



## POLLING DAY UPDATE (LOCAL ELECTION - 2022)

(This update is produced by Collective Campaign for Peace (COCAP) in collaboration with partners. It covers electoral developments, instances of violence, and contestations observed during polling day of Local Election on May 13, 2022)

### Overview of Polling Day (May 13) - Local Elections 2022

The polling day of local elections in Nepal on May 13 remained largely peaceful despite a few instances of clashes and tensions at polling centers in some districts.

There was **64% voter turnout**, though the Election Commission Nepal (ECN) had anticipated 68 to 72% of voter's participation. Local levels having larger voter pools including Kathmandu metropolitan, and other local levels of Terai-Madhesh saw relatively lesser footfall in polling centers, which decreased the total voter turnout. Overall, the **voter turnout ranged from 50% to 75% at individual local levels.**<sup>1</sup>

The data released by the ECN showed smooth completion of polls in the majority of the 21,955 polling centers. Elections were held successfully in all polling centers in Lumbini province while **elections were canceled in 85 centers across 28 local levels in 17 districts** of other provinces due to disputes and clashes between cadres of political parties at the polling center.

### Summary of Violence on Polling Day

NepalMonitor<sup>2</sup> recorded **60 incidents of violence** at polling centers across different districts on election day. The major triggers of these incidents were disputes between cadres of political parties at polling centers, attempts to rig elections, and capture polling booths. Alleged attempts to exploit and influence votes of elderly citizens and persons with disabilities by party representatives also triggered disputes and clashes in some polling centers.

Likewise, alleged voting misconduct by polling officers also resulted in tension in some polling centers. In Kavrepalanchowk district, representatives of political parties vandalized furniture and election materials at the polling center of Shree Ram Secondary School in Panchkhal municipality-13, accusing the polling officer of giving multiple ballot papers to the same person. In Balara

<sup>1</sup> Local Level Election E-bulletin, May 13 -2022

<sup>2</sup> NepalMonitor is an online platform that monitors, tracks, and analyzes the trend of violence surrounding Gender-based, Governance, HRDs, and Electoral issues in Nepal with the objective of enhancing the understanding of violence dynamics and supporting policy interventions.

municipality-3 a polling officer was arrested for allegedly trying to influence voters in favor of a particular party.

As recorded by NepalMonitor, **61 persons sustained injuries** in the violent incidents. A single incident of clash between parties in Gadhimai rural municipality of Rautahat resulted in 15 injuries. Likewise, incidents of clashes in Kharpunath rural municipality of Humla and Baiteshor rural municipality of Dolkaha resulted in 10 injuries each.

Election security personnel fired **warning shots in 27 polling centers of 18 districts** where the situation turned tense due to clashes and rioting. The warning shot fired at the polling center in Bhimsen Thapa rural municipality-2 in Gorkha injured an election volunteer. Similarly, 2 citizens were injured at the polling center in Katari municipality-10 of Udayapur from warning shot fired by police.

**Incidents involving use of Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) purportedly targeting elections were recorded in 3 districts on polling day.** A cylinder bomb was detonated near the parliament at Kathmandu on the morning of election while an IED went off near polling center in Sankhuwasabha. No damage or human casualty were reported in both incidents. IEDs were also found near two polling centers in Bajhang.

### Polis canceled due to tension at polling center in province

Of the total 85 polling center, where the local elections were canceled, majority were in Madhesh (42%) and Sudur Pashchim province (39%)<sup>3</sup>. The clashes resulting due to disputes, accusation of booth captures, along with vandalism at polling centers and destruction of election materials led to cancellation of election in these centers. This points towards insufficient security provisions at these polling centers to conduct free and fair elections.

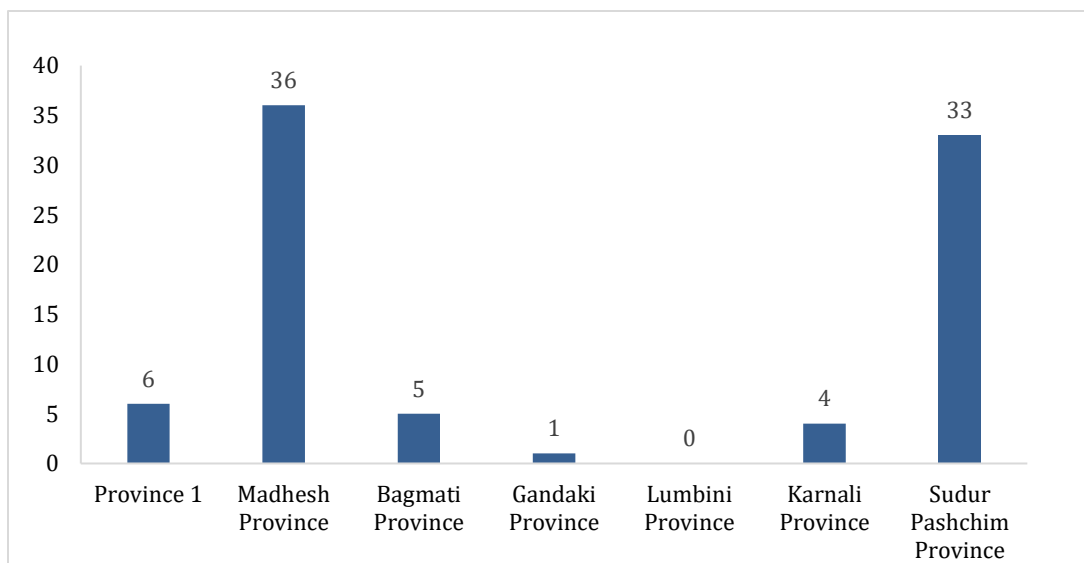


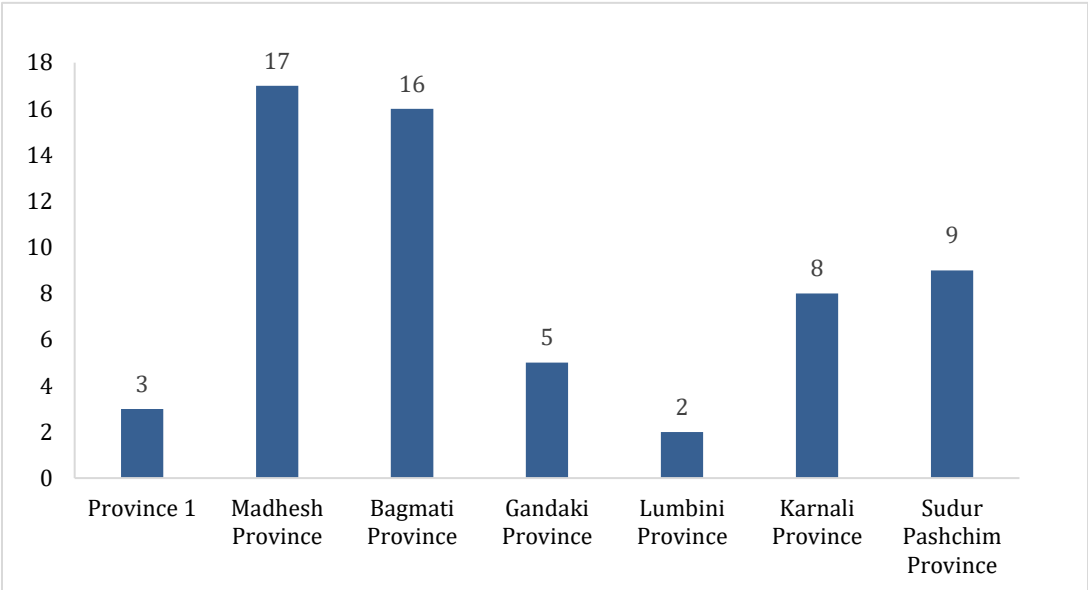
Figure 1: Province wise distribution of polling centers with canceled election (Source: ECN)

<sup>3</sup> Local Level Election E-bulletin, May 13 - 2022

Elections in all the polling centers of Budhiganga municipality of Bajura district were canceled due to lack of security provision. On initial observation, the chief commissioner of ECN attributed weakness in election security management in some polling centers as local elections were held in a single phase across the country. The commissioner also pointed towards failure to embrace democratic values by political parties and candidates in some polling centers as triggers of clashes that led to cancellation of elections.

**Election-related violence in Province**

Madhesh province saw the highest number of clashes among all provinces on the polling day with incidents recorded in 7 out of 8 districts except Siraha. Though Kathmandu valley was largely peaceful, many incidents of election-related clashes were recorded in Sindhupalchowk, Dolakha, Kavrepalanchowk and Ramechhap districts of Bagmati province. The hilly and mountainous districts of Karnali and Sudur Pashchim provinces also experienced incidents of violence with 4 incidents recorded each in Humla and Bajhang. Compared to other provinces, local elections in Province 1, Gandaki Province and Lumbini province were relatively peaceful.



*Figure 2: Violent incidents on Polling Day of Local Election 2022 in Province*

The province wise summary of violent incidents during polling day is presented by Figure 2 while Figure 3 below shows distribution of clashes and disputes reported during the polling day in the local elections - 2022 across districts.

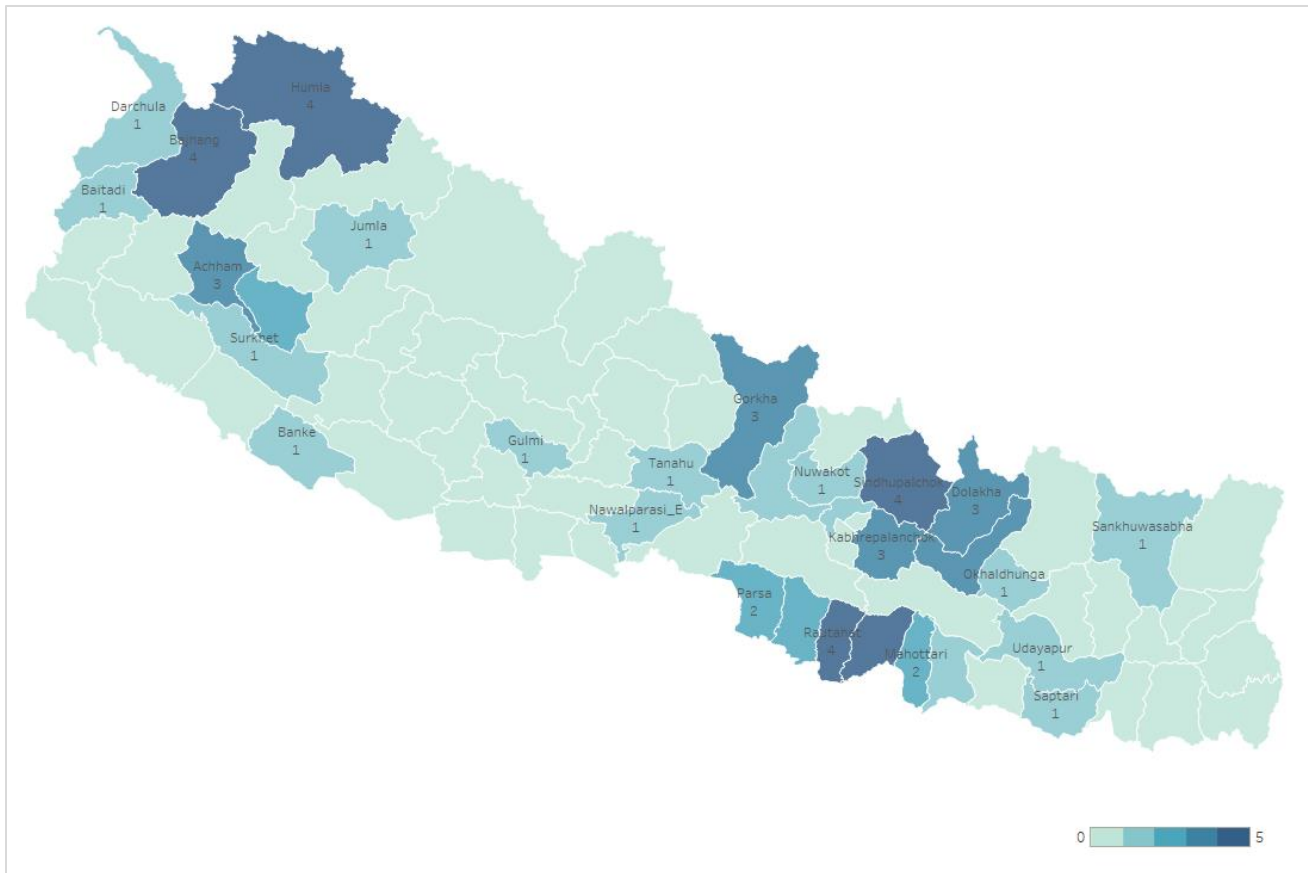


Figure 3: No. of Reported incidents of violence at polling centers in districts on polling day of Local Election 2022

## Province 1

Local elections remained relatively peaceful in most polling centers throughout Province 1 recording only two incidents of clashes in Okhaldhunga and Udayapur.

In Okhaldhunga supporters of Nepali Congress and CPN-UML clashed over a dispute regarding queuing for voting at a polling center in Champadevi rural municipality-9. Police fired 9 rounds of warning shots to take the situation under control.

Two persons were injured when police opened fire to control the situation following a clash at Janata Kalika Secondary school polling center in Katari municipality-10 of Udayapur.

An Improvised Explosive Device (IED) went off near Baljyoti Primary school polling center in Chainpur municipality-4 of Sankhuwasabha after completion of voting on Friday evening.

## Madhesh Province

Tension remained high in many places of Madhesh province during election day on Friday, May 13. Clashes over election-related disputes were reported in different polling centers in 7 of the 8 districts in Madhesh province. Elections were canceled in 15 polling stations in Sarlahi, Saptari, Bara, and Rautahat districts.

In **Sarlahi** district clashes were reported in 4 polling centers including Chakraghata rural municipality-1, Dhankaul rural municipality-2 and Kaudena rural municipality-6. At a polling center in Balara municipality-3 angry voters beat the polling officer for alleged voting misconduct. Following repeated clashes, Nepal Army took control of the polling center in Kaudena rural municipality-6.

**Elections were canceled in 9 polling centers in Rautahat** due to clash and rioting at polling centers and destruction, tampering, and looting of ballot boxes. Three ballot boxes were torched in Baudhimai municipality-2 while a group vandalized and looted ballot boxes in Yamunamai rural municipality and Garuda municipality-7. Clashes were also reported at one polling center in Phatuwa Bijayapur and two in Gadhimai municipality. 15 persons sustained injury in these clashes while elections were canceled in these centers.

Voting at a polling center of Dakneshwori municipality-2 in **Saptari** was briefly halted after a group assaulted staff at the polling center and vandalized election materials.

In **Parsa** district 4 persons were injured in clashes between cadres of political parties at polling centers in Chhipaharmai rural municipality1 and 2.

Clashes over a polling dispute were reported in two places in **Mahottari** district. Polling was briefly disrupted due to clashes at Balwa and Aurahi municipalities. In both places police fired warning shots to bring the situation under control. Polling resumed after the situation turned normal.

In **Dhanusha** polling remained peaceful besides one incident of clash at polling center in Sahidnagar municipality-1 of Dhanusha.

Voting was also affected in Devtal rural municipality and Pacharauta municipality in **Bara** district due to dispute and clash between cadres of political parties. Elections were canceled in 3 polling centers in Ward 2 and 4 of Pacharauta municipality over alleged voting irregularity.

## Bagmati Province

Bagmati Province was one of the hotspots of clashes on election day as suggested by data recorded in the NepalMonitor. However, the polling was resumed in most centers in Bagmati province with cancellation only at 3 polling centers in Ramechhap and 2 in Kavrepalanchowk districts.

The **local elections at 2 polling centers** in Shree Ram Secondary School of Panchkhal municipality-13 of **Kavrepalanchowk** were canceled after cadres from the ruling coalition vandalized the polling center including the ballot boxes. The cadres accused the polling officer of rigging the election by giving multiple ballot papers to one of the voters.

The party cadres also clashed in polling centers of Temal rural municipality-7 and Chaurideurali municipality-6 of Kavrepalanchowk over a dispute regarding voting on behalf of elderly and people with disabilities. Police fired warning shots in both instances to normalize the situation and resume elections.

In **Ramechhap**, the police had to fire warning shots in different polling centers of Doramba Sailung rural municipality, Khaddevi rural municipality-1, and Manthali municipality-1 to control the clashes between the party cadres. The elections at **3 polling centers in Rakatham** of Khaddevi rural municipality-1 were canceled.

Likewise, Ward nos. 1,2, and 3 of Baiteshor rural municipality in **Dolakha** remained tense throughout the election day due to repeated clashes between party cadres of major political parties across different polling centers. The polling started late in the polling centers at ward no. 1 and 2 as party representatives of other parties blamed Nepali Congress cadres who tried to **capture booths in those wards**. Also, the clash at polling center of ward no.3 resulted in **injuries of more than 10 people**. Police had to fire warning shots at all wards to normalize the situation and resume the elections.

**Sindupalchowk** also experienced a tense election day with clashes at polling centers in different local levels including Tripurasundari rural municipality, Bahrabise municipality and Panchpokhari rural municipality. The tension also escalated at the polling center of Melamchi municipality-4, after the party representatives tried to influence the voting of people with disabilities, requiring the army to intervene in bringing the situation to normalcy.

An Improvised Explosive Device (IED) went off near the Parliament in **New Baneshwor-Kathmandu** at 1:00 am on the polling day. Pamphlets belonging to 'CPN Siwadi' were recovered from the site of the incident. No damage was reported in the incident. Elections were held peacefully in all local levels of Kathmandu.

In **Nuwakot**, the voting was briefly halted at the polling centers in Panchkanya rural municipality-5 and Suryagadhi rural municipality-4. At Panchkanya, voting was halted after CPN (Maoist Center) cadres accused Nepali Congress representatives of handing cash to the voters. A clash between cadres of political parties briefly disrupted voting at Suryagadhi.

The mayoral candidate of Nepali Congress in Nilkantha municipality of **Dhading** district was assaulted by cadres of CPN UML and CPN (Maoist Center) as he entered the polling center in ward no. 5 of the municipality, blaming him for violating the electoral code of conduct.

## Gandaki Province

Local elections in Gandaki Province **were largely peaceful** with **cancellation of election only in one** polling center in Phedi of Byas municipality, Tanahu.

In **Tanahu**, Nepali Congress cadres manhandled the independent mayoral candidate of Byas municipality, Mr Deepak Raj Joshi who is the son of ex congress leader Govinda Raj Joshi.

Total of **3 incidents** of inter party clashes were reported at **Gorkha** in different polling centers including ward no. 6 and 7 of Gandaki rural municipality, and ward no. 2 of Bhimsen Thapa rural municipality. Police fired warning shots in all centers to resume polling. A warning shot fired by police also **injured an election volunteer** at the polling center in Bhimsen Thapa rural municipality.

In **Nawalparasi East**, the cadres of CPN-UML and Nepali Congress clashed in the polling center at ward no. 6 of Bulingtar rural municipality-6 over a dispute about assisting to vote elderly citizens and persons with disabilities.

## Lumbini Province

Elections were held peacefully in all districts of Lumbini on polling day. Only a single incident of election-related violence was reported in Dhurkot rural municipality-4 of Gulmi district after the end of voting period in the evening. Three persons including a candidate sustained injury in the incident.

## Karnali Province

Election-related tensions and clashes were reported at polling stations in Humla, Jumla, Surkhet, Dailekh and Kalikot districts of Karnali province during local elections on May 13. 18 persons sustained injuries in these incidents. Elections were canceled at 5 polling centers in the province.

Clashes were reported at two polling centers in Aathbis municipality and Thantikadh rural municipality-6 in **Dailekh**.

In **Humla** district election was canceled at a polling center in Kharpunath rural municipality-1 following clashes between cadres of two rival political parties. 10 persons were injured in the clash that arose due to a dispute regarding who should assist elderly persons and people with disabilities in voting.

A polling officer and two others were injured as two groups clashed at a polling center in Chankheli rural municipality-2. Police fired eight rounds of warning shots to control the situation as the clash intensified.

Similarly, election staff were also attacked while they were transporting ballot boxes from a polling center in Chankheli rural municipality-6 after completion of voting.

An assistant polling officer sustained knee injury in a clash between cadres of rival political parties at a polling center in Guthichaur rural municipality-3 in **Jumla**. Election at the polling center was canceled.

Election was also canceled at a polling center in Simta rural municipality-1 of **Surkhet** after cadres of political parties started rioting alleging that ballot papers without election officer's signature were found.

Similarly, disputes between representatives of political parties also resulted in cancellation of elections at two polling centers in Raskot and Pachaljharana rural municipality of Kalikot district.

## Sudur Pashchim Province

Local elections in Sudur Pashchim province saw **significant numbers of violent incidents** on the election day. According to ECN, the elections were canceled in **31 polling centers** across the province.

The elections were canceled in all the **20 polling centers of 10 wards in Budhi Ganga municipality of Bajura**. Lack of sufficient security provision at the polling centers was the major impediment in conducting free and fair elections. The party cadres of CPN-UML and Nepali Congress in the rural municipality blamed each other of capturing booths in different wards.

Clashes were reported in **3 polling centers in Achham** including Panchaldev Binayak municipality-5, Dhakari municipality-2, and Sanphebagar municipality-13. Police fired warning shots in the former two polling stations to bring the situation back to normalcy, whereas **voting was canceled in the later 2 polling stations**. Four persons were injured in Panchaldev Binayak municipality-5, during the clash between supporters of independent candidate and Nepali Congress candidate.

The local elections were canceled at 7 polling centers in **Bajhang** because of clashes resulting from inter party disputes, and attempts to vote multiple times by the same voter. Also, **suspicious items were found near two polling centers in Jayaprithivi municipality**. The clashes were reported in polling centers of Surma rural municipality, Masta rural municipality-5, Kedarseu rural municipality-4, and Jayaprithivi municipality-7. Police fired warning shots in the later 2 polling centers to bring the situation under control.

Elections in **Baitadi** were relatively peaceful except for an incident in Surnaya rural municipality 2, where four people physically assaulted a voter at a polling center in Basudev Secondary school.

In Darchula, the cadres of CPN-UML and Nepali Congress clashed against each other at Pasupati Bhawan Secondary school polling center in ward no. 6 of Shailyashikhar municipality. Police fired 5 warning shots to take control of the situation.



## Conclusion

The announcement of the election date for May 13 had taken arduous discussions in the government and ruling coalition. Likewise, cases filed in the supreme court regarding the polling date and candidature of incumbent representatives had also raised concerns regarding whether the elections could be conducted on the set date. Despite these doubts and challenges the local level elections were held successfully in more than 99 percent polling centers across the country on May 13.

The management of adequate security provision and restraint from cadres of political parties could have minimized incidents of clashes and tensions that resulted in cancellation of election in 85 polling centers.



*Our return-emailing address is [nepalmonitor@cocap.org.np](mailto:nepalmonitor@cocap.org.np)*