



Is Nepal on a Path Towards Caste Inclusive Political Leadership?

An Analysis of the 2022 Local Level Elections

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- **High Janajati Representation and Candidacy Continued:** In 2022, Janajati candidacy and representation remains at or above 30% in positions open for all castes.¹ While in 2017, elite castes were generally overrepresented and, especially in leadership positions (mayoral and ward chair positions) the share of Janajatis was below their population share, in 2022, Janajatis made up a similar percentage of the pool of candidates and elected leaders as the general population. This holds true across municipal and ward positions, including high-authority positions.
- **Janajati Representation and Candidacy Rose:** In 2022, Janajatis were 7 percentage points more likely to run for office and be elected than in 2017. Among unreserved positions, the share of Janajatis increased the most for the deputy mayor position (almost 9 percentage points).
- **Janajati Women Contesting for Deputy Mayor were More Likely to Face Electoral Setbacks than Janajati Men:** While the share of both female and male Janajati deputy mayor candidates increased from 2017 to 2022, the share increased significantly more for men, suggesting that Janajati women did not benefit from the increase in representation to the same extent as Janajati men.
- **Relative to non-Janajatis, Janajatis Were More Likely to Recontest, be Re-elected and Enter Politics for the First-time:** Janajati incumbents were 1.5 percentage point more likely to re-contest for election and 2 percentage points more likely to be re-elected to office in 2022 than

non-Janajati incumbents. This is consistent with their performance in the 2017 - 2022 term being good enough for their parties to want to stick with them. Among first-time entrants, the share of Janajatis was 0.5 percentage point higher than of non-Janajati.

CONTEXT AND SAMPLE

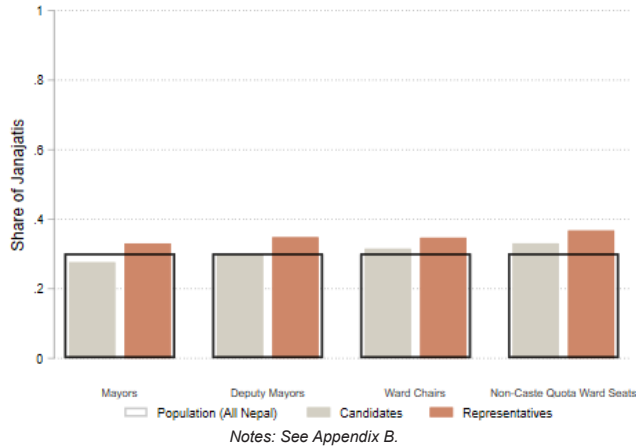
In Nepal's first local elections as a democratic republic in 2017, the historically disadvantaged Janajati group gained significant political representation, with the Maoist party being an important conduit for Janajati representation (Bhusal et al., 2022). Did this continue in 2022?

To analyze temporal changes in Nepal's caste representation, we use a comprehensive administrative dataset of candidates and elected representatives in the 2017 and 2022 local elections (Election Commission of Nepal). Our dataset includes 262,380 unique candidates and 70,460 representatives (35,242 in 2017 and 35,218 in 2022) across both election rounds, representing every municipality and ward. The main findings are below (figure footnotes describing the regression model underlying graphs are in the statistical appendix). provided by the Election Commission of Nepal. Our dataset comprises 262,380 unique candidates and 70,460 representatives (35,242 in 2017 and 35,218 in 2022) across both election rounds, representing every municipality and ward in Nepal. Below, we describe the main findings (figure footnotes describing the regression model underlying the graphs are provided in the statistical appendix).

¹ In particular, we restrict our analysis to mayor, deputy mayor, ward chair, female ward members and open ward seats (excluding female dalit members).

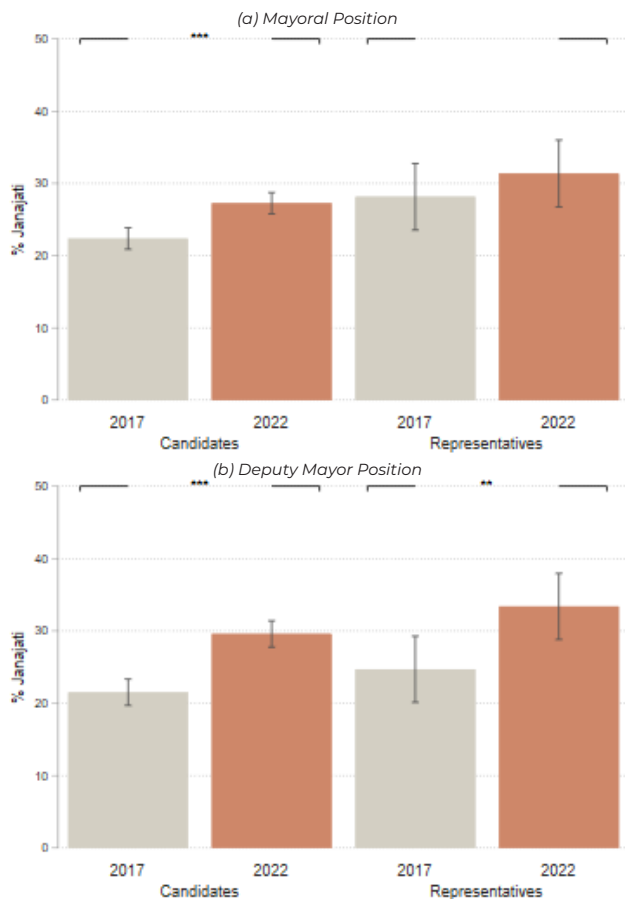
Findings

Figure 1: Caste Composition of 2022 Candidates and Representatives



The transparent black bars represent the share of Janajatis among the general population, while the solid bars represent their share among candidates (beige bars) and representatives (orange bars) in mayor, deputy mayor and non-caste quota ward seats (ward chair, female ward members and open seats). In 2022, Janajatis were at least proportionally represented across positions, including in high-authority positions (mayor and ward chair seats).

Figure 2: Caste Composition of Candidates and Representatives Across 2017 and 2022 Local Level Election Rounds



(c) Non-Caste Quota Protected Ward Seats

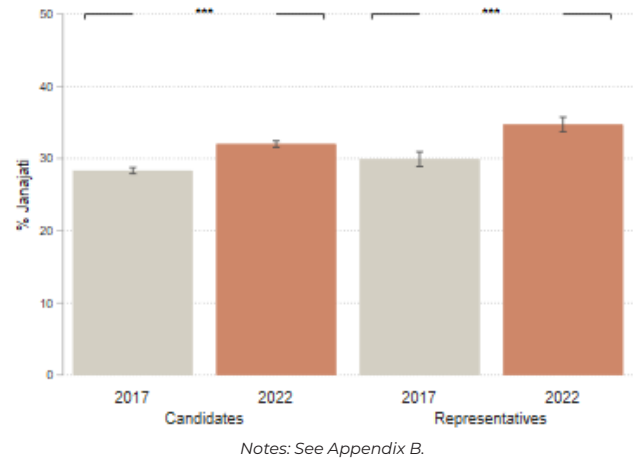


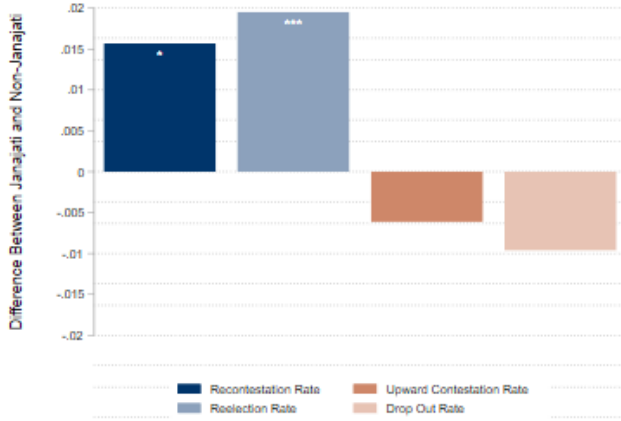
Figure 2 reports the share of candidates and representatives who are Janajati in 2017 and 2022 and indicates when these temporal differences are statistically significant. We track the share of Janajati candidates and elected representatives in mayor, deputy mayor and all non-caste quota reserved ward positions (including ward chairperson, female ward members and open seats) across election rounds.

Significantly more Janajatis ran for and won office in 2022 than in 2017. Overall, Janajatis are roughly seven percentage points more likely to be fielded as candidates and re-elected as local leaders in 2022. While the share of Janajati mayors, ward chairs and unreserved ward seats rose by roughly five percentage points, the share of Janajati deputy mayors increased by almost nine percentage points. Janajatis were successful in maintaining and expanding their political representation across municipal- and ward- positions, and more so at the deputy mayor level. However, while the share of both female and male Janajati deputy mayor candidates increases relative to 2017 (see figure A2), the share of the former increases significantly more than the share of the latter, suggesting that Janajati women could not benefit from the increase in representation to the same extent as Janajati men did. Appendix A2 shows results are robust to the inclusion of a variety of controls.

Why did the representation of Janajatis in Nepal's 2022 elections expand? Figure 3 depicts the difference in recontestation, reelection, upward contestation, and dropout rates for representatives in 2017. The recontestation rate is the proportion of 2017 representatives who ran for the same position again in 2022. The reelection rate is the proportion of representatives elected in 2017 who were re-elected in 2022. The share of 2017 representatives who competed for a higher ranking position in 2022 is referred to as the upward-contestation rate. The dropout rate is the proportion of 2017 candidates who did not run for any position in 2022. We also

estimate the caste gap in the new entrant rate, or the proportion of 2022 candidates who did not compete for any position in 2017. A positive value indicates that Janajati have a higher rate than Non-Janajati.

Figure 3: Recontestation, Upward Mobility, Drop-Outs and New Entrants



Notes: See Appendix B.

Janajatis were (significantly) more likely than non-Janajatis to recontest and be reelected in 2022. Furthermore, Janajatis were more likely to enter politics in 2022. Among Janajati candidates in 2017, 78% dropped out of politics in 2022. All of these factors work together to explain the increase in Janajati representation shown in Figure 2. The magnitude of these caste disparities is significant: Janajati representatives were 1.5% more likely than Non-Janajati to recontest in 2022 and 2% more likely to be re-elected. Among first-time entrants, the Janajati share was 0.5% higher than that of non-Janajati.

In a nutshell, the group of Janajatis, after being ushered into politics in 2017, succeeded in stabilizing and expanding their political representation in 2022.

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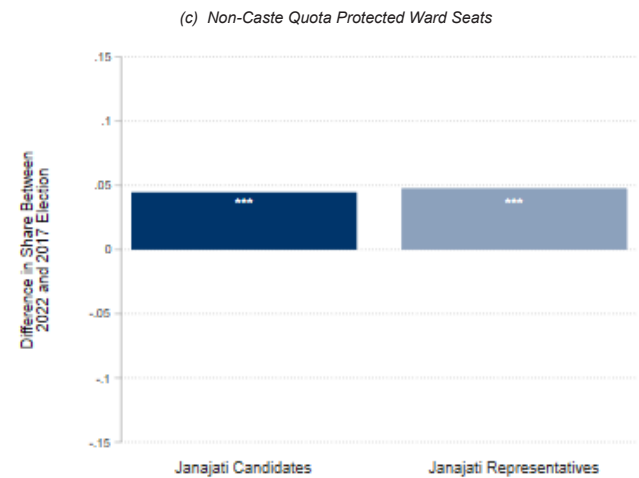
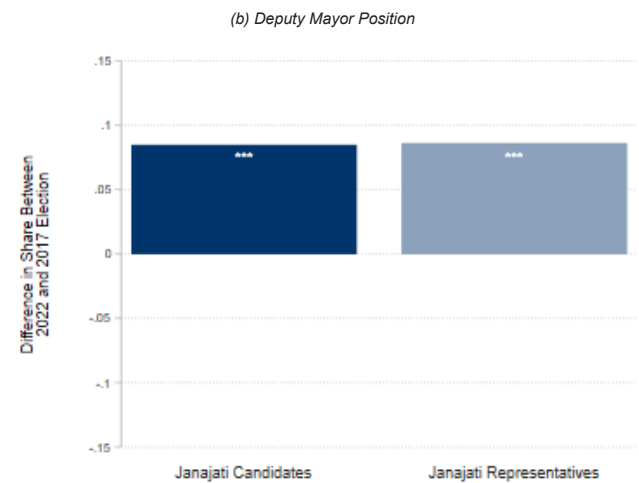
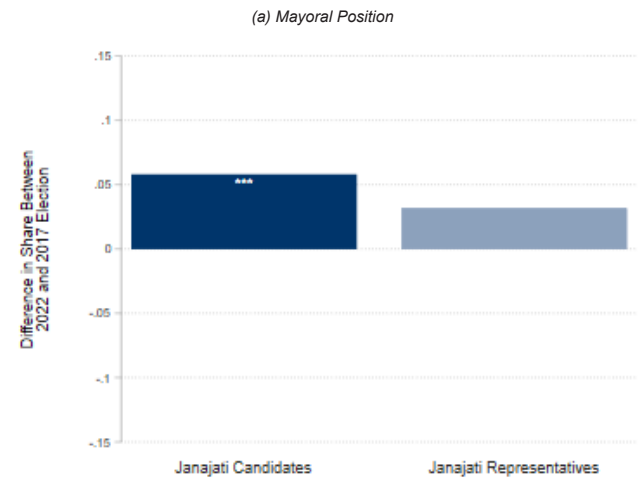
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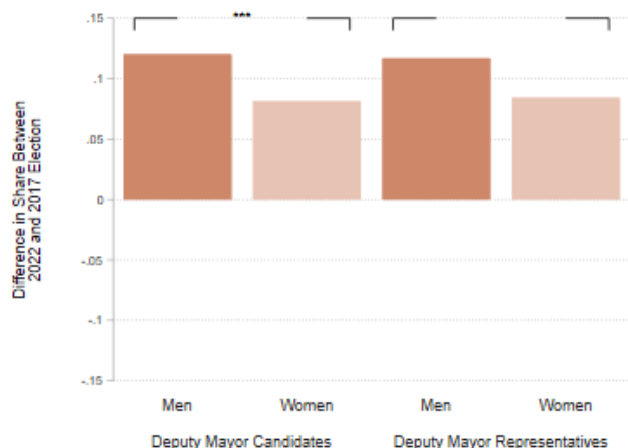
APPENDIX A Figures

Figure A1: Caste Composition of Candidates and Representatives Across 2017 and 2022 Local Level Election Rounds



Notes: See Appendix B.

Figure A2: Candidacy and Representation of Janajati Women Across 2017 and 2022 Local Level Election Rounds



B Statistical Details

Figure 1 Notes: The transparent black bars represent the share of Janajatis among the general population, while the solid bars represent the share of Janajatis among 2022 candidates (beige bars) and representatives (orange bars) in mayor, deputy mayor and non-caste quota ward seats (ward chair, female ward members and open seats). A solid bar that extends above the black bar indicates that the group of Janajatis was overrepresented in politics, whereas a solid bar below the corresponding black bar indicates the group of Janajatis was underrepresented.

Figure 2 Notes: Our sample is the universe of all candidates/representatives in the 2017 (beige set of bars) and 2022 (orange set of bars) local level elections in Nepal. We look at municipal-level positions (mayor and deputy mayor) and non-quota protected ward-level positions (ward chair, female ward members and open seats). Mayor refers to mayors in urban municipalities as well as chairmen in rural municipalities. Deputy Mayor refers to deputy mayors in urban municipalities as well as vice chairmen in rural municipalities. Non-Caste Quota Protected Ward Seats comprises non-caste quota protected open seats at the ward-level (ward chair, female ward members and open ward seats). We plot the share of Janajatis and the confidence bars represent the standard errors from a simple mean comparison of caste and election round. The stars represent the level of significance. Levels of significance: * $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.

Figure 3 Notes: Our sample is the universe of all representatives in the 2017 local level election in Nepal. We look at municipal-level positions (mayor and deputy mayor) and ward-level positions that are not reserved for a particular caste (ward chair, female members and open seats). Recontestation is a dummy that equals 1 if the 2017 representative is re-running for the same position in 2022 as in 2017, 0 otherwise. Reelection is a dummy that equals 1 if the 2017 representative is re-running for the same position in 2022 as in 2017 and being re-elected in 2022, 0 otherwise. Upward mobility is a dummy that equals 1 if the 2017 representative is re-running for a different position in 2022 as in 2017, 0 otherwise. Drop-out is a dummy that equals 1 if the 2017 representative does not contest in the 2022 election, 0 otherwise. The bars represent coefficients from regressing the respective indicator (recontestation, re-election, upward mobility or dropping-out) on an indicator for the caste, including controls for whether the municipality is urban or rural, district fixed effects and heteroskedasticity-robust standard errors. The stars represent the level of significance. Levels of significance: * $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$. We repeat this exercise with the universe of all candidates in the 2022 local level election in Nepal to examine the caste composition among newcomers (not displayed in the figure

but cited in the text). Newcomer is a dummy that equals 1 if the 2022 candidate does not contest in the 2017 election, 0 otherwise.

Figure A1 Notes: Our sample is the universe of all candidates/representatives in the 2017 and 2022 local level elections in Nepal. We look at municipal-level positions (mayor and deputy mayor) and non-caste quota protected ward-level positions (ward chair, female members and open seats). Mayor refers to mayors in urban municipalities as well as chairmen in rural municipalities. Deputy Mayor refers to deputy mayors in urban municipalities as well as vice chairmen in rural municipalities. Non-Caste Quota Protected Ward Seats comprises non-caste quota protected ward-level positions (ward chair, female members and open seats). The bars represent coefficients from regressing an indicator for the caste of the candidate/representative on the election round in the respective position (ie. plotting the difference in the share of Janajati/Non-Janajati representatives/candidates in the 2022 election round compared to 2017), including controls for whether the municipality is urban or rural, district fixed effects and heteroskedasticity-robust standard errors. The stars represent the level of significance. Levels of significance: * $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.

Figure A2 Notes: Our sample is the universe of deputy mayor candidates/representatives in the 2017 and 2022 local level elections in Nepal. Deputy Mayor refers to deputy mayors in urban municipalities as well as vice chairmen in rural municipalities. The bars represent coefficients from regressing an indicator for the election round on gender and caste indicators and an interaction term of gender and caste, including controls for whether the municipality is urban or rural, district fixed effects and heteroskedasticity-robust standard errors. The stars represent the level of significance of the interaction term. Levels of significance: * $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.

References

Bhusal, B., Callen, M., Gulzar, S., Pande, R., Prillaman, S. A., & Singhania, D. (2020). Does Revolution Work? Evidence from Nepal's People's War.