rare today mainly because of their great potential for manipulation and the long period of time it takes to count. However, problems associated with the Voters List necessitate the use of conditional voting.

Despite the numerous problems ascribed to conditional voting, this mode is still an option for voters. Before counting, each conditional ballot

cast is verified to ensure that the voter has not voted in another location. If a voter who cast a conditional ballot is found to have voted in another polling station, the conditional ballot will be rejected. If someone has voted on someone else's behalf (as it routinely happens in several municipalities where turnout exceeds 60%), the conditional vote of the real voter may end up being rejected instead. Around one third of conditional ballots were rejected in 2001 while this has fallen to less than one fifth in 2010.

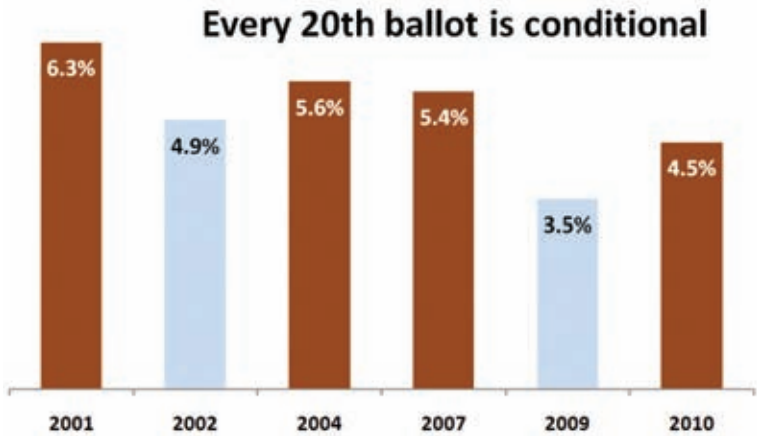


Figure 18: Share of conditional ballots.

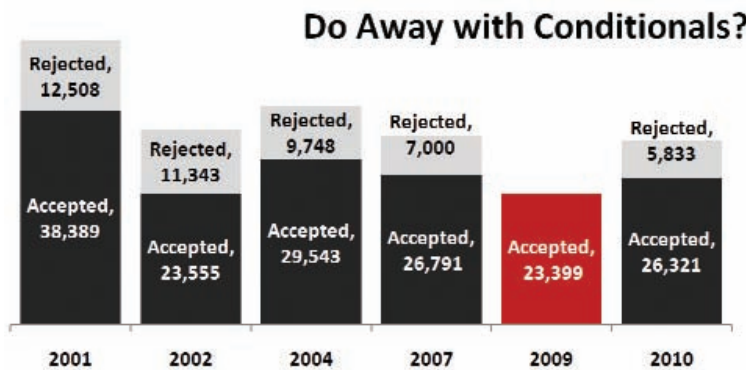


Figure 19: Rate of acceptance of conditional ballots.

Conditional ballots cast on the elections of 2001 constituted an average of 6.3% of all ballots cast ranging from the lowest 4.8% share in Kacanik to Leposavic with the highest percentage of conditional votes casted (12.5%). The share of conditional votes decreased steadily to an average of 3.5% per municipality in 2009. In

2010, the conditional vote average for municipalities constituted 4.3% of the total vote. In all elections, the highest share of conditional ballots were used in Serb-majority municipalities, mostly in three municipalities in northern

Conditional Ballots				
Election years		Avg.	Lowest	Highest
National	2001	6.33%	Kacanik (4.8%)	Leposavic (12.5%)
Local	2002	4.91%	Shtime (2.3%)	Novobrdo (12.8%)
National	2004	5.62%	Decan (2.4%)	Zvecan (44.0%)
National	2007	5.38%	Decan (2.3%)	Leposavic (72.8%)
Local	2009	3.47%	Skenderaj (1.7%)	Zvecan (35.7%)
National	2010	4.34%	Decan (1.9%)	Leposavic (47.8%)

Kosovo where conditions for voting were generally risky, as well as due to population movements of Serbs who moved to the northern part of Kosovo after the war, away from the municipality that they registered.

Another similar category that is even more redundant than conditional voting is by-mail voting. The electorate has many registered voters who live abroad and the option of by mail voting has been available since 2001. The intention of offering this costly but unused tool is to avoid disenfranchisement of voters abroad. By-mail voting starts a few weeks in advance so that the votes can be counted on the day when regular votes are counted. For the national elections in 2001 this voting procured was used by nearly 28,000 registered voters of the diaspora and by-mail ballots made up around

By-mail Ballots			
Type of Elections	Year	Total By Mail	Share of Votes
National	2001	27,788	3.46%
National	2004	3,806	0.54%
National	2007	6,233	0.99%
Mayoral	2007	5,491	0.93%

3.5% of the entire turnout. Since the CEC does not regularly publish data for by-mail ballots, we were not able to tell the share of by-mail voting for elections in 2002, 2007 local assembly, and 2009 and 2010 elections. By-mail voting was doubled from around half a percentage in 2004 to nearly a full percentage value in 2007.

Taking into consideration also the high amount of resources and time placed in providing this type of voting that it is being used by less than 1% of the voters, there have been many voices over the years to abolish this type of voting, at least for municipal elections.

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