

## **Structural Stability Despite Increased Fragmentation: The 2021 County Elections in Croatia**

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The 2021 county elections in Croatia were the perfect example of political change amidst continuity. Relatively new parties and independent candidates made significant inroads against the dominant players of the center-right and the center-left, most notably in the capital city of Zagreb, where a novel leftist political platform won the elections conclusively. The rise of new and credible alternatives resulted in increased fragmentation of the county assemblies and likely more unstable regional governments in the near future. On the other hand, the party that has dominated Croatian politics since independence, Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ), continued that dominance on the county level by winning 15 out of 21 offices of county prefects. More important, the determinants of electoral support for the principal political blocs have remained unchanged from the pattern observed in all national elections since the end of Croatia's War of Independence more than two and a half decades ago.

Keywords: regional elections; Croatia; voter choice

### **Introduction**

In the summer of 2020, in the midst of a lull between the first two waves of Covid-19 infections, the government of Andrej Plenković's center-right Croatian Democratic Union (Hrvatska demokratska zajednica – HDZ) decided to call for national elections in spite of unfavorable public opinion polling which suggested the opposition Social Democrats (Socijaldemokratska partija Hrvatske – SDP) had the upper hand. However, buoyed by a relatively strong showing of its pandemic crisis management team, the generous economic measures to alleviate the negative consequences of lockdowns, and the exceptionally low turnout that usually favors its superior ground organization, the ruling party won the elections decisively (Glaurdić, Lesschaeve, and Mochtak, 2021). The leadership of Andrej Plenković was solidified, the HDZ was able to form a government without any major coalition partners, and the SDP collapsed into internal strife. Considering additionally the HDZ's traditional dominance of Croatia's local and regional government, the 2021 county and municipal elections were supposed to only confirm the HDZ's uncontested power. That, however, did not happen – at least not fully.

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To be fair, the HDZ could point to the victories of 15 of its candidates for the positions of the 21 county prefects as signs of success. They could also point to the further downfall of the Social Democrats and their poorest showing in the regional elections since the 1990s. A deeper dive into the electoral results, however, shows that the HDZ has plenty of cause for concern, with the weakest results of its electoral lists for the county assemblies since 2005. A particular disappointment has been their catastrophic tally in the capital city of Zagreb where a group of green and other leftist organizations coalesced into a new political platform and won the elections in a landslide. Moreover, two new credible players on the right had a good showing and bit into the HDZ's electorate, as did a number of independent candidates, particularly in more urban centers. Considering the weakness of the SDP, it is exactly the performance in office (or in opposition) of those new actors on the regional level – and particularly in Zagreb – that will determine the near future of Croatia's politics both regionally and nationally.

In this election report, we first set the institutional context of regional government and elections in Croatia. We then discuss the 2021 campaign for regional elections and their results, with comparisons to the record of all regional elections since Croatia's independence. Finally, we offer an in-depth multivariate regression analysis of the pattern of the 2021 results and we establish the socioeconomic and demographic determinants of support for the main electoral contenders using detailed electoral results on the level of Croatia's 556 municipalities. We show how this pattern, in spite of increased fragmentation due to the strength of new players, fits into and continues the pattern of electoral support observed in Croatia on the national level since the end of its 1991-1995 War of Independence.

## **Regional government and elections in Croatia**

Based on the Nomenclature of Territorial Units for Statistics (NUTS) of the European Union, Croatia has 556 relatively small municipalities and towns (“općine i gradovi”) on the NUTS-4 level; 20 counties (“županije”) plus the capital city of Zagreb (which has the dual status of municipality/town and county) on the NUTS-3 level; and four non-administrative, statistical regions on the NUTS-2 level. The essential regional units of self-government in this system,

therefore, are the counties, with “županije” both conceptually and terminologically (though not necessarily geographically) drawing on a long tradition from the time when Croatia was part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire (Hrženjak, 2009: 1000). The present system of local and regional self-government was introduced by the then ruling HDZ in December 1992, during the country’s War of Independence, with the first elections for the county and municipal/town assemblies held in February 1993 (Menger, 2018: 113).

From 1993 to 2000, counties played the dual roles of both self-governing units and extensions of the central government. Reflecting the semi-presidential and highly centralized system that Croatia had under the leadership of its first president Franjo Tuđman, county prefects (“župani”) were designated as state rather than regional officials. They were elected by the county assemblies (“županijske skupštine”), but the president had to approve those assemblies’ decisions – something Tuđman notoriously refused to do in Zagreb after his party lost the special election in the capital in the fall of 1995. During this period, counties gained prominence through the elections for the upper house of the national parliament *Sabor* called the House of Counties (“Županijski dom”) where voters elected three representatives from each county regardless of its population size. Here also, however, the president’s influence was crucial, as he could appoint five additional representatives to the house and de facto ensure control over the legislative process. Considering these institutional solutions and the practice exhibited by the HDZ at the time, local experts believe the regional structure during this phase was little more than the instrument of the ruling HDZ for the centralization of Croatia (Đulabić and Čepo, 2017: 541).

Things changed somewhat with the HDZ’s loss of the 2000 parliamentary election and the constitutional reforms that followed in 2000 and 2001. Counties were transformed into more independent units of regional self-government (Đulabić and Čepo, 2017: 540), and the House of Counties was abolished. However, the number and the size of the counties remained the same, which meant that their capacity for independent policy making and effective regional self-government was in many instances limited since the median population of the 20+1 counties is only about 150,000. County politics has thus generally been seen as a reflection of national politics, and county elections have been seen as second-order elections (Koprić et al., 2017). For the past two decades, Croatia’s public administration experts and political parties have been involved in a

continuing debate over the necessary rationalization of the system of local and regional government and of true emancipation of regional politics (Blagojević, 2012: 37; Đulabić and Čepo, 2017: 558; Koprić et al., 2015). However, changes have been at best minimal, largely due to the opposition to reforms by the HDZ which has been a dominant force of local and regional politics since Croatia's independence.

The HDZ's stance is unsurprising considering the system of fiscal dependency it has built between the central government and the units of regional and local government. Recent research has shown the allocation of central government funds to the units of local and regional government to be exceptionally biased and driven by electoral concerns (Glaurdić and Vuković, 2017). The HDZ in particular has used this system to its advantage very efficiently. More troublingly, research has also shown this strategy to be popular with voters who handily reward fiscally expansionist local officials (Glaurdić and Vuković, 2018). This has been identified as one of the principal reasons for the nationalization of regional politics and elections, i.e. the national character of regional politics has been simply a reflection of real fiscal pressures exerted by the central government (Koprić et al., 2015). The only institutional changes of note in Croatia's system of local and regional government over the past two decades have thus been the alterations to the electoral rules that have followed a similar shift on the national level. Just like the national parliament, county and municipal assemblies were elected under mixed electoral rules (i.e. part PR, part majoritarian) during the 1990s, and under PR rules since then. County prefects and municipal/town mayors, on the other hand, were elected by the county or municipal/town assemblies until 2005 and directly by voters in two-round majoritarian elections after that. This change resulted in several notable instances of divided regional and local governments where the prefects and mayors did not command assembly majorities, leading to paralysis in decision making and subsequent early elections, most recently in Croatia's second largest city of Split in the summer of 2022.

### **The 2021 regional elections campaign and results**

The local and regional elections in Croatia took place on 16 May 2021, with the second round of elections for county prefects and municipal/town mayors taking place two weeks later. These were regularly scheduled local and regional elections which by law are always supposed to take place

on the third Sunday in May every four years. They were not concurrent with any national-level elections, as the parliamentary elections took place in July 2020 and the two rounds of presidential elections were held in December 2019 and January 2020. The campaign for the local and regional elections unfolded in the context of the country still recovering from the Covid-19 pandemic and two devastating earthquakes which struck parts of central Croatia – most notably the capital of Zagreb – in March and December 2020. As noted above, the HDZ has been a dominant force in Croatia’s local and regional government since the country’s independence and the dissolution of Yugoslavia in 1991. In the preceding regional elections held in 2017, the party won 12 out of 21 county prefect offices, and was in coalition with the prefects of two more counties. Considering that it also decisively won the national elections in 2020 and that its principal competitor the SDP was in disarray after exceptionally poor results in the 2020 parliamentary elections, the HDZ seemed to be well positioned for another strong showing in the 2021 local and regional elections. One exception to this trend were the parts of central Croatia affected by the 2020 earthquakes due to the slow and inefficient reaction of the HDZ’s national government to the needs of the local population in the earthquakes’ aftermath and the stalled process of reconstruction.

[Table 1 about here]

Table 1 shows the results and some party system characteristics of Croatia’s county elections since the country’s independence. Several things are notable about the 2021 elections in the larger context of the past three decades of regional elections. First, party system fragmentation – captured here by the figure for the average effective number of electoral lists, which is essentially identical to the literature’s standard measure of effective number of parties by votes (Laakso and Taagepera, 1979) – ticked up to its highest level in a decade and a half. In other words, the distribution of votes for county assembly lists on average became more fragmented than in 2017. Second, the turnout and invalid votes figures fit the general pattern observed in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Turnout in the regional elections in 1993 and 1997 was rather high, but this was largely due to the fact that these elections were concurrent with the elections to the parliament’s House of Counties (in 1993 and 1997) and the presidency (in 1997). After that, turnout settled in the 40-50% range, with the proportion of invalid votes hovering around 3.5%. Interestingly, turnout in the national elections has been generally about ten percentage points higher (except in the pandemic elections of 2020)

and the proportion of invalid votes has been substantially lower at about 2% – a sign perhaps of greater frustration of the electorate with the local and regional governments or with the candidates on offer.

Third, Table 1 reveals rather poor results for both the HDZ and the SDP in 2021. Here it needs to be noted that the two largest parties in Croatia almost uniformly field lists encompassing at times sizeable coalitions of parties. They essentially coopt locally more relevant potential competitors in an effort to outflank their true ideological opponents. In practice, this has meant that smaller rightwing and leftwing parties survive by bandwagoning with the HDZ or the SDP, whereas the centrist parties oscillate between the two main players from election to election or even county to county in the same election cycle. The roots of this practice stretch back to the mid-1990s when the opposition parties started clustering together to bring down the HDZ on the national and regional levels, with the HDZ resorting to the same tactic in its effort to claw back to power a decade later. The average effective number of electoral lists presented in Table 1 should therefore be considered as a low approximation of the average effective number of elected parties. Just as the proportions of votes and seats earned by the HDZ and the SDP lists should be seen as the high approximations of the actual votes and seats earned by the two parties. This is particularly true of the HDZ, which in 2021 fielded county lists consisting on average of 3.29 parties. The SDP, on the other hand, due to its internal strife and weakness, lost a number of largely centrist coalition partners from 2017 and fielded county lists consisting on average of 2.10 parties. The HDZ's lists thus garnered 29.4% of the votes and 37.6% of the county assembly seats – their worst result since 2005. And the SDP lists garnered 16.2% of the votes and 18.9% of the seats – arguably their worst result since the 1990s. Only six lists fielded by the HDZ and its partners and only one list fielded by the SDP and its partners won outright majorities in county assemblies. One silver lining for the HDZ were the victories of fifteen of their candidates for prefects (one of them in a coalition where the HDZ was a junior partner) compared to just two victories for the social democrats.

Three sets of players bit into the vote shares of the HDZ and the SDP. First and foremost, various independent candidates became much more electorally savvy and managed to capture 12.5% of county assembly seats with 9.6% of the votes. This was a dramatic increase on their previous showing of 5.1% of votes and 5.3% of seats in 2017. Independent candidates also captured two

offices of county prefects – in the Šibenik-Knin County in Dalmatia, and in the Međimurje County in the northwest. Second, the 2021 election saw the consolidation of two important blocs to the right of the HDZ: Homeland Movement (Domovinski pokret – DP) and the Bridge (Most). Domovinski pokret was founded on the heels of the 2019 presidential run by the singer Miroslav Škoro, who narrowly missed out on the second round of the presidential elections by winning 24.5% of the votes. The DP subsequently won 16 out of 151 parliamentary seats and nearly 11% of the votes in the 2020 *Sabor* elections. In the county elections of 2021, its lists managed to get 9.3% of the votes and 8.6% of the seats. Most, on the other hand, grew out of a local list in the small Dalmatian town of Metković that was formed in 2012. It first evolved into a coalition of independent lists that contested local elections on the platform of fight against corruption and clientelism. Recently, however, it moved sharply to the right and profiled itself as a rather coherent conservative party. This strategy lost it many of its anti-corruption allies (and voters), but Most managed to survive attacks by the HDZ and other rightwing parties. In the county elections of 2021, the lists put forward by Most and its allies managed to get 7.2% of the votes and 6.5% of the seats (Most and DP were in coalition in 3 out of 21 counties). Finally, the electoral player that particularly bit into the vote share of the SDP was the new political party We Can! (Možemo!) cobbled together out of several green and other leftist movements and parties (Bajruši, 2021), which won 9.4% of the votes and 4.5% of the seats in county assemblies. Most notably, however, it won the position of the mayor of the city of Zagreb (of which more below) and formed, together with the SDP, a firm majority in the assembly of the capital.

The aforementioned uptick in average county party system fragmentation can therefore be explained by the rise of various credible independent lists, DP, and Možemo!, the consolidation of Most, and the accompanying decline of the HDZ and SDP. If we split the distribution of county assembly seats based on party list ideology where lists are identified as left, center-left, center, center-right, and right based on the programs of the most senior coalition partner (or the individual party in case of single-party lists), we can see that the center-right and rightwing parties on the political spectrum, with 318 and 110 seats respectively, jointly control more than one half of the total number of seats (803) in Croatia's county assemblies. The center (182), mostly composed of various liberal and people's parties; center-left (152), which is dominated by the SDP and its allies; and the left (41), which is largely composed of Možemo! and its partners – lag behind.

While the HDZ's national party organization, led by prime minister Andrej Plenković, could point to the victories of fifteen of its candidates for county prefects as a sign of strength, the HDZ actually had plenty of reasons for concern – most notably due to its catastrophic results in the capital. The 2021 elections marked the end of the rule of Milan Bandić, who served as the mayor of Zagreb for two decades and died in February 2021, just eleven weeks before the elections for his seventh term in office. Bandić started his career as a communist organizer and local functionary in the 1980s. In the 1990s, he became the leader of the social democrats in Zagreb and a city assemblyman. He then led the opposition's takeover of Zagreb in the early city elections of 2000 and never looked back, winning the city elections again in 2001, 2005, 2009, 2013, and 2017. Over the years, however, he moved to the right and abandoned the SDP (or, depending on the perspective, the SDP abandoned him) to form his party Bandić Milan 365 – Party of work and solidarity (Stranka rada i solidarnosti – BM365). His party collaborated very closely with the HDZ on both the national and the city level. Bandić also created one of the most corrupt city administrations in the region that was marred by scandals related to public procurement, nepotism in employment, construction permits, waste management, and financial profligacy (Paparella and Appelt, 2021).

Bandić's most prominent rival was Tomislav Tomašević, the candidate of the coalition of green and other leftwing political parties led by Možemo!. Their inventive organizing and marketing campaign became particularly poignant in the immediate aftermath of the March 2020 Zagreb earthquake where the city services under Bandić's leadership proved their staggering incompetence in helping the affected population and managing reconstruction efforts. Ultimately, Tomašević won the 2021 election easily in the second round with 65.3% of the votes, beating Miroslav Škoro of DP with 34.7%. Moreover, Možemo! completely dominated the elections to the city assembly, winning 23 out of 49 seats. After the elections, they created a coalition with the SDP and thus turned Zagreb into Croatia's first major city run by a leftwing green-red administration. With regional administrations, including the administration of the city of Zagreb, depending strongly on the central government for financing, this made Zagreb the political battlefield to closely monitor in the coming years for signs of future electoral fortunes on both the

national and regional levels. In other words, the success of Možemo! in managing the city of Zagreb and cleaning up local politics will have a significant impact on the prospects of the opposition in the parliamentary elections which are projected for the summer of 2024.

### **Determinants of the pattern of electoral results**

As noted above, recent research has shown the pattern of incumbents' results in Croatia's local elections to be largely driven by their fiscal profligacy, i.e. voters – particularly those in Croatia's war-affected areas – seem to be fiscally liberal and to reward municipal mayors for their spending (Glaurdić and Vuković, 2018). Due to the low number of cases, (dis)confirming the findings of this research on the regional/county level would not be methodologically viable. Moreover, this line of argumentation is solely focused on explaining the electoral fortunes of incumbents, regardless of their ideological orientation. A number of studies on the level of political parties, electoral candidates, individual voters, and aggregate-level electoral results has shown national politics in Croatia to be decisively determined by the communities' and individuals' experiences of and attitudes toward the country's 1991-1995 War of Independence. Ideological differentiation of political parties and their resulting appeal to voters in the whole region of Southeast Europe have been shown to be driven by the recent war past, with the division between the political left and right being determined by their standpoint toward the possible victimhood of the outgroup (Glaurdić, Lesschaeve, and Mochtak, 2021). Experimental evidence has also shown voters in this region to be more forgiving of politicians' corruption if those politicians served in the region's wars of the 1990s (Lesschaeve and Glaurdić, 2021). More specifically to Croatia, preferential voting data from the parliamentary elections has revealed that the Croatian electorate was split in its views of political candidates' combat experience, with voters in war-affected areas rewarding candidates for their military service and voters in areas not affected by the war penalizing them for it (Glaurdić and Lesschaeve, 2021). Most critically for the purposes of this report, research using municipality-level data has repeatedly shown the geographic pattern of electoral results on the national level to be driven by the communities' exposure to war violence, with the vote for the center-right HDZ (i.e. the party that took Croatia into independence and led it during the war) being positively related to the intensity of the communities' exposure to war violence and the vote for the center-left SDP being negatively related to it (Glaurdić and Vuković, 2015; 2016).

As the first step in our explanation of the determinants of the electoral results in the 2021 county elections, we tabulated the results of the PR elections for the county assemblies for the two still most dominant parties of the center-right and the center-left – the HDZ and the SDP – on the municipal level and compared them to their results in the PR elections for the national parliament in 2020. We present these data in Figure 1, where the top two maps present the results for the HDZ lists and the bottom two maps present the results for the SDP lists (the 21 counties are marked in Roman numerals in the maps with the county election results).<sup>3</sup> As is immediately obvious, the correlation between the 2020 national results and the 2021 regional results on the municipal level is exceptionally high. In the case of the HDZ, it is actually 0.86 and in the case of the SDP it is 0.75.<sup>4</sup> Several points of difference, nevertheless, need to be noted. Municipalities with Serb majorities often vote for the social democrats in the national elections, but for Serb ethnic parties in the local elections. Moreover, weaker results of the HDZ in northwest Croatia and of the SDP in Slavonia in the county-level elections of 2021 are largely a reflection of voters' strategic decision-making considering the county-level balance of power.

[Figure 1 about here]

While these simple correlations suggest that the pattern of results in the regional elections may be determined by the same criteria as is the case in the national elections, we try to confirm that by replicating the models used in previous research (Glaudić and Vuković, 2016) and applying them on the county assembly electoral results with Croatia's 556 municipalities as the units of analysis. Table 2 presents our findings, with Model 1 being the strict replication of previous research for the HDZ and SDP lists (i.e. a fractional logit model with binary variables for Croatia's historic regions of Dalmatia, Slavonia, Istria, and Central Croatia), and Model 2 being the multi-level-model with the 556 municipalities being embedded into the 21 counties. In both cases, the principal explanatory variables remain essentially the same as in the 2016 study. We model the state of the

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<sup>3</sup> We add the votes of the Istrian Democratic Assembly (Istarski demokratski sabor – IDS) to the SDP votes in the 2021 elections because they ran together in the 2020 national elections. The IDS, however, is a distinctive and arguably unique regionalist player in Croatia that has dominated Istrian politics independently of the SDP that has generally been its national-level partner (Stjepanović, 2018).

<sup>4</sup> The correlation between the 2020 national and 2021 regional votes is also high for the DP and Most. When added together (since they are ideologically close and they ran together in three counties), the correlation is 0.74.

local economy with previous year's figures for unemployment and per capita monthly income in Croatian kunas (ln-transformed), as well as the proportion of the population that is economically active based on the last census figures available (2011). Our demographic controls also include the proportions of Croats, non-believers (i.e. atheists and agnostics), retirees, and agricultural population (i.e. population whose livelihood primarily comes from agriculture) in the municipal population. We furthermore include the figures for the average age of the municipal population, the average number of years of education of the adult population, and the weighted average settlement size (ln-transformed) in the municipality as a measure of the urban-rural divide. Finally, as in the 2016 study, we model the exposure of the local population to violence in Croatia's War of Independence with the figures for disability caused by war operations. In the absence of reliable casualty figures, this variable has been shown to be an excellent proxy for the pattern of war violence as it closely corresponds to the operations of the warring sides and the evolution of the frontlines (Glaurđić, Lesschaeve, and Mochtak, 2018).

[Table 2 about here]

As could have been predicted from the correlation figures discussed above, the results presented in Table 2 closely mirror the results observed in Croatia's national elections (Glaurđić and Vuković, 2016: 141). The center-left social democrats and their allies do better in economically propulsive areas with greater proportions of voters who are not religious. The center-right HDZ and its allies, on the other hand, do better in areas with lower educational attainment, higher unemployment, and a lower proportion of ethnic minorities (i.e. higher proportion of Croats). Most remarkably, the level of support for the two camps is decisively defined by the pattern of violence in Croatia's War of Independence, even two and a half decades after the end of violence. Just as in all postwar national elections to date, the level of support of the Croatian voters in the 2021 county elections for the HDZ/SDP is positively/negatively related to communal exposure to war violence. In fact, a one standard deviation increase in *War disability* (equal to 12.5) leads to a 3.9 percentage point higher vote share for the HDZ lists, and a 5 percentage point lower vote share for the SDP lists – a nearly 9 percentage point swing that is substantively large and comparable in size to the one observed on the national level. This is yet another piece of evidence for the deeply pervasive and long term impact of war violence on electoral politics in postwar societies – even

on the sub-national level. It is also yet another piece of evidence of the nationalized character of regional politics in Croatia.

## **Conclusions**

The 2021 county and municipal elections in Croatia took place at a particularly challenging time for the country recovering from the Covid-19 pandemic and two earthquakes. Considering those challenges, it is perhaps not surprising that voters looked beyond the dominant parties of the center-right and the center-left, leading to increased fragmentation of the county assemblies. Underneath that increased fragmentation, however, lay the structural foundations that have dominated Croatia's politics since the end of its War of Independence in 1995. Using multivariate regression analysis of the 2021 county electoral results on the level of Croatia's municipalities, we have demonstrated that the socio-economic and demographic determinants of the pattern of support for Croatia's two still dominant voting blocs on the national level remain not only unchanged, but that they also extend to regional politics. Further research is needed to better elucidate the structural foundations of support for the new players of all ideological persuasions that have chipped away at the support of the HDZ and the SDP blocs. These new players will have to build coherent platforms, policies, and the record of performance in office to consolidate their standing in the electorate and to prove they are more than a passing trend. This is particularly the case in Zagreb, where the new leftist platform *Možemo!*, that has captured the city government after two decades of the corrupt government of Milan Bandić, will have to prove to be true to its name. Its success in the capital will be a decisive determinant of whether the opposition parties will manage to challenge the dominance of the HDZ on the national level in the near future.

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**Table 1. County assembly results and select party system characteristics**

	1993	1997	2001	2005	2009	2013	2017	2021
Average Effective number of electoral lists	2.86	3.59	5.92	4.28	3.41	3.87	3.74	4.19
Average list coalition size	1.35	1.17	1.22	1.81	1.91	2.14	2.22	2.05
Average HDZ list coalition size	1.00	1.33	1.81	1.91	3.10	4.05	3.24	3.29
Average SDP list coalition size	2.33	1.52	1.43	3.29	3.33	4.00	3.67	2.10
Turnout	64.1%	71.2%	47.0%	40.8%	47.0%	47.2%	48.7%	46.7%
Invalid votes	3.4%	2.8%	3.4%	2.8%	3.4%	4.5%	3.5%	3.8%
HDZ lists votes	45.2%	41.1%	26.5%	25.1%	34.7%	29.6%	31.8%	29.4%
SDP lists votes	12.2%	14.1%	20.0%	30.7%	29.8%	25.9%	22.6%	16.2%
Independent lists votes	0.3%	0.7%	4.9%	6.8%	10.8%	9.6%	5.1%	9.6%
HDZ lists seats	54.9%	54.2%	33.9%	31.9%	42.4%	37.8%	40.5%	37.6%
SDP lists seats	13.8%	13.2%	22.8%	34.9%	32.0%	31.3%	16.6%	18.9%
Independent lists seats	0.6%	0.2%	2.0%	3.4%	6.8%	5.1%	5.3%	12.5%

**Table 2. Determinants of support for the HDZ and the SDP county lists**

	Model 1		Model 2	
	HDZ lists	SDP lists	HDZ lists	SDP lists
Unemployment	0.483*** (0.113)	-0.338*** (0.116)	0.043 (0.125)	-0.066 (0.093)
Income (ln)	0.068 (0.041)	0.084** (0.040)	-0.031 (0.042)	-0.019 (0.031)
Activity	-0.154 (0.138)	0.282** (0.125)	-0.210* (0.117)	0.435*** (0.087)
War disability	0.003*** (0.001)	-0.004*** (0.001)	0.002*** (0.000)	-0.002*** (0.000)
Croats	0.352*** (0.044)	0.011 (0.034)	0.364*** (0.034)	-0.001 (0.025)
Non-believers	-0.023 (0.210)	0.900*** (0.168)	-0.093 (0.196)	0.909*** (0.146)
Retirees	-0.121 (0.171)	0.307** (0.153)	-0.028 (0.164)	0.117 (0.122)
Agriculture	-0.206*** (0.065)	-0.116* (0.063)	-0.180*** (0.055)	-0.030 (0.041)
Average age	0.000 (0.003)	-0.003 (0.003)	-0.002 (0.003)	0.001 (0.002)
Education	-0.032*** (0.011)	0.001 (0.010)	-0.051*** (0.011)	0.004 (0.008)
Settlement size (ln)	-0.015*** (0.005)	-0.023*** (0.005)	0.001 (0.005)	-0.009** (0.004)
Dalmatia	0.053*** (0.014)	-0.059*** (0.012)		
Slavonia	0.121*** (0.015)	-0.012 (0.015)		
Istria	-0.118*** (0.027)	0.092*** (0.016)		
Observations	556	556	556/21	556/21
Log (pseudo)likelihood	-233.88	-171.54	493.25	651.12
AIC			-958.49	-1274.24
R-squared	0.584	0.691	0.407/0.441	0.353/0.387

\*\*\*p < 0.01. \*\*p < 0.05. \*p < 0.01. Average marginal effects reported, with standard errors in parentheses. Fractional logit used in Model 1, multi-level model with county controls in Model 2.

**Figure 1. Support for HDZ and SDP lists in national (2020) and county (2021) elections**

