

The Limits of Snap Elections: Political Deadlock in Kosovo after the June 2026 Vote

Bálint L. Tóth, Mathias Corvinus Collegium
toth.balint@mcc.hu

Abstract

Kosovo's June 2026 snap election has once again exposed the country's persistent political deadlock. Despite three parliamentary elections within 18 months, the fundamental balance of political power has changed relatively little: the Self-Determination Movement (LVV) remains the dominant political force, while opposition parties have struggled to establish a credible alternative. The crisis reflects deeper tensions over coalition-building, presidential authority, and the functioning of political institutions. Repeated elections have contributed to voter fatigue, declining participation, and growing public frustration with partisan confrontation. This paper analyzes the political significance of Kosovo's latest election results by drawing on the relevant academic literature, electoral statistics and online databases, as well as reporting from local online news portals. It approaches the results through electoral geography and demography, a comparative review of campaign strategies, the effects of Kosovo's electoral system, and party politics dynamics. Kosovo's political experience raises broader questions about the resilience of democratic institutions and the political elite's capacity to compromise. The latest developments highlight the limits of elections as a remedy for unresolved institutional conflict, while raising broader questions about democratic consolidation, the functioning of institutions, and the prospects for political stability.

Keywords: Kosovo, elections, political parties, party system, analysis

Background

The repeated elections were primarily caused by political deadlock over government formation and, subsequently, the election of the president (Cvetković 2025). The process began in February 2025, when the legislative election marked a significant shift in Kosovo's political landscape. The voting produced no single-party majority, and the winner failed to reach a coalition agreement (Kosovo Online 2025). Prime Minister Albin Kurti's Self-Determination Movement (*Lëvizja Vetëvendosje*, LVV) remained the largest party but fell from 50.3 % to around 41.0 % of the vote, losing its parliamentary majority (Aretera 2025). LVV represents a relatively clear ideological choice: its leftist and developmentalist program

emphasizes progressive taxation, social welfare, the expansion of public services, increased domestic production, and a strong state role in economic development (Mexhuani 2025). LVV's confrontational approach toward Serbia and reluctance to grant greater autonomy to Serb-majority municipalities in Kosovo strained relations with the European Union (EU), United States, and the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), contributing to international pressure and sanctions (Mustafa 2025).¹

The right-wing conservative Democratic Party of Kosovo (*Partia Demokratike e Kosovës*, PDK) and the liberal Democratic League of Kosovo (*Lidhja Demokratike e Kosovës*, LDK) both strengthened their positions, creating several possible government configurations but also increasing the risk of prolonged negotiations. Initially, the parliament failed to elect a speaker and deputy speakers, because no candidate could secure the required 61 votes. This delayed the formation of a government for months. Nevertheless, short by 5 votes, Kurti's new government ultimately did not receive the green light in the legislature that had been eventually formed with great difficulty, which led to the parliamentary elections being repeated in December 2025 (Gafuri and Aylott 2025).

LVV then won enough seats to form a simple-majority government; with an increase of 9 seats, the party's parliamentary group grew to a total of 57 members. Yet a new constitutional crisis emerged over the head of state's election. Vjosa Osmani's mandate was expiring, and constitutional rules require a parliamentary quorum of at least 80 of the 120 Members of Parliament (MPs) – 2/3 majority – for a presidential election (KQZ 2026b). Consequently, the governing party needed opposition participation again – specifically, 23 MPs. Prime Minister (PM) Albin Kurti expected opposition MPs to facilitate the vote, as had occurred in 2021, but PDK and LDK demanded greater influence over the candidates (Deutsche Welle 2026). LVV rejected these demands, arguing that its electoral mandate entitled it to choose the head of state, while opposition parties viewed an opposition president as an essential counterbalance to LVV's parliamentary dominance. The parties failed to compromise, preventing the election of a president and triggering the dissolution of parliament and another snap election (Radio Evropa E Lirë 2026b). The opposition LDK also had an incentive to return to elections, hoping to benefit from outgoing head of state Osmani's popularity, who joined the party that year.

As displayed in Table 1 and Figures 1–2 below, the June 2026 election largely failed to alter Kosovo's political landscape. With a parliamentary group that became 4 seats smaller, PM Kurti's party nevertheless remained the strongest political formation (KQZ 2026a). They were now 8 seats short of an independent majority. However, Kosovo's reserved ethnic minority seats mean that LVV can form a simple majority with support from non-majority MPs, making the election outcome broadly similar to the previous one. The number of mandates held by the national conservative PDK remained unchanged, while the more

¹ Although EU member states differed over how firmly to pressure Pristina, the EU collectively condemned the Kurti government's handling of northern Kosovo following the Serb boycott of local elections, the installation of ethnic Albanian mayors in Serb-majority municipalities, and subsequent police operations. The EU also deplored attacks on EULEX, warned against unilateral actions, and introduced temporary, reversible diplomatic and funding-related measures in June 2023. The United States likewise criticized Pristina's actions as unnecessarily escalatory and warned that they “will have consequences for our bilateral relations with Kosovo,” urging Kurti to change course. NATO condemned attacks on KFOR personnel, called for de-escalation, and highlighted declining political as well as practical coordination with Kosovo, warning that this undermined its Euro-Atlantic aspirations and urging both Pristina and Belgrade to implement their normalization agreement and implementation annex (Council of the EU 2023; European Union External Action 2023; NATO 2023a; 2023b; UNMIK Media Observer 2023; US Department of State 2023).

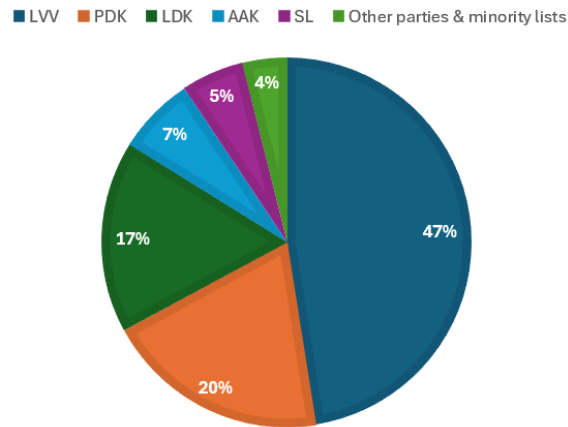
expressly pro-Western LDK and the Alliance for the Future of Kosovo (*Aleanca për Ardhmërinë e Kosovës*, AAK) increased their presence in the legislature only marginally.

Table 1: Vote Share by Political Entity with Parliamentary Mandate (June 2026 Election)

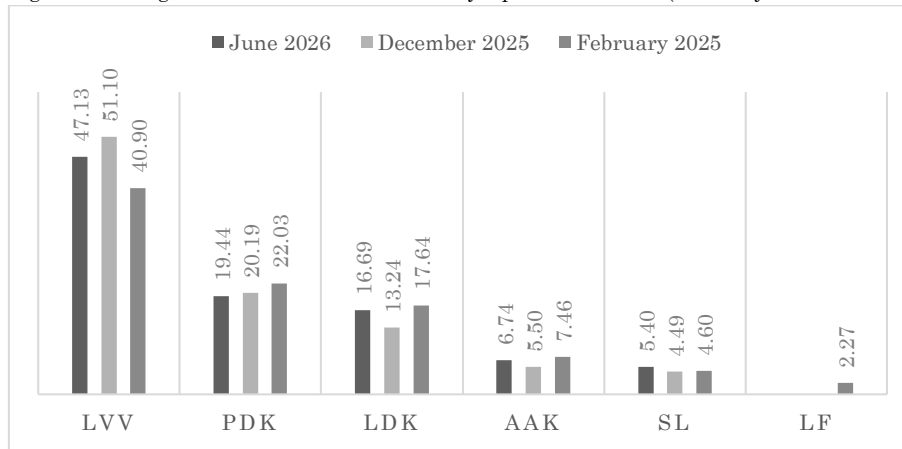
Political entity	Votes	Vote share	Seats
Self-Determination Movement (LVV)	382,869	47.13 %	53
Democratic Party of Kosovo (PDK)	157,892	19.44 %	22
Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK)	135,567	16.69 %	18
Alliance for the Future of Kosovo (AAK)	54,729	6.74 %	7
Minority list parties			
Serbian List (SL)	43,843	5.40 %	9
Turkish Democratic Party of Kosovo (KDTP)	5,709	0.70 %	2
For Freedom, Justice and Survival (ZSPO)	5,447	0.67 %	1
Vakat Coalition (KV)	3,910	0.48 %	1
New Democratic Initiative of Kosovo (IRDK)	3,492	0.43 %	1
New Democratic Party (NDS)	2,693	0.33 %	1
Social Democratic Union (SDU)	2,682	0.33 %	1
Ashkali Social Democratic Party (PSA)	2,598	0.32 %	1
Egyptian Liberal Party (PLE)	2,199	0.27 %	1
Unique Gorani Party (JGP)	1,650	0.20 %	1
United Roma Party of Kosovo (PREBK)	905	0.11 %	1

Source: KQZ 2026a

Figure 1: Distribution of Vote Share (June 2026 Election)



Source: KQZ 2026a, own illustration

Figure 2: Changes in the vote shares of the major political entities (February 2025–June 2026)²

Source: KQZ 2026a; 2026b; 2026c, own illustration

The election's political significance

After three elections within 18 months, many citizens became disengaged from politics and exhausted by constant campaigning (Sejdiu and Tóth 2026). Overall turnout declined, with roughly 100,000 fewer votes than 6 months earlier (KQZ 2026a). The governing party and the conservatives lost some of their popularity, while the center-right liberals, led on the electoral list by former head-of-state Osmani, managed to increase their support, to some extent (Radio Evropa E Lirë 2026a).

The results also highlighted growing frustration with parties' repeated attempts to outmaneuver one another, particularly over the presidency of the republic (Stojanović 2026; Weizman 2026). The elections therefore reinforced societal polarization (KCSS–KAS 2026). The crisis was exacerbated by the close ties between the leadership of Serbia, which does not recognize Kosovo's independent statehood, and the Serb List, a nationalist minority party in Kosovo, thereby burdening an already deeply conflict-ridden domestic political system with an external dimension (Gafuri and Aylott 2025).

The parties' main messages

Charismatic leadership and clientelism are identified as major determinants of electoral support in the country (Krasniqi 2016). Leaders often matter more to voters than party platforms, while patronage through employment and public contracts can reinforce political loyalty. Coalition formation likewise tends to depend on parliamentary arithmetic rather than ideological compatibility, contributing to instability and governance crises. LVV is seen as both a democratizing force that dismantled entrenched political cartels and as a government whose nationalist and confrontational policies generated serious domestic and international challenges. While its rise has increased competition and encouraged policy innovation among rivals, concerns over media freedom, judicial independence, nationalism, and ethnic tensions remain (Mustafa 2025).

Kosovo's parties have relatively vague policy platforms and limited ideological differences, so political competition is driven heavily by personal rivalries, leadership conflicts, and

² In February 2025, the New Kosovo Alliance (*Aleanca Kosova e Re*, AKR), the Justice Party (*Partia e Drejtësisë*, PD), and members of the ruling LVV parliamentary group formed the Family List Coalition (*Lista për Familjen* AKR-PD, LF). AKR and PD did not participate in the following legislative elections (Bllaca 2022; Klan Kosova 2024; KQZ 2026c).

clientelist networks (Gafuri and Aylott 2025). A recurring element of PM Kurti's confrontational rhetoric in both 2025 and 2026 was his accusation that rival political formations were involved in corruption, which also reduced the prospects for legislative cooperation among the government and the opposition. Meanwhile, opposition parties largely united around an *anti-Kurti* platform, without developing a coherent alternative policy program.

Party communication in Kosovo remains less ideological and more pragmatic, reflecting the country's post-conflict and post-communist development (Krasniqi 2016). The parties emerged primarily from the struggle for independence, state-building, and international administration. Although PDK, LDK, and AAK formally identify as center-right, their policies frequently incorporate social-democratic elements, while LVV offers a more distinct center-left alternative, retaining elements of nationalist rhetoric.

In the early stages, the campaign was relatively restrained, as the opposition LDK needed the potential support of the governing LVV to elect a new head-of-state. As the electoral mobilization progressed, however, tensions between the two parties' lead candidates – former president Osmani, and PM Kurti – became increasingly focused on disputes over the powers of the presidency (Kosovo Online 2026b). In Kosovo, there is an institutional tension between the head-of-state's ambitious constitutional overreach, and a strong, centralized prime minister's office at the top of the executive branch's hierarchy. Although the presidency is formally ceremonial, Osmani increased her institutional visibility through diplomacy and high-level international summits, thereby strengthening her foreign-policy role.

The campaign featured harsh rhetoric, personal attacks, and social media was used primarily for political confrontation. The statements made by parliamentary candidates focused principally on assigning responsibility – namely, which political actors were culpable for preventing political compromise on the formation of parliament, the investiture of the government, and the election of the head-of-state – while there was very little discussion of healthcare, education, foreign policy, or the economy. Parties largely recycled their previous programs (Sejdiu and Tóth 2026). The key difference, compared to the previous campaigns, was Osmani's return to active party politics (Reporteri 2026). By becoming Kurti and his government's foremost critic, rather than continuing in her previous role as a figure embodying social unity, Osmani lost some of her credibility, leading to a decline in her personal support (Novakov 2026).

At the same time, economic concerns – particularly poverty, unemployment, and costs of living – are the dominant public issues that citizens are worried about (UNMIK 2024). Public confidence in economic development remains relatively low. Taxpayers expect policymakers to reduce the cost of essential consumer goods and electricity. The need to improve healthcare and strengthen environmental protection also ranks among the most important societal demands. For Kosovo Serbs, poverty, problems related to the use of public urban spaces, and ethnic tensions represent the main challenges. Fewer than one-third of Kosovo's Serb population feel safe on the streets (UNMIK 2024).

As of May 2026, the largest share of Kosovar citizens (38 %) believe that the country is going in the wrong direction when it comes to politics, economy, healthcare, safety, and other public issues. Whereas 1.5 years earlier, a considerably larger proportion was more optimistic about the country's trajectory (NDI 2026). Over the same period, the proportion of citizens who would choose to move permanently to another country increased from 15 % to 28 %, with the growth particularly pronounced among those aged 18–24. Corruption, economic inequality,

and the lack of accountability among politicians are perceived by the public as the greatest threats to democracy in Kosovo. Political parties, the national assembly, the government, and the office of the president are considered the least trustworthy institutions in terms of their public duties. Roughly 1/4 to 1/3 of the population rate the democratic functioning and transparency of these institutions as poor (NDI 2026).

The shadow of Kosovo's electoral and party systems

Kosovo's proportional electoral system contributes to fragmented parliamentary outcomes while making minority parties crucial to government formation. The country operates as a single electoral district, with citizens primarily voting for parties, also directly selecting candidates (Krasniqi 2019). Of the 120 parliamentary seats, 20 are reserved for minority communities – 10 for Serbs and 10 for other groups – and the remaining 100 are in practice filled by the Albanian-majority, yet not legally set aside by ethnicity and technically open to all parties/lists. Kosovo's constitution does not give the largest party an automatic majority in the assembly. Rather, the electoral system allows a party to win the largest number of seats and then seek support from other parties or representatives (coalition partners, minority-community representatives, supporting deputies) to form a parliamentary majority. Thus, a party does not need to win 61 seats independently if it can secure sufficient support from other deputies.³ In the latest election, LVV won 53 seats but could potentially reach a majority through cooperation with non-Serb ethnic minority MPs.

The country's constitutional framework encourages parliamentary groups to engage in extensive negotiations and seek compromise, as illustrated by the vote on the presidency of the republic, which requires the presence of 80 members of parliament to constitute a quorum. Kosovo's major political parties, however, have traditionally struggled to cooperate, and coalition governments frequently collapse before completing their terms. The broader political environment significantly impedes cooperation among parliamentary groups.

Kosovo's governments are short-lived because its highly polarized and weakly institutionalized party system produces fragile coalitions, while unclear institutional rules and political events repeatedly trigger government collapse (Sejdiu 2021). Since independence, no government has completed a full four-year mandate, with the sole exception of the second Kurti cabinet (from 2021 to 2025/2026). Coalition partners frequently withdraw their support when cooperation becomes politically costly or when leaders see opportunities for short-term electoral advantage. The three largest parties (LVV, LDK, and PDK) have often campaigned with *red lines* against cooperating with one another. This makes coalition formation difficult and gives smaller parties disproportionate bargaining power. Minimal-winning coalitions are particularly vulnerable, because weak party discipline and absenteeism can prevent governments from securing legislative majorities. Parties are also highly personalized, clientelist, and less programmatic, encouraging leaders to prioritize offices and short-term interests over coalition stability.

Kosovo's electoral and party systems have evolved in parallel, with their development strongly shaped by the country's history. Proportional representation generally produces broader parliamentary representation, and Kosovo adopted this model to ensure ideological, political, as well as ethnic pluralism (Krasniqi 2019). Following the 1999 war and the

³ Kosovo's system combines proportional representation with guaranteed minority-community representation. These elements serve to distribute mandates according to electoral support, to make sure the government has majority support in the assembly, and to provide non-majority communities with a protected presence in the legislature. If the first proposed government fails to obtain that majority, another candidate is appointed under the constitutional procedure. If the second attempt also fails, new elections are called (Constitution of the Republic of Kosovo 2008).

establishment of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission (UNMIK), existing parties continued their activities, with LDK representing the main peaceful resistance tradition and PDK and AAK emerging from the Kosovo Liberation Army (*Ushtria Çlirimtare e Kosovës*, UÇK) (Mexhuani 2025). LDK initially functioned as an independence movement under scholar and writer Ibrahim Rugova (later head of state) before developing a moderate center-right profile, while PDK and AAK, gradually shifted from radical origins toward market-oriented positions.

All three organizations have experienced significant electoral erosion due to internal divisions, party fragmentation, and the emergence of new competitors (Garcia Martinez 2018). Founded in 2005, LVV has been the major exception, nearly doubling its support and parliamentary representation by 2017 and emerging as a credible alternative to the traditional establishment.

Since the beginning, the system used proportional representation in a single nationwide electoral district, closed lists, gender quotas, and guaranteed minority seats (Krasniqi 2019).⁴ After independence in 2008, the combination of proportional representation and reserved minority seats has contributed to the persistence of ethnically based parties rather than encouraging the development of strongly ideological or multiethnic political organizations. The resulting system is characterized by a large number of parties, unstable governing arrangements, shifting interactions, and weak ideological differentiation.

In terms of party concentration, the effective number of political formations – based on their respective shares of votes and seats – indicates a moderate pluralist system, whose emergence has been fundamentally facilitated by the country's proportional electoral scheme (Garcia Martinez 2018). At the same time, with regard to party-system stability and changes in voter preferences, the Pedersen volatility index indicates persistently high levels of electoral realignment in Kosovo, based on a trend analysis of the results of recent legislative elections. This instability is attributed mainly to weak ideological and societal cleavages, frequent party splits and mergers, shifting coalitions, and Kosovo's post-communist and state-building context (Ibid.).

Electoral geography and demographics

Voter turnout in the cities (Pristina, Prizren, Gjilan, Gjakova, Peja) is generally higher than in the country's rural regions (KQZ 2022). The regional breakdown (Figures 3–7) shows that, in June 2026, LVV was most popular in South Mitrovica, where it received nearly 63 % of the vote. The ruling party secured at least 50 % in 12 other municipalities across the country, while its weakest performances – below 20 % – were recorded in areas with ethnic Serb or Turk majorities. PDK was particularly strong in the municipalities of Skenderaj and Drenas, where it received more than 70 % of the vote; both towns are historically associated with prominent founding members and commanders of the Kosovo Liberation Army. In peripheral areas, however, PDK failed to reach 10 %. LDK obtained at least 20 % of the vote in 10 municipalities, particularly in western, northern, and central Kosovo, with its strongest result in Istog (36.8 %), the hometown of former President Ibrahim Rugova. AAK performed best in Deçan (50.3 %), a predominantly ethnic Albanian municipality in western Kosovo near the border and another historic UÇK stronghold. The Serb List secured at least 50 % in 10 municipalities, most of which have predominantly ethnic Serb populations. Among voters

⁴ In June 2008, the new election law introduced a 5 % electoral threshold for parliamentary elections for ordinary parties and coalitions. Lists representing non-majority communities benefit from an exemption from the general threshold, so the other 20 seats are guaranteed for non-majority communities (ACE 2008).

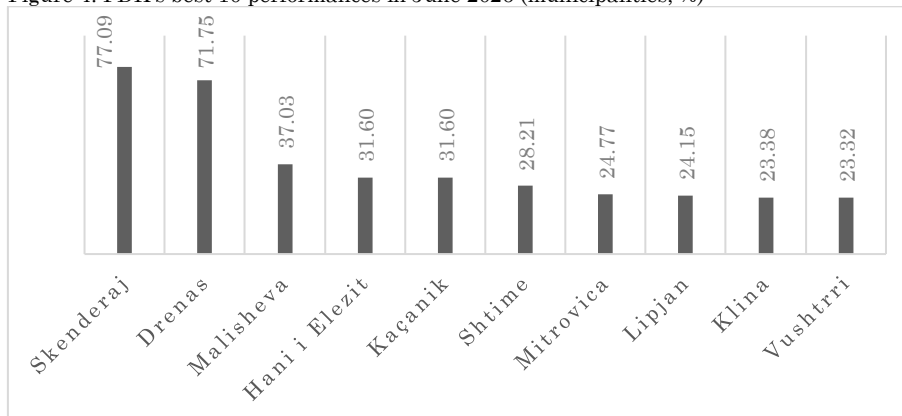
abroad, LVV recorded by far the strongest result, receiving more than 83 % of the vote, while PDK and LDK each received approximately 7 %.

Figure 3: LVV's best 10 performances in June 2026 (municipalities, %)



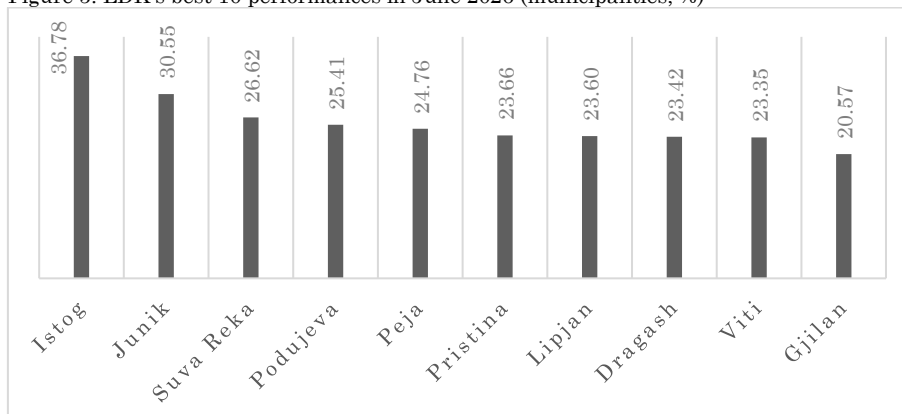
Source: KQZ 2026a, own illustration

Figure 4: PDK's best 10 performances in June 2026 (municipalities, %)



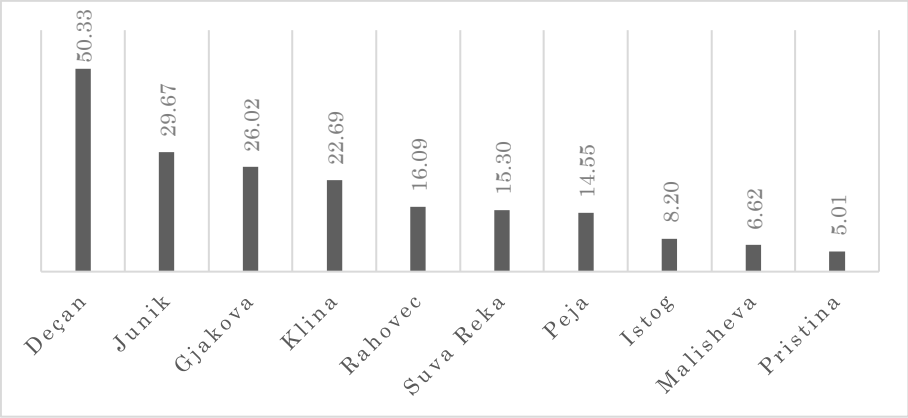
Source: KQZ 2026a, own illustration

Figure 5: LDK's best 10 performances in June 2026 (municipalities, %)



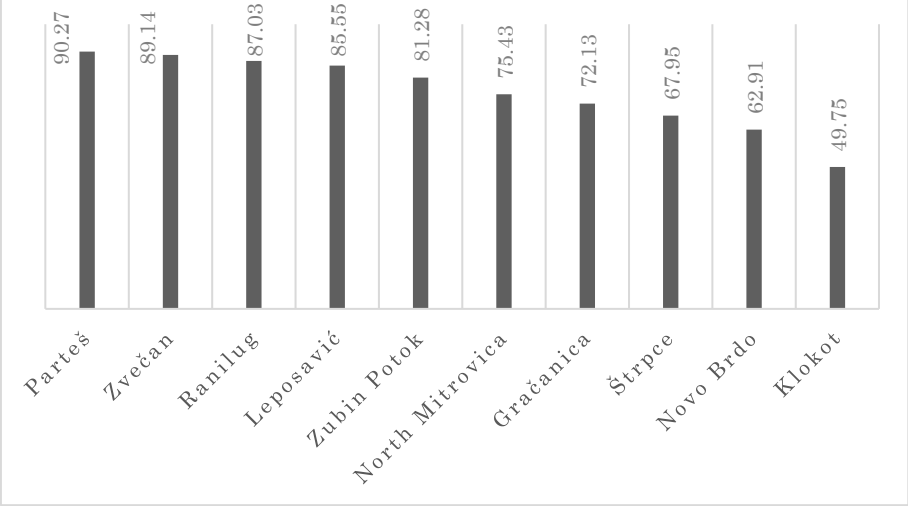
Source: KQZ 2026a, own illustration

Figure 6: AAK's best 10 performances in June 2026 (municipalities, %)



Source: KQZ 2026a, own illustration

Figure 7: SL's best 10 performances in June 2026 (municipalities, %)



Source: KQZ 2026a, own illustration

Figure 8: Kosovo's Municipalities



Source: Thong Thái 2024

When it comes to the gender distribution of the votes, men tend to be more active in exercising their democratic rights throughout the country. Based on statistics dated 2009–2021, the age groups 26–40 and 65–99 years present the lowest percentages of participation in the electoral processes (37.79 % and 37.66 %, respectively). The 18–25 age group records the highest voter turnout (47.45 %), and the 41–64 age group also participates quite actively (46,85 %) at the elections (Ibid.).

LVV's electoral strength is particularly evident among young voters and women, making it difficult for opposition parties to attract new voters.⁵ PDK remains strong in central Kosovo, in the historical region of Drenica, but struggles to expand beyond its traditional base. LDK faces similar demographic challenges. Both opposition parties rely heavily on historical political identities that increasingly resonate less with younger and female voters. PDK's association with the UÇK and LDK's emphasis on former leader Ibrahim Rugova appeal to older generations but offer limited relevance to voters born after the war or after Rugova's death. Neither opposition party has sufficiently developed a forward-looking political identity

⁵ LVV's electoral strength among young voters and women stem from its emphasis on gender equality, social welfare, and issues that resonate with voters' everyday concerns, including maternity leave, women's representation, education, and healthcare. Its ability to field more women candidates than the legally required quota may further strengthen its appeal among women, while exposing the difficulties PDK and LDK face in attracting female voters. Among younger voters, LVV benefits from a changing political landscape in which the legacy of the Kosovo Liberation Army, which has historically contributed to PDK's political appeal, may carry less weight for generations who did not experience the war. Instead, these voters are more concerned with contemporary policy priorities, particularly education and healthcare, potentially weakening the appeal of established opposition parties that rely heavily on historical political identities (Sejdiu and Tóth 2026).

focused on issues such as education, healthcare, and economic opportunities (Sejdiu and Tóth 2026).

LVV has significantly transformed Kosovo's party system by challenging the longstanding dominance of LDK and PDK and weakening their entrenched political cartel (Mustafa 2025). LVV's anti-corruption, center-left, nationalist, and anti-establishment agenda has helped it achieve consecutive electoral victories, gathering particularly strong support among young people, women, and urban voters. Its government improved employment and social protection and was associated with some reduction in corruption, but concerns remained over personalistic leadership, weak public investment, and noncompetitive contracting. Opposition criticism of Kurti also appears disconnected from voter preferences. Arguments concerning corruption or strained relations with international partners, particularly the United States,⁶ have had limited impact on the previous votings, because many citizens perceive improvements in governance and support Kurti's efforts to strengthen Kosovo's sovereignty in the mostly Serb-dominated northern region of the country.

Has the latest election brought Kosovo closer to resolving its political crisis?

By October 2026, LVV and PDK had reached a pragmatic compromise to elect economist Justina Shiroka Pula as president with 81 votes, averting early elections and easing the institutional deadlock. Having previously served as minister of energy and mining (2008–2011) and as a PDK member of parliament (2011–2014), Shiroka Pula brings extensive academic and political experience, while her cross-party support offers opportunities for greater institutional stability and better-coordinated foreign policy. Nevertheless, Kosovo's underlying political polarization remains unresolved, as the presidential election took place amid serious street protests against the convictions of former Kosovo Liberation Army leaders (Pejovic 2026; Fouda 2026).

The major Kosovar parties have strong incentives to avoid another early election. Although LVV and PDK retained similar numbers of seats, both lost substantial numbers of votes, reflecting declining turnout. LDK has an even greater electoral risk because of an ongoing leadership crisis. During the summer of 2026, its leader, Lumir Abdixhiku, faced significant internal opposition, including from influential municipal figures and the mayor of Pristina (Miladinovic 2026). The immediate leadership challenge to Abdixhiku ended in July, when he survived a formal confidence vote. But the underlying conflict inside the LDK has not really ended (Kosovo Online 2026a). By September, the dispute had shifted from *Should Abdixhiku be removed?* to *How much authority does he actually have, and what political direction should the LDK take?* Consequently, another election could intensify LDK's divisions and further reduce its support.

The new government will certainly still face substantial domestic pressures, particularly in healthcare and economic development, as well as EU sanctions and strained relations with international partners (Aretera 2025). Regionally, it will need to manage relations with Serbia and the Serb List while navigating increasingly complicated relations with the United States and the EU. A return to consensus-based politics could ultimately improve the

⁶ Opposition parties – particularly the PDK, LDK and AAK – argue that Kurti's confrontational approach, unilateral decisions in the north and failure to coordinate with allies, weakened trust with the US. They point to the 2025 suspension of the US Strategic Dialogue as evidence. Kurti's second government (2021–2025/2026), however, continued to profess support for NATO membership and close relations with Washington. The central disagreement concerns how Kosovo should assert sovereignty and manage Serbia-related disputes, and whether the government's methods have unnecessarily damaged relations with its principal allies. Nevertheless, the prime minister acknowledged differences with Washington but rejected the claim that Kosovo had broken with the US (BTI 2026; Reuters 2023; Office of the Prime Minister 2026; KOHA 2025).

investment climate, strengthen international relations, and help unlock EU funding and assistance. This post-election impasse is structural rather than temporary (Podgórzanska 2025). Political deadlock has delayed reforms, weakened public and international confidence, and threatened access to EU financial assistance. Ultimately, Kosovo's ability to advance European integration depends on stronger political consensus, institutional capacity, democratic accountability, and progress in normalizing relations with Serbia.⁷

Kosovo's recent political trajectory demonstrates how institutional design, partisan polarization, and weak coalition-building capacity can interact to produce prolonged political instability. Repeated snap elections have not substantially altered the balance of power; instead, they have reinforced LVV's dominance while leaving opposition parties unable to construct a viable alternative governing coalition. The resulting institutional paralysis has also generated broader democratic costs. Increasingly personalized campaigns, and limited substantive policy debate have contributed to voter fatigue, declining turnout, and growing distrust of political institutions and media. More fundamentally, Kosovo's democratic consolidation depends on transforming electoral competition from a zero-sum struggle over institutional control into a more substantive process of policy-based political contestation and negotiated governance.

Note on author:

Based in Budapest Dr. Bálint L. Tóth is a researcher and lecturer at the Center for Political Science of MCC Division (NTK) and an independent analyst at the In Statu Nascendi think tank. His expertise spans public policy, political research and analysis, transport policy, international relations, corporate compliance, as well as editorial and academic work. His research focuses on public policy coordination among the Visegrad Four, EU integration in the Western Balkans, regional transport cooperation, and election analysis. He has previously held professional positions at Hungarian State Railways, Corvinus University of Budapest, and KPMG Global Services Hungary, and has experience in university teaching, podcast production, and conference organization.

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⁷ Additionally, in Kosovo, contested statehood still complicates the relationship between citizenship and democracy (Krasniqi 2026). Kosovo formally has an inclusive citizenship framework, but the practical exercise of citizenship rights – especially for minorities – is constrained by overlapping jurisdictions and Kosovo's unresolved international status. Pristina's efforts to assert the state's sovereignty may be perceived by Kosovo Serbs, Belgrade, and some members of the international community as undermining local Serbs' ability to exercise their right to Serbian citizenship and to maintain their identity and ties with Serbia.

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