

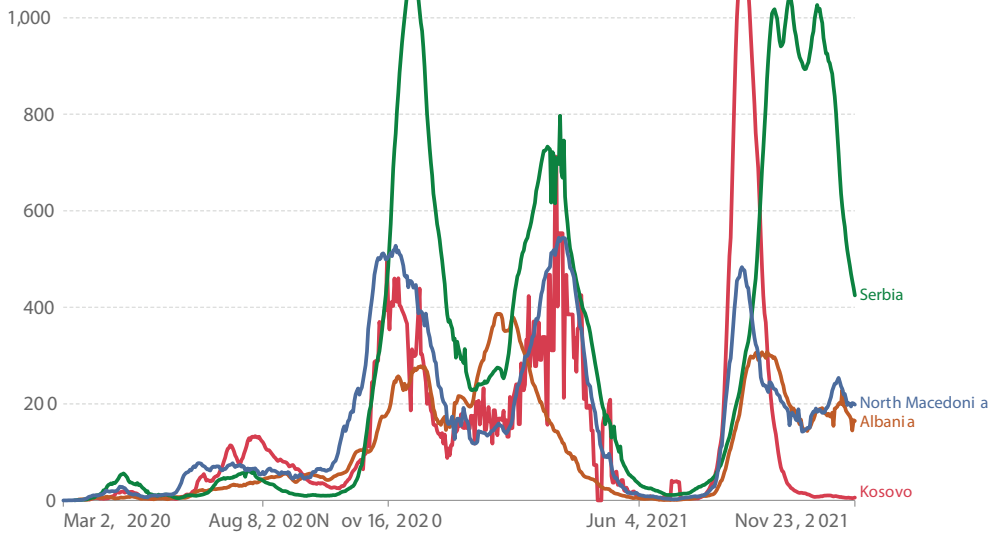
Increasing the Number of Vaccinations in Kosovo - Driving Factors in the Process

The high number of COVID-19 cases in Kosovo and low number of vaccinations

First cases of COVID-19 in Kosovo were registered in March 2020. The highest number of positive cases was recorded on August 26, 2021, with 1,118 confirmed COVID-19 cases. The main reason for the increase in the number of cases during this time was the lifting of measures against COVID-19 by the Government of the Republic of Kosovo in the summer months of 2021. For example, indoor gathering of up to 100 people was allowed, for purposes of events, parties, etc. During this period, Kosovo became a country with a high number of infections and deaths from COVID-19, on one hand, and a small number of vaccinated people compared to the rest of the countries in the region, on the other hand.



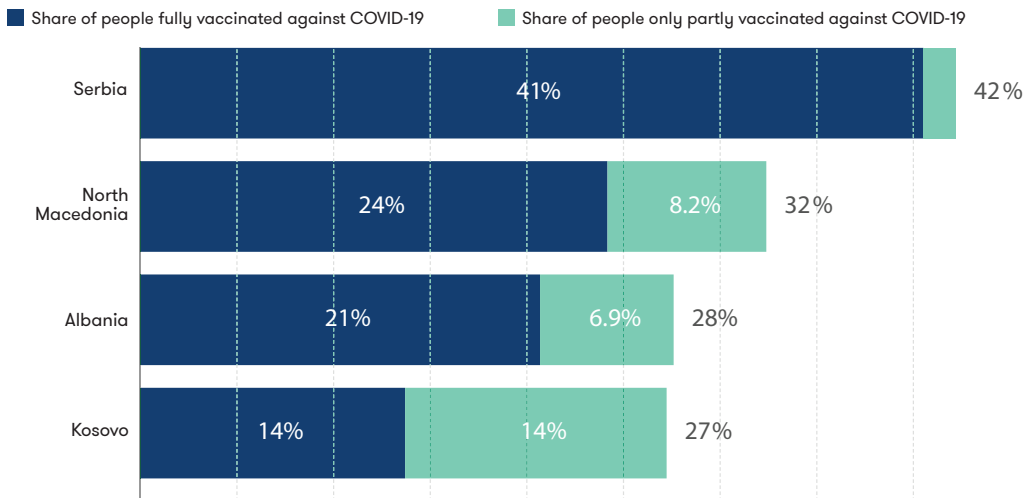
FIGURE 1: Number of COVID-19 cases in Kosovo, Serbia, North Macedonia, and Albania since the emergence of the pandemic



Source: Our World in Data: [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) Vaccinations - Statistics and Research](#)

Figure 2 below shows a breakdown of vaccinated persons in Kosovo and neighboring countries, with one or two doses, from the beginning of vaccination and until 23 August 2021.

FIGURE 2: The trend (expressed in %) of persons vaccinated with one and two doses against COVID-19 in Kosovo and the countries of the region



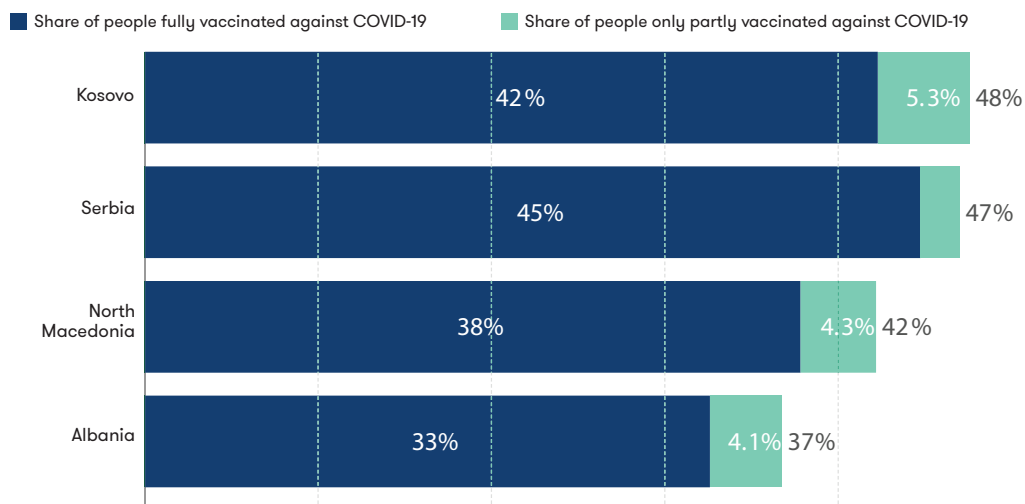
Source: Our World in Data: [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) Vaccinations - Statistics and Research](#)

Thus, as seen in Figure 2, compared to other countries, Kosovo ranked last in terms of the number of vaccinated persons against COVID-19.

The noticeable increase in the number of vaccinated persons and the decline in the number of COVID-19 cases in Kosovo

From the end of August and until November 15, 2021, Kosovo marked a sharp increase of vaccinated persons. Kosovo thus leapfrogged from the last place in the region to the leading position in terms of the number of vaccinated persons. From the end of August until November 15, there were 95,566 people inoculated with one dose, and 75,136 with two doses.

FIGURE 3: The trend (expressed in%) of persons vaccinated with one and two doses against COVID-19 in Kosovo and the countries of the region



Source: Our World in
Data: Coronavirus
(COVID-19) Vaccinations -
Statistics and Research

DRIVING FACTORS FOR THE INCREASE IN THE NUMBER OF VACCINATED IN KOSOVO FROM THE END-AUGUST UNTIL MID-NOVEMBER 2021¹

1. Increased vaccination capacities, from 90 teams at the beginning of the pandemic, to over 300 during this period, accompanied with sufficient doses of the vaccines. The increase of vaccination capacities was also envisaged with the [Action plan for mass vaccination of citizens with the vaccine against COVID-19](#), of May 2021, which provided for the vaccination of around 500,000 citizens per month. Sufficient doses were distributed at all vaccination points, associated with an increased number of vaccination teams (including mobile teams).
2. A more direct campaign was developed to encourage the population for vaccination. This was a necessary campaign due to the reluctance of citizens to be immunized with the COVID-19 vaccine. During this period, the Ministry of Health (MoH) turned to the social media to call on citizens to get their vaccines, showing scientific data on the benefits of vaccinations. The Ministry of Health has also produced motivational videos with influential people, showing the reasons for vaccination and the effect of the vaccine. Another element of the motivational campaign for vaccination by the MoH was the delivery of text messages via phone for vaccinations without appointment.

¹ Faik Hoti. Email communication. 15.11.2021.

3. Fear of the population from the extreme spread of the delta variant in July – August 2021 (with 98% prevalence in detected COVID-19 cases), with up to 2,500 cases per day and a high number of deaths. The spread of this variant led to the number of vaccinations increasing up to 19,526 per day. The high number of vaccinations, in turn, led to a decline in the number of positive cases, from 2,250 per day in August, to 259 in September.
4. Government warnings that access to institutions and other activities, as well as the freedom of movement in general, may depend on the status of vaccinations. Government decision of August 20, 2021, allowed entry to gatherings, cultural or sports activities only to people with proof of vaccination or a RT-PCR negative test for COVID-19. These measures led to a higher awareness of citizens on vaccinations.
5. Warnings from different European and other countries that freedom of movement will depend on vaccination, as well as visa applications. In March 2021, the EU imposed restrictions on all travels. One such restriction was the necessity to have an EU digital certificate, the absence of which led to the person be tested or quarantined. Such digital certificates were discussed to be required in the Western Balkan countries as well.² This restriction of movement was an additional element that pushed citizens planning to travel to EU countries to get the vaccine.
6. Prior to the beginning of the new school year, particularly during two weeks of September, teachers were urged to get their vaccines before the school year, and student access to libraries was conditioned to the proof of vaccination. In June 2021, there was a significant reluctance of teachers to get the vaccine. However, the Ministry of Education's call for vaccination and the warning that vaccination is a prerequisite for the beginning of the school³ led to an increase in the percentage of vaccinated teachers from 30% in July to 90%⁴ in October. The restriction of entry to libraries with proof of vaccination also led to an increase in the number of vaccinations.
7. The abovementioned factors led to the decline in the number of sceptics regarding vaccinations (antivaxxers) in the summer months, and this affected the increase in the number of vaccinations. According to a perception survey by the MoH on vaccination (October 2020), the number of people expressing reservation on the vaccine has gradually dropped from around 50% almost completely against vaccination in October–November 2020 to around 18% in June–July 2021.⁵

According to the abovementioned factors, it can be concluded that the actions taken by the MoH have proved successful in increasing the number of vaccinated people in Kosovo, at the same time decreasing the number of cases and deaths due to COVID-19. However, for a have long-term or sustainable result on the successful management of the pandemic, the measures taken should be applied consistently, as there is still a risk of the spread of new variants with COVID-19 in Kosovo and beyond.

² Radio Free Europe. "Vaccination certificates will also be issued to citizens of the Western Balkans". March 29, 2021. <https://bit.ly/3G0GSKM>. (accessed data, November 3, 2021).

³ E, K. "Only 30 percent of teachers have been vaccinated". Kosova Sot. July 27. <https://bit.ly/3o53F1G>. (accessed data, November 1, 2021).

⁴ Gentiana Ahmeti. "MEST: 90% of teachers have been vaccinated". Kallxo.com. October 1, 2021. <https://bit.ly/3Ea0T0H>. (accessed data, November 3, 2021).

⁵ Faik Hoti. Email communication. 15.11.2021.

