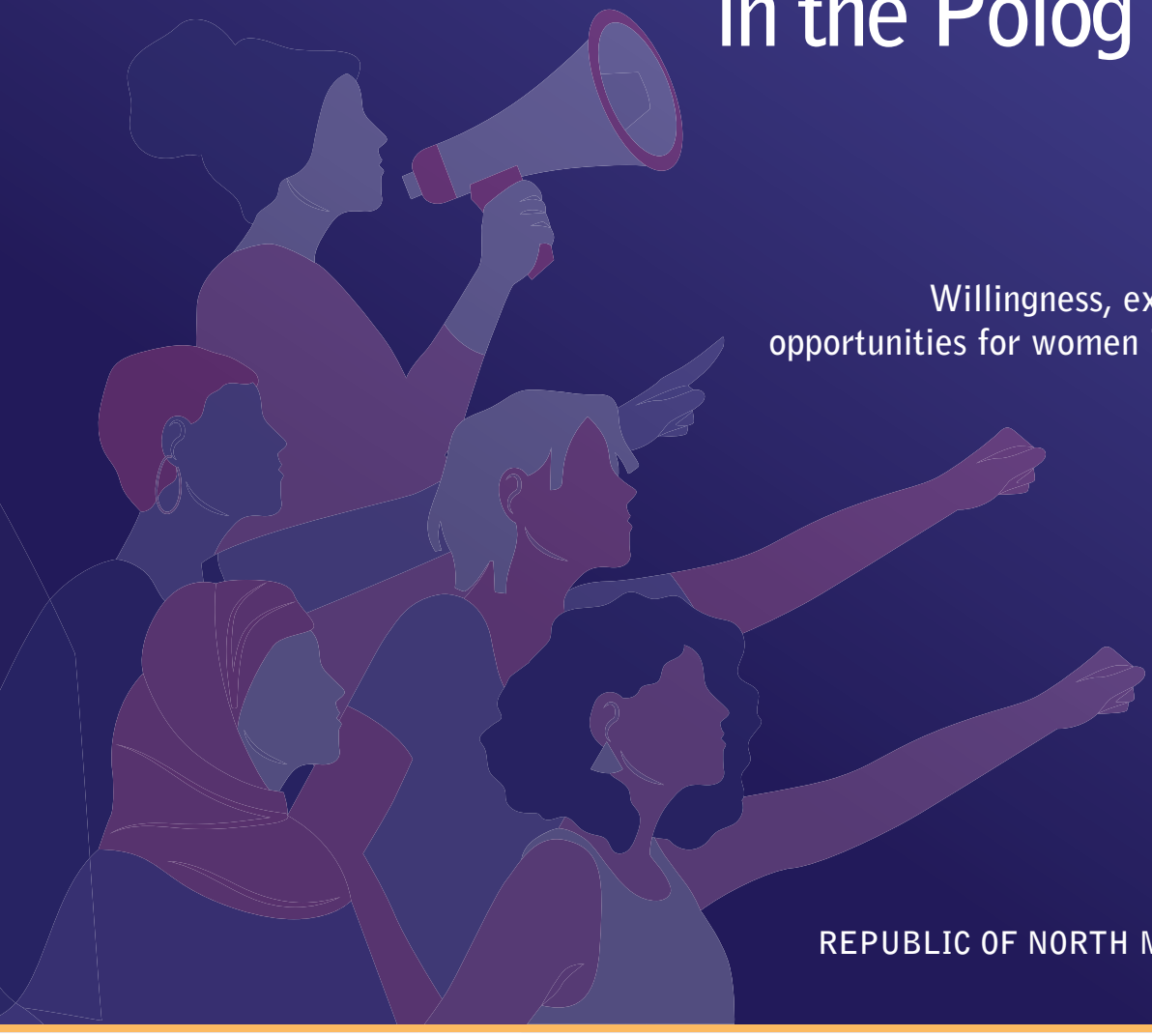
Institute for Leadership and Public Policy

Women's Participation in Politics and Decision - Making in the Polog Region



Willingness, expectations and opportunities for women in local politics

REPUBLIC OF NORTH MACEDONIA 2026

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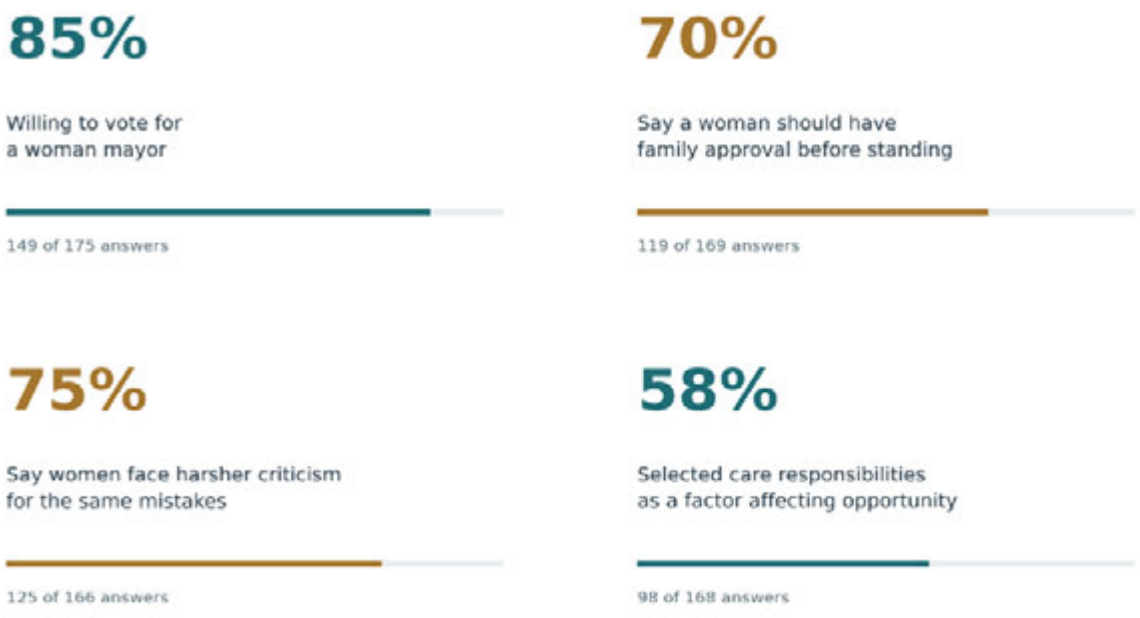
At a glance

Support for women candidates was high among the people who took part. Their answers also raised questions about family approval, public criticism and women's influence once elected. The most striking difference was between their own willingness to vote for a woman mayor and what they expected their community to accept.



The analysis includes 192 responses. Each percentage uses the people who gave a substantive answer to that question, so the total changes when people skip a question, say "don't know" or decline to answer. The counts below each finding make that total clear. Figures here are rounded and unweighted.

For council office, 165 of 181 people answering were willing to vote for a woman (91%). After the council-list quota was explained, 91 of 142 supported it (64%). A separate question about a minimum share of women mayoral candidates received 113 supportive answers out of 138 (82%). These questions have different answer totals and cannot be treated as a direct comparison of support.

This was a voluntary online survey, not a representative poll of Polog. Women, younger adults, graduates and public-sector workers were prominent. Among those stating a community affiliation, almost all were ethnic Albanian. Only four participants were 60 or over, and nobody from Jegunovce took part.

What ILPP could do next

ILPP could connect mentoring to practical council work and nomination opportunities, explore accessible support against harassment, and help people follow women councillors' contributions. Before choosing care support or other measures, ask prospective candidates what would make participation easier. Include people the survey reached less well.

Executive summary

High willingness among participants to support women candidates does not necessarily translate into equal political opportunities.

Most survey participants said they would vote for women in local elections. Yet their responses also highlighted concerns about community acceptance, family expectations, care responsibilities, public criticism and access to political opportunities.

The findings offer ILPP and its partners useful directions for future work, while recognising that they reflect the people surveyed rather than the wider population of Polog.

About the study

The survey collected **192 responses between 9 September and 2 October 2026** through an online questionnaire available in Albanian, Macedonian and Turkish. The selection process is explained in Annex B. [1–3]

Participation was voluntary and non-random. Women, younger adults, graduates, public-sector workers and ethnic Albanian respondents were strongly represented. Older residents, some municipalities and other communities were less well represented. The results therefore cannot be generalised to the entire region.

Percentages are based on those answering each question, so respondent totals vary. Comparisons between questions use matched answers where stated.

Key findings

1. Strong personal support, but doubts about community acceptance.

Among 169 respondents answering both questions, 91% were willing to vote for a woman councillor and 85% for a woman mayor. More strikingly, among 149 answering both relevant questions, **85% were personally willing to vote for a woman mayor, but only 57% believed their community would accept one** — a 28-point gap. This reflects expectations about others, not verified community resistance. See Annexes C and E.

2. Women are visible in politics, but their influence is less widely recognised.

Almost everyone giving a yes/no answer recognised that women served on municipal councils. Yet only 49 of all 192 participants supplied the name of a woman active in regional politics, while 48% of 141 answering the influence question believed women councillors had real influence over decisions. These findings measure recognition and perceptions, not actual political power. See Annex E.

3. Family expectations and care responsibilities remain important concerns.

Seven in ten respondents answering the relevant question believed women should obtain family approval before standing for office. Care responsibilities were selected by 58% as a factor affecting participation, but only 15% selected childcare and care services as a support measure. The questions differed, so this does not mean childcare support is unwanted. Further discussion is needed to understand what practical help women would use. See Annex E.

4. Trust and leadership expectations differ between respondents.

Women politicians received higher average trust scores than men politicians, at 5.8 versus 4.6 out of ten. Women respondents accounted for much of this difference, while men respondents showed only a slight preference for male politicians. Expectations also varied by policy area, although majorities considered gender irrelevant for finance, public safety and health. See Annexes C–E.

5. Public criticism and political party support deserve attention.

Three-quarters of respondents answering believed women face harsher criticism than men for the same mistakes. The most frequently selected support measures were training and mentoring (47%), more women in party leadership (47%) and protection from harassment (44%). See Annex E.

6. Respondents expressed support for quotas, but legal changes require separate assessment.

After the existing council-list requirement was explained, 64% of those answering supported it. In a separate yes/no question, 82% supported a proposed minimum share of women among parties' mayoral candidates. Different question formats and response groups mean these figures are not directly comparable. See Annex E. [4, 5]

What ILPP and its partners could do next

The findings suggest three practical priorities:

- **Connect preparation with opportunities:** Link mentoring and training to council experience, transparent nomination processes and practical support for prospective candidates.
- **Improve safety and support:** Make confidential advice and referral services for harassment, threats and online abuse easier to access.
- **Make women's political contributions more visible:** Work with councils and local media to communicate councillors' responsibilities, initiatives and achievements.

ILPP should also involve men in discussions about family and community expectations, consult women who considered standing but did not, and reach communities underrepresented in the survey.

A starting point, not a final answer

The survey reveals considerable support for women in local politics among participants, alongside concerns that deserve further investigation. Some findings change after adjusting the sample: agreement that more women in local government would improve decisions falls from 59% to about 49% under the capped adjustment. This reinforces the need for caution. See Annex C.

Its greatest value is in helping ILPP identify where to ask better questions, test practical solutions and build opportunities for women's meaningful political participation.

Who answered

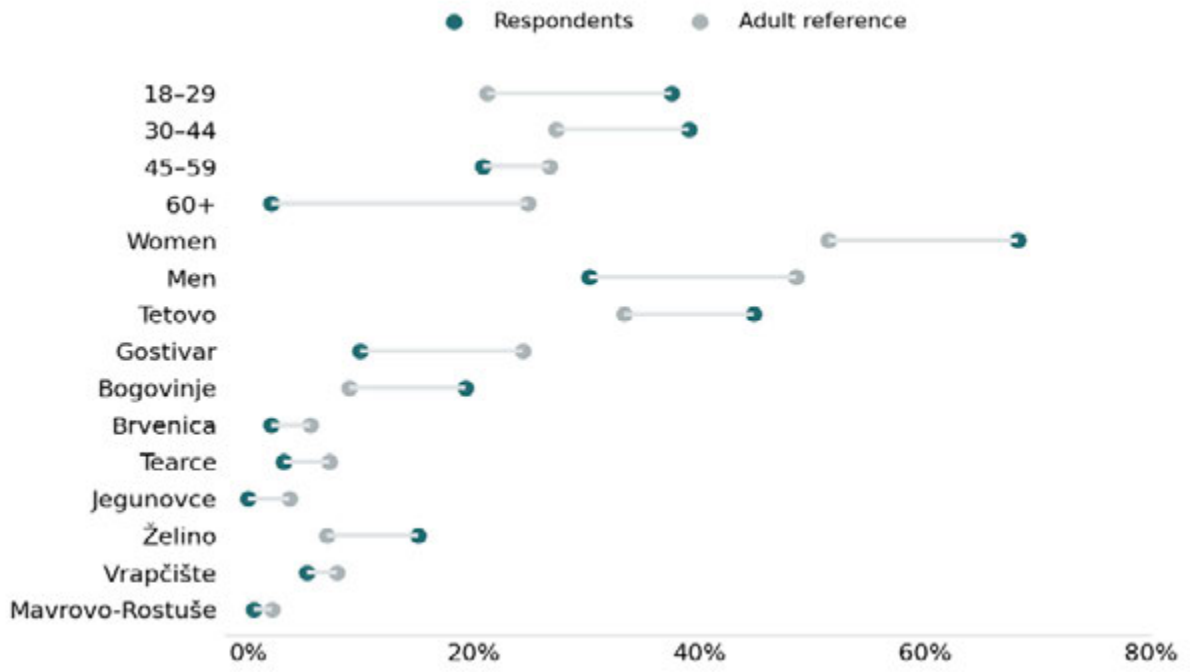


Figure 1. Who took part compared with the adult population estimates used to plan the survey. Sample percentages use all 192 responses; three sex answers and one age answer are unstated. The reference is calculated from Census 2021 age groups, not certified 2026 totals or published exact adult counts. The calculation is explained in Chapter 3 and Annex C. Adjustment cannot supply the views of people the survey did not reach. [1, 11]

1. Why this study was undertaken

Would people vote for a woman in local elections? What might encourage or discourage women from entering politics? And do people believe women already in office have real influence?

The Institute for Leadership and Public Policy (ILPP) commissioned this study through *Leading Change with Meaningful Voice*, with support from the German Federal Foreign Office through the German Embassy in Skopje.

The research explores attitudes among people who took part in the Polog region, looking separately at municipal councils and mayoral positions.

The survey focused on six main questions:

1. **Visibility and influence:** Do people recognise women in local politics, and do they believe these women influence decisions?
2. **Political trust:** Do respondents trust women politicians differently from men politicians?
3. **Voting and family support:** Would people vote for a woman councillor or mayor, and would they support a female relative standing for office?
4. **Leadership expectations:** Do people associate certain municipal responsibilities with women or men?
5. **Barriers to participation:** What role do care responsibilities, public criticism, harassment and party support play in people's perceptions?
6. **Quotas and solutions:** What do respondents know about electoral quotas, and which measures do they believe could help women participate?

The study describes the views of those who participated. Because respondents were not randomly selected, the findings cannot be treated as representative of the whole Polog region. The research followed an agreed Codebook and Analysis Plan. Annex A describes the sample, Annex B the quality checks and Annex C the adjustments and sensitivity checks. [1, 2]

2. The rules for councils and mayors

North Macedonia's electoral rules are different for municipal council candidates and mayoral candidates. Understanding this distinction helps explain why the survey asks about both positions.

AT A GLANCE | TWO ROUTES INTO LOCAL OFFICE

MUNICIPAL COUNCIL LISTS	MAYORAL CANDIDATES
40% minimum	**No equivalent quota**
For the less represented sex on candidate lists; placement rules also apply.	The council-list minimum does not apply to nominations for mayor.

Visual guide. The 40% requirement applies to candidate lists, not a guaranteed share of elected council seats [4, 5].

Council candidate quotas

Under Article 64(5) of the Electoral Code, **at least 40% of candidates on parliamentary and municipal council lists must be of the less represented sex**. Placement rules require at least one candidate in every three positions and an additional place in every ten. However, this requirement applies to candidate lists. It does not guarantee that women will win 40% of elected seats [4, 5].

What about mayors?

The council-list quota does not apply to mayoral candidacies. Joining a council list and securing a party's nomination for mayor are therefore different routes into local politics. [4, 5]

The survey therefore examines willingness to vote for women in both positions.

Municipal responsibilities

Municipalities also have responsibilities under Article 14 of the Law on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men.

These include establishing equal-opportunities commissions, appointing coordinators and considering their proposals when developing local policies and decisions [8].

These existing structures could play a useful role in supporting women's participation and following up on the study's findings.

3. The Polog region

Polog has nine municipalities, including the larger centres of Tetovo and Gostivar. The survey aimed to collect 300 responses across the region. Planning used an approximate adult population of 195,253, calculated from Census 2021 age groups for whole municipalities, including their villages. This is an estimate of residents aged 18 or over, not a city population or an official exact adult count. The calculation is explained below and in Annex C. [1, 11]

In total, **192 responses were retained for analysis**. However, participation varied considerably between municipalities and demographic groups [1, 11]. See Annex A.

SURVEY AT A GLANCE

192	8 OF 9	4
RESPONSES ANALYSED	MUNICIPALITIES REACHED	PARTICIPANTS AGED 60+

192 responses analysed | 8 of 9 municipalities reached | 4 participants aged 60+. These figures show the survey's reach, not how well it represents the wider regional population.

Who answered the survey?

Women and younger adults were strongly represented, while participation was concentrated in certain municipalities.

- **Women:** 131 participants, compared with 58 men; three did not state their sex. See Annex A.
- **Younger respondents:** Most were under 45, while only four were aged 60 or over.
- **Most responses:** Tetovo contributed 86, Bogovinje 37 and Želino 29.
- **Less represented areas:** Gostivar contributed 19 responses, Brvenica four and Tearce six. Nobody from Jegunovce participated.

Municipality	Adult planning reference	Planned responses	Analysed responses
Tetovo	65,147	76	86
Gostivar	47,546	59	19
Bogovinje	17,564	29	37
Brvenica	10,793	23	4
Tearce	14,044	26	6
Jegunovce	7,152	19	0
Želino	13,637	25	29
Vrapčište	15,288	27	10
Mavrovo - Rostuše	4,082	16	1
Total	195,253	300	192

Source and calculation: State Statistical Office, Census 2021, MAKSTAT table T1003P21. The adult planning reference is the population aged 20 or over plus 40 per cent of the 15–19 age group, approximating ages 18 and over. It assumes that age group is evenly distributed across its five ages. These are calculated references for whole municipalities, including their villages; they are neither city-only populations nor published exact counts of adults. For Tetovo, 63,012 + (0.40 × 5,337) = 65,146.8, shown as 65,147. For Gostivar, 46,152 + (0.40 × 3,484) = 47,545.6, shown as 47,546. Annex C records the rounding detail. The recruitment target was 300; this report analyses 192 retained responses. [1, 11]

Local electoral context

The research also took place against a changing political background. In Gostivar, Vrapčište and Mavrovo - Rostuše, the 2025 mayoral elections required repeat voting on 11 January 2026 after turnout fell below the required threshold. [5]

During the survey period, Brvenica was preparing for an early mayoral election scheduled for 18 October 2026 [5, 7].

These events provide useful context, but the survey cannot establish whether they influenced respondents' attitudes. A separate analysis excluding Brvenica's four responses produced very little change in the selected findings, as detailed in Annex C.

4. How the survey was carried out

Survey design and data collection

The study used a voluntary online survey for adults aged 18 or over living in the Polog region. Participants were recruited through public links and municipal outreach targets, rather than randomly selected.

The questionnaire was available in Albanian, Macedonian and Turkish. It covered political awareness, trust, voting attitudes, family expectations, factors affecting participation and possible support measures. Completion typically took around nine minutes. Most attitude questions offered five substantive choices, including a neutral option; the statement about men making better political leaders used four choices, with no neutral option. The question wording and response formats matter when comparing results. [1, 3]

Responses were collected through KoboToolbox's European server, beginning on 9 September 2026. This report uses the data exported on 2 October 2026.

The survey link was distributed through ILPP, municipalities, public institutions, social media and personal networks. The most commonly reported sources were ILPP (22%), friends or relatives (20%) and municipalities or public institutions (20%) [1–3].

How the final 192 responses were selected

The original export contained 260 records. After removing test submissions and responses that did not meet the participation requirements, 203 eligible and consenting responses remained.

A further 11 responses were excluded following combined quality checks, leaving 192 for analysis. Annex B explains the decisions and alternative inclusion checks. [1, 3]

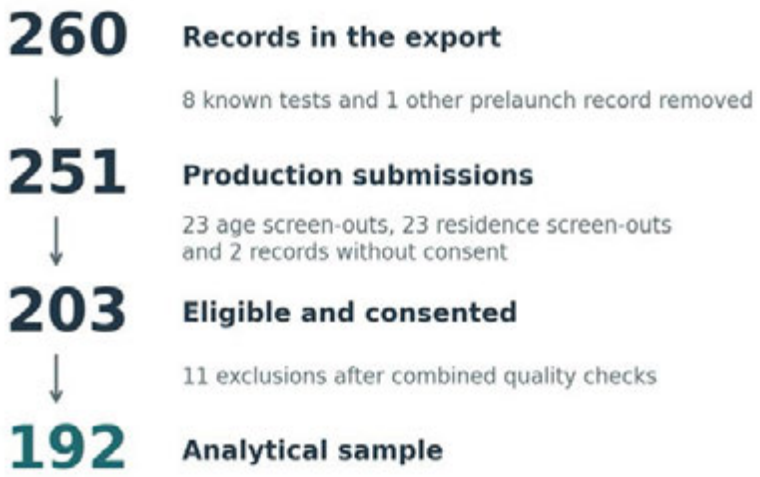


Figure 2. How the final sample was selected. Of 260 exported records, nine prelaunch or test records were removed, followed by 48 submissions failing age, residence or consent requirements. A further 11 were excluded after combined quality checks, leaving 192 responses.

Quality checks considered unusually short completion times, repeated answers, attention-check responses and large numbers of unanswered questions. Responses were not removed because of a single minor warning. Unfavourable opinions about women or quotas were never grounds for exclusion. See Annex B. [1]

As an additional check, selected percentages were recalculated using all 203 eligible and consenting responses. They changed by less than two percentage points. An alternative 194-response sample was also tested. Annex B explains the inclusion rules; Annex C presents sensitivity results.

Why the number answering each question changes

Although 192 responses were retained, not everyone answered every question. Some participants skipped questions, selected "don't know" or declined to answer.

Percentages are based on the people who gave a relevant answer to each question, rather than automatically on all 192 participants. Neutral answers are included where offered; "don't know", refusals and blanks are excluded from opinion percentages.

For example, **165 of 181 respondents (91%)** said they would vote for a woman councillor. The other 11 participants did not provide an answer included in that calculation.

When comparing answers to two different questions directly, the report uses responses from people who answered both. The annexes provide the detailed response totals and explain how missing answers were handled. Annex D gives subgroup answer totals; Annex E gives the full distributions for each question. [1]

What happens when the sample is adjusted?

The study also tested whether adjusting the results to better reflect the region's population would change the findings.

The original plan covered municipality, sex and age. However, too few older people participated, and nobody from Jegunovce responded, so the full adjustment was not possible.

Instead, two weighting methods were tested using municipality and sex across the eight municipalities represented. Annex C explains both methods. [1, 11]

Some results changed noticeably. For example, agreement that more women in local government would improve decisions fell from 59% to approximately 49% after the capped-weight adjustment. The trust advantage for women politicians narrowed, while protection from harassment became the most frequently selected support measure.

The main report presents the original, unweighted findings. Annex C provides the adjusted results and detailed calculations. Neither adjustment makes the survey representative of the wider Polog population.

What this study can tell us

The survey provides useful insight into the attitudes of those who participated, but the findings cannot be generalised to the entire Polog region.

Women, younger adults, graduates and public-sector workers were strongly represented. Older residents, several smaller municipalities and Macedonian- and Turkish-speaking communities were less well represented.

Because participants were not randomly selected, a conventional margin of error for a random sample does not apply. Differences between groups should be read cautiously, rather than as definitive differences between communities or municipalities. Small-group comparisons are flagged or withheld in Annex D.

These limitations do not make the findings unusable. They help clarify what the evidence can support and where further research would be valuable.

Consent, privacy and withdrawal

Participation was voluntary and required consent. ILPP is responsible for managing the survey data.

The questionnaire did not request participants' names, contact details or exact addresses, although open comments and optional names of politicians could contain identifying information. Only anonymised comments with separate quotation permission are included in the report. In the final analytical sample of 192, the optional open-text field contained 140 non-empty entries, including a few very brief or placeholder entries. Of those, 112 respondents explicitly permitted anonymous quotation, 19 declined and nine gave no permission response; unanswered permission was treated as no consent. Among all 203 eligible, consenting production submissions, the corresponding figures were 144 non-empty entries and 115 explicit permissions. The quotations included in this report come only from records with explicit quotation permission. [1–3]

The analysis uses the 2 October 2026 data export. Any withdrawal requests must be handled in accordance with the participant information and project protocol, with any necessary changes made before publication [1–3].

5. Women in office and their perceived influence

Women's presence in local politics was widely recognised among respondents, but views about their influence were less positive. Relatively few participants supplied the name of a woman active in regional politics. Supplying a name was not an independently verified test of recognition.

Presence, visibility and influence

- **High awareness of women in office:** Almost everyone who gave a yes/no answer (147 of 151) said women served on their municipal council.
- **Divided views on influence:** Less than half (67 of 141, or 48%) agreed that women councillors had real influence over decisions. Another 27% disagreed and 26% were neutral. A further 39 participants answered "don't know".
- **Limited recognition of individuals:** Although 56 participants said they could name a woman active in regional politics, only 49 supplied a name — approximately one in four of all 192 participants. The names were not independently verified.

Political engagement and information

Participants reported relatively strong political engagement. Of 181 people answering, 139 of 181 expressed moderate or high interest in local politics, while 147 of 187 (79%) said they voted in the October 2025 local elections. See Annex E.

Social media was the most frequently selected source of local political information: 128 of 189 people answering (68%), compared with 22 (12%) for news portals and 18 (10%) for television. Online recruitment may partly explain this pattern. Social media could help ILPP reach audiences similar to those surveyed, while other routes are needed to reach people missed by the survey. See Annexes A and E.

What the findings suggest

The findings reveal an important distinction: recognising that women hold political office does not necessarily mean believing they influence decisions. However, the questions had different groups of respondents, so the figures should not be interpreted as a measured decline from awareness to influence.

The study captures participants' perceptions, rather than women councillors' actual powers or achievements. Future research could explore which decisions and contributions residents recognise, alongside interviews with women councillors about their experiences, responsibilities and influence over local decisions.

6. Trust in women and men politicians

Overall trust

The same 163 participants rated both groups of politicians on a scale from 0 to 10. Women politicians received an average score of **5.8**, compared with **4.6** for men — a difference of 1.2 points. The order of the questions was randomised. See Annexes C and E.

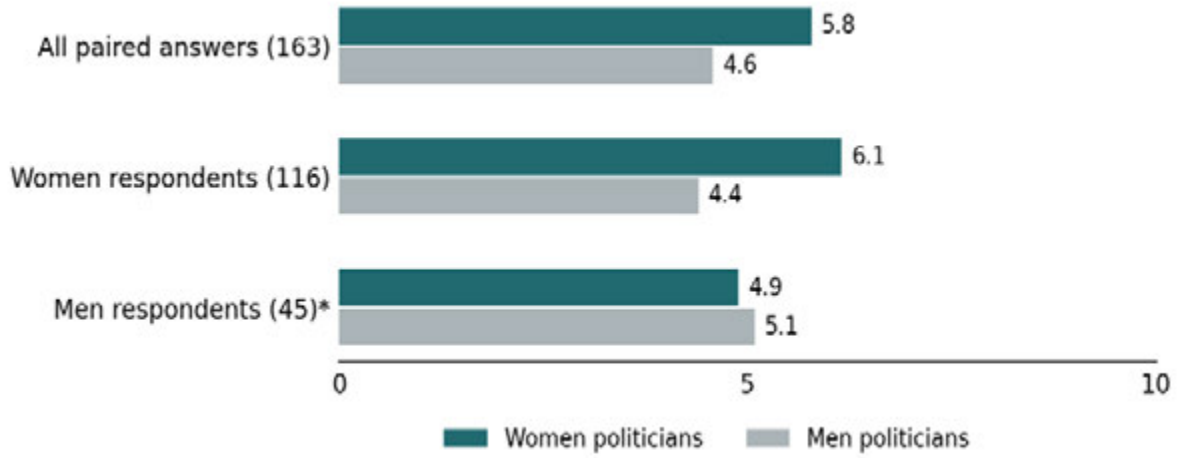


Figure 3. Average trust scores among 163 respondents who rated both women and men politicians. Results are also shown for women respondents (116) and men respondents (45); two did not state their sex. Differences use unrounded scores. Male subgroup findings are tentative. See Annexes C and D.

Looking at individual answers, 53% rated women politicians higher, 25% gave both groups equal scores and 23% rated men higher. Percentages exceed 100% slightly because of rounding.

Different perspectives among women and men

The differences become clearer when respondents are considered separately:

- **Women respondents (116):** Gave women politicians an average score of 6.1, compared with 4.4 for men — an advantage of approximately 1.8 points, calculated using unrounded scores.
- **Men respondents (45):** Gave men politicians a slightly higher average score of 5.1, compared with 4.9 for women — a difference of just 0.2 points. See Annex D.

Two participants who rated both groups did not state their sex. The male respondent group is relatively small, so its results should be treated cautiously.

Adjusting for the sample's uneven composition narrowed the overall trust advantage for women politicians, but did not reverse it. Detailed results are provided in Annex C.

What the findings suggest

The findings point to different perceptions of women and men politicians among respondents, rather than universal confidence in either group. Both overall averages remain relatively close to the middle of the scale.

Open comments reflected encouragement alongside demands for accountability. One participant observed, "Where women lead, there is work and prosperity." Another offered a more sceptical message: "Just do not keep telling us lies." These are individual views, not evidence of how widely either sentiment is shared.

The scores measure general perceptions of trust, not politicians' actual performance or likely electoral support for particular candidates.

7. Voting willingness and family expectations

Participants expressed strong personal support for women entering local politics, but were less confident that their communities would accept women in leadership roles. Family support was also widespread, alongside expectations that women should seek family approval before standing for office.

Personal willingness versus community acceptance

Among the same 169 respondents, 91% were willing to vote for a woman councillor and 85% for a woman mayor — a six-percentage-point difference. See Annexes C and E.

The more striking finding concerns community acceptance. Among 149 people answering both questions, **85% were personally willing to vote for a woman mayor, but only 57% believed their community would accept one** — a gap of 28 percentage points. Forty-five respondents expressed personal willingness without expecting community acceptance; four expressed the reverse.



Figure 4. Matched comparisons of voting willingness, perceived community acceptance and family support. Each comparison uses the same people for its two questions, but groups differ between comparisons (149, 169 and 162). Family support includes support with reservations. Gaps use unrounded percentages. See Annexes C and E.

When presented with two equally qualified candidates holding similar views, 48% said gender would make no difference, 40% preferred the woman and 11% preferred the man. See Annex E.

The gap between personal willingness and perceived community acceptance deserves further investigation. Respondents may hold different views from others around them, misjudge

community attitudes or feel more comfortable expressing support themselves. The survey cannot establish which explanation applies.

Family support and expectations

Support for women within families was also high. Among 162 respondents answering both questions, 92% were willing to vote for a woman councillor and 92% would support a close female relative standing for council, including those expressing reservations. These equal percentages do not mean the same individuals gave both answers.

Yet **70% of 169 respondents** believed a woman should have her family's approval before standing for office.

This expectation was more common among older respondents: 53% of those aged 18–29 agreed, compared with 77% of those aged 30–44 and 88% of those aged 45–59. The oldest comparison is tentative because only 33 people answered in that age group. The group aged 60 or over was too small to compare. See Annex D.

Table 7.1. Expectations of family approval by age among survey respondents. The 45–59 comparison is exploratory; the 60-plus group was too small to compare.

Age group	People answering	Agree family approval is needed
18–29	62	53%
30–44	70	77%
45–59	33	88% — exploratory

Family approval was also expected more often among respondents from other settlements (76%) than among those from Tetovo or Gostivar city (63%). These are descriptive differences within the sample, not representative findings about age groups or rural communities. "Other settlements" should not automatically be read as "rural".

Importantly, the survey did not ask whether men should seek the same approval, nor what respondents understood by "approval" — encouragement, practical support or permission. [1, 3]

Attitudes towards women leaders

Views were less uniformly supportive when questions focused on leadership and decision-making.

Of 161 people answering, 95 (59%) believed more women in local government would improve decisions. This falls to about 49% after the capped-weight adjustment, showing that the apparent majority depends on how the sample is treated. See Annexes C and E.

On political leadership, 110 (68%) disagreed that men make better leaders than women, while 51 (32%) agreed. Yet views differed considerably by respondent sex: 18% of women agreed with the statement, compared with 64% of men. The male comparison is tentative, based on 45 respondents, and the survey cannot isolate sex from other differences between these groups. See Annexes D and E.

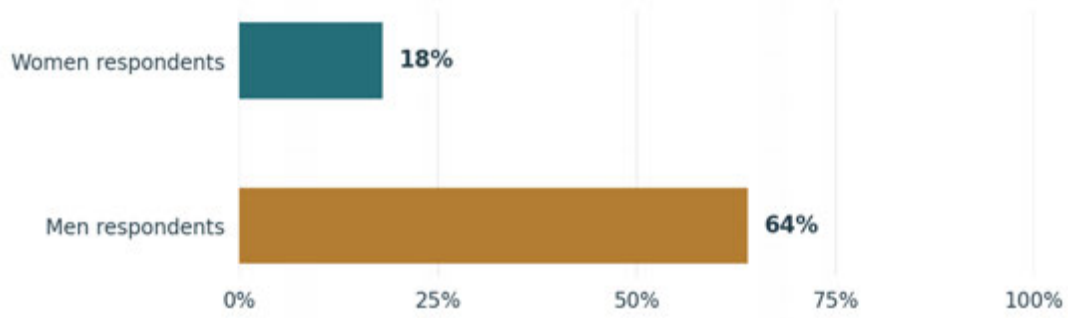


Figure 5. Agreement that men make better political leaders than women, by respondent sex. Unweighted results among 114 women and 45 men answering this question. The men's subgroup is small, so the comparison is tentative. See Annex D.

What the findings suggest

The findings point to a distinction between personal willingness to support women in politics and expectations about how families and communities would respond.

High levels of stated support do not necessarily mean that women face no social or practical barriers. Equally, expectations of family approval do not establish that families prevent women from standing.

Further research could explore what people mean by family approval, why they anticipate community resistance and whether these expectations affect women's actual decisions to enter politics.

8. Expectations of competence across council responsibilities

Participants did not consistently favour one gender across municipal responsibilities. Their expectations varied by policy area, with many believing that gender would make no difference.

The survey asked whether a woman, a man or neither gender in particular would generally manage five areas of municipal policy better. These responses reflect perceptions of competence, not actual abilities or performance. See Annex E. [1, 3]

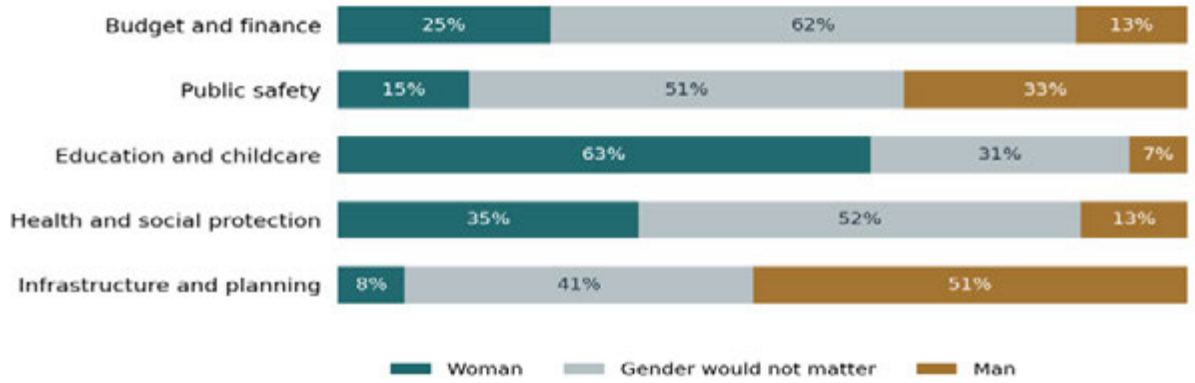


Figure 6. Perceived competence across five municipal responsibilities. Answer totals: budget and finance (176), public safety (168), education and childcare (177), health and social protection (175), and infrastructure and planning (178). Rounded percentages may not total 100%. These are perceptions, not measured competence. See Annex E.

The findings reveal three patterns:

- **Gender-neutral expectations:** Most respondents believed gender would not matter for budget and finance (62%), health and social protection (52%) or public safety (51%).
- **Education and childcare:** 63% believed women would manage this area better, the strongest preference for women across the five responsibilities.
- **Infrastructure and planning:** 51% believed men would manage this area better, the strongest preference for men.

Although more respondents favoured men than women for public safety, most believed gender would not matter in that area.

One participant challenged the idea that competence depends on gender: "It will be hard, but if a man can do it, so can you. What do you have less than a man?"

What the findings suggest

The findings point to different expectations of women and men across municipal responsibilities, rather than a universal preference for either gender.

ILPP could use these results to explore why certain responsibilities are associated with women or men, supported by practical examples of councillors' work. The responses do not establish differences in actual competence or justify assigning responsibilities by gender.

9. Factors respondents think affect participation

Care responsibilities, harassment and party support were the most frequently identified factors affecting women's participation in local politics. The findings suggest several areas for further investigation, rather than a single explanation for why women enter or remain outside politics.

Perceived barriers to participation

Participants could select up to three factors from ten named options, with "none" and "other" also available. Among 168 people answering, the most frequently selected were:

- **Care responsibilities:** 98 respondents (58%).
- **Harassment and public attacks:** 63 respondents (38%).
- **Party support:** 60 respondents (36%).

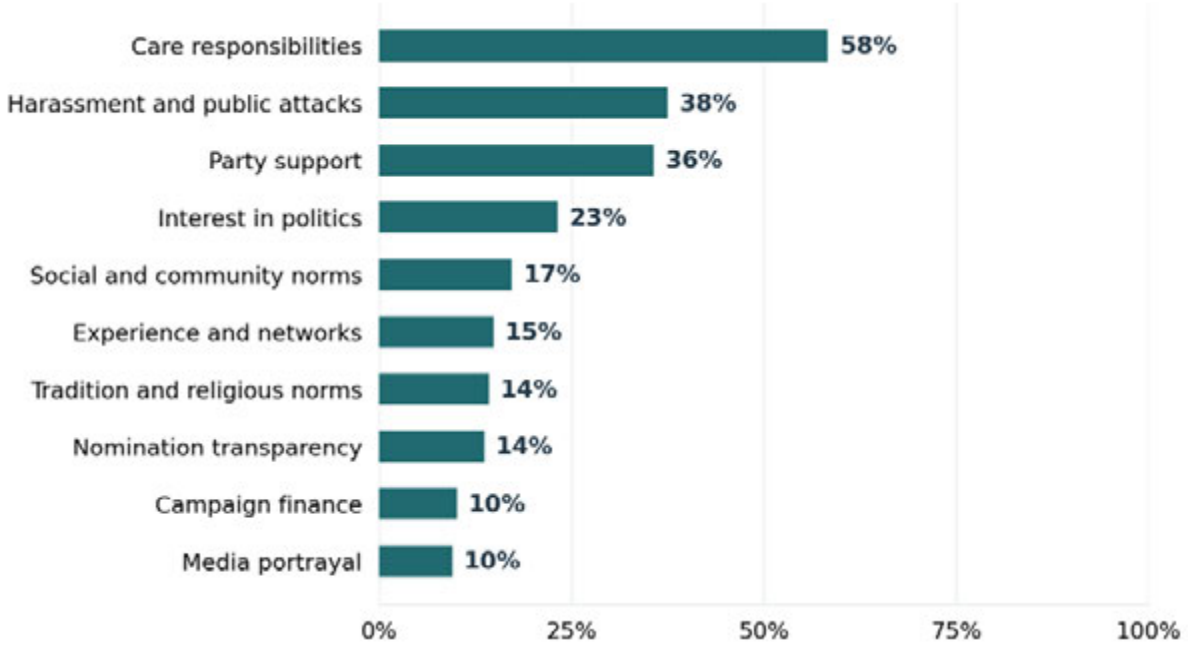


Figure 7. Factors participants believe affect women's political opportunities (168 people answering). Participants could choose up to three options, so percentages may exceed 100% when added together. Two selected "none" and three selected "other". Full counts are in Annex E.

Care responsibilities were selected by 58% of 123 respondents with a child under 15 at home and 57% of 37 respondents without one. The similar percentages suggest that care responsibilities were recognised as an issue in both groups, although the smaller group requires cautious interpretation. The findings do not establish who actually provides care or how responsibilities are shared (Annex D).

Personal choice, family and party influence

Asked what most affects a woman's decision to enter politics, the two most frequently chosen answers each received about one-third of the 161 responses:

- **The woman's own decision: 52 people (32%).**
- **Her spouse or immediate family: 52 people (32%).**
- **Her social circle: 28 people (17%).**
- **Party support: 27 people (17%).**

Two people (1%) selected economic circumstances.

These findings, based on 161 answers, suggest that respondents see personal choice and family influence as equally prominent considerations. (Annex E).

Harsher criticism and public attacks

A particularly striking finding concerns perceived double standards. **Three in four respondents (125 of 166, or 75%) believed women face harsher criticism than men for making the same mistakes.**

Awareness of public attacks was also common among those expressing a view. Of 121 substantive answers, 74 respondents (61%) reported having heard of at least one case involving a woman politician, including 59 who had heard of several. See Annex E.

However, this represents only 39% of all 192 survey participants. Others selected "don't know", declined to answer or left the question blank. The responses measure awareness of reported incidents, not verified cases or personal experiences of harassment.

What the findings suggest

The findings point to three areas worth exploring further: practical support for care responsibilities, safer conditions for political participation, and the role of political parties in supporting women.

ILPP could investigate what forms of childcare or family support prospective candidates need, how public criticism affects their willingness to participate, and what assistance they receive from political parties.

These results provide a starting point for discussion, rather than proof that any individual factor directly prevents women from entering politics.

10. Views on quotas and ways to support women candidates

The survey explored whether participants knew about existing rules for women's representation, whether they supported them, and what could help more women enter politics.

Awareness and support for quotas

Of 171 people answering, 79 (46%) said they knew a legal minimum for the less represented sex on council candidate lists existed. Another 48 had heard something but did not know the details; 44 were unaware. These measures reported awareness, not verified knowledge of the rule. (Annex E). [4, 5]

After the rule was explained, 91 of 142 people answering **(64%) supported it**; 25 were neutral and 26 opposed it. On its future direction, 85 of 138 **(62%) wanted the minimum increased**, 33 maintained, and 20 reduced or removed. These questions used different answer totals. (Annex E).

In a separate question, **113 of 138 respondents (82%)** supported introducing a minimum share of women among political parties' mayoral candidates. Another 54 participants gave no substantive answer: 34 said "don't know", eight declined and 12 left the question blank.

The proposal would apply to a party or coalition's mayoral candidates across several municipalities, rather than requiring a woman candidate in every municipality. Because this question differed from the council-list question in both format and answer group, the percentages should not be compared directly. Full response details are provided in Annex E.

What support would help?

Participants were asked to select up to three measures that could help women participate in politics. The most frequently chosen were:

- **Training and mentoring: 47%.**
- **More women in party leadership: 47%.**
- **Protection from harassment: 44%.**

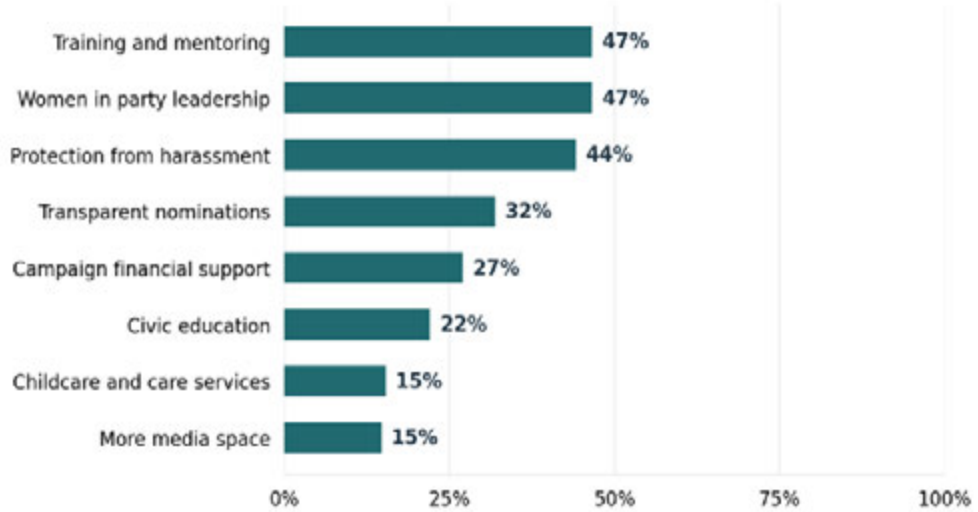


Figure 8. Measures selected to support women's political participation. Based on 163 people answering, each able to choose up to three options. Percentages therefore do not add up to 100%. Full results are in Annex E.

The gap between care responsibilities and proposed solutions

An interesting difference emerged. **Care responsibilities were identified as a factor affecting women's political participation by 58% of respondents (98 of 168), yet only 15% (25 of 163) selected childcare and care services as a support measure.**

This does not mean respondents rejected childcare support. The questions offered different options and were answered by different groups of people. Respondents may also have prioritised other solutions or understood care support differently.

ILPP could explore what practical help prospective candidates would find most useful, including childcare, flexible schedules, transport and support at home. Further response details are provided in Annex E.

Who should take responsibility?

When asked who should create more opportunities for women, 45% of 165 respondents said everyone should work together. Political parties were identified by 27%, followed by civil society at 10%. See Annex E.

The findings suggest that cooperation matters, but responsibility should also be clear. ILPP could use these responses to bring relevant organisations together and agree on practical actions.

11. Respondents in their own words

The final survey question invited respondents to offer advice to a local woman considering standing for political office. Their comments included encouragement, warnings about the challenges ahead and expectations of honesty and professionalism.

The quotations below have been anonymised and translated from Albanian. They illustrate individual views rather than how widely those views are shared. Only comments with separate permission for quotation are included [3].

Encouragement and confidence

Some participants offered direct messages of support:

"Don't give up! Believe in yourself! Break this barrier and prove that a woman is capable and can succeed at anything."

Another encouraged women not to let gender discourage them:

"Have confidence, and don't hesitate to stand just because you are a woman."

Warnings about political life

Other respondents recognised the difficulties women might face:

"It will be one of the most complicated challenges you face. Sexism, injustice and prejudice will follow you at every step."

Another offered a shorter warning:

"Be ready for public exposure and criticism."

Professionalism and accountability

Support also came with expectations that candidates should be capable, honest and close to the people they represent.

"Be professionally prepared, take a position, raise your voice especially for women's rights, be incorruptible in decision-making, and stay close to citizens."

Not everyone was optimistic. One respondent expressed doubt about the political environment:

"The conditions for a woman leader have not yet been created."

What these voices tell us

The comments show different perspectives among participants: encouragement, concern about public treatment and expectations of integrity. These are individual voices, not evidence of how common each view is. They nevertheless offer useful starting points for conversations with women considering political office about the opportunities, concerns and support that matter to them.

12. What the findings mean for ILPP

The survey reveals considerable support for women in local politics among those who participated, alongside concerns about community acceptance, family expectations, public criticism and access to opportunities.

The findings offer ILPP a starting point for discussion and practical action, but they should not be treated as representing everyone in the Polog region.

Include women and men in the conversation

Among respondents answering the question about voting for a woman mayor, **90% of 121 women and 73% of 51 men** said they would do so.

These differences highlight the value of including both women and men in discussions about political participation, family support and community expectations. However, the findings reflect only those surveyed and cannot be generalised to all women or men in Polog. Some other comparisons involving men are based on smaller groups and should be interpreted cautiously (Annex D).

Understand the gap between personal support and community expectations

One of the survey's most interesting findings was the **28-percentage-point gap** between personal willingness to vote for a woman mayor (85%) and the belief that the community would accept one (57%). Both figures come from the same 149 respondents.

ILPP could explore why this gap exists. Do people underestimate their neighbours' willingness to support women, or are they describing barriers they have witnessed? The survey cannot answer this on its own. Further analysis of the finding is provided in Annex C.

Ask women what practical support they need

Care responsibilities were the most frequently selected factor affecting women's participation, while relatively few participants chose formal childcare services as a solution.

Rather than assuming what support women need, ILPP could speak directly with prospective candidates about childcare, transport, schedules, household responsibilities and the challenges of combining political activity with everyday life.

Address concerns about public criticism and harassment

Three-quarters of respondents answering the relevant question believed women face harsher criticism than men for the same mistakes. Protection from harassment was also among the most frequently selected support measures.

ILPP could work with women in politics, political parties and relevant organisations to understand their experiences and identify practical ways to respond to harassment and public attacks.

Explore opportunities within political parties

Respondents frequently selected training, mentoring and more women in party leadership as useful measures.

ILPP could discuss with political parties how women are recruited, supported and considered for leadership positions. Conversations with current and former candidates could help identify which forms of assistance are genuinely useful.

Reach people the survey missed

Women, younger adults and people connected to public institutions were strongly represented in the survey. Older residents, some municipalities and Macedonian- and Turkish-speaking communities were less well represented.

Future outreach should include these groups, as well as women who considered entering politics but decided against it. Their experiences may reveal priorities that are not visible in the current findings.

Turning findings into action

The next step is to test these ideas through discussions with residents, prospective candidates, women councillors, political parties and community organisations.

ILPP can use those conversations to identify practical support worth piloting, understand what works and develop activities based on women's experiences rather than assumptions.

The value of this study lies not only in its findings, but also in the questions it raises about how women can participate more fully in local political life.

13. How to track progress

This survey provides a useful starting point for measuring future progress. However, its findings describe the people who participated, not the whole population of Polog.

Future surveys should use the same main questions and answer options wherever possible, while recording who participates. Survey results should also be considered alongside practical evidence, such as women's access to political nominations, mentoring opportunities and support services. See Annexes D and E. [1–3]

What ILPP could track

Table 13. Suggested indicators for future monitoring. Answer totals differ between indicators; none is a population-wide measure. Within each survey round, compare willingness and community acceptance only among people answering both questions. See Annexes C–E. [1–3]

Indicator	Current starting point	Follow-up measure
Recognition of women politicians	26% (49 of 192) supplied a woman's name	Check whether respondents can actually name women active in regional politics
Perceived influence	48% (67 of 141) believed women councillors had real influence	Repeat the question and record uncertain or missing answers
Community acceptance gap	28-point gap among the same 149 people answering both questions	Repeat both questions; within each survey round, calculate the gap among people answering both
Family approval	70% (119 of 169) expected family approval before standing	Explore the difference between family encouragement and permission
Trust in politicians	Women politicians scored 1.2 points higher among 163 people rating both groups	Track trust scores for both women and men politicians
Awareness of quotas	46% (79 of 171) said they knew a quota existed	Check awareness and actual understanding of the rules
Awareness of public attacks	61% (74 of 121 substantive answers); 39% of all participants	Track awareness alongside available records of reported incidents
Practical participation	No project baseline provided	Start tracking mentoring, participation, nomination opportunities and use of support services

How to use these findings

ILPP should track changes in attitudes alongside what actually happens in practice. For example, greater awareness of harassment may reflect more incidents, better reporting or greater public attention.

Project records can show how many women receive mentoring, access political opportunities or use support services. Future surveys can help explore whether perceptions are changing.

Changes in survey results alone cannot prove that ILPP caused them. Progress will be easier to assess when survey findings, participant experiences and project records are considered together.

14. Practical options for ILPP and partners

The findings suggest several ways ILPP and its partners could support women's participation in local politics. These are options to explore and test, rather than proven solutions or existing commitments.

Three priorities for the next phase

1. Connect training with real opportunities

Training and mentoring should help prospective candidates take practical next steps. ILPP could work with political parties to explain nomination procedures, offer opportunities to observe council work and provide mentoring linked to women's interests and needs.

Practical difficulties, including care responsibilities, transport and time commitments, should be discussed with participants rather than assumed.

2. Make protection and support accessible

Women considering or holding political office should know where they can seek confidential advice about harassment, threats and online abuse.

ILPP and relevant partners could identify existing services, agree clear referral arrangements and examine whether people can access the help they need.

3. Make councillors' work more visible

Recognising that women hold council seats is different from knowing what they contribute.

ILPP could work with municipalities and local media to make councillors' responsibilities, initiatives and decisions easier for residents to follow. This would help people assess political contributions using practical examples.

Who could do what?

Political parties

Parties could make nomination processes more transparent by publishing selection criteria and timelines. They could also review women's access to mayoral nominations, council lists and internal leadership positions, while ensuring candidates know where to seek support if they experience harassment.

Municipalities

Councils could provide clearer information about councillors' roles, committee work and responses to residents. Municipal equal-opportunities bodies could review their activities, resources and reporting arrangements within their existing duties. Public engagement should reach beyond established institutional networks. [8]

Civil society and ILPP

ILPP could bring women, men and families together to discuss family expectations, practical support and independent decision-making. Mentoring could cover public speaking, budgeting, council procedures and community engagement. Participants should also have access to information about safety and support services.

Media

Local media could give greater attention to councillors' actual work, including initiatives, decisions and responses to community concerns. Applying consistent standards of scrutiny to women and men, while distinguishing legitimate political criticism from harassment and personal abuse, would support more informed public discussion.

National institutions and international partners

The findings could inform discussion about women's access to political nominations, including the possible use of minimum shares for mayoral candidates. Any proposed legal change would require separate assessment. [4–6]

Partners could also examine whether existing protection and support arrangements are accessible and where improvements may be needed.

Future research could use several recruitment routes to reach older residents, smaller municipalities and underrepresented communities. If regional population estimates are needed, it should use an appropriate probability sampling design. Interviews with women who considered standing but decided against it could add insights that this survey cannot provide. [2]

How the findings can inform ILPP's next activities

The table below links the main findings to the project's awareness-raising and capacity-building components.

What the survey found	Awareness-raising	Capacity-building
Women are recognised in politics, but their individual contributions are less visible. Only 49 respondents supplied the name of a woman active in regional politics, while 48% of those answering believed women councillors had real influence over decisions.	Highlight individual women councillors, their responsibilities and documented contributions to local decision-making.	Help councillors communicate their work, initiatives and results more effectively to residents.
Family expectations remain important. Seven in ten believed a woman should obtain family approval before standing. Care responsibilities were also the most frequently identified barrier (58%).	Organise community conversations involving women, men and families about support, shared responsibilities and women's decisions to enter politics.	Combine leadership training with practical discussions about childcare, family responsibilities, time commitments and other support prospective candidates may need.
Personal support exceeds perceived community acceptance. Among the same 149 respondents, 85% would vote for a woman mayor, but only 57% believed their community would accept one.	Use the findings to encourage open community discussions about attitudes towards women leaders, without assuming that the gap proves community opposition.	Equip local partners with the skills and materials to facilitate constructive, inclusive discussions.
Leadership expectations differ by policy area. While 63% associated education and childcare competence with women, 51% associated infrastructure and planning competence with men.	Showcase women's experience and contributions across a wider range of municipal responsibilities, including finance, infrastructure and public safety.	Provide mentoring and practical training that prepares women for leadership roles across different municipal policy areas.
Women are perceived to face unequal scrutiny. Harassment and public attacks were selected as barriers by 38%, while 75% believed women politicians face harsher criticism for the same mistakes.	Engage local media and communities in discussions about fair coverage, responsible criticism and harassment in political life.	Help prospective candidates and councillors prepare for public scrutiny, respond to harassment and identify appropriate support and referral services.
Awareness of electoral quotas is incomplete. While 46% reported knowing that a legal quota existed, 64% supported the current requirement after it was explained.	Develop accessible information explaining the existing gender quota, how it applies to council candidate lists and how mayoral nominations differ.	Offer practical briefings for political parties, municipal representatives and prospective candidates on electoral rules and nomination processes.

These are options for ILPP and its partners to consider, not commitments already agreed. The indicators in Chapter 13 provide a baseline for later discussion of progress, bearing in mind that a future survey may reach different people.

Closing assessment

The survey found considerable willingness to support women in local politics among those who participated. At the same time, respondents raised questions about family expectations, community acceptance, political opportunities and public treatment.

For ILPP, the next step is to turn these findings into practical discussions and carefully tested activities. Connecting training with opportunities, improving access to support and making councillors' work more visible are useful starting points.

This research identifies where further understanding and practical action are needed, while recognising whose voices have not yet been sufficiently heard.

Annex A Sample profile and interpretation rules

Characteristic	Retained composition
Sex	131 women; 58 men; 2 refused; 1 blank
Age	72 aged 18–29; 75 aged 30–44; 40 aged 45–59; 4 aged 60+; 1 refused
Settlement	86 Tetovo or Gostivar city; 103 other settlements; 3 blank
Education	3 primary or less; 25 secondary; 31 vocational/post-secondary; 51 bachelor; 60 master/doctorate; 8 refused; 14 blank
Employment	89 public sector; 27 private; 6 self-employed; 9 unemployed; 21 students; 1 pensioner; 3 unpaid domestic work; 10 other; 12 refused; 14 blank
Community	161 Albanian; 4 Macedonian; 2 Turkish; 1 Bosniak; 1 Serb; 1 other; 6 refused; 16 blank
Reported questionnaire language	168 Albanian; 5 Macedonian; 1 Turkish; 18 blank
Child under 15 at home	137 yes; 40 no; 2 refused; 13 blank
Route to survey	42 ILPP; 39 friend/family; 38 municipality/institution; 18 social network; 15 organisation; 5 local media; 6 other; 2 don't know; 6 refused; 21 blank

Codes 98 and 99 are missing for substantive calculations, as are blanks. Refusal and "don't know" remain explicit answers in the completeness check. Agreement and willingness combine the top two five-point categories. Family support is reported both broadly, including reservations, and as full support. Narrative percentages are rounded to whole numbers. Decimals in technical checks show calculation differences, not population precision.

Screen-outs and no-consent records enter no substantive analysis. All 203 production records in the sensitivity check are eligible and consented; known tests are never restored. Retained records need not answer every optional question. No exact duplicate response payloads or repeated export UUIDs were found among those 203 submissions, but the open-link survey cannot guarantee that every submission represents a different individual.

The questionnaire-language field records 168 Albanian, five Macedonian and one Turkish response, with 18 blank. It is self-reported rather than a complete log of the language displayed.

Annex B Quality decisions

The 32 core blocks are B1, B2, B3, B4_status, B5, C1a, C1b, C2, C3, C4a, C4b, C5–C10, D1–D5, E1–E4, F1, F2a, F2b, F3–F5. Each multiple-selection question is one block. The optional politician name is not a core block. Extensive blanks mean more than 30 per cent of blocks missing. Straightlining means the same valid 1–5 answer on all seven C4a–C9 items.

The primary speed calibration takes the first 50 submitted eligible, consented production records ordered by start time. All carry the platform's consented_submit status; optional omissions do not make them server partials. Median elapsed duration is 616.332 seconds; max(180, 0.4 × median) gives 246.5328 seconds (about 4.1 minutes). These first 50 begin between 9 and 16 September. Duration measures elapsed time and may include pauses.

Case	Seconds	Answered blocks	Observed weak flags
A	42.6	21/32	Short duration; QC1 incorrect; More than 30% core blank
B	77.1	3/32	Short duration; QC1 missing; More than 30% core blank
C	96.5	4/32	Short duration; QC1 missing; More than 30% core blank
D	131.1	31/32	Short duration; QC1 missing; Straightlining C4a–C9
E	179.4	11/32	Short duration; QC1 missing; More than 30% core blank
F	229.2	15/32	Short duration; QC1 missing; More than 30% core blank
G	231.1	8/32	Short duration; QC1 missing; More than 30% core blank
H	244.5	32/32	Short duration; QC1 incorrect
I	246.1	22/32	Short duration; More than 30% core blank
J	461.3	32/32	QC1 incorrect; Straightlining C4a–C9
K	1311.9	32/32	QC1 incorrect; Straightlining C4a–C9

Case letters are public audit labels, not withdrawal codes. Missing QC1 and extensive missingness were treated as one underlying nonresponse signal; an incorrect instructed answer was considered separately. Distinct flags are a case-review judgement, not proof of statistical independence: short duration and missing answers may also be related. The 194-case and all-203 checks assess sensitivity to the inclusion decisions. Duration decisions use full precision. The restricted log preserves source-record links for reconciliation. Opinions, including unfavourable views about women or quotas, were never exclusion grounds.

As a sensitivity test, requiring all 32 core blocks answered for the first-50 calibration gives a median of 605.7015 seconds and a threshold of 242.2806 seconds. This retains cases H and I and yields 194. It changes the selected percentages by less than one point. The 192 cases form the documented primary specification. The alternative shows that a stricter completeness requirement for calibration produces a slightly lower speed threshold, with little effect on the selected findings.

Annex C Weighting and robustness

Population calculation and rounding. The references in Chapter 3 reproduce the codebook integers used in the original planning and weight checks. They are derived from State Statistical Office Census 2021 municipal age groups (T1003P21), using ages 20+ plus 0.40 × ages 15–19. Tearce gives 13,685 + (0.40 × 899) = 14,044.6; standard rounding would give 14,045, while the codebook records 14,044. Summing the unrounded estimates gives 195,253; individually rounding each municipality gives 195,254. The displayed codebook references sum to 195,253. They are retained here so the existing weights remain reproducible; the one-person discrepancy is disclosed rather than silently changing the reference. These calculated adult references must not be cited as exact official census adult counts. [1, 11]

Weighting is conditional on the eight municipalities with retained responses. The codebook's adult planning reference is 188,101 for those municipalities and 195,253 for all nine. Initial municipality weights use each covered municipality's reference share divided by its achieved share. Iterative calibration alternates municipality margins with a women–men reference of 51.44 and 48.56 per cent among those declaring either category. Refused and blank sex are not assigned an identity. Age and community are not calibrated.

Untrimmed weights range from 0.321 to 4.621; ten exceed 3.00. The bounded specification clips and rescales with the final 0.30–3.00 limits enforced throughout normalisation. Final weights range from 0.342 to 3.000 and sum to 192. Bounding changes the calibrated margins: women represent 54.79 per cent of binary-sex weighted answers rather than exactly 51.44 per cent. The adjustment still cannot account for residents the survey did not reach.

Weight specification	Range	Unequal-weighting effect	Weight-only effective n
Municipality and sex untrimmed	0.321–4.621	1.766	108.7
Municipality and sex bounded	0.342–3.000	1.522	126.1
Sex only	0.742–1.582	1.148	167.3

Unequal-weighting effect = $n \times \Sigma w^2 / (\Sigma w)^2$. Weight-only effective n = $(\Sigma w)^2 / \Sigma w^2$. They describe weight dispersion, not design-based sampling precision. Weighted item percentages divide the weighted numerator by the sum of weights among substantive answers to that item.

Additional finding	Main 192	Alternative 194	Untrimmed	Bounded
Harsher criticism	75.3%	75.0%	65.1%	66.9%
Women councillors have influence	47.5%	47.2%	45.2%	44.9%
Support female relative	91.7%	91.2%	88.8%	89.9%
Fully support female relative	84.0%	83.5%	82.3%	83.1%
Quota support	64.1%	64.1%	65.1%	66.0%
More women improve decisions	59.0%	59.0%	47.9%	49.4%

The main personal–community matched gap is 27.5 percentage points; it is 26.3 with bounded weights. The councillor–mayor gap is 5.9 points unweighted and 7.1 bounded. Trust is +1.20 points unweighted, +1.16 with all 203, +1.19 under the 194-case alternative and +0.83 bounded. The direction of these comparisons remains the same, but support levels and some majority descriptions change.

For education and childcare competence, 62.7 per cent select a woman unweighted; the corresponding figures are 55.0 per cent untrimmed and 54.1 per cent bounded. For E1, bounded weights still place care first (53 per cent), followed by harassment and party support (both about 33 per cent). For F4, protection from harassment moves first (46 per cent), then women in party leadership (43 per cent), then training/mentoring (41 per cent). The same leading three measures remain, with a different order.

Main results under alternative assumptions

Finding	Main 192	All 203	Untrimmed	Bounded
Willing to vote for a woman mayor	85.1%	84.1%	80.9%	82.0%
Willing to vote for a woman councillor	91.2%	90.9%	88.3%	89.2%
Community accepts a woman mayor	58.5%	57.8%	57.8%	57.7%
Family approval needed	70.4%	70.7%	68.8%	68.6%
Care factor selected	58.3%	56.6%	51.3%	53.5%
Support mayoral-candidate minimum	81.9%	81.4%	74.5%	76.1%
More women would improve decisions	59.0%	59.1%	47.9%	49.4%
Reject male leadership superiority	68.3%	66.9%	59.5%	61.7%
Trust gap in points	1.20	1.16	0.73	0.83

Check excluding Brvenica

Brvenica check	Full sample	Without Brvenica	Change
Community accepts a woman mayor	58.5% (n=159)	58.7% (n=155)	+0.2 pp
Willing to vote for a woman mayor	85.1% (n=175)	85.5% (n=172)	+0.3 pp
Support mayoral-candidate minimum	81.9% (n=138)	81.6% (n=136)	-0.3 pp

Annex D Subgroup bases

All results are unweighted. Below 30 substantive answers, comparative percentages are suppressed. An asterisk marks exploratory bases of 30–49; at least 50 permits cautious descriptive comparison. These thresholds do not establish representativeness or remove confounding.

Group	Mayor willingness	Family approval needed	Reject male leadership superiority
Women	90% (n=121)	73% (n=119)	82% (n=114)
Men	73% (n=51)	64% (n=47)*	36% (n=45)*
Tetovo/Gostivar city	91% (n=78)	63% (n=75)	79% (n=71)
Other settlement	81% (n=94)	76% (n=92)	60% (n=88)
18–29	86% (n=66)	53% (n=62)	64% (n=58)
30–44	85% (n=71)	77% (n=70)	71% (n=66)
45–59	82% (n=33)*	88% (n=33)*	73% (n=33)*
60+	Suppressed (n=4)	Suppressed (n=3)	Suppressed (n=3)
Bachelor	82% (n=51)	67% (n=48)*	79% (n=43)*
Master/doctorate	89% (n=55)	71% (n=55)	73% (n=52)

Bachelor and master/doctorate respondents provide the only education groups with at least 30 valid answers for these comparisons. Their mayor willingness is 82 and 89 per cent, respectively. The survey does not isolate an education effect. Municipal and community attitude comparisons are omitted for inadequate achieved bases; small counts in the coverage table remain visible for recruitment planning.

Annex E Complete substantive distributions

Counts and rounded percentages use valid substantive answers. The final column reports 98 ("don't know"), 99 ("prefer not to answer") and blanks separately. Multiple-selection percentages count people choosing an option; they may total more than 100. Every substantive category is retained, including contrary and low-frequency answers.

Political interest and visibility

Item	Valid n	Category count and percentage	98/99/blank
B1 Interest in local politics	181	None: 22 (12%); Little: 20 (11%); Moderate: 94 (52%); High: 45 (25%)	2 / 6 / 3
B2 Reported vote in October 2025 local election	187	Yes: 147 (79%); No: 31 (17%); Not eligible: 9 (5%)	0 / 4 / 1
B3 Reports women councillors in own municipality	151	Yes: 147 (97%); No: 4 (3%)	36 / 2 / 3
B4_status Says able to name a woman in regional politics	95	Yes: 56 (59%); No: 39 (41%)	47 / 50 / 0
B5 Main source of local political information	189	Television: 18 (10%); Social media: 128 (68%); Online news portals: 22 (12%); Family, friends or neighbours: 6 (3%); Radio: 0 (0%); Newspaper: 2 (1%); Meetings or rallies: 11 (6%); Not interested: 2 (1%)	0 / 3 / 0

Trust and candidate choice

Item	Valid n	Category count and percentage	98/99/blank
C1a Trust in women politicians	168	0: 10 (6%); 1: 7 (4%); 2: 6 (4%); 3: 19 (11%); 4: 12 (7%); 5: 28 (17%); 6: 10 (6%); 7: 23 (14%); 8: 16 (10%); 9: 8 (5%); 10: 29 (17%)	10 / 11 / 3
C1b Trust in men politicians	171	0: 21 (12%); 1: 12 (7%); 2: 12 (7%); 3: 14 (8%); 4: 17 (10%); 5: 34 (20%); 6: 18 (11%); 7: 15 (9%); 8: 11 (6%); 9: 6 (4%); 10: 11 (6%)	7 / 13 / 1
C2 Choice between equally qualified candidates	176	Woman: 71 (40%); Gender would not matter: 85 (48%); Man: 20 (11%)	8 / 6 / 2

Attitudes to participation

Item	Valid n	Category count and percentage	98/99/blank
C3 Perceived community acceptance of a woman mayor	159	Strongly disagree: 11 (7%); Disagree: 25 (16%); Neither agree nor disagree: 30 (19%); Agree: 60 (38%); Strongly agree: 33 (21%)	29 / 3 / 1
C4a Personal willingness to vote for a woman mayor	175	Strongly disagree: 6 (3%); Disagree: 9 (5%); Neither agree nor disagree: 11 (6%); Agree: 76 (43%); Strongly agree: 73 (42%)	4 / 5 / 8
C4b Personal willingness to vote for a woman councillor	181	Strongly disagree: 4 (2%); Disagree: 6 (3%); Neither agree nor disagree: 6 (3%); Agree: 90 (50%); Strongly agree: 75 (41%)	2 / 4 / 5
C5 Perceived real influence of women councillors	141	Strongly disagree: 14 (10%); Disagree: 24 (17%); Neither agree nor disagree: 36 (26%); Agree: 51 (36%); Strongly agree: 16 (11%)	39 / 9 / 3
C6 Women should have family approval before standing	169	Strongly disagree: 10 (6%); Disagree: 23 (14%); Neither agree nor disagree: 17 (10%); Agree: 84 (50%); Strongly agree: 35 (21%)	13 / 7 / 3
C7 Politics is an unsuitable environment for women	171	Strongly disagree: 31 (18%); Disagree: 59 (35%); Neither agree nor disagree: 40 (23%); Agree: 32 (19%); Strongly agree: 9 (5%)	9 / 7 / 5
C8 More women in local power would improve decisions	161	Strongly disagree: 8 (5%); Disagree: 16 (10%); Neither agree nor disagree: 42 (26%); Agree: 70 (43%); Strongly agree: 25 (16%)	23 / 4 / 4
C9 Women face harsher criticism for the same mistakes	166	Strongly disagree: 6 (4%); Disagree: 24 (14%); Neither agree nor disagree: 11 (7%); Agree: 66 (40%); Strongly agree: 59 (36%)	12 / 6 / 8
C10 Men make better political leaders than women	161	Strongly agree: 14 (9%); Agree: 37 (23%); Disagree: 74 (46%); Strongly disagree: 36 (22%)	15 / 10 / 6

Competence by policy area

Item	Valid n	Category count and percentage	98/99/blank
D1 Municipal budget and finance	176	Woman: 44 (25%); Man: 23 (13%); Gender would not matter: 109 (62%)	9 / 3 / 4
D2 Public safety	168	Woman: 26 (15%); Man: 56 (33%); Gender would not matter: 86 (51%)	10 / 7 / 7
D3 Education and childcare	177	Woman: 111 (63%); Man: 12 (7%); Gender would not matter: 54 (31%)	2 / 5 / 8
D4 Health and social protection	175	Woman: 62 (35%); Man: 22 (13%); Gender would not matter: 91 (52%)	5 / 4 / 8
D5 Infrastructure and urban planning	178	Woman: 14 (8%); Man: 91 (51%); Gender would not matter: 73 (41%)	3 / 6 / 5

Opportunity and family support

Item	Valid n	Category count and percentage	98/99/blank
E1 Factors affecting women's political opportunities	168	Family responsibilities and childcare: 98 (58%); Social norms and community expectations: 29 (17%); Party support or lack of support: 60 (36%); Transparency of nomination procedures: 23 (14%); Campaign financial resources: 17 (10%); Harassment, threats or public attacks: 63 (38%); Experience, training and networks: 25 (15%); Media portrayal of women candidates: 16 (10%); Tradition and religious norms: 24 (14%); Women's own interest in politics: 39 (23%); No important factors: 2 (1%); Other: 3 (2%)	10 / 9 / 5
E2 Heard of public attacks or defamation	121	No: 47 (39%); One case: 15 (12%); Several cases: 59 (49%)	52 / 12 / 7
E3 Reaction to a close female relative standing for councillor	169	Discourage her: 7 (4%); Indifferent: 7 (4%); Support with reservations: 13 (8%); Fully support: 142 (84%)	11 / 4 / 8
E4 Main influence on entering politics	161	Spouse or family: 52 (32%); Political party support: 27 (17%); Social circle: 28 (17%); Her own decision: 52 (32%); Economic situation: 2 (1%)	19 / 6 / 6

Quota awareness and preferred action

Item	Valid n	Category count and percentage	98/99/blank
F1 Self-reported awareness of a statutory gender quota	171	Yes: 79 (46%); Heard something but not exact: 48 (28%); No: 44 (26%)	0 / 15 / 6
F2a Support for the stated 40 per cent quota	142	Strongly oppose: 8 (6%); Oppose: 18 (13%); Neither support nor oppose: 25 (18%); Support: 44 (31%); Strongly support: 47 (33%)	23 / 18 / 9
F2b Preferred future direction of the quota	138	Increase: 85 (62%); Keep: 33 (24%); Reduce: 9 (7%); Remove: 11 (8%)	27 / 15 / 12
F3 Support a minimum share of women mayoral candidates	138	Yes: 113 (82%); No: 25 (18%)	34 / 8 / 12
F4 Measures to strengthen local participation	163	Training, mentoring and leadership programmes: 76 (47%); Campaign financial support: 44 (27%); Childcare and care services: 25 (15%); Protection from harassment and online attacks: 72 (44%); Transparent party nomination rules: 52 (32%); More media space for women candidates: 24 (15%); More women in party leadership: 76 (47%); Civic education in schools: 36 (22%); None would change much: 4 (2%); Other: 1 (1%)	12 / 6 / 11
F5 Primary responsibility for creating opportunities	165	Political parties: 45 (27%); Municipalities: 8 (5%); National institutions: 12 (7%); Civil society: 16 (10%); Media: 1 (1%); Families and communities: 9 (5%); All jointly: 74 (45%)	9 / 5 / 13

References and analytical materials

[1] ILPP. Codebook and Analysis Plan, live Kobo final, 16 September 2026. Supplied specification for variable meanings, QC, planned comparisons, reference estimates, weighting and withdrawal reconciliation through 17 October. Adult reference estimates derive from Census 2021 five-year age tables as documented in the codebook.

[2] ILPP. Research Methodology and Implementation Note for the German Embassy, 16 September 2026. Supplied final design and implementation document; withdrawal deadline 17 October 2026 at 23:59.

[3] ILPP. Kobo XLSForm acLatS6rMSGmDCUiTdYYEX.xlsx, settings version 20260915_v1_11_OCT08; all-versions export generated 2 October 2026 at 21:46:52. Supplied live variables and recorded notices; 260 export records. 2 October is the analytical cutoff; recorded withdrawal notices and the protocol are reconciled separately.

[4] Constitutional Court of the Republic of North Macedonia. Decision U.br.28/2023, 6 June 2023; discussion of Electoral Code Article 64(5), placement and candidate-list rather than elected-seat quotas. Source

[5] OSCE/ODIHR. Republic of North Macedonia, Local Elections, 19 October and 2 November 2025, Final Report, 7 April 2026. Registered mayoral candidates and electoral context. Source

[6] State Election Commission. Local Elections 2025 candidate statistics; confirmed council-candidate totals. Source

[7] State Election Commission. Early election for mayor of Brvenica, 18 October 2026; official election page. Source

[8] Law on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men. Official consolidated text, Official Gazette 201/2015, incorporating Law 6/2012 and amendments/correction 30/2013, 166/2014 and 150/2015; Article 14(3), (5) and (7). Read with amendments 53/2021 and 39/2025. Ministry official law register: Official register ; consolidated text: Consolidated law ; 2021 amendment: 2021 amendment ; 2025 amendment: 2025 amendment

[9] Friedrich Ebert Foundation. The Gender Gap Report Part I, Gender and Political Leadership, analysis of the Southeast Europe Youth Study 2024. Source

[10] EVS/WVS (2024). Joint EVS/WVS 2017–2022 Dataset, version 5.0.0, results by country weighted by gwght, 30 June 2024, variable D059, printed page 228 (PDF page 231). North Macedonia: strongly agree 14.0%, agree 29.2%, disagree 35.1%, strongly disagree 15.5%, don't know 4.8%, no answer 1.3%. Approximately 46% substantive agreement is calculated as (14.0 + 29.2) / (14.0 + 29.2 + 35.1 + 15.5), using published rounded categories. Fieldwork and mode from GESIS documentation. Country results table ; Dataset documentation

[11] State Statistical Office. Census 2021. MAKSTAT T1003P21, total resident population by five-year age group and sex, by municipality. Table updated 30 March 2022. Adult references calculated as described in Chapter 3 and Annex C. Official municipal age table

Data availability

Aggregate answer distributions, subgroup bases and sensitivity results are provided in the annexes. Respondent-level records, withdrawal identifiers and unredacted comments are not publicly released. Requests for further aggregate analysis or access to research materials should be directed to ILPP as data controller; any access must respect participant consent, confidentiality and the project's retention arrangements. The final analytical dataset remains subject to withdrawal reconciliation.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