



LOCAL ELECTIONS 2023: BETWEEN PERCEPTIONS AND REALITIES

An analysis of local elections in the Republic of Moldova from gender equality perspective

Chisinau, 2024

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INTRODUCTION

On November 5, 2023, general local elections were held in the Republic of Moldova in all administrative-territorial units of level I - [cities \(municipalities\)](#), villages (communes) and level II - [districts](#), [Chisinau](#) and [Balti](#) municipalities, except for the localities on the left bank of the Dniester River. Representatives of local public administration were elected for a four-year term: 896 mayors¹ and 11 058 local councilors in district, municipal, town, commune and village councils².

The local general elections of 5 November 2023 were the first to be held under the new legislation, with the new Electoral Code approved on 8 December 2022 and coming into force on 1 January 2023. The main areas that have been amended, supplemented or regulated concern the mandate, constitution and activity of electoral bodies, the process of nomination and registration of candidates, the management of electoral lists, the transparency of campaign financing and the strengthening of the Central Electoral Commission's (CEC) control powers in the area of political financing. Other relevant issues concern the organisation of polling stations, optimising mechanisms for settling electoral disputes, simplifying the voting procedure for voters, election coverage and monitoring, and the initiation and conduct of referendum. According to the new legislation, general local elections are to be held every four years, on the last Sunday in October or the first Sunday in November. In addition, in 2022, the Contravention Code was supplemented and the use of hate speech and/or instigation to discrimination by electoral contestants, including through electoral materials, is now prohibited and sanctioned.

In the 2023 local elections the double quota system was fully implemented. According to Article 68(3) of the Electoral Code No. 325/2022, the lists of candidates for parliamentary and local elections shall be drawn up respecting the minimum representation quota of 40% for both sexes, and the positioning of candidates on the lists shall be done according to the formula: minimum four candidates for every ten seats. For local elections, these lists are drawn up in proportion to the number of councilor mandates at level I and II of the administrative-territorial units. The number of councillors is communicated to the public by a [decision of the Central Electoral Commission](#), based on the provisions of [the Electoral Code](#) and [Law no. 436/2006](#) on local public administration, according to the number of inhabitants of the administrative-territorial unit on 1 January of the year in which the elections are held. In addition, for all localities with less than 1500 inhabitants, a number of 9 councillors in the local councils is established by default.

At the same time, political parties will be able to benefit from financial resources from the state budget in proportion to the number of women and young people elected as a result of the elections. According to Law 294/2007 on political parties, they are entitled to receive annual funding from the state budget through the Central Electoral Commission. The amount of allocations for this purpose is approved in the annual budget law, the percentage share being 0.1% of the state budget revenues, except for special-destination revenues (Art. 27, para. (1)), of which 7.5% goes to political parties in proportion to the number of women elected in local elections and 5% to political parties in proportion to the number of young people elected in local elections. Such legislative measures encourage political parties to promote and support candidates from these categories for better political representation.

For the 2023 local elections, the Central Electoral Commission has set³ the maximum expenditure ceiling as 0.1% of the revenue provided for in the state budget law. According to Art. 53 para. (1) - (4) of the Electoral Code and paragraph 21 sub-paragraphs 1) and 3) of the Regulation on the financing of initiative groups and electoral campaigns, approved by the decision of the Central Electoral Commission No. 1185/2023, the general national ceiling of the financial means that can be transferred to the "Electoral Fund" account is 0.1% of the revenues provided for in the state budget law for that year. In monetary

¹ Until 27 March 2024, the mayoral mandate has not been validated in 2 municipalities,

<https://a.cec.md/ro/lista-primarilor-alesi-15312.html>

² https://a.cec.md/storage/ckfinder/files/2355_Anexa_Raport%20ALG%205%20nov%202023.pdf

³ https://a.cec.md/ro/cu-privire-la-stabilirea-plafonului-general-al-mijloacelor-financiare-ce-2751_107339.html

terms, the general ceiling of funds that can be transferred to the "Electoral Fund" account and used by electoral contestants in each constituency for the general local elections of 5 November 2023 was **66,274,579.00 lei**, based on the coefficient of 23.99 lei per voter. The ceiling is set by the CEC on the basis of a coefficient multiplied by the maximum number of voters in the constituency where the elections take place. Taking into account the differences in financial capacities, the 0.1% ceiling (quite high) could be an impediment to campaigning.

The Centre for Partnership for Development (CPD) has been monitoring parliamentary and local elections for about 15 years, analysing women's representation in elections, voter perceptions, political party funding, etc. with the aim of highlighting the main inequalities in terms of women's and men's participation in electoral processes; society's perceptions of women's presence in political life, etc. As part of the observation mission for the 2023 general local elections, CPD aimed to analyse trends in relation to previous elections. Specifically, in the monitoring process, the CPD focused on: (i) the representation of men and women on the lists of candidates: compliance with the 40% minimum representation quota for both sexes when drawing up the lists of candidates for the local elections and the positioning of candidates on the lists, in accordance with the latest legislative provision (minimum of four candidates of the opposite sex for every ten seats); (ii) the income and economic possibilities of women and men candidates: analysis of the income statements of candidates for mayor and correlation with their presence on the lists of candidates; (iii) access of candidates, especially women, to the media (analysis of four types of media products: news, talk shows, election debates and advertisements, the aim being to identify the level of presence of female candidates in the TV media during the election campaign and to correlate this indicator with their presence on the candidate lists); (iv) voters' perceptions of female and male candidates (this analysis is based on a survey in which respondents give their opinions on the presence of women and men in politics, gender roles in family, household and society and how this role influences the involvement of women and men in politics).

CHAPTER I

**UNCOVERING A PATRIARCHAL STATUS QUO.
WHERE ARE WE HEADING?**

METHODOLOGY

The analytical report was developed based on data generated by a nationally representative opinion poll conducted among the 18+ population in the Republic of Moldova. The poll was conducted with the aim of identifying persistent stereotypes about gender roles, including the openness of Moldovan voters to women's participation in politics. The research was carried out by the Centre for Sociological Investigations and Marketing Research "CBS-RESEARCH", conducted on a sample of 1227 people in the Republic of Moldova.

Sample structure:

		Total		Male		Female	
		Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Total		1227	100,0%	505	100,0%	722	100,0%
Respondent gender:	Male	505	45,7%	505	100,0%	0	0,0%
	Female	722	54,3%	0	0,0%	722	100,0%
Respondent age:	18-29 years	162	17,0%	72	16,5%	90	17,4%
	30-44 years	264	26,6%	112	30,5%	152	23,4%
	45-59 years	253	22,1%	118	23,9%	135	20,6%
	60 + years	548	34,3%	203	29,1%	345	38,7%
Respondent education:	Incomplete secondary	161	13,6%	53	12,4%	108	14,6%
	General secondary	316	25,3%	123	24,3%	193	26,1%
	Vocational-technical	434	33,5%	205	38,5%	229	29,4%
	Higher	308	27,6%	120	24,8%	188	29,8%
Respondent occupation:	Economically active	372	35,9%	187	44,1%	185	29,0%
	Economically inactive	855	64,1%	318	55,9%	537	71,0%
Language of communication:	Romanian	800	73,5%	335	75,0%	465	72,2%
	Russian or other	427	26,5%	170	25,0%	257	27,8%
Socio – economic level:	Low level	441	34,6%	158	31,5%	283	37,2%
	Medium level	434	33,7%	186	33,3%	248	33,9%
	High level	352	31,7%	161	35,2%	191	28,8%
Residence:	Urban	607	45,0%	264	47,9%	343	42,5%
	Rural	620	55,0%	241	52,1%	379	57,5%

ANALYTICAL APPROACH TO VOTER CLUSTERS

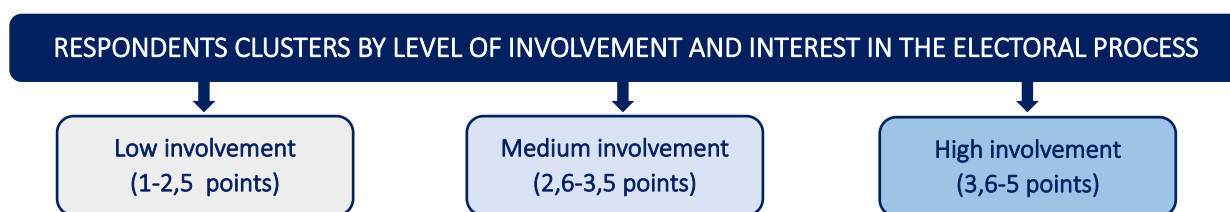
In order to understand the level of citizens' involvement in the elections, respondents were classified into three groups in this survey. Respondents were classified according to 6 items that address citizens' interest in the electoral process. The intensity of interest was estimated from 1 (low interest/involvement) to 5 (high interest/involvement).

To what extent are you interested in the election campaign and the 2023 local general elections?

Items	Numerical value				
	Not at all interested	Not really interested	Nor-Either	Somewhat interested	Very interested
Frequently watch the news about elections	1	2	3	4	5
Frequently watch election debates	1	2	3	4	5
Analyse the profiles of electoral candidates	1	2	3	4	5

Attend meetings of electoral candidates with voters	1	2	3	4	5
Inform colleagues/family members, friends about electoral candidates	1	2	3	4	5
Participate in electoral activities organised by electoral candidates	1	2	3	4	5

By applying the arithmetic mean, we could classify citizens into three groups depending on their level of involvement and interest in the electoral process: (i) **low involvement** - people who show no or little involvement and interest in the electoral process, with a value of up to 2.5 points; (ii) **medium involvement** - people who show a medium level of involvement and interest in the electoral process, with a value of between 2.6 and 3.5 points; and (iii) **high involvement** - people who show a high level of involvement and interest in the electoral process, with a value of between 3.6 and 5 points.



Source: Authors' calculations based on CPD poll data, 2023

Sample structure:

		Total			Male			Female		
		Passive	Medium	Active	Passive	Medium	Active	Passive	Medium	Active
Total		47,6%	33,9%	18,4%	41,6%	35,3%	23,2%	52,8%	32,8%	14,5%
Respondent gender:	Male	41,6%	35,3%	23,2%	41,6%	35,3%	23,2%	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%
	Female	52,8%	32,8%	14,5%	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	52,8%	32,8%	14,5%
Respondent age:	18-29 years	61,7%	29,9%	8,4%	56,4%	28,4%	15,2%	65,9%	31,2%	2,9%
	30-44 years	55,3%	29,4%	15,2%	53,8%	29,3%	16,9%	57,1%	29,6%	13,4%
	45-59 years	45,1%	36,9%	18,0%	38,5%	40,0%	21,5%	51,6%	33,9%	14,5%
	60 + years	36,4%	37,4%	26,2%	22,9%	41,5%	35,6%	44,9%	34,8%	20,3%
Respondent education:	Incomplete secondary	70,8%	19,0%	10,2%	63,6%	23,0%	13,4%	75,8%	16,2%	8,0%
	General secondary	50,2%	36,8%	13,0%	46,1%	39,8%	14,0%	53,3%	34,5%	12,2%
	Vocational-technical	45,0%	33,3%	21,6%	41,2%	31,3%	27,5%	49,2%	35,6%	15,2%
	Higher	37,3%	39,9%	22,8%	26,6%	43,8%	29,7%	44,8%	37,2%	18,0%
Respondent occupation:	Economically active	46,5%	33,5%	20,0%	45,6%	33,1%	21,3%	47,7%	34,1%	18,3%
	Economically inactive	48,3%	34,1%	17,6%	38,4%	37,0%	24,6%	54,9%	32,2%	12,9%
Language of communication:	Romanian	50,3%	32,2%	17,5%	43,7%	34,3%	21,9%	56,0%	30,4%	13,6%
	Russian or other	40,4%	38,6%	21,0%	35,1%	38,1%	26,8%	44,4%	38,9%	16,7%
Socio – economic level:	Low level	50,3%	32,4%	17,3%	44,0%	36,6%	19,4%	54,7%	29,4%	15,9%
	Medium level	48,0%	33,3%	18,7%	43,7%	32,5%	23,8%	51,6%	34,0%	14,5%
	High level	44,4%	36,2%	19,4%	37,3%	36,7%	26,0%	51,7%	35,7%	12,6%
Residence:	Urban	46,4%	37,5%	16,2%	42,2%	37,0%	20,8%	50,4%	37,9%	11,7%
	Rural	48,7%	31,0%	20,3%	41,0%	33,7%	25,3%	54,6%	28,9%	16,5%

VOTERS' PERCEPTIONS OF WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN POLITICAL LIFE

To measure and analyse citizens' perceptions, CPD conducted a national opinion poll during the election campaign. The poll was conducted by CBS-Research on a sample of 1227 people over the age of 18. The margin of error for the survey is +/- 3%. The poll sought to measure citizens' preferences for being elected to public decision-making positions at local and central level, as well as perceptions of the level of representation of under-represented groups (women, young people, people with disabilities and minority representatives) in local, district and municipal councils.

The data of the poll show that a large part of the population do not still accept equal opportunities in public life. Although the Republic of Moldova has made significant progress during recent years in ensuring equality between women and men in various spheres of social, economic and political life, stereotypical perceptions still persist in the national culture. Young, less educated men are significantly less supportive of the need to ensure equal access for women and men to opportunities in public life, which confirms patriarchal views. There are multiple factors that explain this social phenomenon, such as the perpetuation of patriarchal traditions and values, fear of change, religious and/or cultural influences, lack of knowledge and lack of understanding of the principle of gender equality. These conceptions become major barriers to women's involvement in public life, including politics, which explains their under-representation in this sphere.

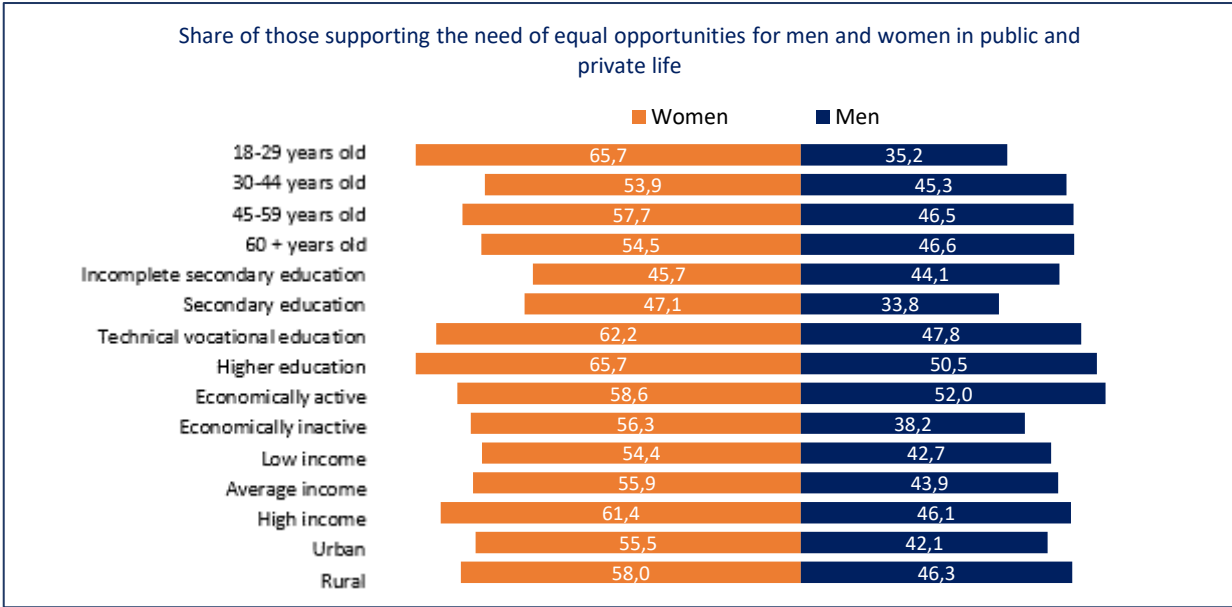


Figure 1. Profile of people for whom it is very important that women and men have equal opportunities and chances in all spheres of public and private life, %
Source: CPD national opinion poll, 2023

The general conception is that women should be present mostly in private/family life than in public life. More than 50% of the population totally agree, or rather agree, that it is the duty of women to take more care of the housework, and more than 60% agree that it is more the duty of men to bring money into the house, which reveals the persistence of the traditional norm that men are the main financial providers of the family, and women - the ones who should take care of the family, housework. This perception creates pressures and barriers for women who want to develop a career and can undermine their efforts to become financially independent. Over 54% of citizens believe that women's destiny is the family and the household, suggesting limited confidence in their ability to manifest themselves in other areas and pursue their own aspirations. This perpetuates the limitations and constraints placed on women's career development. These figures reflect a mindset rooted in patriarchal traditions and a perpetuation of gender inequalities in society (see Figure 2).

Perceptions of women's involvement in politics and decision-making worsened in 2023. One of the key findings of the monitoring process of the 2021 elections from a gender perspective suggested that stereotypes about women's involvement in politics reduce. In the 2021 elections, 18.2% of the population considered that women had no place in politics, and 12.1% - doubted their ability to hold leadership positions. In 2023, the data shows a worsening of perceptions about women's participation in decision-making, with the figures reaching 27% of citizens believing that women have no place in politics and 18.4% - that women are less capable and unable to hold leadership positions. A dynamic analysis of this data shows that society's stereotypes and prejudices towards women's participation in politics will worsen after 2021, despite the fact that the number of women in elective and decision-making positions will also increase significantly during this period. This trend can be explained by: **(i)** the persistence of gender stereotypes and traditional society's expectations that women should be more responsible for family care and housework and that their involvement in politics is perceived as a deviation or threat to these roles; **(ii)** the multiple crises faced by the Republic of Moldova contribute to a more critical perception of women in leadership positions. As a result of the 2020 presidential elections and the inauguration of the new government in 2021, decisive positions in the state have been taken over by women - the country's president, prime minister, minister of internal affairs, etc., as these are positions of strategic importance for the country. At the same time, in the period of 2020-2022, the Republic of Moldova witnessed consecutive crises, which had inevitable implications on the living standards of the population. Although these are global crises, which have also impacted the Republic of Moldova, decision-makers/national authorities (headed by women) have been blamed for the effects of these crises. Past experiences indicate that women currently in leadership positions have been blamed much more harshly for the effects of these crises compared to their counterparts in past periods of governance. Failures or difficulties have been associated with the general perception that women are not capable or competent to lead. This worsening of perceptions reflects a backlash against efforts to promote gender equality and women's participation in politics.

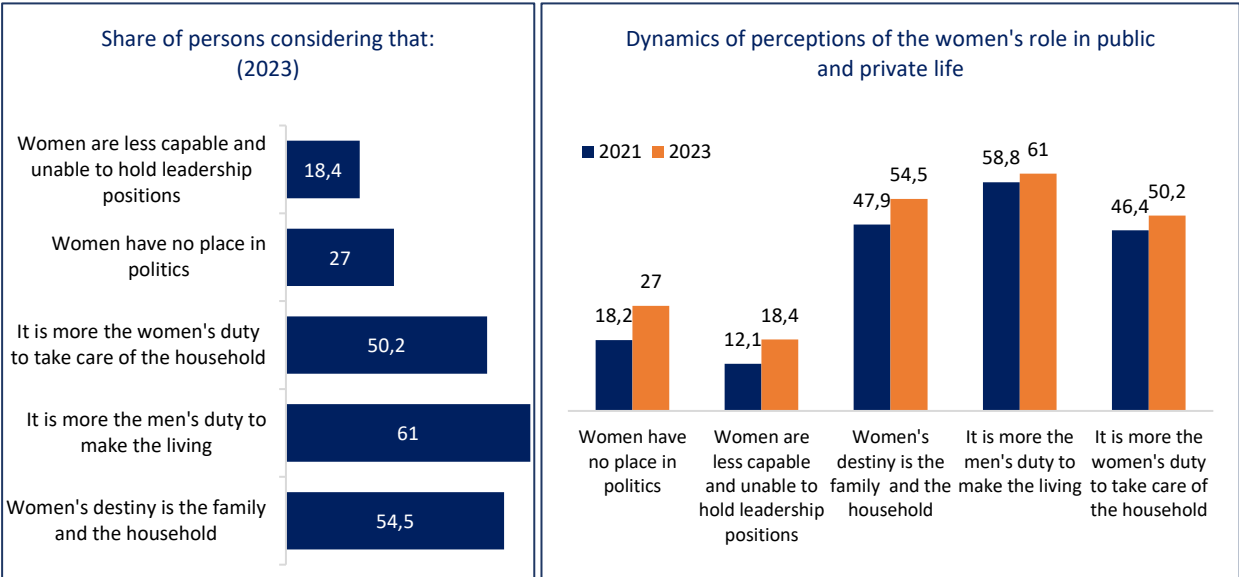


Figure 2. People's perceptions of women's role in public and private life, %
 Source: CPD national opinion poll, 2023

Stereotypes about women's participation in political life are largely shared by men and people with low levels of education. Within the analysis we aimed to identify the profile of population groups with stereotypical approaches according to socio-demographic characteristics. The graphs below (see Figure 3) suggest that men and people with low levels of education are the most frequent adherents of stereotypes related to the role of women in the family and in decision-making. One explanation could be cultural, social and educational influences that instigate certain behaviours, ignoring the diversity and individuality of each person. At the same time, the above data show that these groups do not support gender equality in public and private life, which indicates a preference for 'traditional' gender roles. People with lower levels of education are also more likely to share gender stereotypes. Educational limitations can impact on

exposure to and understanding of gender equality debates and concepts. Lack of access to information and resources, as well as cultural perspectives, can contribute to the perpetuation of stereotypes.

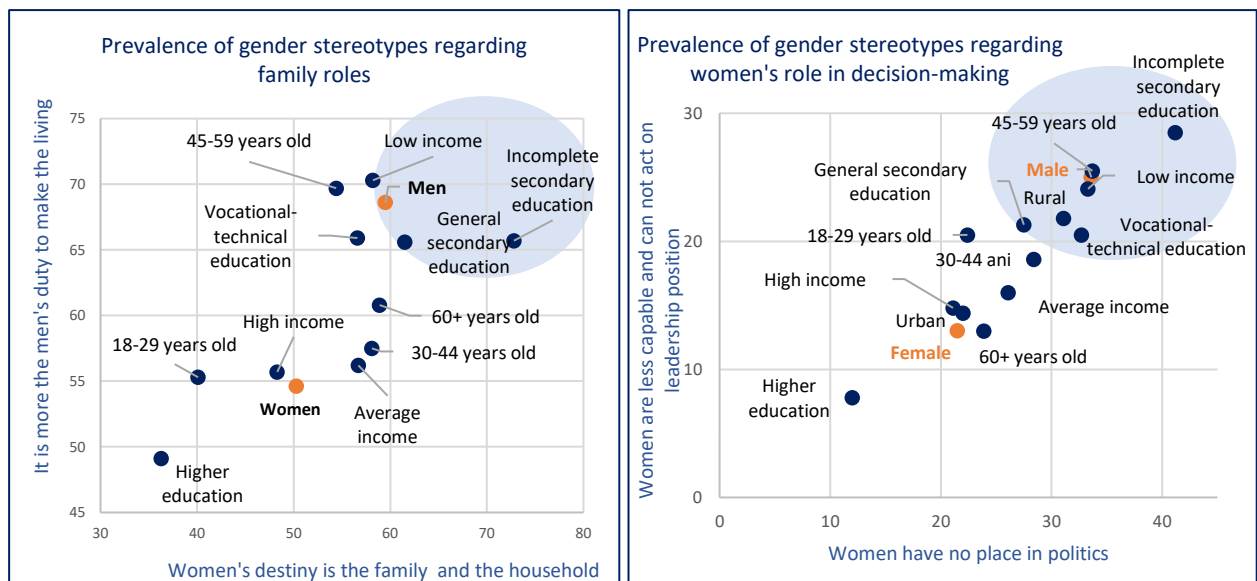


Figure 3. Profile of the population sharing stereotypes about women's role in family and decision-making, %
Source: CPD national opinion poll, 2023

The higher the elective positions, the less women are accepted in these positions. The present analysis also aimed to analyse citizens' views on the gender of the person who should occupy certain elective positions in the decision-making process. The graph below shows that for higher elective positions people would prefer a man, while for lower positions - women. Thus, for the chair of the parents' committee, women are more likely to be supported, while for the position of President of the country, preferences are predominantly for a man, with an imposing difference of more than 30 pp. This trend is kept for all positions and increases as the position moves up the hierarchy chart. If we look at the dynamics of these preferences for two important elective positions for this election, namely mayor and councillor, we see that 34% of respondents would prefer a man and only 5.9% a woman as mayor in the 2023 election, while 26.9% would support a man as councillor and only 6.8% a woman in this position. From 2019 to 2023, we see that the share of those who would support a man in both of these positions is steadily increasing, and those who would support a woman - drastically decreasing. The previous findings argue and explain this trend, but we must be aware that fair representation in local councils can be ensured by legislative measures, such as the double quota system, which would help women overcome these barriers at the level of social construction. At the same time, it is imperative to initiate measures to mitigate stereotypes.

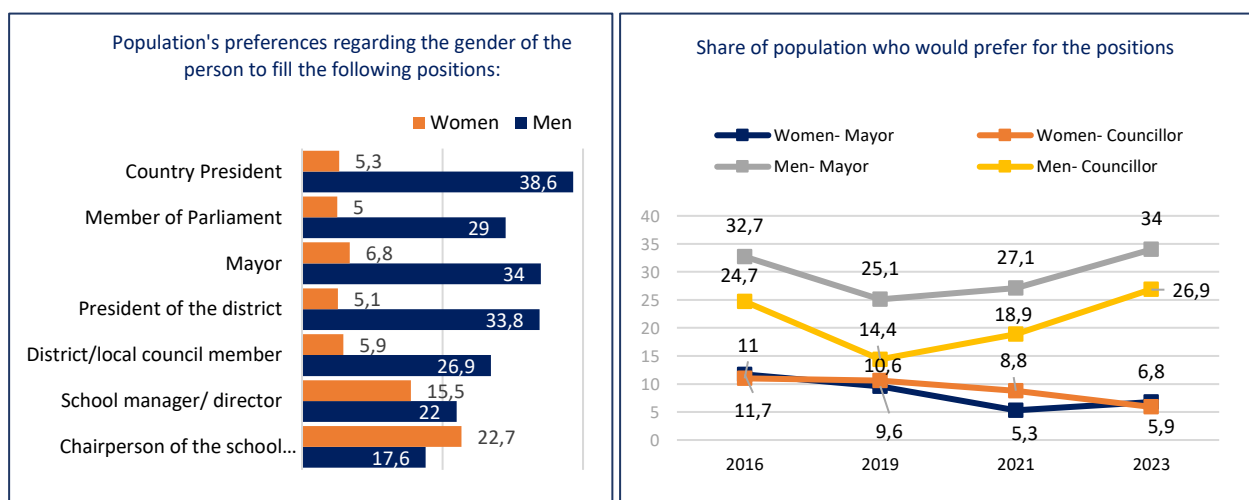


Figure 4. People's preferences regarding the gender of the person who should occupy the leadership positions, %
Source: CPD national opinion poll, 2023

VOTERS' PERCEPTIONS OF UNDER-REPRESENTED GROUPS IN DECISION-MAKING POSITIONS

Citizens want to see more young people in decision-making positions. When asked about the level of representation of women, young people, minority representatives and people with disabilities in decision-making positions, more than half of the population believe that the number of young people in both Parliament and district and local councils should be higher. This is explained both by the fact that young people's involvement in politics has been promoted in recent years and by people's desire to renew the political class. The support of young people in the decision-making process is a welcome development, which shows progress in addressing society's stereotypes and perceptions of certain marginalised groups in society. On the other hand, only 16% of the population consider that people with disabilities are under-represented. Although the number of women involved in decision-making is quite low, only 17% of citizens think that this number should be increased, which is explained by the persistence of gender stereotypes.

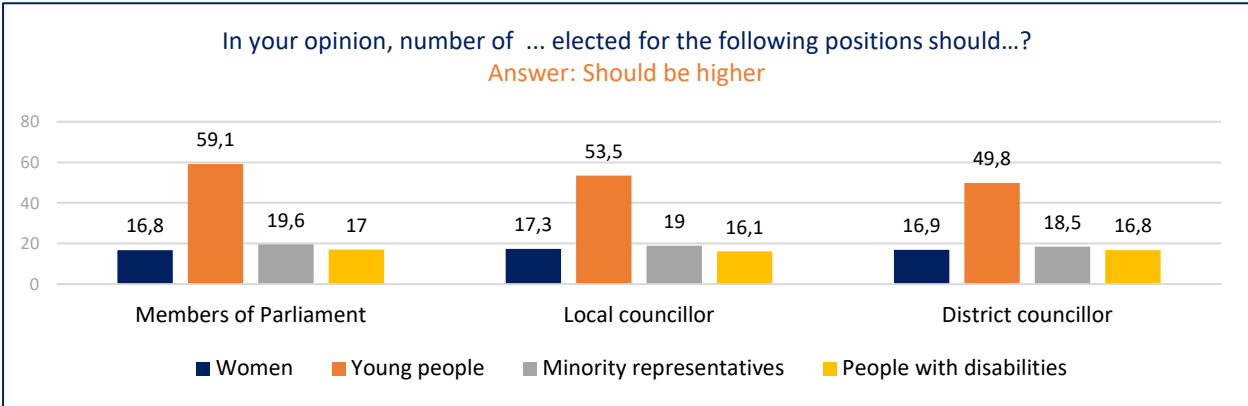


Figure 5. Share of the population that considers that the number of representatives of under-represented groups in decision-making positions should be increased, %
Source: CPD national opinion poll, 2023

The level of support for inclusion in decision-making process is clearly decreasing. Inclusion is an important element in ensuring fair representation in decision-making. The analysis of the dynamic situation reveals a drastic decrease in the population believing that more women, people with disabilities and representatives of ethnic minorities should be included as councillors at local or district level, which may discourage the involvement of these categories of people in the decision-making process. The most significant discrepancies in this respect are with regard to the number of women in both local and district councils. Thus, while in 2021 about 30% of respondents thought that the number of women should be higher, in the current year this share did not reach 18%.

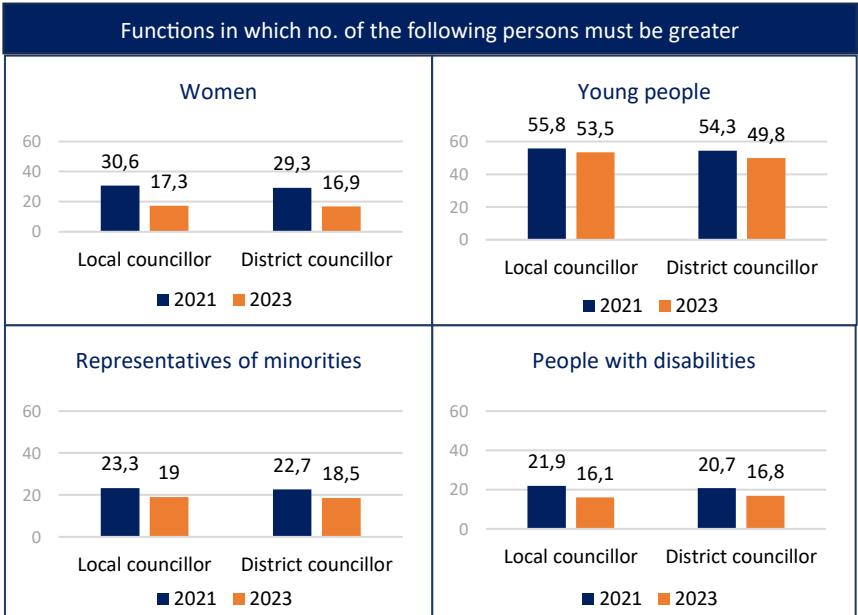


Figure 6. Share of the population that considers that the number of representatives of under-represented groups in decision-making positions should be increased, in dynamics, %
Source: CPD national opinion poll, 2023

Older people and people with low incomes show the greatest resistance to women's promotion to executive positions. Based on the conclusion of the above data, we set out to understand which categories of people show significant resistance to promoting gender equality in decision-making. Thus, according to the graphs below, we see that older people and those with a low socio-economic level have changed their views and perceptions the most between two elections. This position can be attributed to factors such as reduced access to information, reduced ability to distinguish false information from credible information, lack of knowledge and ability to verify information sources, and reduced access to a variety of media sources. Another explanation relates to the fact that these people, being socially and economically vulnerable, consider that solving problems that directly affect them is more important, and increasing fair representation is not seen as a direct solution to remedy these problems. Thus, people from these groups may be likely to support candidates and policies geared towards solving economic and social problems without linking this to promoting gender equality in decision-making.

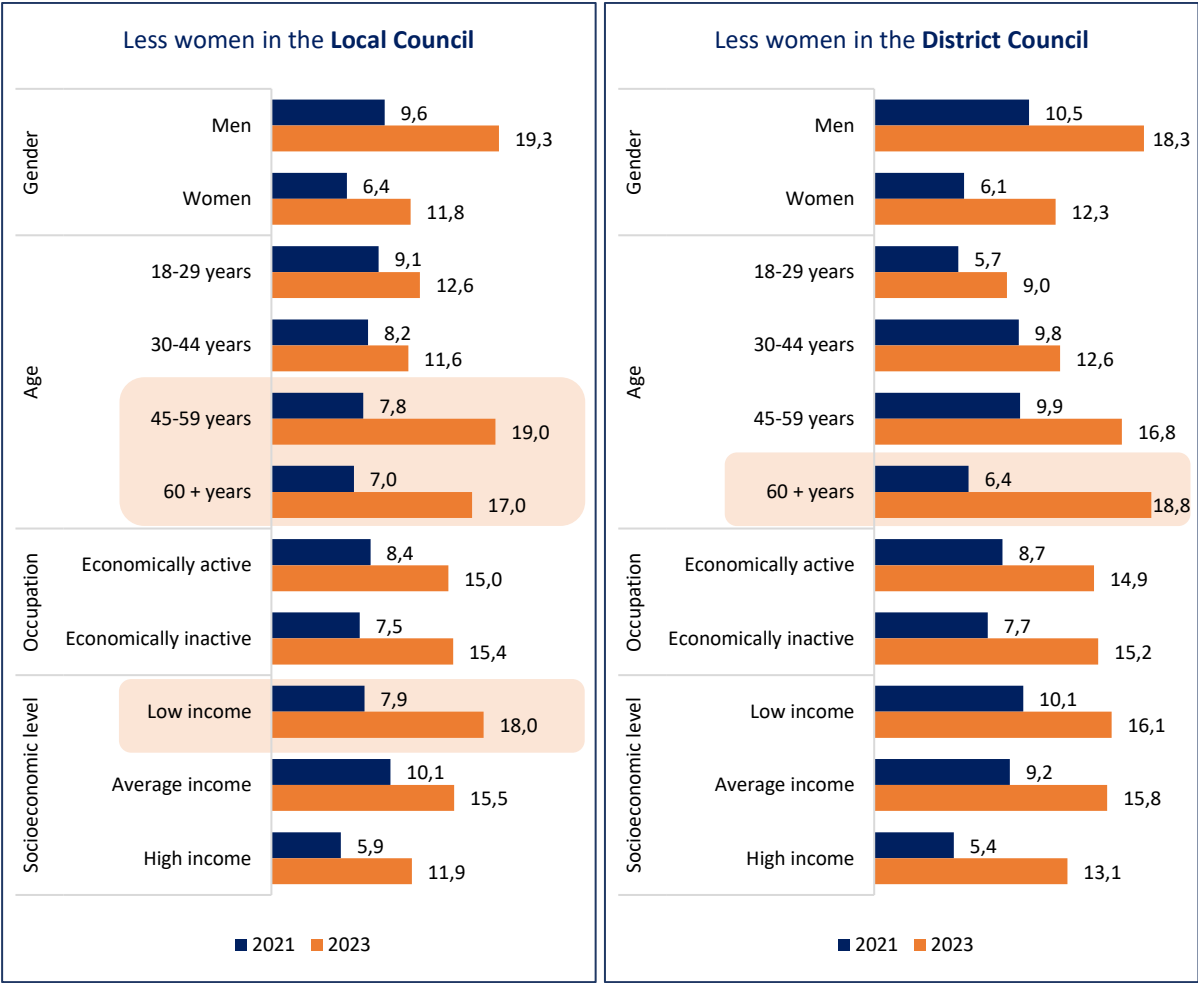


Figure 7. Dynamics of perceptions that the number of women in local and district councils should be reduced, %
 Source: CPD national opinion poll, 2021-2023

VOTERS INVOLVEMENT IN THE ELECTION CAMPAIGN

Half of Moldova's adult population does not show interest and involvement during the election campaign and in the election process. An important element of the present analysis concerns the behavioural aspects of voters during the electoral campaign, in particular the level of interest in the electoral process, in exercising the right to vote, etc. The level of involvement and interest of citizens was measured by means of an Index, constructed on the basis of 6 items⁴ that target citizens' interest in the electoral process. The intensity of interest was estimated from 1 (low interest/involvement) to 5 (high interest/involvement). On the basis of this index, citizens were classified into three main groups⁵ according to their level of involvement and interest in the electoral process: (i) citizens with active involvement, (ii) citizens with medium involvement and (iii) citizens with low interest and involvement. The data show that less than **20%** of citizens show a relatively high level of involvement, while about **48%** - are passive in the electoral campaign. These data lead us to believe that there is a relationship between the level of interest in the electoral campaign and the degree of effective exercise of the right to vote. We can reasonably assume that the category of population active in the electoral campaign (following political news, electoral debates, attending meetings with electoral candidates, etc.) will show a higher propensity to go to the vote than the passive population.

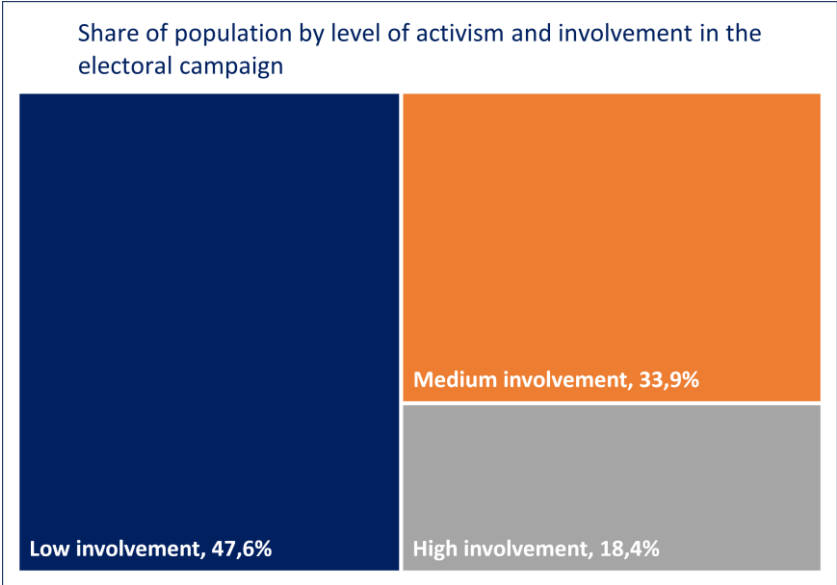


Figure 8. Voter groups according to their level of involvement in the electoral process
Source: CPD national opinion poll, 2023

In the 2023 election campaign, citizens have become even more passive compared to the previous election. A dynamic analysis of the level of interest and involvement of citizens in electoral processes shows a certain regression in this respect. The share of passive citizens, not involved and not interested in electoral processes has increased by about 8pp in just 2 years compared to the 2021 parliamentary elections. The low level of interest correlates with the level of uncertainty among voters as to whether they intend to go to the polls and decide which candidate they would vote for. Thus, according to the data, more than **51%** of the adult population of the Republic of Moldova has not decided on the candidate they would vote for in the elections of 05 November 2023. The increased level of uncertainty and low interest

⁴ Items measure: How frequently citizens watch election-related news; How frequently they watch election debates; How much citizens review candidate and candidate profiles; How frequently voters are interested in attending meetings with election candidates; How frequently they discuss/inform colleagues/family members/friends about election candidates; How interested citizens are in participating in election activities organized by election candidates.

⁵ Citizens who had an average score of less than 2.5 were considered to be citizens with a low level of involvement; citizens with an average score from 2.5 to 3.5 were considered to be citizens with a medium level of involvement and citizens with a score from 3.5 to 5 were considered to be citizens with a high level of involvement.

in the 2023 electoral process can be explained by: (i) the general level of anxiety resulting from the effects of the recent economic and security crises, for which the public authorities are blamed, (ii) the level of disappointment with electoral promises, (iii) uncertainty about the voter's ability to influence the electoral process in any way.

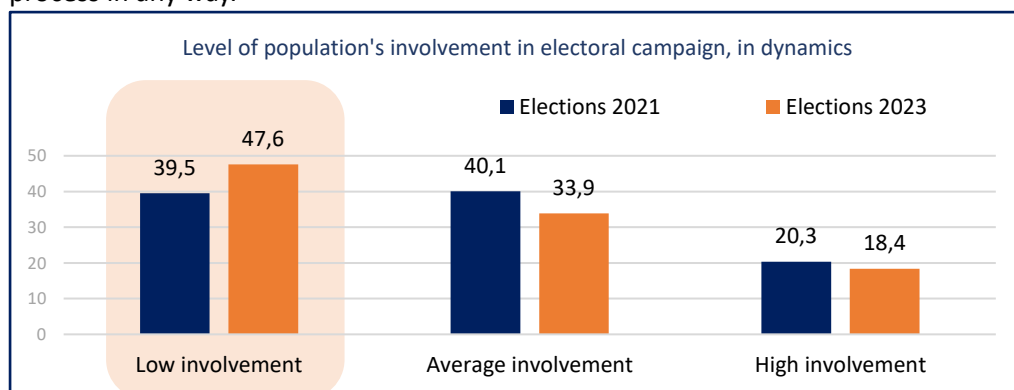


Figure 9. Voter groups by their level of involvement in the electoral process

Source: CPD national opinion poll, 2023

Age, gender and educational level influence the level of involvement and interest of citizens in electoral processes. Women show a lower level of involvement in decision-making processes, forming more than 50% of the passive group, compared to just over 40% of men (who do not watch election news or debates, do not discuss election events or the candidates, do not attend meetings organised by election candidates, etc.). In terms of age-related variations, the share of young people in the low-involvement group is about twice as high as for people aged over 60. The differences become more pronounced when looking at the involvement of women in different age groups. More than 65% of women in the 18-29 age group have a low level of involvement and only 3% can be considered active in the electoral process.

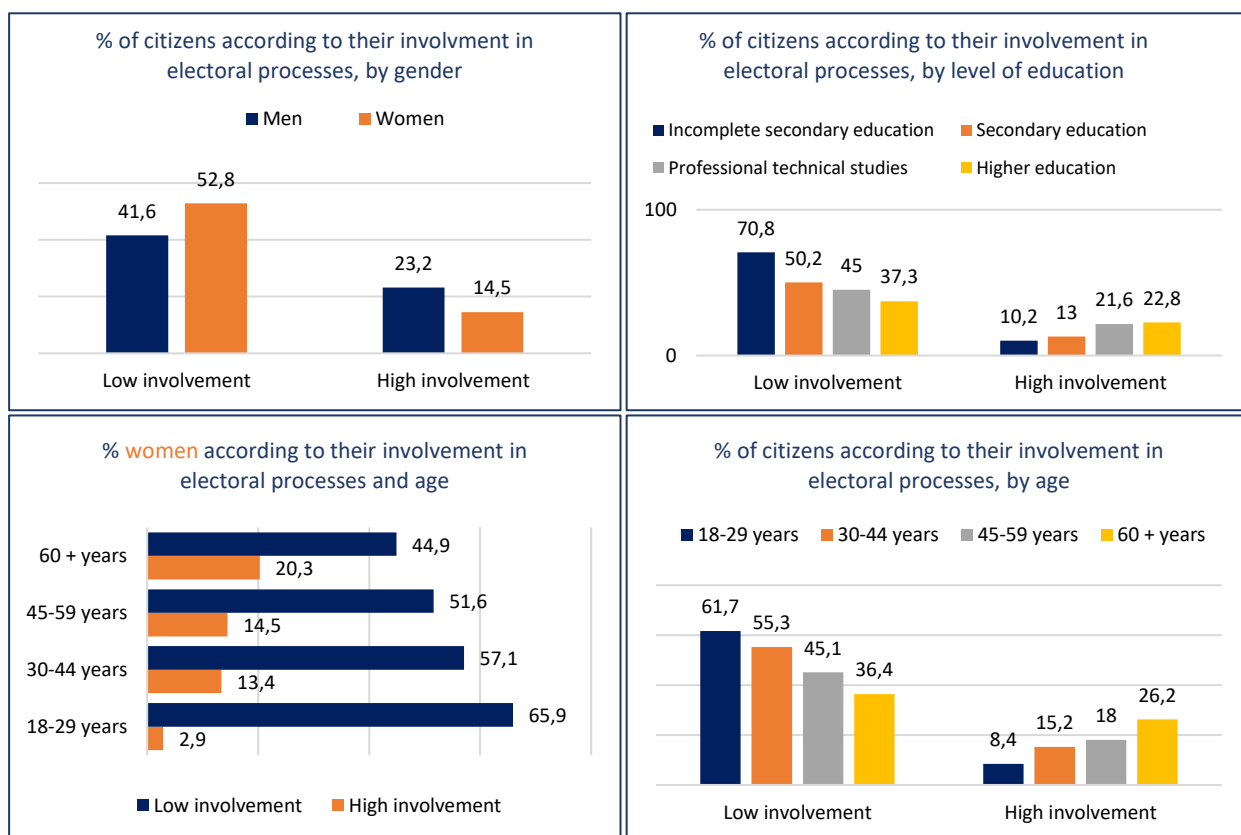


Figure 10. Voter groups by level of involvement in the electoral process, by demographic characteristics

Source: CPD national opinion poll, 2023

FINDINGS

This chapter focuses on presenting the main findings of the process of analysing society's stereotypes and perceptions of the role of women and men in decision-making. This chapter is an important contribution to understanding the electoral and decision-making process and the role the gender plays.

As a result of the data analysis and processing of the data obtained following the poll, we can highlight the following conclusions:

1. Patriarchal misconceptions persist in a large part of the population. More than 50% of the population totally agree, or rather agree, that it is the duty of women to take more care of the housework, and more than 60% agree that it is more the duty of men to bring money into the house. In addition, 54.5% of the respondents believe that women's destiny lies in the family and the household.

2. Society's perceptions of women's role in politics and decision-making worsened in 2023, with more respondents believing that women have no place in politics (27%) and that they are less capable of holding leadership positions (18%).

3. There is a drastic decrease in the population supporting human diversity in local public administration, particularly in terms of an increase in the number of women, people with disabilities and ethnic minority representatives in decision-making. This trend may discourage the involvement of these groups in local and district decision-making. Views towards women have changed drastically. In the 2023 elections, 34% of citizens would prefer a man as mayor and only 5.9% - a woman, while 26.9% would support a male councillor and only 6.8% a woman in this position. Where, in 2021 about 30% of the population thought that the number of women should be higher, this year the share does not even reach 18%.

4. The positive trend in these elections is the desire to increase the number of young people in leadership positions. About 50% of the population say that the number of young people in leadership should be much higher. Thus, at least with regard to a group considered marginalized, there is progress and perceptions of their participation have changed, highlighting the importance of involving young people in the decision-making process, by valuing their skills and contribution. As a result, a more balanced, innovative and sustainable society can be built.

5. Half of Moldova's adult population is not active and interested in the electoral process. The high level of indifference and passivity in the electoral process leads us to believe that the population with a low level of involvement will also show a very low turnout, while the category of population active in the electoral campaign (following political news, electoral debates, participating in meetings with electoral candidates, analysing their profile, etc.) will show a higher propensity to vote.

6. The share of the passive population in election campaigns has increased in the 2023 elections, by about 8pp compared to the 2021 parliamentary elections. This is explained by (i) the general level of anxiety resulting from the effects of the recent economic and security crises, for which public authorities are blamed, (ii) the level of disappointment with electoral promises, (iii) uncertainty about the voter's ability to influence the electoral process.

CHAPTER II

**WOMEN MAYORS IN THE
SHADOWS**

GENDER REPRESENTATION AMONG MEN/WOMEN CANDIDATES FOR MAYOR

Overall, the presence of women in the 2023 elections was relatively low, which can be explained by the pressure of social norms. There are many obstacles to women's equal participation in elections and decision-making processes, including psychological and traditional barriers, inequalities in resources, etc. On the one hand, political parties can be dominated by a single strong and visible leader, usually a man, leaving few opportunities for women to enter the political process. On the other hand, gender roles greatly influence women's predisposition to enter politics. Caring responsibilities, lack of family support (a factor closely linked to gender roles) and lack of confidence in their own strengths and abilities are the main barriers preventing women from getting involved in electoral processes.

Stereotypes further nourish women's distrust and reluctance to run for elective positions. Only 8% of the population believe that a mayor should be a woman, compared to 36% who opt for a man in the same position, confirming patriarchal views on the role of women and men. At the same time, the data reflect strong traditional prejudices and stereotypes that a mayor must be married, have children and be religious, which fits the prototype of the "traditional and accepted mayor". These stereotypical labels automatically exclude people who do not fit this 'standard'. For not conforming to these informally created standards women are much more harshly taxed, than men in the same circumstances. An example is the President of the Republic of Moldova, who is frequently criticized for her marital status.

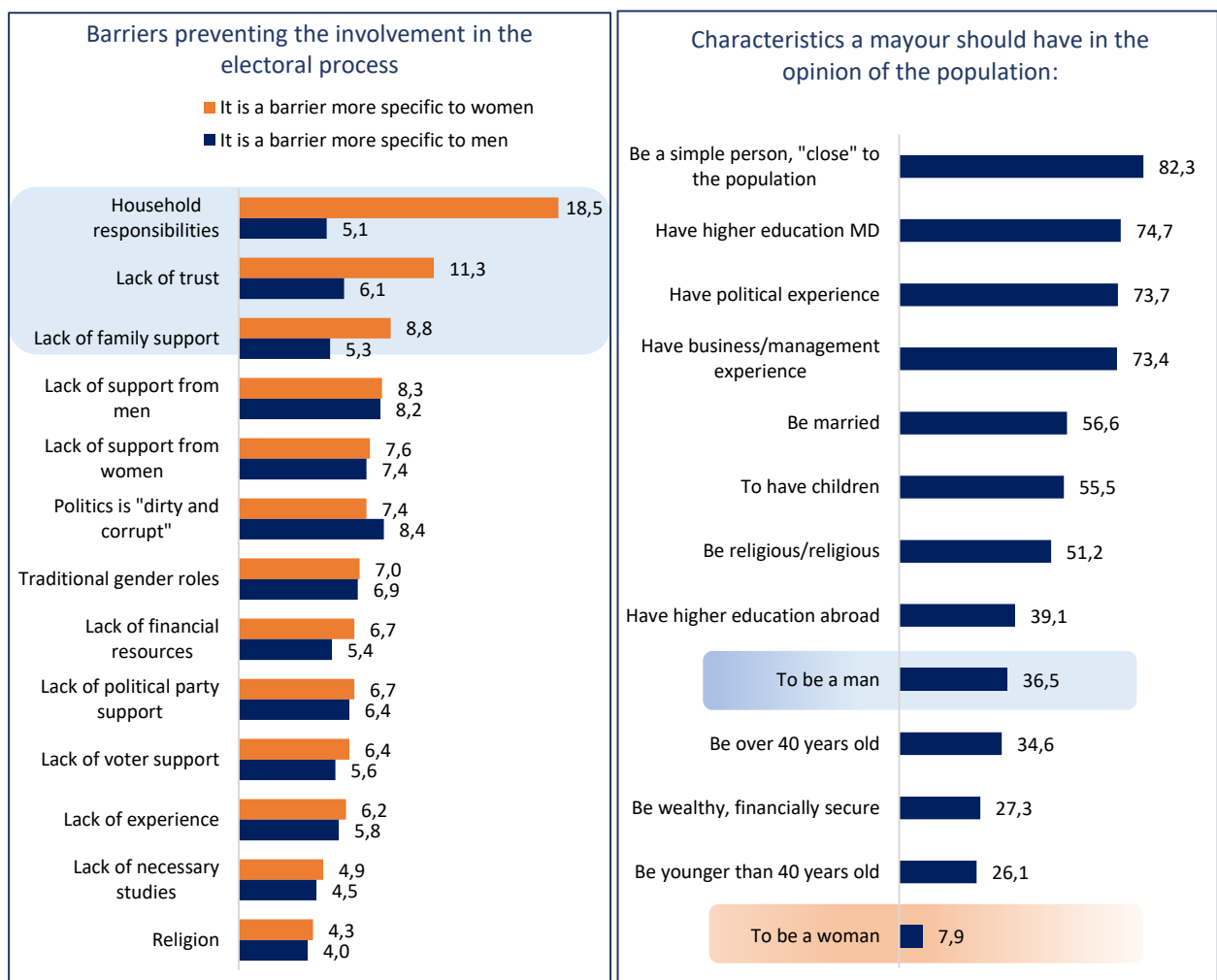


Figure 11. Share of women among mayoral candidates, in % dynamics
Source: National representative survey, CPD, 2023

Throughout the decade, the share of women mayor candidates has increased by only 7%, which is a rather modest progress. Despite extensive measures and efforts in recent years to ensure equal opportunities and possibilities in politics, women continue to be under-represented at all levels of decision-making. Thus, in the 2023 local elections, the share of women running for mayor was only 30.3% of all candidates, an increase of only 3% compared to the 2019 elections and only 7% compared to the 2007 local elections, indicating a very slow but consistently positive development.

Women tend to run for mayors in smaller electoral districts, knowing they have a better chance of winning. Analysis of the electoral „behaviour” of candidates shows that women run for mayor mainly in villages, which are small electoral districts. This trend can be explained by at least two factors: (i) female candidates who are supported by a particular party are often directed to smaller electoral districts, where the decision-making power and scale of local level decisions is lower, while in cities, where the scale of decisions and availability of resources is greater, male candidates are often nominated for mayor; (ii) in smaller electoral districts the level of proximity and trust is higher, i.e. women's chances of winning become higher, which leads them to run in a higher proportion. The dynamic analysis shows that while women continue to run in higher numbers in small electoral districts - villages, the share of women candidates in large electoral districts – cities, shows a higher increase in the 2023 election - over 5%, compared to a 3% increase in the share of women candidates in villages. This trend is a positive one, indicating that there are now more prerequisites, more favourable conditions, more support and more courage among women to run for in large electoral districts, where there are more opportunities and resources and higher levels of decision-making.

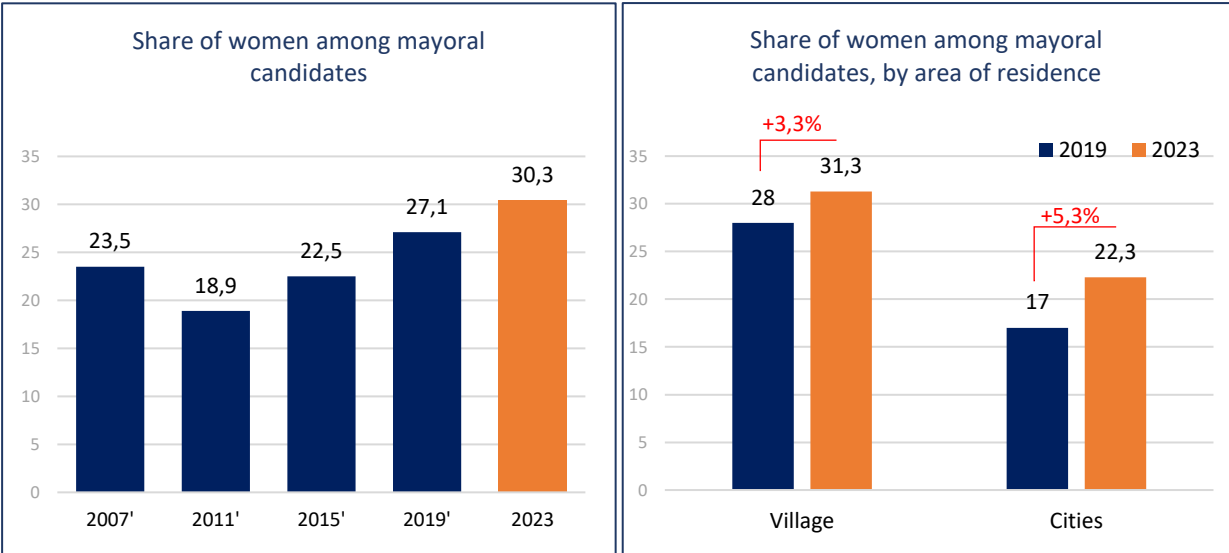


Figure 12. Share of women among mayoral candidates, in dynamics and by type of electoral district, %
 Source: CPD calculations based on CEC (Central Electoral Commission) data

Most of the women ran on behalf of a particular political party, which nominated them in an unfair way. More than 17 political parties were involved in the current elections. Each of these parties has nominated women candidates for mayor in different ways, and has absolute control over the candidates they put forward for different elective positions. The majority of political parties nominated up to 30% of their candidates for mayor. Only two political parties have more than 38% women among the total number of candidates they have nominated - the Political Party „Democrația Acasă” and „Șansa” Party (see figure 13).

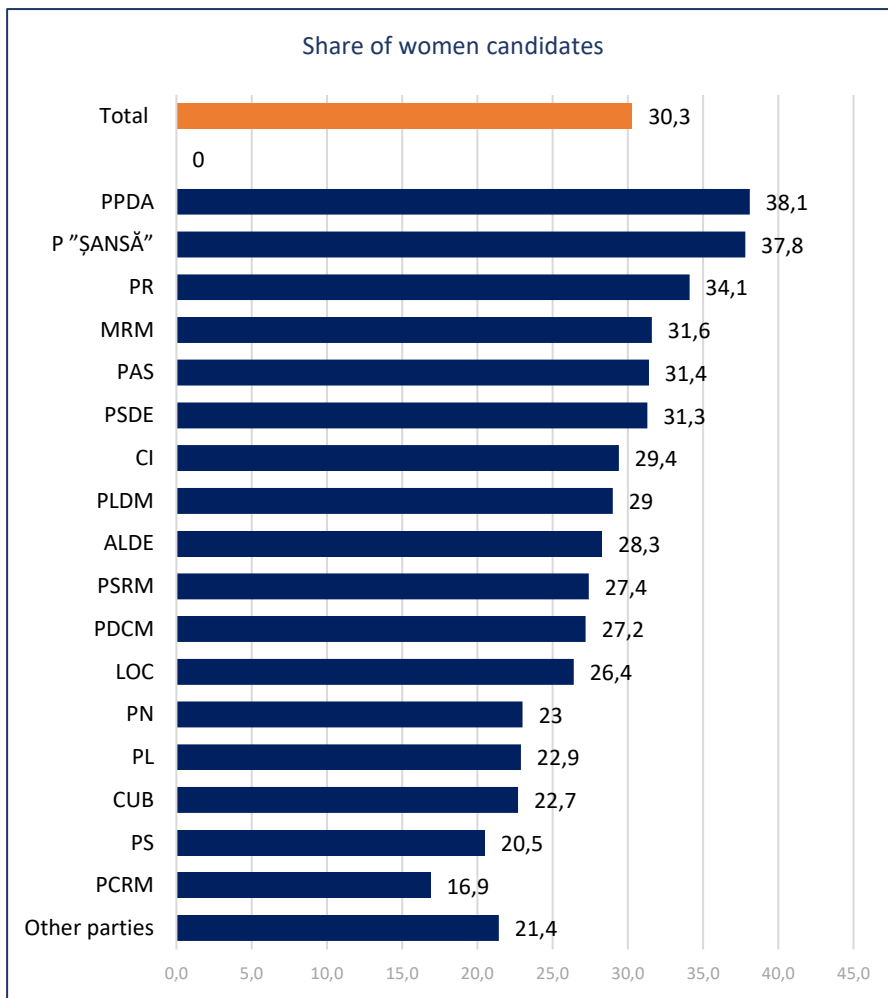


Figure 13. Share of women among mayoral candidates, by party, %
Source: CPD calculations based on CEC (Central Electoral Commission) data

The share of women running as independent candidates increased by 6% compared to the 2019 election. The share of women running independently continues to be lower than the share of women nominated for the same position by political parties. This indicates that (i) women are more reluctant to run for office without the support of a party, including moral and financial support, and (ii) increasing women's representation for mayoralty will be difficult without the involvement of political parties.

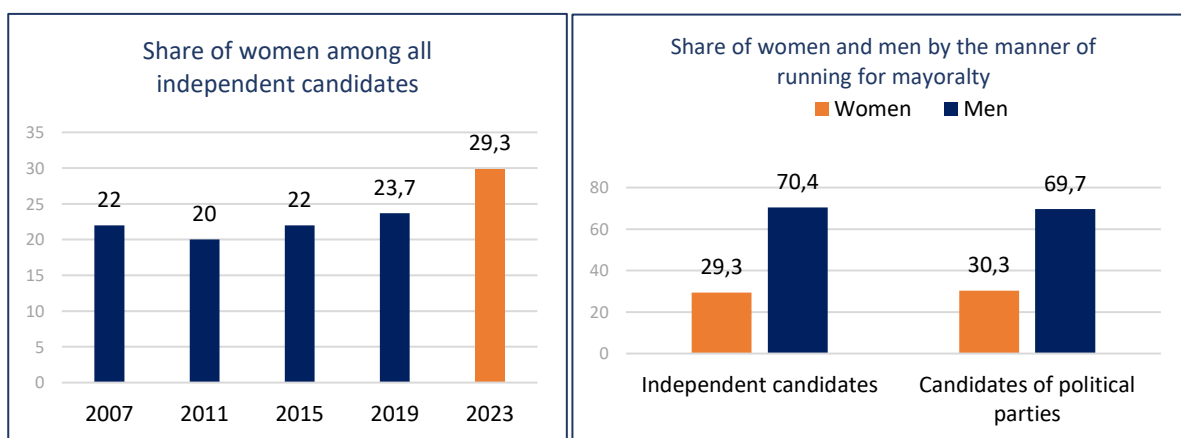


Figure 14. Share of women who ran independently for mayoralty, %
Source: CPD calculations based on CEC (Central Electoral Commission) data

At the territorial level, there are significant differences in the way women were nominated for the position of a mayor. Some districts recorded a significant number of women candidates, reaching around 40% of all candidates. This is the case of Basarabeasca, Falesti, Edinet and Anenii Noi districts. At the opposite pole are the Chisinau and Balti municipalities and Taraclia district, which reached a share of just over 20% women candidates. This uneven distribution confirms once again that the larger the electoral district (Chisinau, Balti), the likelihood and possibility of women to be appointed to elective positions.

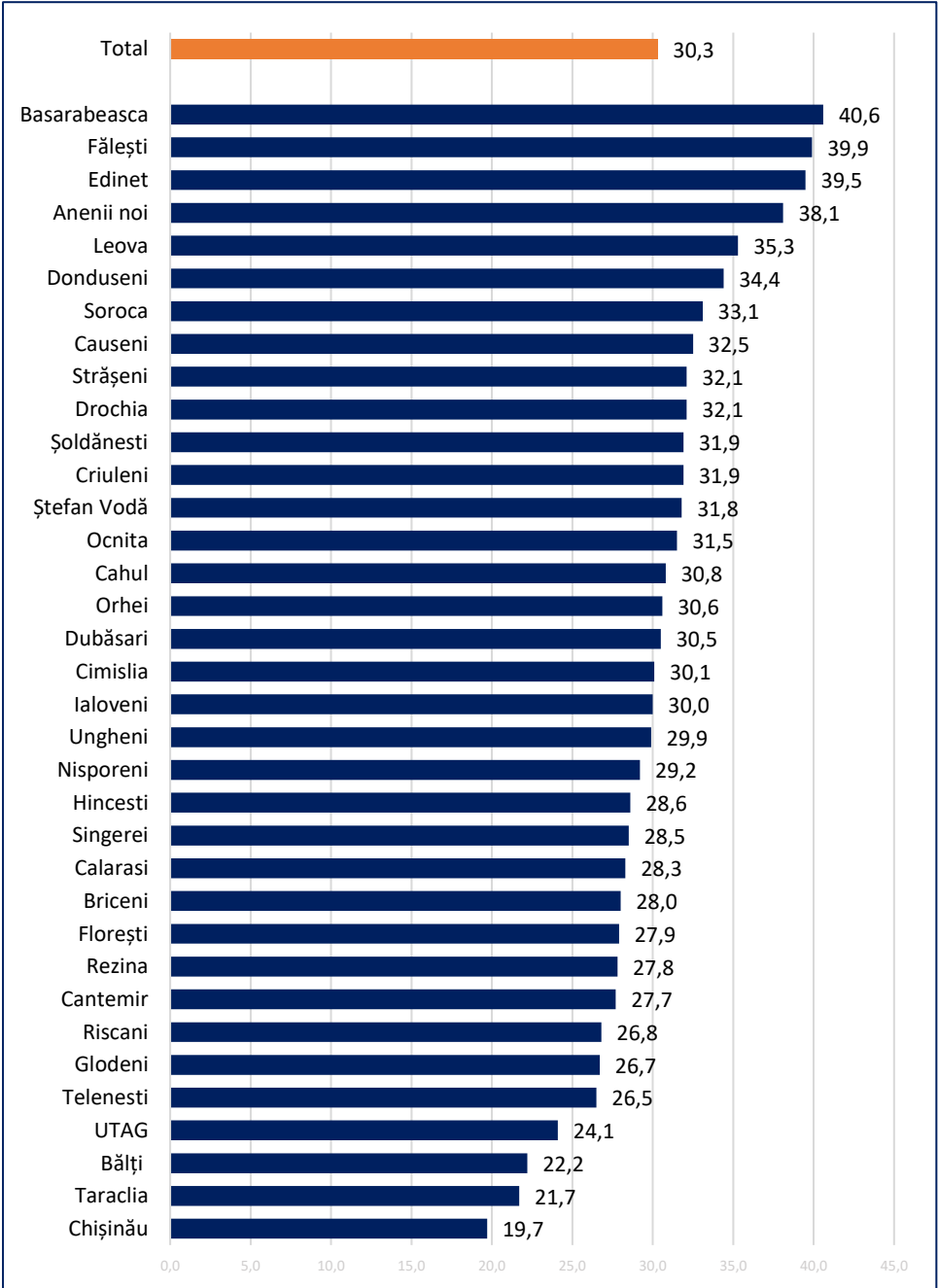


Figure 15. Share of women who ran for mayoralty, by territory, %
 Source: CPD calculations based on CEC (Central Electoral Commission) data

In most districts, the number of women candidates for mayor in the 2023 elections has increased. The graph below illustrates the progress made in different regions/districts of the country compared to the 2019 elections. In most districts the share of women candidates for mayor increased, with some districts registering an impressive dynamic, such as Basarabeasca district, where the share of women candidates increased by 20% compared to 2019. There are, however, districts that have registered a setback in this election, such as Sîngerei, Taraclia, UTAG, Rîşcani, Teleneşti, Cahul, Floreşti district. This uneven dynamic

can be explained by the political parties that won the majority of votes in certain districts and the share of women they nominated to the position at party level. (see figure 16)

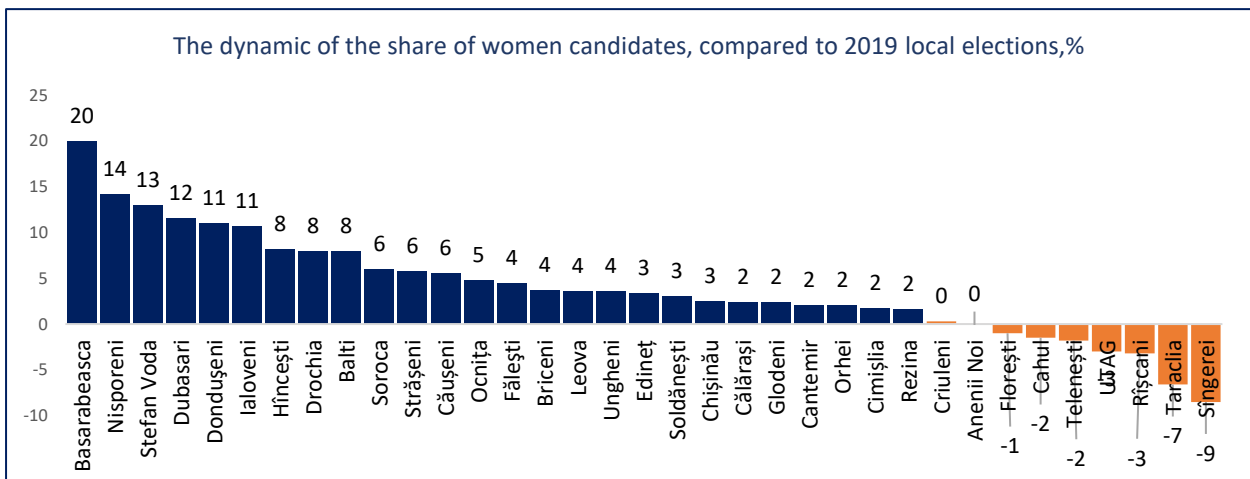


Figure 16. Progress in each district in terms of the number of women candidates for mayor compared to the 2019 elections, percentage points

Source: CPD calculations based on CEC (Central Electoral Commission) data

Women who were mayors in 2019 tended to run in the 2023 local elections as well. The graph below shows a direct relationship between the number of women running for mayor in the 2019 elections and the number running in 2023. Thus, in districts where there were more women candidates in the 2019 elections, there are more women who also ran in 2023. This suggests that women who ran in 2019 were likely to run for re-election in 2023, and that efforts to promote women in politics have prompted other women to enter politics.

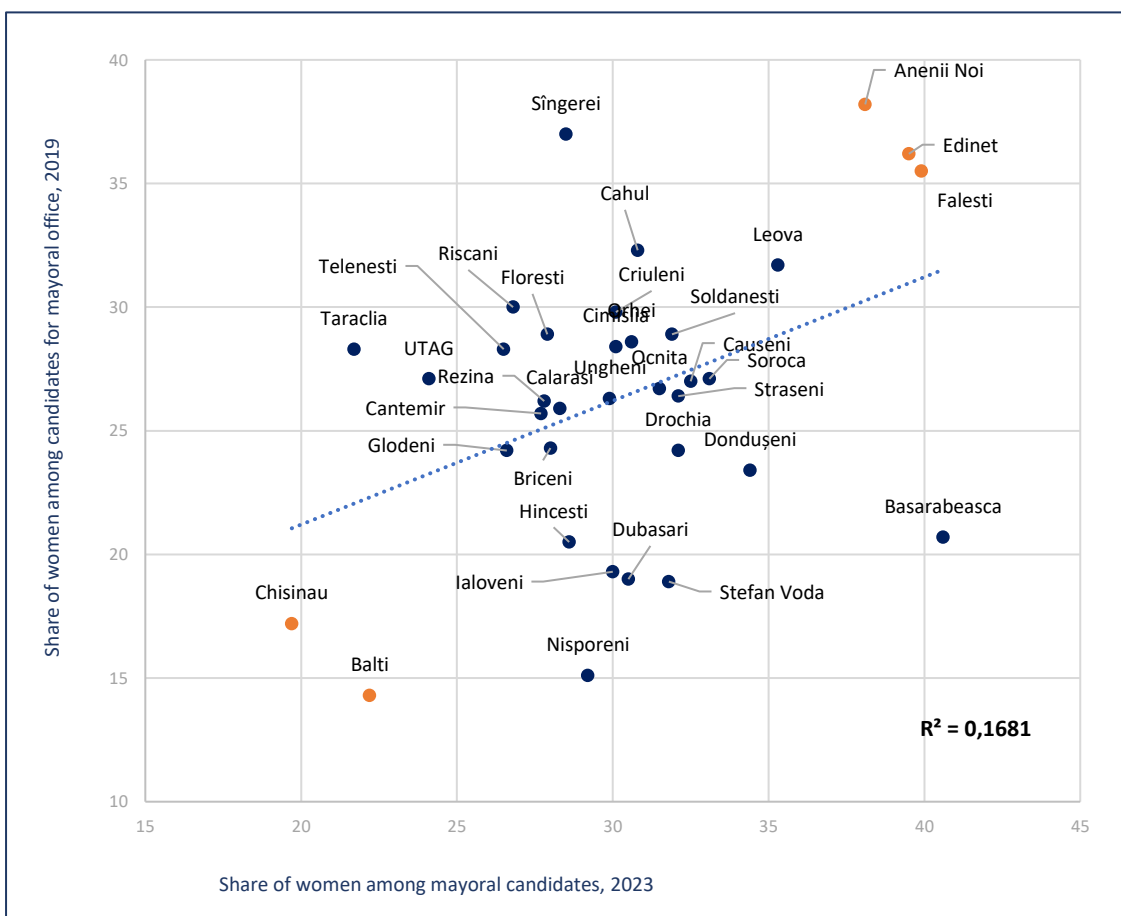


Figure 17. Ratio of women among candidates for mayor in 2023 and in 2019, by territory, %

Source: CPD calculations based on CEC (Central Electoral Commission) data

GENDER REPRESENTATION AMONG LOCAL ELECTED OFFICIALS FOR MAYORALTY

The share of women elected as mayors has not increased significantly. In the result of the 2023 elections, 24% of women candidates won (215 women, in numerical terms) and hold the office of mayor. Compared to the 2019 elections, the number of women increased by only 2%, a trend that has continued over the last four elections.

Based on the trends of the last four elections, it has been stated that Moldova will only reach a 30% share of women in the mayoralty in 2035. Taking into account this trend which has been maintained for 4 electoral scrutinies, but also based on the findings of the first monitoring report on society's perceptions of the role of women and men in elective position, we can see a strong societal resistance to change, which is due to cultural, social and educational factors.

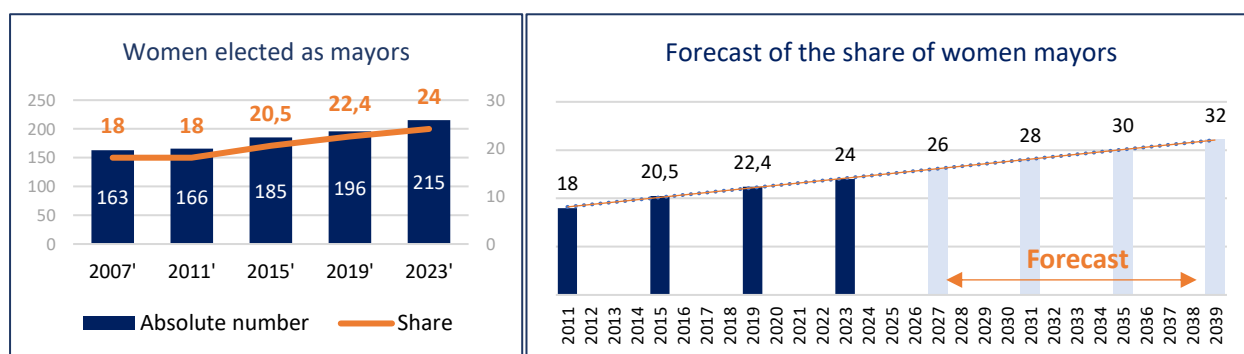


Figure 18. Share of women elected as mayors, depending on the manner of running for and residence of the mayor's office, %
Source: CPD calculations based on CEC (Central Electoral Commission) data

Young people are under-represented in mayoral positions. Although from an age perspective there are no significant gender discrepancies, an alarming trend in the analysis process has been elucidated regarding the extremely low representation of young people both among candidates for mayor and among those elected: around 10% only. Contrary to this, the majority of those in this position fall in the age group 46 - 55 years and even 55+. This discrepancy highlights the existence of stereotypes and prejudices about young people aspiring to leadership positions.

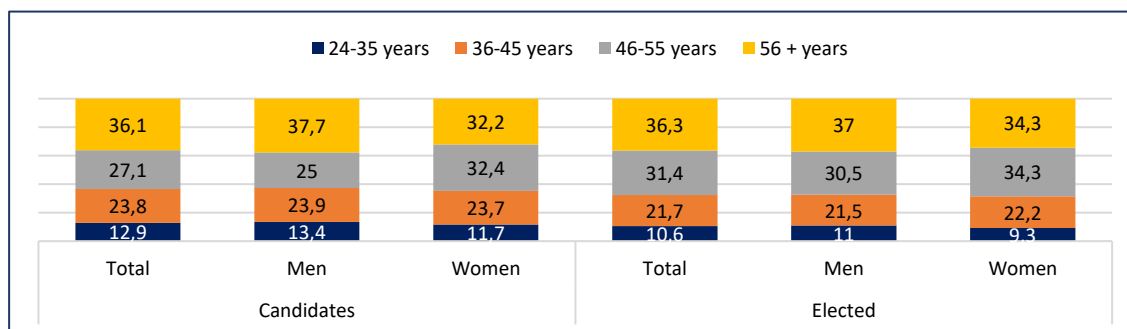


Figure 19. Share of women elected as mayors, depending on the manner of running for and residence of the mayor's office, %
Source: CPD calculations based on CEC (Central Electoral Commission) data

Women not only run in smaller electoral districts, but also most often win there. The number of women who won the mayoral seat independently remained unchanged from the 2019 elections, at around 24.1% of all women candidates. There was a slight increase in the number of women who became mayors being nominated by a political party. As to the electoral district, out of the total number of elected mayors in rural areas - 24.7% are women, while in urban areas this figure is 14.8%. If to compare with the 2019 elections, where the number of women elected as mayors in urban areas was 16% and in rural areas - 23%, in 2023 we see a slight increase in the number of women winning this position in rural areas. The

graph below shows that women not only tend to run for in smaller electoral districts, but also win more often compared to those running for in larger electoral districts.

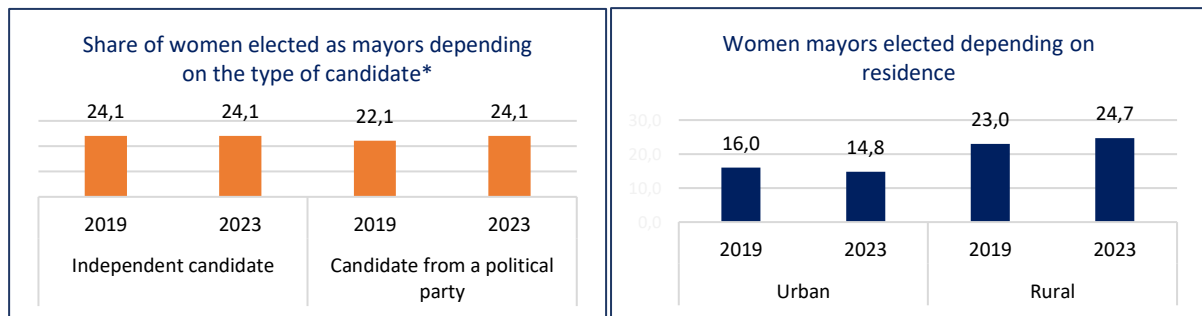


Figure 20. Share of women elected by status of candidate and residence of mayoralty, %, 2019-2023
 Source: CPD calculations based on CEC (Central Electoral Commission) data
 *Shares of candidates (men/women) from "Şansa" Party

Most women mayors were elected from the Party of Action and Solidarity - 76 in all. The analysis of the share of women in the total number of mayors elected from each party points to the top 3 parties with the highest performance in this respect: the Democratic Party of the Republic of Moldova (PDM) - 42.9%, the Political Party Democracy at Home (PPDA) - 30% and the European Social Democratic Party (PSDE) - 27.2%. However, if we analyse the numerical value of women mayors in these three parties, we find that the number is quite small: PDM - 6 primaries, PPDA - 6 primaries and PSDE - 28 women mayors. The most elected women mayors ran from the Action and Solidarity Party (PAS) - 76 mayors, but their share of the total number of women mayors who ran from PAS and won is only 26%.

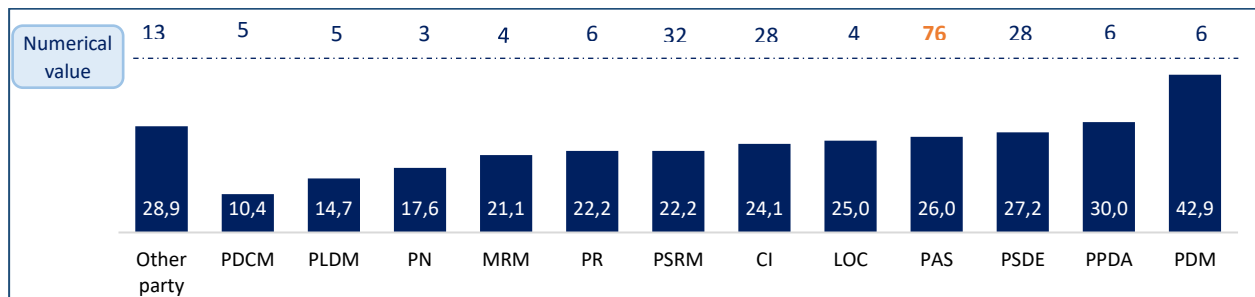


Figure 21. Share of women elected as mayors by party, %
 Source: CPD calculations based on CEC (Central Electoral Commission) data

The gender loss in the 2023 local mayoral elections is 4.8%. The gender loss is calculated as the difference between the share of women candidates and the share of women elected to the position. This difference directly expresses the competitiveness of women, relative to men, in the electoral race, but more importantly - the voter's willingness to vote for a woman or to disregard the candidate's gender in determining the voting option. Compared to 2019, this trend has not changed, largely due to an increase in the number of women candidates and the same trend with respect to the share of elected mayors.

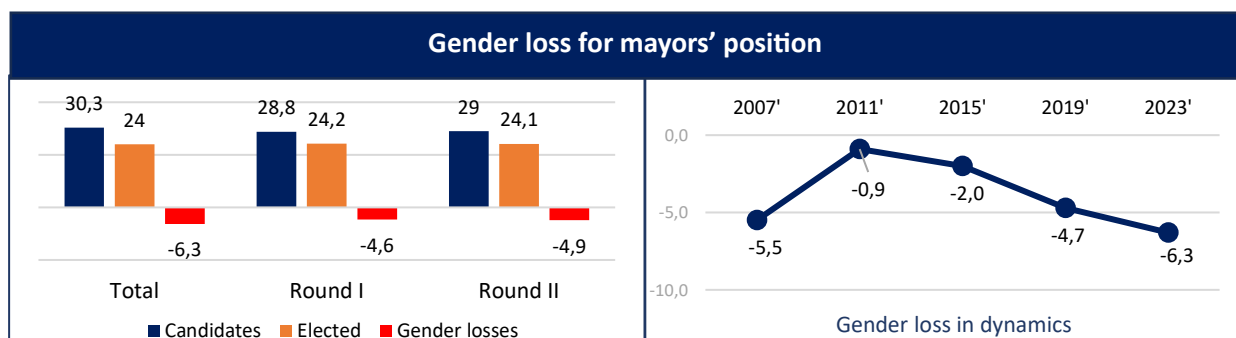


Figure 22. Gender loss for the position of mayor and their trend, %
 Source: CPD calculations based on CEC (Central Electoral Commission) data

From a geographical perspective, gender losses vary significantly. The largest gender loss has been recorded in Rezina district (19,5%), where women candidates accounted for 27.5% of all mayoral candidates, with the share of women elected being only 8%. Rezina is followed by Balti municipality where no female candidate was elected, thus the gender loss was 16.7%, and Calarasi with a gender loss of 14.9%. These three districts also recorded significant gender loss in the previous elections. On the other hand, the biggest gender gain has been recorded in Chisinau municipality, accounting for 17,2%. Although in this electoral race, out of the total number of mayoral candidates for Chisinau localities, women candidates accounted for only 19.6%, the share of elected female mayors is 36.8% of the total number of mayors in the region. Compared to the 2019 elections, when the highest share of female mayors was registered in Singerei (42.3%), in 2023 the most female mayors are in Cahul - 40%.

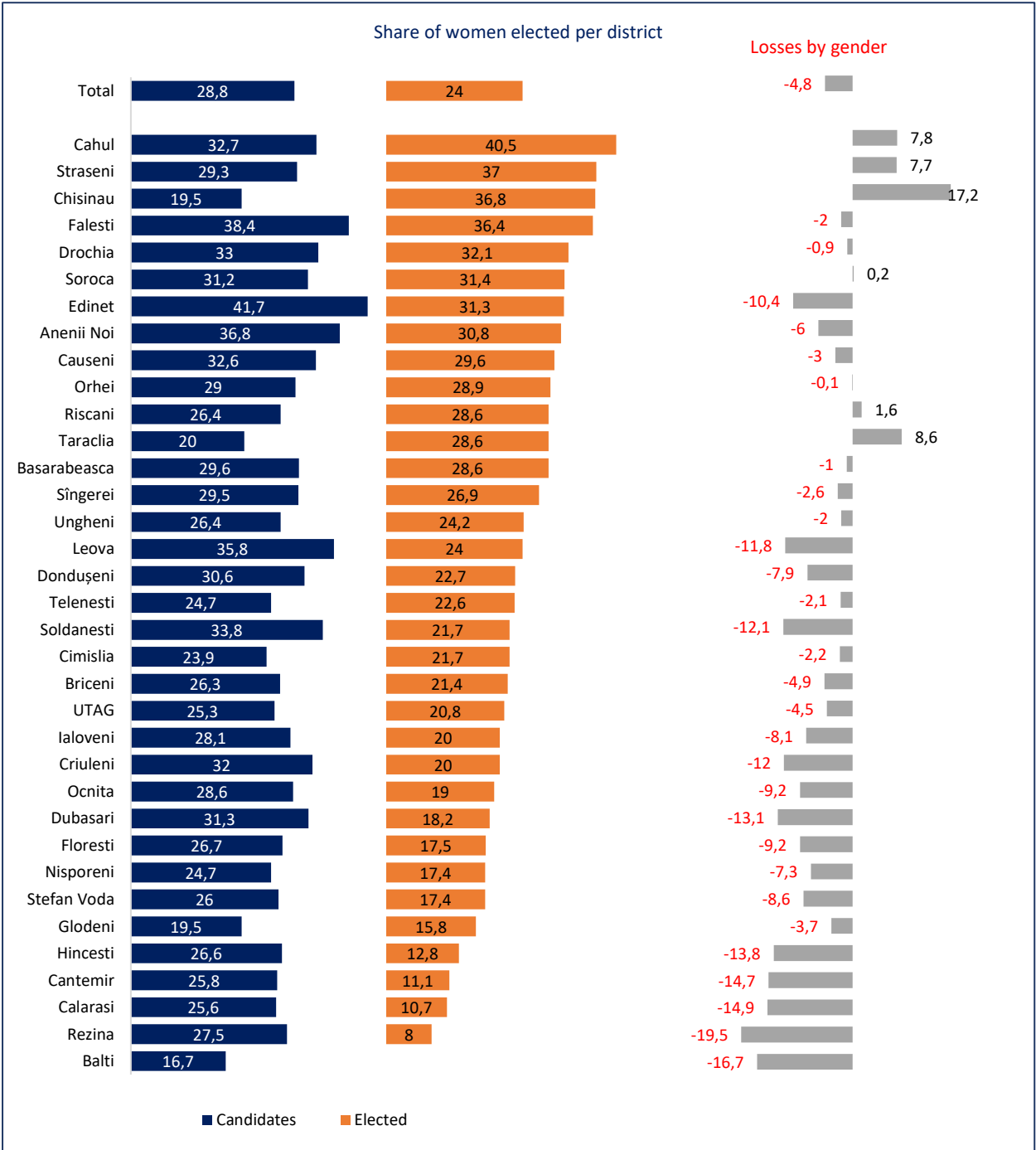


Figure 23. Share of women candidates vs. elected women per district and gender losses per district, %, Source: CPD calculations based on CEC (Central Electoral Commission) data

* In order to objectively calculate the gender loss in the 2023 local elections, those nominated by the political party "Șansă", which was not admitted to the elections, were excluded from the total number of female candidates.

GENDER REPRESENTATION IN THE MEDIA

Women candidates are still not actively promoted in the media. As television plays a key role in disseminating information on the electoral process, including the presentation of the candidates who are running for office, monitoring the media space from a gender perspective is indispensable. Therefore, the monitoring process focused on four types of media products for the period 3 October - 3 November 2023: (i) electoral debates; (ii) electoral spots; (iii) talk-shows and (iv) news. Ten TV channels were monitored in terms of balanced representation of women and men: Prime, Moldova 1, Pro TV Chisinau, TV8, Jurnal TV, N4, Publika TV, R Live, Vocea Basarabiei, Canal 3.

Electoral debates

During the monitoring period, 69 rounds of televised electoral debates were analysed, including those repeated. Monitoring was carried out during the period 09.10.2023-03.11.2023. The summary broadcast time was 60 hours and 15 minutes. A total of 201 representatives of electoral contestants participated in the debates.

Parameter	Quantity
Number of units monitored, including repeated broadcasts	69
Monitoring period	09.10.2023 -03.11.2023
Total broadcasting time	60 h 15 min
Total number of participants	201 persons

Table 1. Quantitative parameters of debates monitoring

Source: CPD calculations based on monitoring of media institutions

Increasing the level of women's representation in politics does not influence their level of representation in the media. In recent elections, including the current one, there has been a positive trend in the representation of women, but the level of representation in the media remains alarmingly low. Of the total number of participants in the debates, only 15% were women. In most cases, women candidates were together with men candidates (mixed debates -31,9%). And debates in which only women candidates participated were less than 6% of broadcasts. As a rule, women candidates made few interventions, so that out of the total number of hours of interventions, only 12.5% were interventions by women candidates, which means that out of the total number of interventions which amounted to 60 hours 15 minutes, women candidates spoke for only 7 hours 30 minutes. This meant that the women candidates who were present at the debates played the supporting part in most cases.

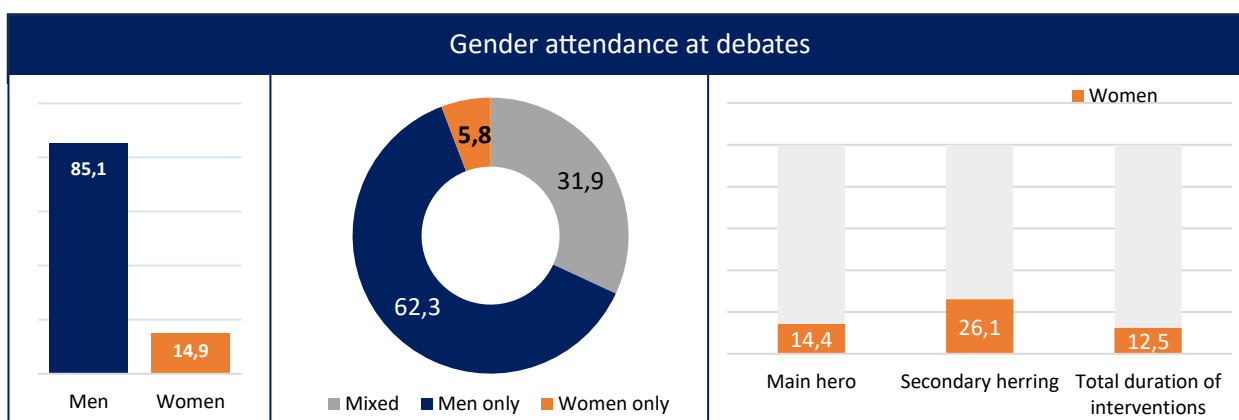


Figure 24. Presence of genders at the debates, %

Source: CPD calculations based on monitoring of media institutions

The women candidates were present on the least watched TV channels and at unpopular times. In the analysis process, it was found that the popularity of the TV channel influences the gender distribution of male and female candidates participating in the election debates. That is, the more the TV channel is watched by more viewers, the lower the presence of women candidates in the electoral debates organised by the channel. Considering the monitoring process, it was found that women were most often present on Realitatea Live TV channel, which has one of the lowest audiences in Moldova. Also, the electoral debates in which women candidates participated were broadcast at 18:00, the hour with the lowest audience. In conclusion, we find that, in addition to the fact that women candidates participate quite rarely in electoral debates, the programmes in which they participate are broadcast on less watched TV channels at an evening hour when the audience is the lowest.

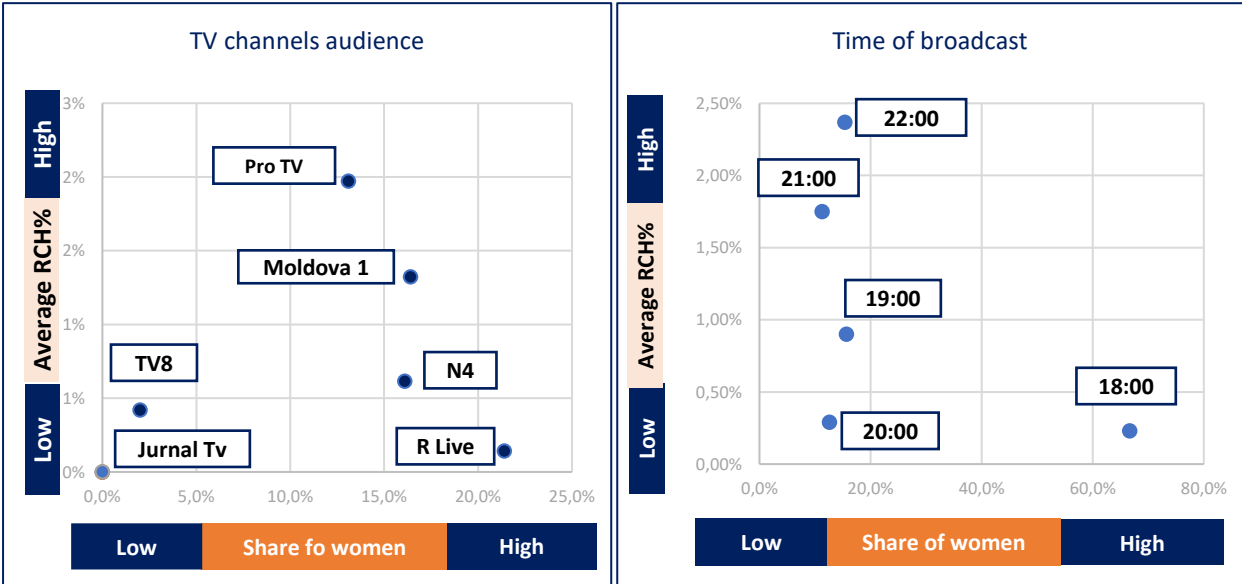


Figure 25. Women's presence vs. channel audience and time of broadcast, %
 Source: CPD calculations based on monitoring of media institutions

Talk-shows

During the monitoring period, 14 talk-shows dedicated to the electoral issue were analysed, including repeated broadcasts. Monitoring was carried out during the period of 16.10.2023-03.11.2023. The total broadcasting time was 15 hours and 32 minutes. A total of 41 representatives of electoral contestants participated in these talk-shows.

Parameter	Quantity
Number of monitored broadcasts	14
Number of monitored participants interventions	41
Monitoring period	16.10-03.11.2023
Total broadcasting time	15 h 32 min

Table 2. Quantitative parameters of talk-shows monitoring
 Source: CPD calculations based on monitoring of media institutions

Women are invisible for talk-shows in Moldova. With regard to gender representation in talk-shows in Moldova, data analysis shows that women are not actually invited on the set. In the main role, in the 41 interventions monitored out of the 14 broadcasts, 80% were men and only around 17% were women. Only men participated in the supporting role. While in the other types of media products we observe a slight increase in the presence of women, in the talk-shows we observe a decreasing trend. Thus, in 2019, only 20% of the main heroes and 14.3% of the supporting heroes were women. Women are missing from the sets and continue to become increasingly invisible in talk-shows in Moldova. It should be emphasized that the decision to invite a specific person to the talk-show set belongs solely to the TV channel and the

editorial team. It should be noted that the vast majority of talk-shows on Moldovan TV channels deal with political issues. Even more when it comes to the election campaign. All the 14 monitored shows, without exception, focused on the subject matter: whether they dealt with the election or with close issues with direct connotations on politics in the country. The under-representation of women in talk-shows is becoming a significant problem in the media. Although, apparently, in the digital world, we can argue that there is more diversity in terms of media content, where gender representation differences are less visible. However, it is important to point out that talk-shows still remain very popular and have a significant impact on people's perceptions and opinions. Many people perceive talk-shows as one of the main sources of information and debate, especially on topical issues of public interest. People who do not have access to a variety of media content, such as low-income or geographically isolated users, may be more exposed to stereotypical ideas and views. It is important for broadcasters and news teams to be aware of the importance of equitable coverage. The data below shows that only two of the channels monitored made some effort to ensure gender representation.

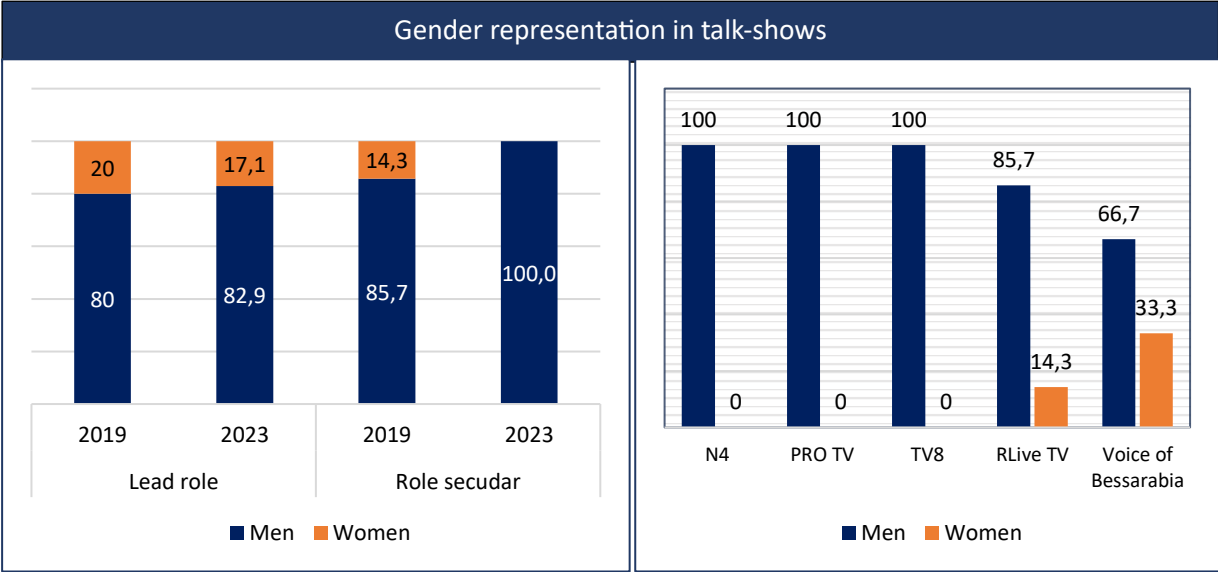


Figure 26. Gender presence in talk-shows, %
 Source: CPD calculations based on monitoring of media institutions

NEWS

During the monitoring period, 1,065 news bulletins dedicated to the election issue were analysed, including repeated broadcasts. Monitoring was carried out during the period of 03.10.2023-03.11.2023. The total broadcasting time was 31 hours and 69 minutes.

Parameter	Quantity
Number of monitored participants interventions	1065
Monitoring period	3.10.2023 - 03.11.2023
Total broadcasting time	31 h 69 min

Table 3. Quantitative parameters of news monitoring
 Source: CPD calculations based on monitoring of media institutions

News bulletins focus on male candidates, ignoring women. Monitoring of gender representation in news bulletins shows that male candidates have dominated this type of media production, both in the lead and supporting roles. According to the data in the graph below, 80% of the candidates featured in news bulletins in the lead role were men, while in the supporting role their share was 76%, which raises a question about the gender balance in the media coverage of candidates. At the same time, the analysis

did not reveal any significant difference in the positive, negative or neutral image the candidates received in the news bulletins.

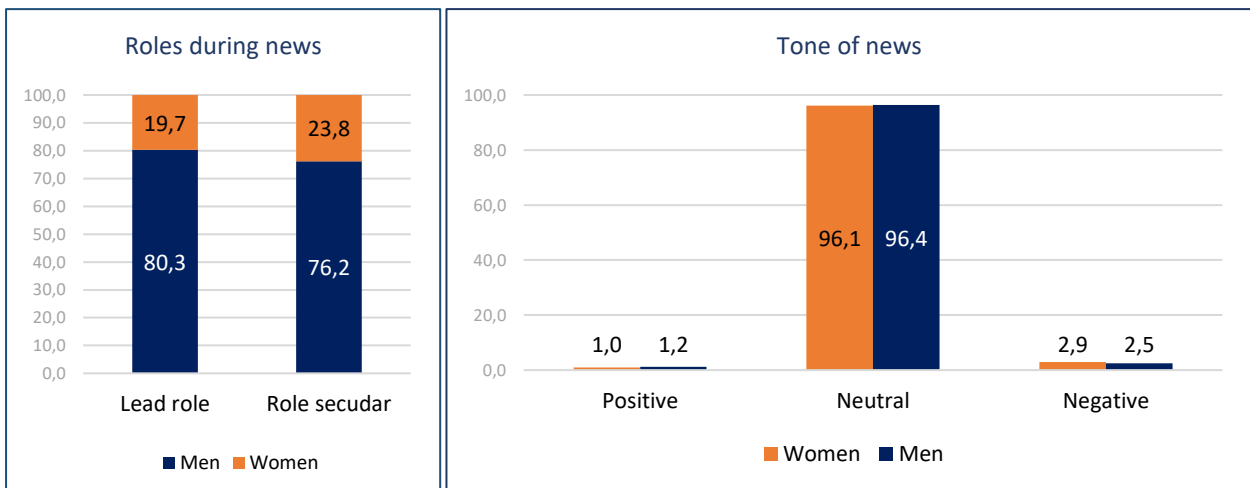


Figure 27. Presence of men and women in the news, %
Source: CPD calculations based on monitoring of media institutions

All TV channels, without exception, did not take into account a gender balance in their news bulletins, and most of them broadcast news about women candidates at times with low ratings. The gender distribution of news bulletins in terms of TV channels and broadcasting hours highlights the trend from other elections as well, namely the absence of women in most media productions, regardless of the type of TV, and news is no exception in this case. At the same time, when we analyse the news that covered women candidates, we see that most of them were broadcast at the hours with the lowest audience. These figures underline once again the need for a fair and balanced representation of both genders in news bulletins, regardless of channel or time of broadcast.

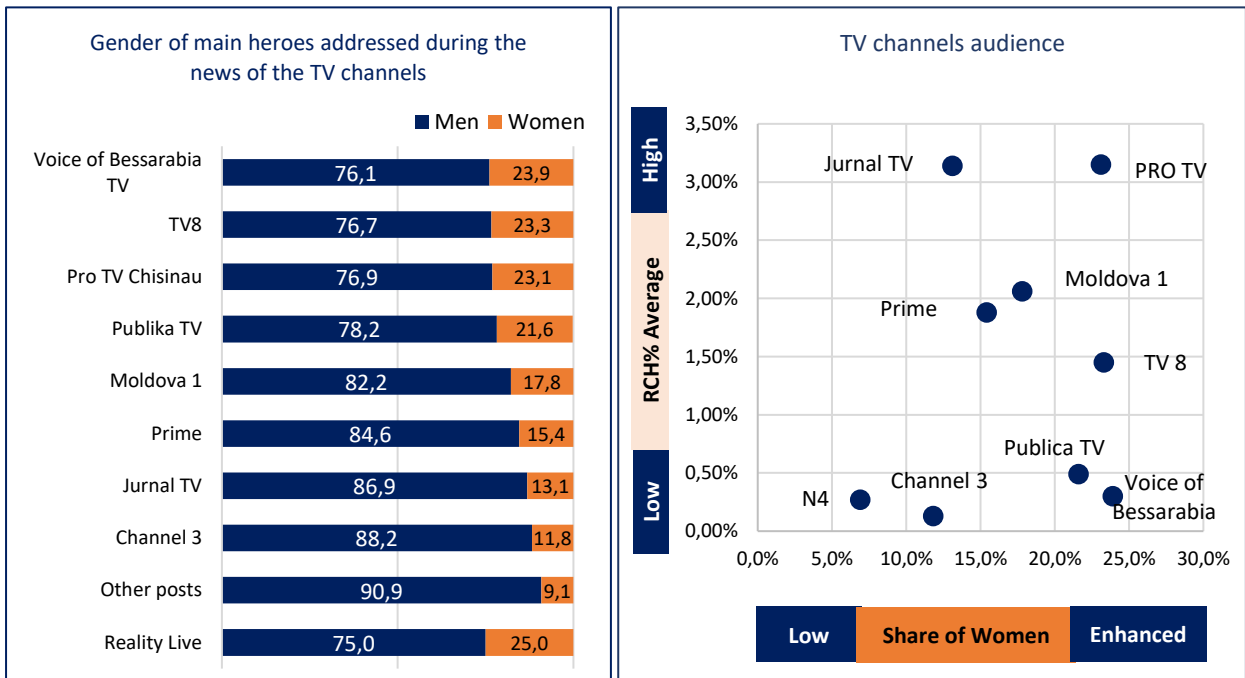


Figure 28. Gender of main heroes addressed in TV news, %
Source: CPD calculations based on monitoring of media institutions

SPOTS

During the monitoring period, 141 election spots were analysed, including the 1381 repeatedly run spots. Monitoring was carried out during the period of 09.10.2023-03.11.2023. The total broadcast time was 18 hours and 33 minutes. Since election advertising is paid, the total cost according to the price list is about 213 621 thousand dollars.

Parameter	Quantity
Number of units monitored	141
Number of runs monitored	1381
Monitoring period	09.10-03.11.2023
Total broadcasting time	18 h 33 min
Total cost according to the price list	213 621 thousand dollars

Table 4. Quantitative parameters of electoral spots monitoring
Source: CPD calculations based on monitoring of media institutions

As in other media productions, women appear less in election advertising. A component part of political advertising that is increasingly used every year is represented by electoral spots. They are one of the basic tools used by electoral contestants to attract voters. On the one hand, election spots present the electoral candidate's intentions, his/her vision for the future and proposed political solutions, and on the other hand, they are intended to create a favourable image of the 'face' of the party - the candidate registered in the race. Given that election spots have a long-term contribution to shaping and strengthening the image of politicians before the electorate, it is important that they respect a balanced representation of both men and women. However, the analysis of their representation in election spots shows that in the 141 spots monitored, more than 70% of the participants are men, while only about 29% are women.

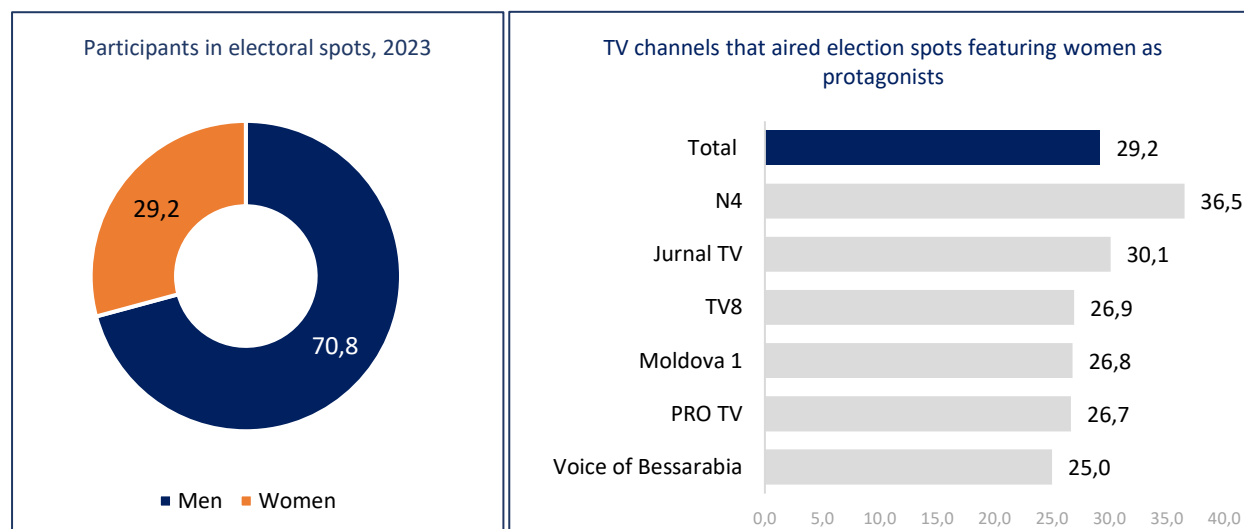


Figure 29. Gender of protagonists participating in election spots, including by party/institution, %
Source: CPD calculations based on monitoring of media institutions

In this election, no political advertisement was released with only women or predominantly women, which is unprecedented. In the 2019 (local elections) and 2021 (parliamentary elections) elections, the ads featuring only women or predominantly women (in the mixed ones) accounted for around 10% and 12% respectively of the entire election campaign. In 2023 this rate was 0%, which indicates a significant decrease compared to previous elections. Of the 141 election spots analysed, which ran more than a thousand times, 17.7% featured exclusively men as the main heroes. Gender parity (equal presentation of women and men) was respected in only 4% of the election spots analysed. It is important to note that in the case of election spots, unlike other media products such as election debates or talk-shows, the political

parties decided entirely upon the protagonist of the election spot. In other words, ignoring women in election spots clearly shows the political parties' preference for a certain representation, in this case - for the male image associated with the political party.

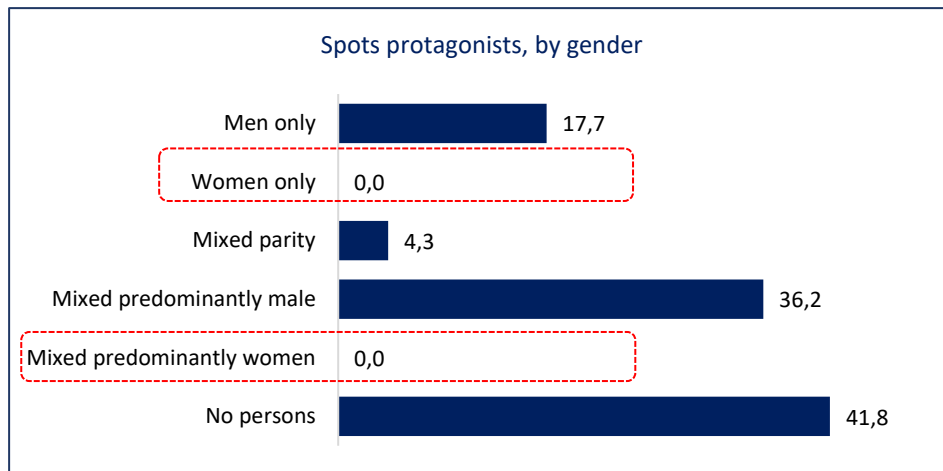


Figure 30. Types of election spots by gender and TV channels that aired election spots with female protagonists, %
Source: CPD calculations based on monitoring of media institutions

Spots featuring women are run during the period of the day with small audience. Although the number of women mayors has increased in the current election, their visibility is still quite low, also because of the way they are portrayed in the media. Spots featuring mainly women have a higher run rate in the morning hours, when the audience (RCH) is quite low, while in the evening, during peak hours (20:00-22:00), spots with female heroines are run less. At the same time, the graph below shows that spots featuring women are run (number of insertions) to a lesser extent.

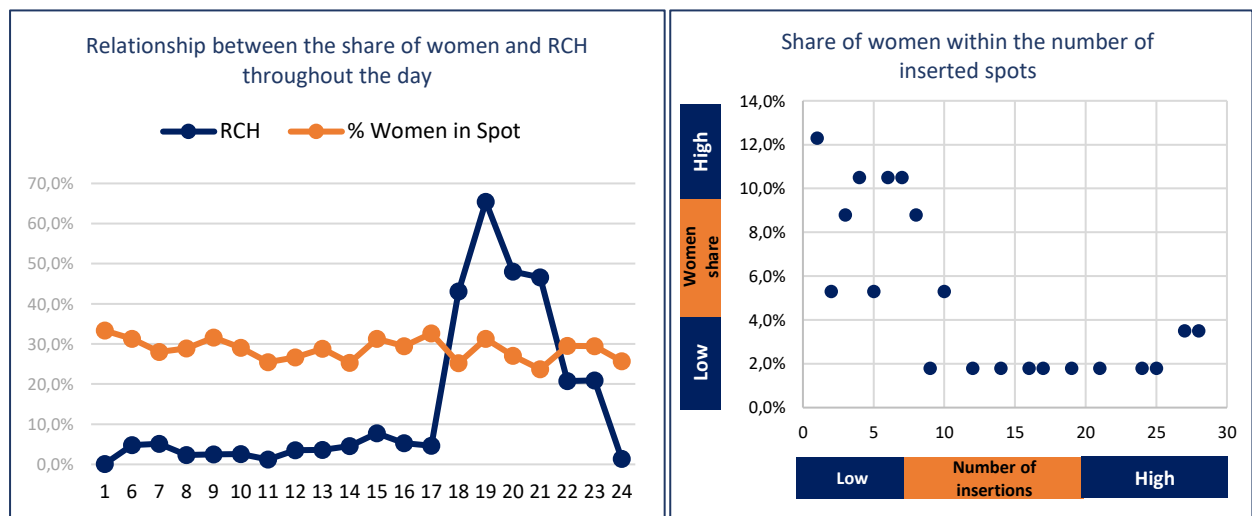


Figure 31. Types of election spots by gender and TV channels that broadcast election spots with female protagonists, %
Source: CPD calculations based on monitoring of media institutions

FINDINGS

The monitoring of the equitable representation of women and men in the 2023 mayoral elections reveals the existence of barriers to women's participation in this elective position. We find that:

1. Gender roles strongly influence women's propensity to enter politics. Responsibilities related to taking care, lack of family support (a factor closely related to gender roles), and lack of confidence in their own strengths and abilities are the main barriers preventing women from getting involved in electoral processes.

2. Around 50% of society associate the position of mayor with qualities related to marital status, presence of children and religiousness, while 36% believe that a mayor should be a man and only 8% - a woman.

3. Compared to the 2011 elections, the share of women candidates for mayor has increased by only 7%. Thus, in the 2023 local elections, the share of women candidates for mayor was 30.4% of all candidates, an increase of only 3% compared to the 2019 local elections and only 7% compared to the 2011 local elections, indicating a very slow but consistently positive development.

4. The share of women running as independent candidates increased by 6% compared to the 2019 elections. The share of women running independently remains lower than the share of women nominated for the same position by political parties. This shows that (i) women are more reluctant to run for the position without the support of a party, including moral and financial support, and (ii) increasing the representation of women for mayor will not be possible without the involvement of political parties.

5. The share of women elected as mayors is not improving significantly. As a result of this election, 24% of elected mayors are women (215 women, in numerical terms). Compared to the previous elections, the number of female candidates increased by only 2%, a trend that has continued over the last four elections. Analysing the trend over the years, we see that **the number of women mayors in Moldova will reach 30% in 2035.**

6. Women not only run for in smaller electoral districts, but also win the positions most often. The dynamic analysis shows that while more women continue to run for in small electoral districts – villages, the share of those running for in large electoral districts – cities, in the 2023 elections, shows a higher increase - over 5%, compared to a 3% increase in the share of women running in villages. If analysing from the point of view of electoral district, we observe that 24.7% of the total number of mayors elected in rural areas are women, while in urban areas the figure is 14.8%.

7. Women continue to be "invisible" in media space. The monitoring process covered four types of media products: election debates, election spots, talk shows and news from 10 monitored TV channels. Regardless of the media product, the analysis of equitable representation in the media shows that: (i) the increase of the number of women in politics does not influence the level of representation of women in the media; (ii) there are quite little women represented in media products and (iii) at low audience hours; (iv) no TV channel, regardless of the type of media product, took gender balance into account.

CHAPTER III

THE TRIUMPH OF DOUBLE QUOTA SYSTEM OR HOW WE ACHIEVED A FAIR REPRESENTATION

GENDER PERSPECTIVE IN DISTRICT AND LOCAL ELECTIONS

The 2023 local elections brought us closer to a fair representation of women and men candidates in the electoral process. In the 2023 election, the share of women among the candidates for the position of district/municipal councilor is 45.3%, and among the candidates for the position of local councilor - 47.2%. The dynamic analysis shows a positive trend regarding the share of women candidates for the position of councilor in the last election polls. Thus, in the 2023 local elections, the share of women candidates in district/municipal councils increased by more than 15% compared to the 2015 election and by more than 2% compared to the 2019 election. The share of female candidates in the local councils increased by about 12% compared to 2015 and by 1.4% compared to 2019. A lower progress compared to the previous election is due to the positioning provisions that were applied differently in current election compared to the 2019 election. However, the positive dynamics of recent years suggest that the double quota system is the tool that ensures equal opportunities and chances for women and men during the election process. Thus, as long as there is an obligation to respect the 40% quota and the positioning provisions, the share of women candidates for the position of councilor will exceed the threshold reached in 2023. Adherence to the 40% quota and positioning provisions will continue to strengthen the fair representation of women in future local elections, ensuring equal opportunities for candidates of both genders.

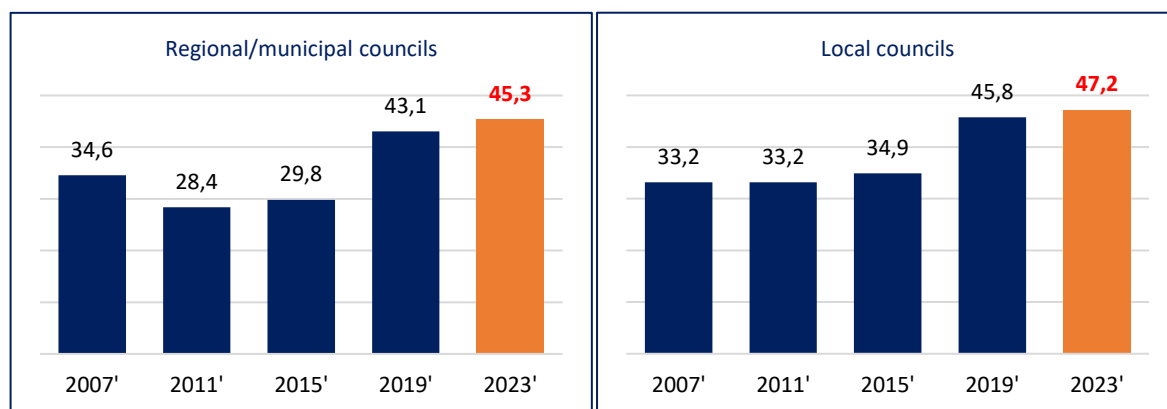


Figure 32. Share of women candidates for the position of district/municipal and local councilor, %
Source: CPD calculations on the basis of data provided by CEC

Women who run independently are more present in the competition for the position of local councilor. Most of the women candidates for councilor positions are appointed by political parties, which are often influenced by the current legislative provisions. A significantly smaller share of women decide to run independently in the elections, being tempted to run mostly in local councils. The share of women running independently in district and municipal councils has decreased from 10.9% in 2019 to 9.1% in 2023. Instead there is an increase in the number of women for the position of local councilor who choose to run independently, from 17.1% in 2019 to 21.9% in 2023.

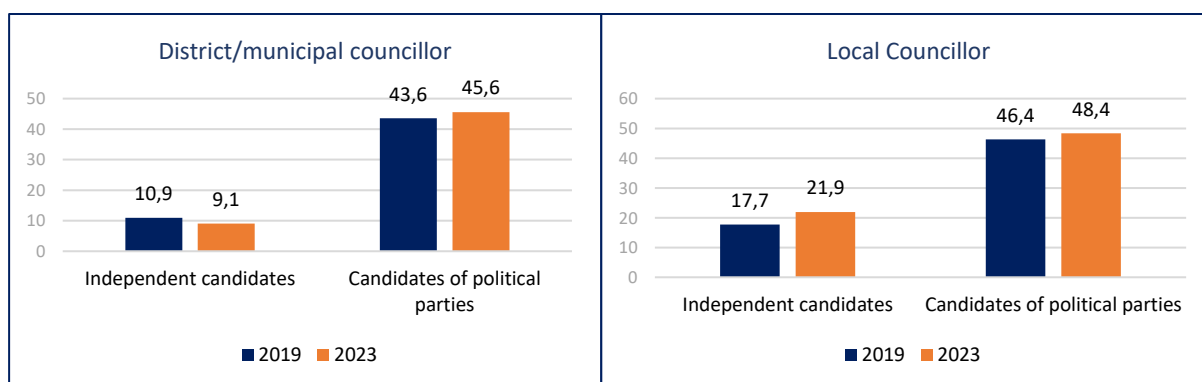


Figure 33. Share of women from total number of candidates in district/municipal and local councils, by type of candidate, %
Source: CPD calculations on the basis of data provided by CEC

The political parties designated at least 40% women on the lists of candidates for the councilor position – a decision that seems to be influenced by the current legislative provisions. This conclusion is supported by the data provided below, which illustrate the share of designated women candidates by political party affiliation. Although the distribution varies significantly, each party has made an effort to ensure gender balance in designating candidates for the position of district/municipal and local councilors. In particular for district/municipal councils, all parties included more than 40% women on the lists of candidates, and the Political Party ‘Force of Alternative and Salvation of Moldova’ (PPFASM) designated in total 60% of women candidates. In case of local councils, most political parties exceeded the threshold of 45% of women appointed for the position of local councilor. The chart below reflects a relatively even representation of women and men running for councilors, reaching ever closer an equal distribution of 50/50. This trend is encouraging and indicates a positive evolution regarding the presence of women on the lists of candidates, a fact that projects a direction of a more equitable representation in the election and decision-making process.

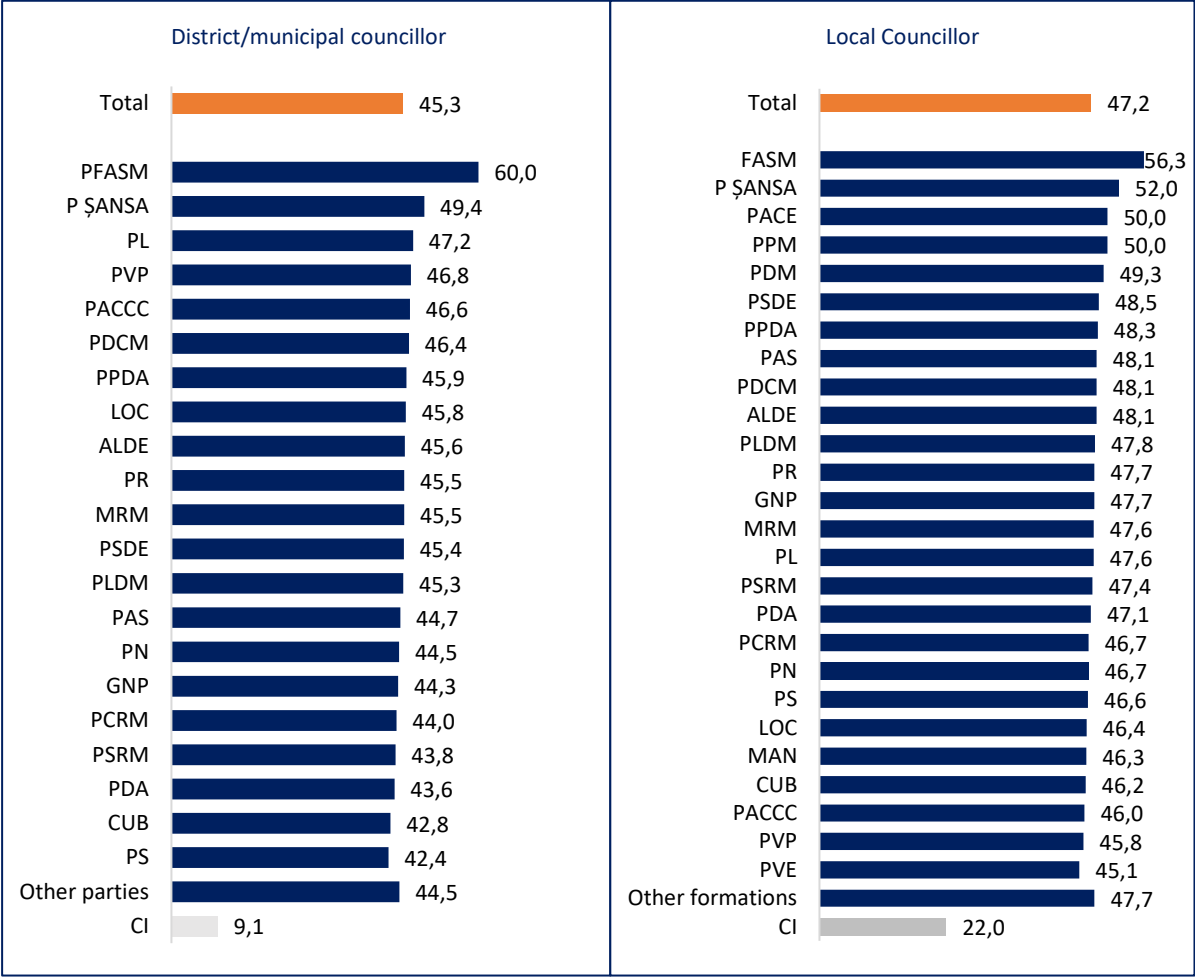


Figure 34. Share of women from the total number of candidates for the position of district/municipal and local councilor, by party, %; Source: CPD calculations on the basis of data provided by CEC

Women participated and were predominantly elected in villages and communities. Regarding male and female candidates, the 40% quota has been observed and we have a fair representation for both genders in all administrative-territorial units of level I and II. However, the data show significant differences between district/municipal and local councils. The proportion of men in the composition of district/municipal councils is much higher, constituting 66.6% of those elected, while women constitute only 33.3%. On the other hand, a more balanced representation can be found in the local councils, where we have 59.7% of men and 40.3% of women for this position. At the same time, we note that women have a more significant presence in the positions of mayor at the rural level, which indicates a trend that they not only participate in elections, but also win more frequently in small settlements. It is explained by the fact that political parties tend to designate more women in villages and communities, where the level of

decision-making is lower, compared to cities and municipalities, where the level of decision-making is higher and are more resources.

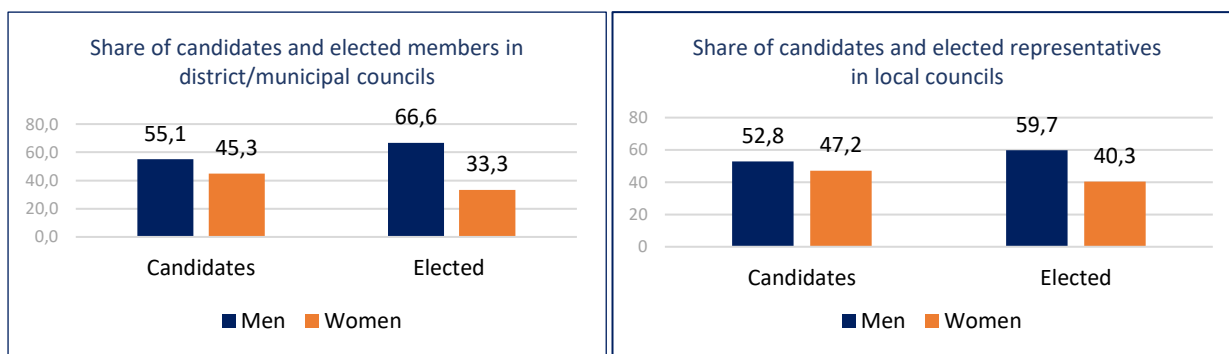


Figure 35. Share of the **candidates and elected** representatives for the position of district/municipal and local councilor, by gender, %; Source: CPD calculations on the basis of data provided by CEC

PAS and PSRM are the parties with the most elected female councilors, with a significant difference compared to the other parties. The diagrams below illustrate the representation of women in district/municipal and local councils by different political parties. The data show that the Action and Solidarity Party (PAS) has the highest share of women councilors at district/municipal level, with 40.9% (146 women councilors). It is followed by the Party of Socialists from the Republic of Moldova (PSRM) with a representation of 33.2% (85 women councilors). The other political parties have reached a representation of 20%-30% of women in the position of councilor at district/municipal level (approximately 10-15 women councilors), an exception being the European Social Democratic Party, which reached a number of 25 women in this position. At the level of local councils, there is a much higher share of women elected as councilors, with a significant gap in numerical representation between the two dominant parties, PAS and PSRM, compared to the other parties. The diagrams below illustrate the share of women councilors in relation to the total number of councilors from each party, chosen during the election. The percentage analysis shows that, at the local level, most parties ensured a representation of women between 30% and 40% of the total number of councilors, with the exception of 'Democratia Acasa' Political Party, which has a representation of 24.5% of women councilors from the total number of councilors of the party.

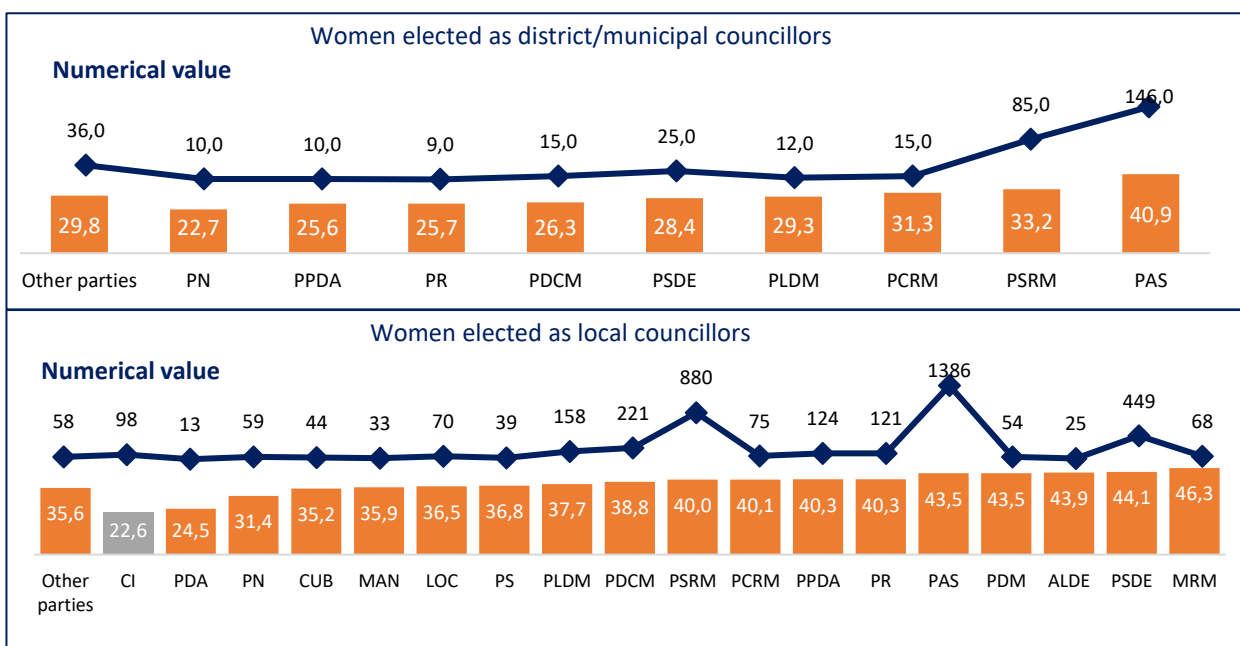


Figure 36. The share and numerical value of women elected for the position of district/municipal and local councilor, by party, % and no.

Source: CPD calculations on the basis of data provided by CEC

Among the elected councilors, young people are underrepresented. The analysis of data from age and gender perspective at the level of local and district/municipal councils shows a detailed picture of the elected councilors' profile. In terms of age, young people aged between 18 and 34 are underrepresented, constituting only 10% of all councilors at district/municipal level and 12% at local level. The largest share of elected councilors is represented by 35-64 age groups, specifically in 35-44 years (27.6%) and 55-64 years (26.2%) categories. There is a predominant presence of councilors aged 45-64 at the level of local councils, they represent over 50% of the total elected representatives. As for the women elected for the position of councilors, at district/municipal level the largest share is represented by those aged 35-44 (31%), while in local councils approximately 29% of elected women fall into 45-54 age range. Concerning men councilors, the age distribution is similar at both district/municipal and local level, with a considerable representation starting from 35 to 65. Thus, the analysis reveals a balanced age distribution for men, while women are present to a greater extent in the age categories between 35 and 54.

The differences by average age of elected councilors is largely determined by their interests and experience. Persons with long political experience tend to dominate the political landscape, while young people often face obstacles in gaining access to elected positions. This is caused by a lack of experience or support from the political or social community. This age difference in political positions may also be the result of partisan selection strategies of the candidates.

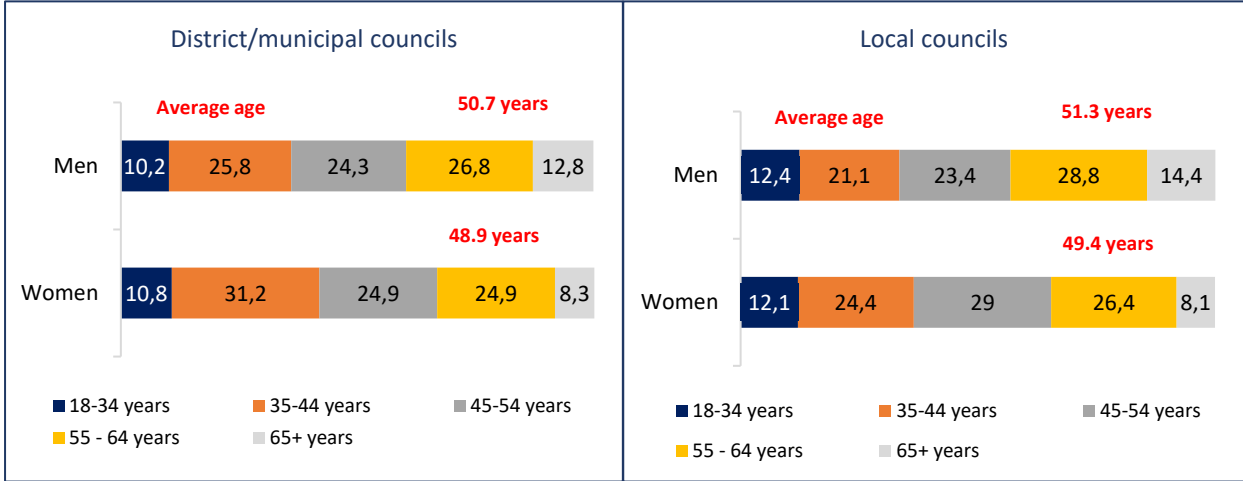


Figure 37. Share of women and men elected for the position of district/municipal and local councilors, by age, %.
 Source: CPD calculations on the basis of data provided by CEC

The territorial distribution of young people elected in the district/municipal/local councils is uneven. The general data on the composition of the councils at the I and II level of administrative units show that young people aged between 18-35 represent only 12.4% of the total number of councilors at district/municipal level and 13.8% within local councils. In the top of settlements with a greater number of young people as councilors are Balti Municipality, with 31.4% young people in the council, and Chisinau Municipality, with 29.4%. At the level of local councils, Chisinau is leading, with 25.5% young people, and Ialoveni with 22.5% (see figure 38).

With certain exceptions, young people were predominantly elected for councilor positions in smaller communities. This can be explained by the specific dynamics of smaller communities, where access to administrative positions may be easier reached by young people and women. Political and social opportunities may be more visible in these environments, thus providing more space and support for the representation of young people and women in local decision-making positions. Also, in small settlements the process of civic involvement can be more accentuated, providing a more accessible platform for the active involvement of young people and women in the community life. Although, the double quota system and financial incentives directly influence the decision of political parties regarding the gender of candidates, as far as young people are concerned, only financial incentives motivate parties to appoint candidates from this age group.

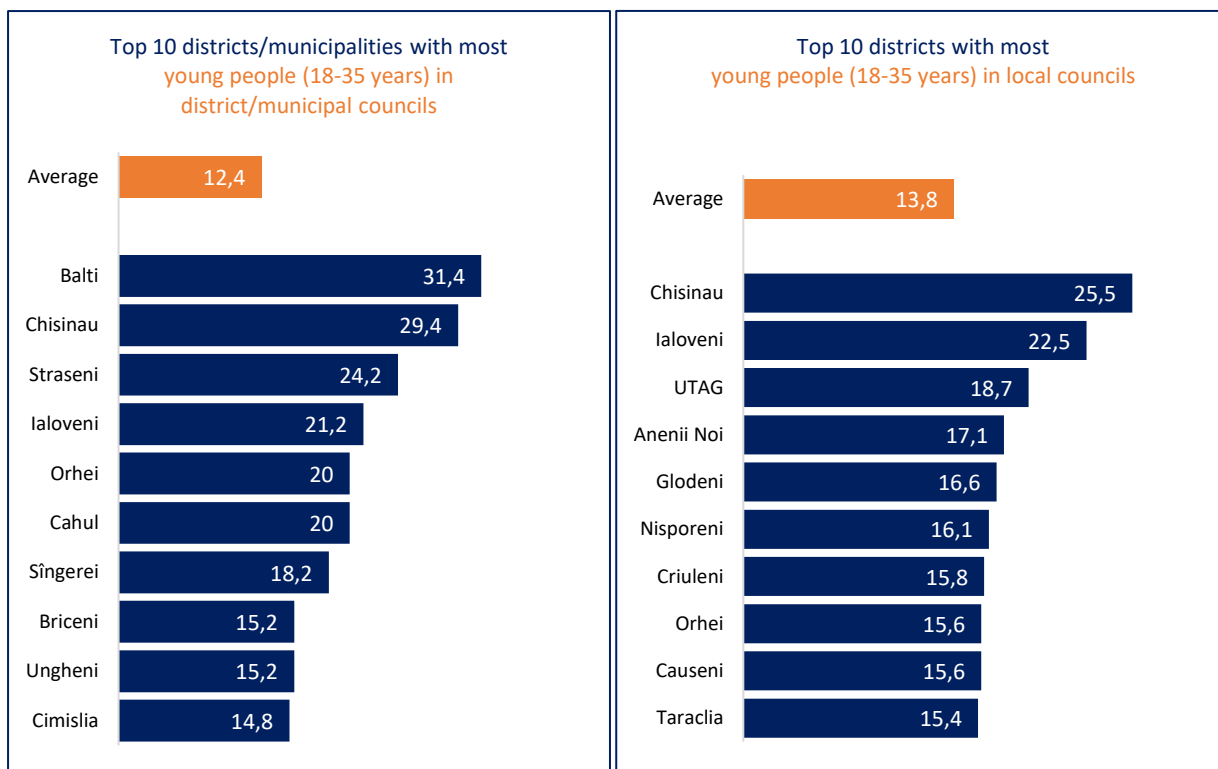


Figure 38. Share of young people elected for the position of district/municipal and local councilor, top 10 districts, %
Source: CPD calculations on the basis of data provided by CEC

The gender losses registered in the 2023 local elections are lower than those in the 2019 elections. Gender losses represent the difference between the share of women candidates and the share of those elected. We observe that gender losses registered in the 2023 local elections are lower than those in the 2019 elections. The difference can be explained by the implementation of new positioning provisions in this election. While in 2019, according to the legal provisions, 3 representatives of the opposite gender had to be ensured for every 10 seats, in the 2023 this provision was changed, establishing for every 10 seats - 4 to be of the opposite gender. This change helped to increase the number of women in eligible and elected positions on the lists. It is important to note that the greatest gender losses are found at the level of district/municipal councils. Here, the larger size of these councils amplifies the impact of gender losses in terms of women representation. As a conclusion, we can state that the implementation of the updated positioning provisions in the 2023 elections reduced the discrepancies between the share of women candidates and that of elected women, diminishing gender losses compared to the 2019 elections, with the most impact within district/municipal councils, given the size of these institutions.

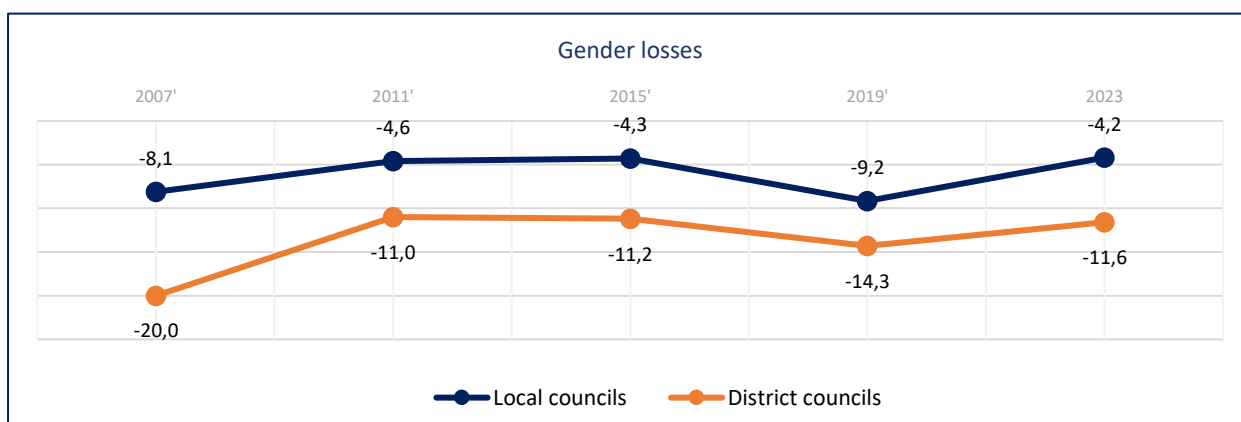


Figure 39. The trend of gender losses regarding the district/municipal and local councilor, %
Source: CPD calculations on the basis of data provided by CEC

From the geographical perspective, the analysis of gender losses at the level of district/municipal councils highlights significant differences among regions. Rezina district stands out with the biggest discrepancy, where women candidates represented 44.4% of the total number of candidates, but only 22.2% were elected as councilors. Next in the list are the districts Ștefan-Voda and Basarabeasca, with a discrepancy of 18%. In contrast, the districts with the lowest gender loss are Edineț, where the difference between women candidates and those elected is only 0.6%, and Leova, Soldanesti and Donduseni, with discrepancies of up to 5%. These districts, with low gender losses, can be remarked also by the significant presence of women in the district councils. In Chisinau and Balti municipalities, the gender loss is 6.5% and 9.5%, respectively.

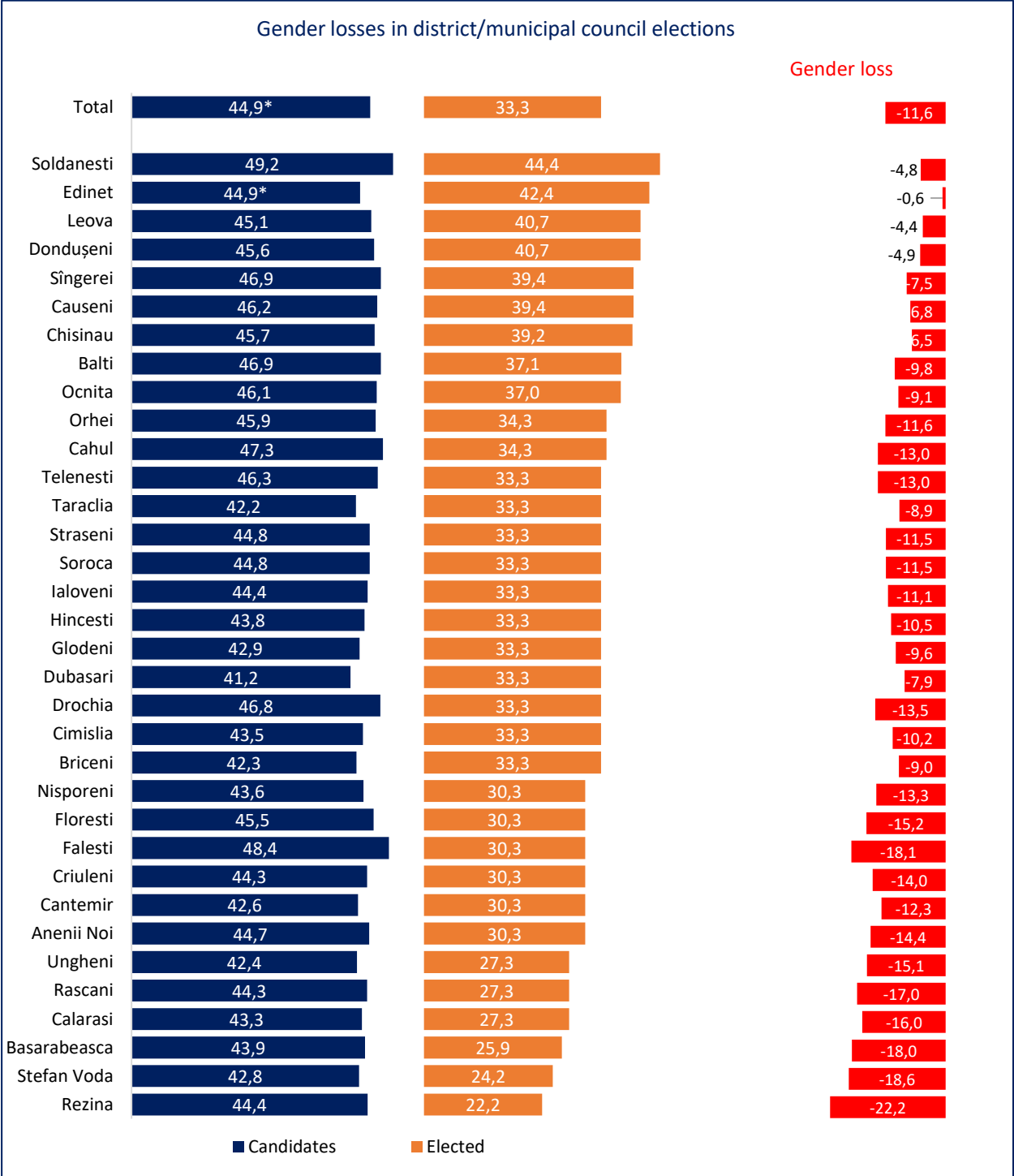


Figure 40. Gender losses in election of district/municipal councilors
 Source: CPD calculations on the basis of data provided by CEC
 *In order to objectively calculate the gender loss within the 2023 local elections, those nominated by the political party "Șansa", which was not admitted to the elections, were excluded from the total number of female candidates.

At the level of local councils, we also note significant differences in terms of gender losses among the country districts. Balti Municipality registers the highest gender loss, reaching 25.7%. Then follows Glodeni with 13% and ATUG with 10%. In contrast, the district with the highest representation of women in local councils is Leova (48.6%), with a gender loss of only 1.2%. It is followed by Soldănești with 46.2% and Edineț with 45.6% women in the local councils. The below diagram reveals the top of settlements that have a fair representation, with at least 40% women councilors in the composition of local councils. These include Causeni, Anenii Noi, Falesti, Dubasari, Drochia, Straseni, Sorooca, Rezina, Sangerei, Criuleni, Rașcani, Ungheni, Cahul and Orhei districts. The other regions of the country have less than 40% women in local councils, with Balti Municipality and ATUG registering less than 30% women councilors. Significant discrepancies between regions indicate an uneven representation of women in local councils, underlining the need to adopt specific measures to increase the participation and equitable representation of women in these units of local administration.

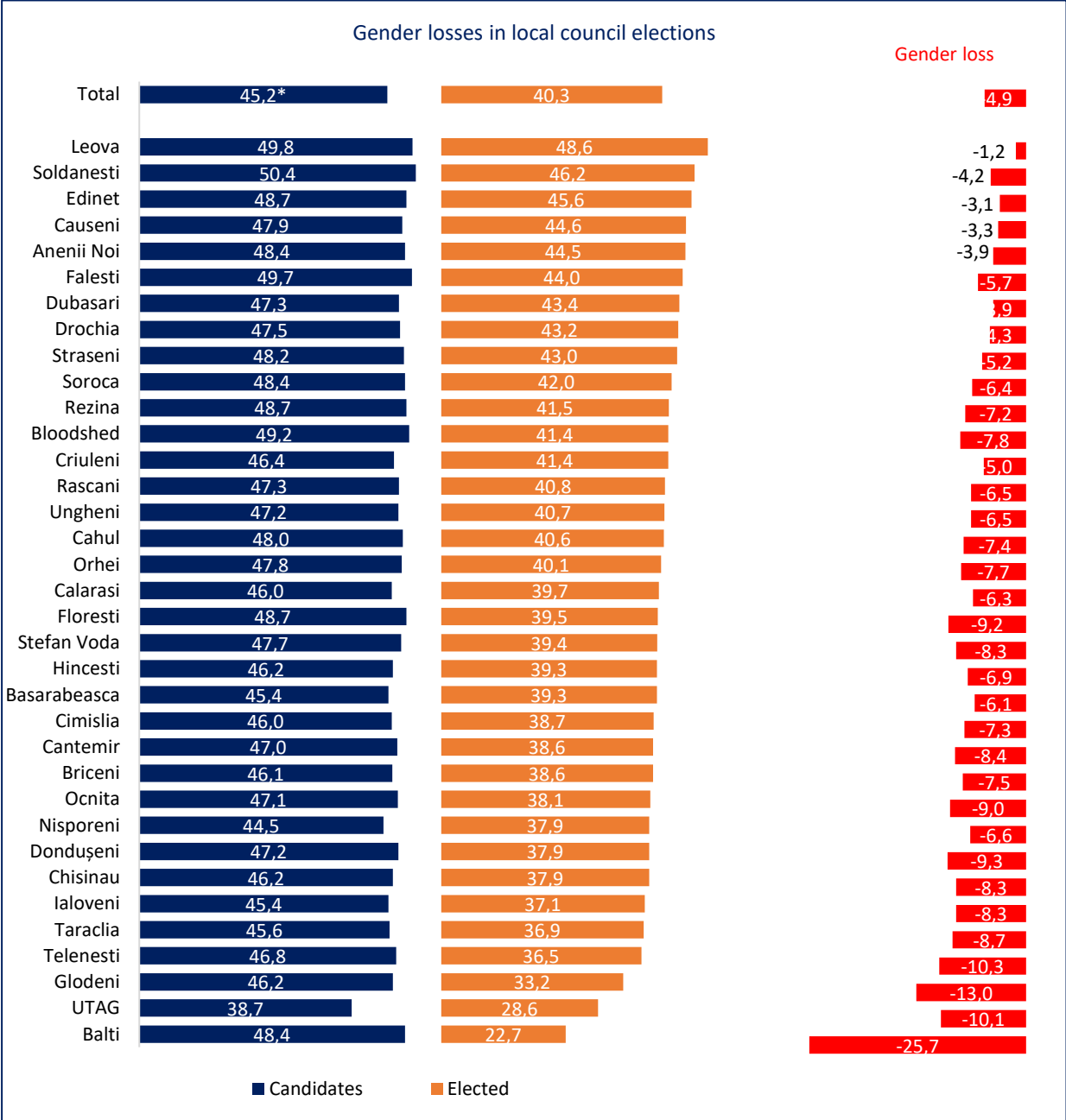


Figure 41. Gender losses in election of local councilors, %
 Source: CPD calculations on the basis of data provided by CEC
 *In order to objectively calculate the gender loss within the 2023 local elections, those nominated by the political party "Șansa", which was not admitted to the elections, were excluded from the total number of female candidates.

THE DOUBLE QUOTA SYSTEM - ENFORCED OR IGNORED ONCE MORE?

The double quota system (the gender quota of 40% and provisions related to position on the list), as a tool to ensure fair representation, is still valid for all election polls. Starting from 2016, political parties were obliged to comply with the minimum gender quota of 40% for both genders at the stage of drawing up the lists of candidates for the parliamentary and local elections, and from 2019 - to observe the new provisions regarding the positioning of candidates on the lists (minimum four candidates for every ten seats). For 2019 general local elections, a derogation from the provisions of the legislation in force was introduced: the lists of candidates were to be drawn up respecting the minimum gender quota of 40% for both genders and a minimum of three candidates of the opposite gender for every 10 seats.

In 2019, about a third of the total lists of candidates for the position of councilor at both levels, registered by the District Electoral Councils, did not respect the gender quota and/or positioning provisions. According to the Regulation for general local elections of 20 October 2019, candidate lists had to meet the minimum gender quota of 40% for both genders and include at least three candidates of the opposite gender for every 10 seats. However, the previous monitoring report showed that at the district/municipal council level, 35.6% of the registered lists in that election were in contradiction with these legal provisions. Of these, 27.5% did not respect the 40% gender quota, and 8.1% violated the provisions of positioning on the lists. At the level of local councils, the percentage of registered lists that violated these provisions was even higher, reaching 40.3%. In this category, 38.3% of the lists did not respect the gender quota, and 2% had deficiencies regarding the positioning on the lists according to the established rules.

This chapter aims to monitor and analyze compliance with the double quota system in designating candidates on the lists in the 2023 elections. The analysis is crucial to check to what extent the principles of fair representation of both genders have been respected, providing relevant information on diversity and representativeness in local and district/municipal councils. This evaluation can highlight possible gaps in the application of gender quotas and identify room for improving the participation and inclusion of both genders in the local decision-making process.

District and municipal councils

Women are positioned in less eligible positions on the candidate list, generally occupying the last places in the deciles. The diagram below shows a specific distribution of the share of women in the deciles of the candidate lists for the position of councilor in district/municipal councils. Analysis of the deciles in terms of the first place reveals a progressive increase in the proportion of women as we move down from the top of the list. For example, in the first decile on the first place, only 18% of the total candidates for the position of councilor in the district/municipal councils are women. In the second decile, this proportion increases to 28% on first place (position 11), and in the third decile it reaches 38% (position 21). This analysis indicates a stronger presence of women in less privileged positions on the list of candidates, a fact that once again confirms the importance of positioning provisions in the election process. The fact that women are placed in the lower positions of the candidate lists suggests that without positioning provisions and the gender quota, it would not be possible to achieve the desired increase in the number of women in the councilor position. Without these regulations, women would be likely to be positioned at the bottom of candidate lists, with little chance of being elected. Positioning provisions contribute significantly to increase of the chances of candidates of the opposite gender and to promote fair representation in decision-making positions. They help ensure a fair distribution of genders on the

candidate lists, thus increasing the chances that both men and women will be included in more privileged positions, contributing to a fairer and more proportionate representation in governing institutions.

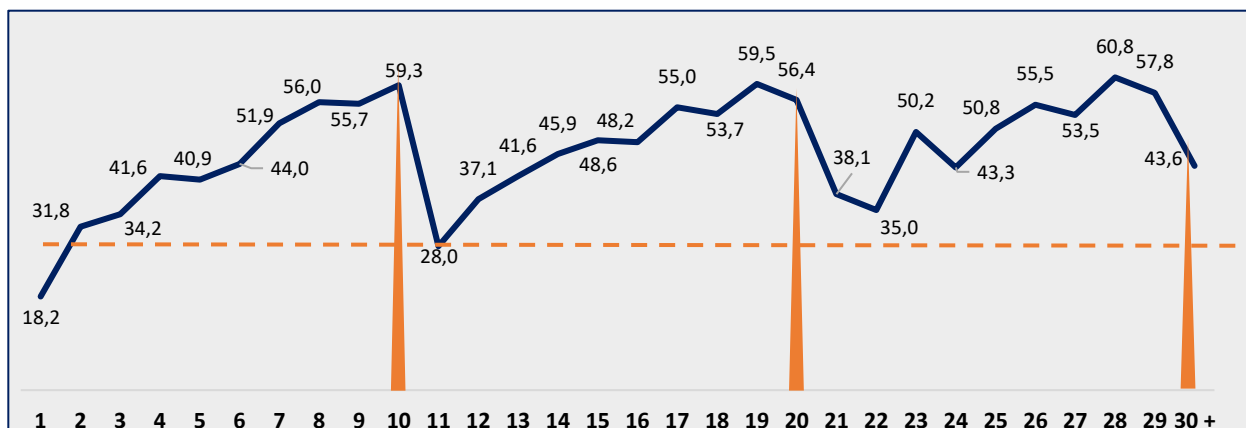


Figure 42. Positioning of women candidates on the candidate lists in district and municipal councils, by position, %
Source: CPD calculations on the basis of data provided by CEC

Very few women still rank the top of the lists of candidates (the first position). The analysis of the positioning of women on the candidate lists in the last three election polls leads to the idea that the finding highlighted in the diagram above is valid for all elections. In the 2023 local elections, the number of women on the lists increased as well as the number of women placed in positions with a higher probability of acceding to a councilor position at the district/municipality level. Analysis of the first 5 places, the most suitable for acceding to the position of councilor, shows that in each year of the elections there has been an increase in the number of women included in the first quintile. For example, in the 2015 and 2019 elections at the top of the candidate list only 14% were women, while in the 2023 elections this number reaches 18.2%. However, the gender discrepancy is still enormous for position 1 of the list of candidates at the district/municipality level and for the first 5 places, with women positioned mostly towards the end of the deciles. Although positioning provisions were implemented to promote fair representation, it is observed that political parties continue to designate women to less favorable positions, and without positioning provisions women would most likely have been positioned at the bottom of the candidate list. It is important to note that the positioning provisions, which require 4 candidates of the opposite gender for every 10 seats, have significantly contributed to progress in the representation of women in elective positions. However, in order to ensure a fully fair representation, it would be opportune to analyze the possibility of introducing new rules for appointing candidates on electoral rolls, focused on quintiles. For example, the introduction of additional provisions according to which at least 2 candidates of the opposite gender had to be appointed for every 5 seats, would further strengthen diversity and balance in public positions.

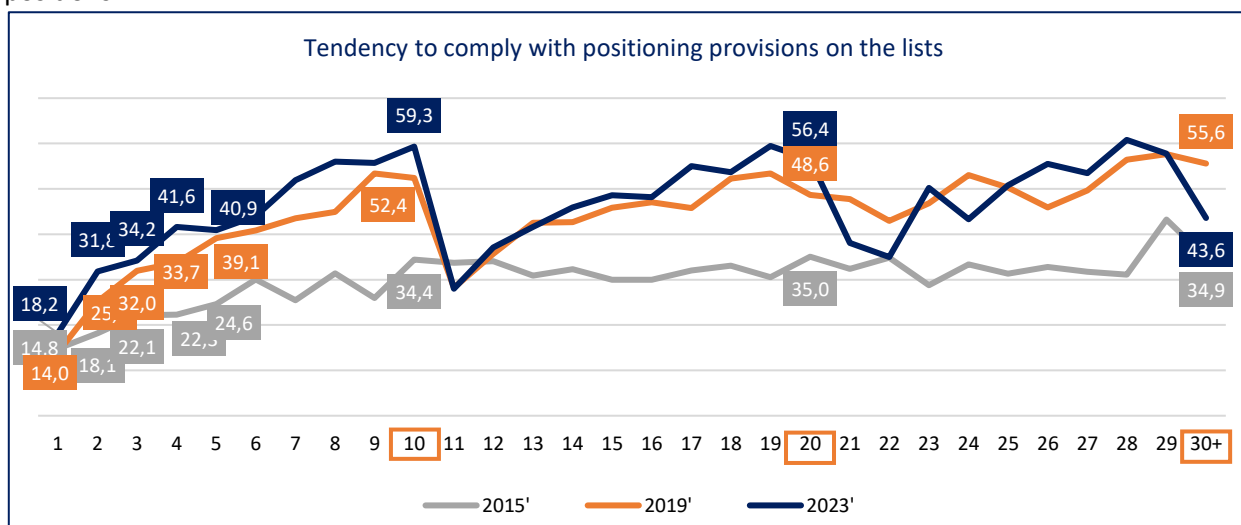


Figure 43. Share of women on the lists of candidates in district/municipal councils, by deciles, in dynamics, %
Source: CPD calculations on the basis of data provided by CEC

Most of the candidate lists registered with violations of rules did not respect the gender quota. The double quota system was designed to ensure fair representation of both genders in decision-making positions. However, there are still violations while designating women and men for positions on the list. According to the data in the figure below, approximately 31% of the total lists of candidates at the level of district/municipal councils showed deviations regarding the observance of the double quota system. Of these lists, 3.7% affected negatively men, while 27% disadvantaged women. Analysis of deviations shows that most of them are related to the failure of observing the gender quotas.

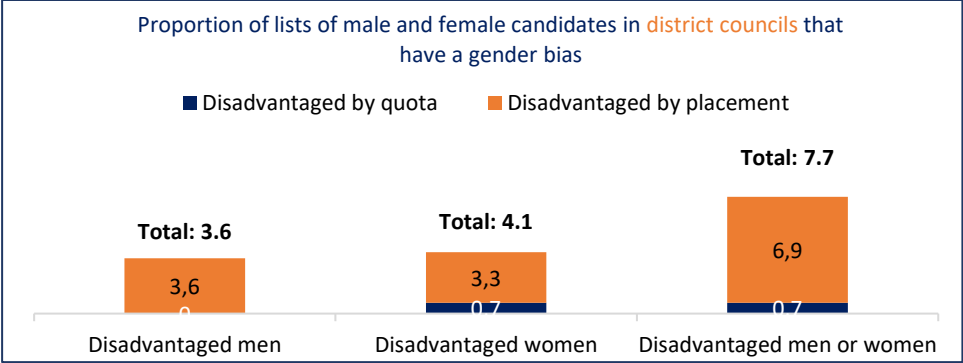


Figure 44. The share of candidate lists in district/municipal councils which do not observe the double system quota, %
 Source: CPD calculations on the basis of data provided by CEC

Local councils

In the case of local council candidates, the difference in gender positioning on the deciles is smaller compared to the district/municipal councils. The gender gap for the top position (1) of candidate lists is smaller in this context. From the second position on the candidate list, women have a balanced representation of at least 40%, except for the first place within each decile, where the differences can be more clear. The difference in gender positioning on deciles at the level of candidate lists for local councils can be influenced by several factors. An important aspect concerns the size of the communities in which the local elections are held. In smaller settlements there is often greater involvement and better knowledge of the candidates, which can favour gender-balanced representation on the lists. Also, in the local political context, there are some particularities that can influence the positioning on the candidate lists. Candidates for local councils can be selected on the basis of individual qualities and competences rather than gender. Thus, in smaller communities, personal criteria and local involvement may take precedence over strictly gender-balanced representation.

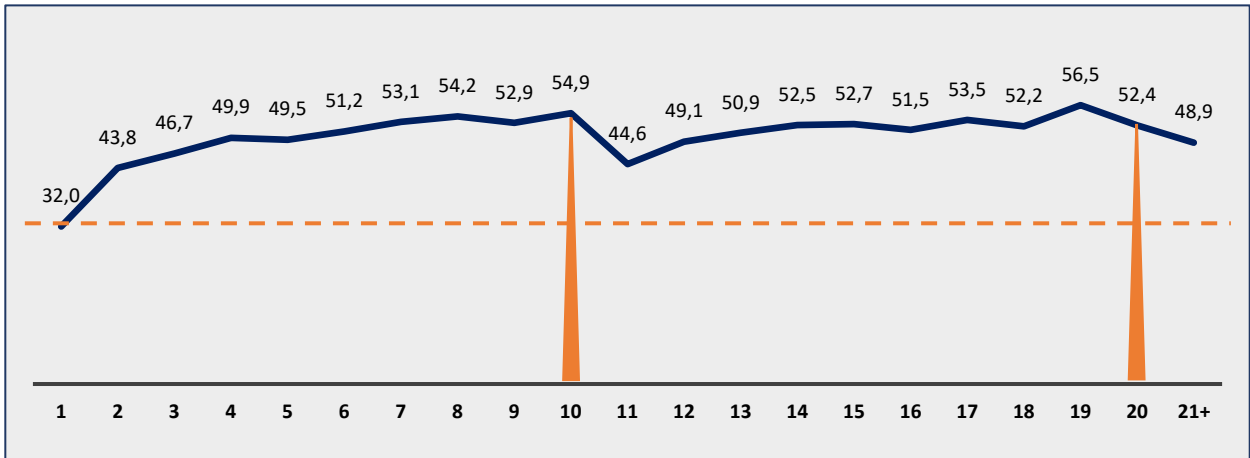
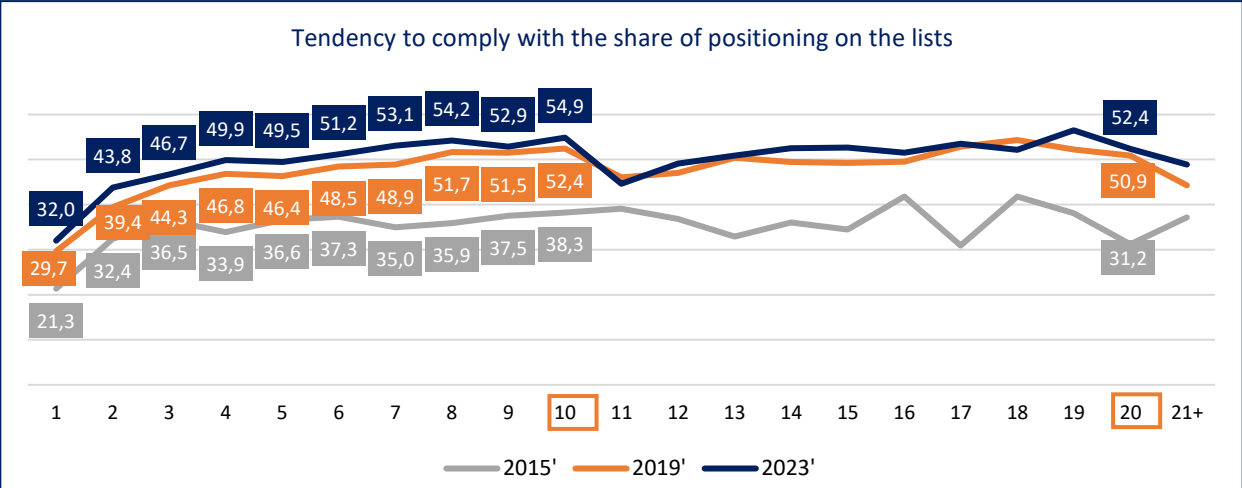


Figure 45. Positioning of women candidates on the candidate lists in local councils, by position, %
 Source: CPD calculations on the basis of data provided by CEC

In the last three election polls, the positioning of women on the lists of candidates in local councils registered a positive evolution, especially in 2023, where their representation improved significantly, including the first positions. Despite this positive trend, the top positions on the lists still do not reach a representation of at least 40% for each gender. On the first places of the candidate lists, the difference compared to the 2015 elections constituted 10%, and compared to the 2019 election – only 2.2%. The double quota system influenced this change, facilitating the positioning of women on the places with the best chance of accessing positions. In the case of district/municipal council lists, where the list is more



extended, women continue to be predominantly placed in less eligible positions towards the end of the deciles. Instead in local councils, where the lists are shorter, it is more difficult to apply.

Figure 46. Share of women on the lists of candidates in local councils, by deciles, in dynamics, %
 Source: CPD calculations on the basis of data provided by CEC

In the context of local councils, a greater number of lists with quota violations of 40% is attested, compared to the level of district/municipal councils, these representing 3% of the total list of candidates. At the same time, 8.7% of the submitted lists disfavored a certain gender when positioning, of which 4.3% disfavored women, and 4.4% - men. As in the case of district/municipal councils, these deviations can occur due to the odd number of members in the composition of local councils, which makes it difficult to fully comply with the provisions of the double quota system.

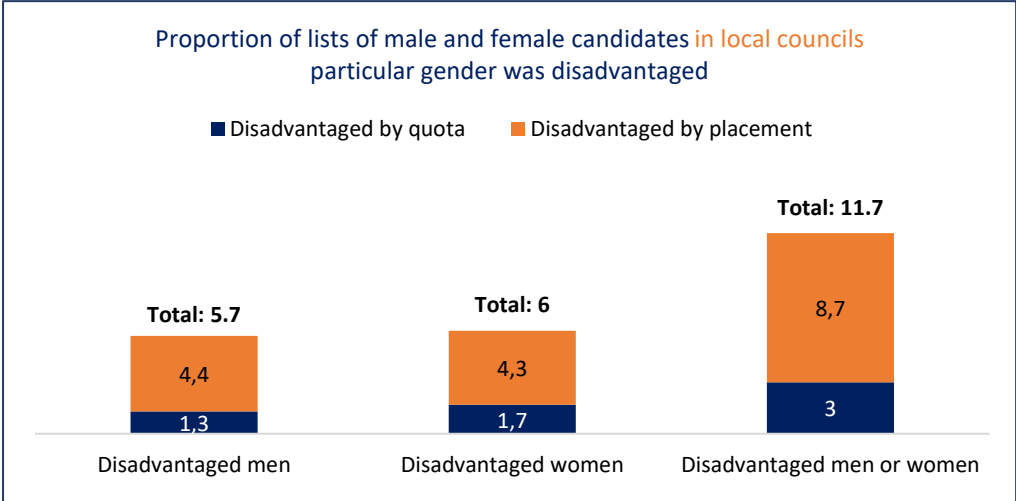


Figure 47. The share of candidate lists in local councils, that did not comply with the 60/40 quota system, and the placement on the lists of candidates favored a certain gender, % which do not observe the double system quota, %
 Source: CPD calculations on the basis of data provided by CEC

FINDINGS

The monitoring of the fair representation of women and men in the 2023 elections for the position of councilor highlights significant progress in terms of the fair participation of women and men in the election process, but also certain inconsistencies in the way of implementing the legislative provisions regarding the double quota system, namely the minimum gender quota of 40% for both genders and the positioning provisions on candidate lists. Specifically, we find that:

1. In 2023 local elections we are getting closer to a 50/50 representation of women and men candidates in the election process. The share of women among the candidates for the position of district/municipal councilor is 45.3%, and among the candidates for the position of local councilor - 47.2%, which represents an increase of over 15% compared to the 2015 elections and by over 2% compared to 2019 in case of district/municipal councilors and an increase of about 12% compared to 2015 and 1.4% compared to 2019 in case of local councilors.

2. Most of the women candidates for the position of councilor are designated by political parties, and those who decided to run independently were more oriented towards the position of local councilor (21.9%, compared to 9.1% who ran independently for the position of district/municipal councilor).

3. Under the pressure of the imposed legal provisions, the political parties designated at least 40% women on the candidate lists for the councilor position. In case of district/municipal councils, all parties included more than 40% women on their candidate lists, and in case of local councils, most political parties exceeded the threshold of 45% women nominated for the position of local councilor.

4. Women participated for the councilor position and were predominantly elected in smaller communities. In the composition of district/municipal councils, the share of elected women councilors is 33.3%, while in local councils - 40.3% of women. This can be explained by the specific dynamics of smaller communities, where access to administrative positions may be easier reached by young people and women. Political and social opportunities may be more visible in these environments, thus providing more space and support for the representation of young people and women in local decision-making positions.

5. Among the elected councilors, young people are underrepresented. Thus, young people aged between 18 and 34 constitute only 10% of all councilors at district/municipal level and 12% at the local level. The young people elected to the position of district/municipal councilor can be found more in Balti (31.4%) and Chisinau (29.4%) municipalities. At the level of local councils, Chisinau is leading, with 25.5% young people, and Ialoveni with 22.5%.

6. Women are positioned in less eligible positions on the candidate lists, occupying the last positions in the deciles. In the first decile on the first position, there are only 18% of women from the total candidates for the position of councilor in the district/municipal councils and 32% - in the local councils.

7. During the 2023 local elections, violations of the provisions regarding the 40% quota were attested. Violations are found regarding the designation of both women and men on the candidate lists, as well as the disfavor of one gender or another in the case of placement provisions (for every 10 places, at least 4 places of the opposite sex). In the case of district/municipal councils, approximately 7.7% of the total lists of candidates at the level of district/municipal councils contained deviations in regard to the observance of the double quota system, of which 3.6% disadvantaged men, while 4.1% - the women. At the same time, about 0.7% of the lists violated the quota provision regarding the representation of at least 40% of the opposite sex. At the level of local councils: 8.7% of the submitted lists disfavored a certain gender when positioning, of which 4.3% disfavored women, and 4.4% - men. As in the case of district/municipal councils, these deviations are explained by the odd number of members in the composition of local councils, which makes it difficult to fully comply with the provisions of the double quota system.

CHAPTER IV

IS MONEY CRITICAL IN ELECTION CAMPAIGNS?

INCOME OF THE CANDIDATES FOR THE POSITION OF MAYOR (Chisinau Municipality and Balti Municipality)

The average income of a man candidate for the position of mayor is 1.5 times greater than the income of a woman candidate. Monitoring reports for 2023 local elections indicate an underrepresentation of women candidates and elected for the position of mayor. One of the factors that explain the lower participation of women relates to their access to financial resources, which often determines a person's ability to participate in election campaigns. Launching and participating in political life involves essential costs, which are constantly increasing in the context of economic developments of recent years. Thus, the financial resources possessed by a candidate become an essential element in his/her ability to access decision-making positions. In order to understand the correlation between incomes and access to elective positions, the incomes of candidates from Chisinau and Balti municipalities were analyzed during 2023 local elections (in these elections, the Central Electoral Commission did not segregate the national data on the candidates' incomes, thus access to this data was limited). According to official data, the total average income of men candidates for mayor position was MDL 306,820 thousand, compared to MDL 201,472 thousand of women candidates, which represents a discrepancy of 34% in favor of men. In case of salary income, the difference is smaller – 14%, but it is also in favor of men.

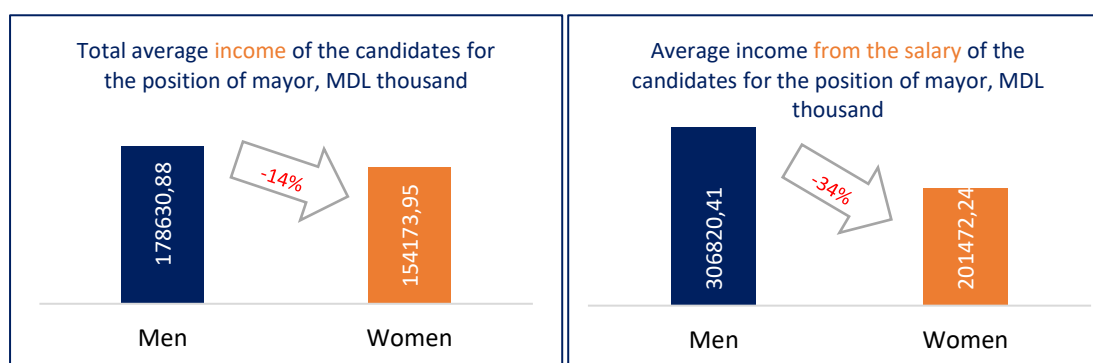


Figure 48. The average income of men and women candidates for the position of mayor, 2023

Source: The income declarations of candidates from Chisinau and Balti municipalities

Women candidates are more dependent on salary income. Data analysis of the income of men and women candidates reveals a low diversity and less productivity of income sources among women. Thus, the women candidates declared only 3 sources of income, of which 76.5% came from salary (job). On the other hand, men declared 6 sources of income, of which 58.2% - salary income, and over 30% - productive income from the sale of movable and immovable assets, donations/bequests, deposits, scientific/teaching activities. Thus, we note a certain degree of financial vulnerability of women, who are effectively dependent on salary income, a fact that makes them 'poorer', compared to men, and decreases their chances of accessing decision-making positions in the election process, there where 'money talks'.

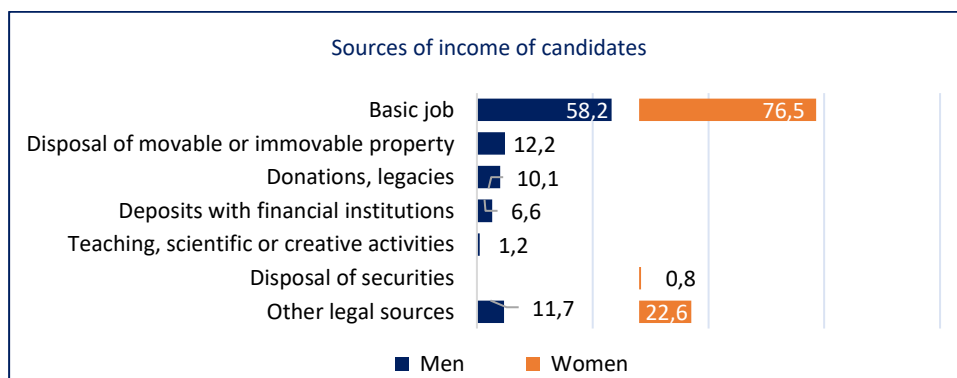


Figure 49. Sources of income of the candidates for the position of mayor, 2023

Source: The income declarations of candidates from Chisinau and Balti municipalities

The capital of women candidates is much lower than that of men candidates. Election campaigns are extremely expensive and time-consuming, and candidates who manage to get more funds to run their election campaigns have a better chance of winning. Studies⁶ show that women candidates have more difficulties getting funds for their campaigns. They generally have to identify multiple sources of income, which requires much more time and effort to raise funds, while their men counterparts can focus on other aspects of election campaigns. Candidates' assets, measured in terms of bank accounts, share/shares in capital stock, have a significant positive impact on electoral potential. Candidates with greater capital filter more easily into competitive parties. But even among candidates from competitive parties, the one with more capital is more likely to win the constituency. The data on the assets of the candidates in the 2023 elections show that only 5% of women own a share/or shares in the capital stock of an enterprise, compared to 33% in case of men. At the same time, only 9% of women have bank accounts, compared to 19% of men candidates. Women's limited access to financial resources complicates the planning and running of a significant election campaign, which reduces their chances of winning.

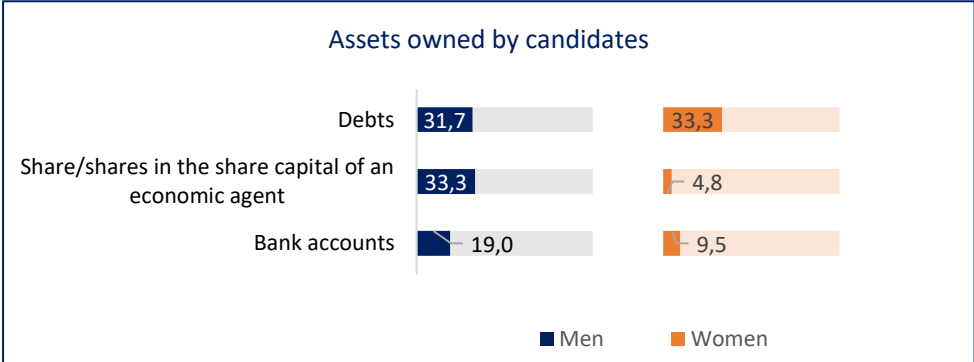


Figure 50. Assets owned by candidates for the position of mayor, by type of assets, 2023
 Source: The income declarations of candidates from Chisinau and Balti municipalities

There are significant differences in the value of assets held by the candidates. Analysis of assets declared by candidates, measured in terms of real estate, securities, land owned, shows that men own lands that value 6 times more than those owned by women, while real estate owned by women has a value more than 2 times higher than those held by men. These data show that women not only own fewer assets, but their value is often lower.

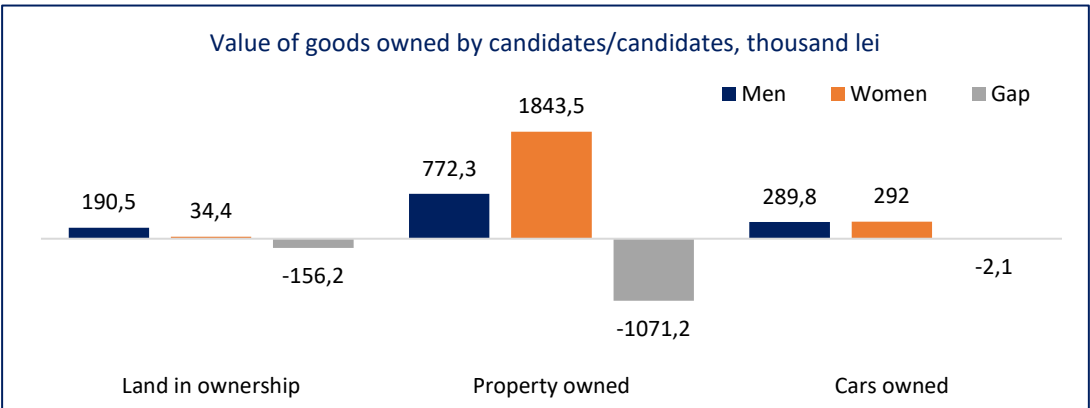


Figure 51. The average value of the assets of men and women candidates for the position of mayor, by type of asset, and the discrepancy from gender perspective, 2023

Source: The income declarations of candidates from Chisinau and Balti municipalities

⁶ Shannon Jenkins, "A Woman's Work Is Never Done? Fund-Raising Perception and Effort among Female State Legislative Candidates"

ELECTION CAMPAIGN FUNDING

In order to support election campaigns, women were involved oftener in volunteering, and men made more donations. Of the total number of party members who supported the 2023 election campaigns through volunteering, 52.9% were women, and 47.1% were men. On the other hand, about 60% of those who donated were men. Half of the donations made were made in cash, and only 19.6% of the donations were made by transfer. During the election campaigns, donations of goods were also registered, these constituting approximately 30% of the total value of the donations.

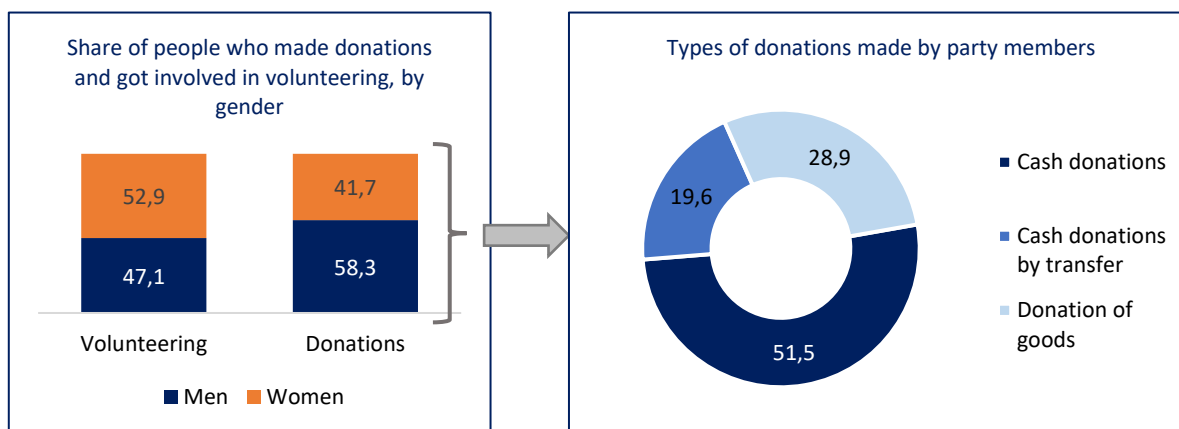


Figure 52. Share of women and men who participated in volunteering or made donations to support election campaigns, by gender and type of donation, 2023

Source: Financial reports of political parties, Central Electoral Commission

Donations made by men were much more frequent and valuable than those made by women. Although both men and women party members made donations in various forms, the average value of a donation made by men is considerably higher than those of women, with an average of MDL 1103.73, which constitute a 15% difference. This fact is due exclusively to the assets and income discrepancies that women and men experience throughout their lives. Also, the number of donations made is higher among men party members. The share of donations made by men is 60%, compared to 40% in case of women. The biggest gender discrepancy among donations is seen in the donation of goods, where approximately 73% were made by men and only 27% by women.

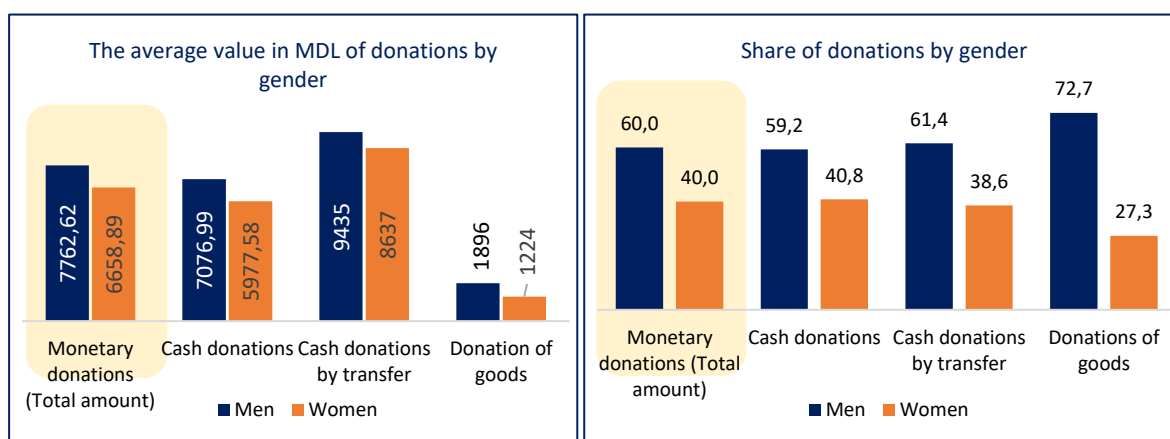


Figure 53. The average value in MDL and the share of donations made to support the election campaign, by gender and types of donations, 2023

Source: Financial reports of political parties, Central Electoral Commission

The most generous donations were made by members of the 'Chance' Political Party. More than half of the donations made within the 'Chance' Party were made by women - members of the party. Respectively, the largest donation made by women from all parties was made by the members of 'Chance' Party, in the

amount of MDL 1,790,870.00. The next party in which women contributed significantly during the election campaign is the MAN Party, where 51.2% of women made donations worth MDL 1,350,550.00.

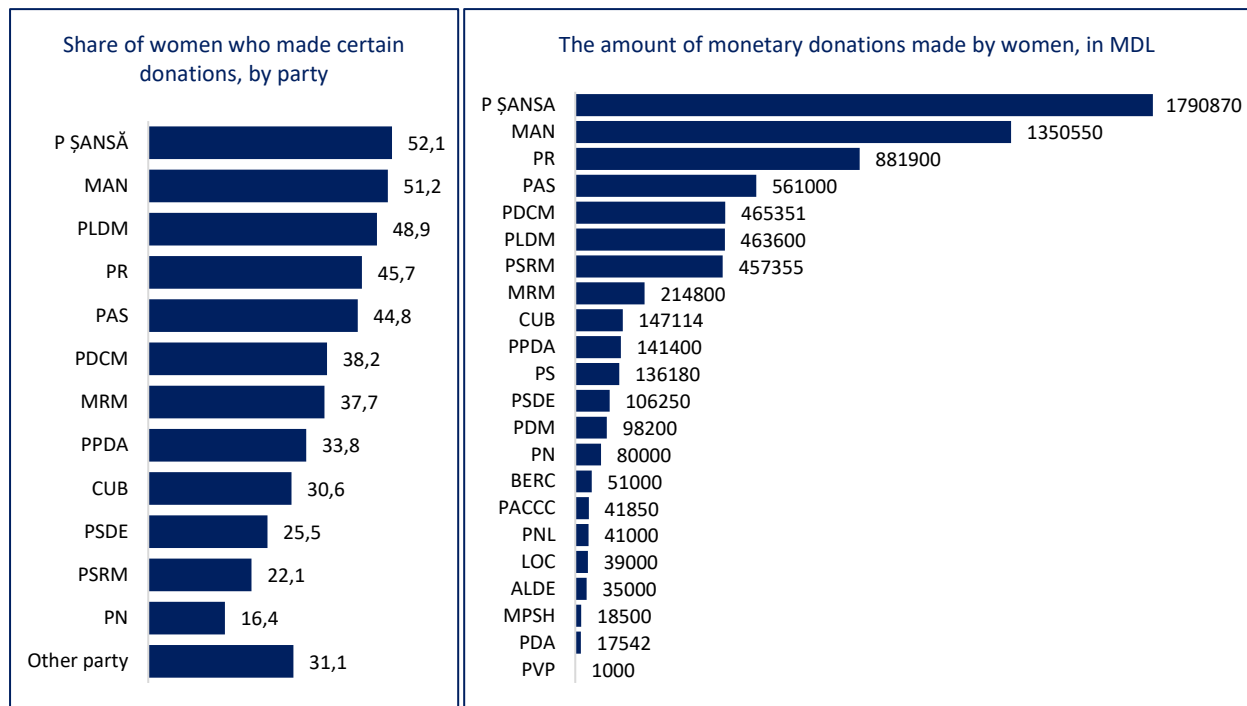


Figure 54. Share of women who made donations to support the election campaign and value of donations, by party, 2023; Source: Financial reports of political parties, Central Electoral Commission

Most of the monetary donations made by women were made in cash. The data analysis shows that practically all donations made by the members of ‘Chance’ Party, which received the most donations, were made in cash. However, the most monetary donations by transfer were made by women from the Party of Development and Consolidation of Moldova (PDCM), in a total amount of MDL 460,351.00. Party members are more reluctant to donate by transfer, as it implies greater transparency about the source of income from which donations are intended to be made.

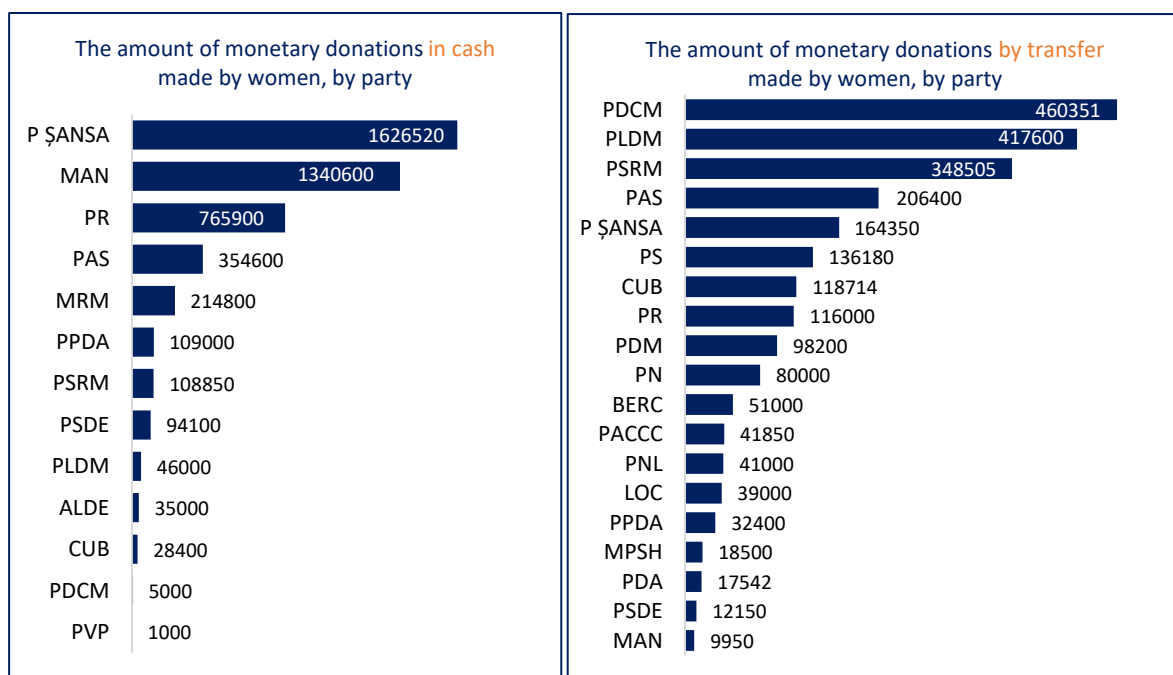


Figure 55. Value of donations made by women, by type of transfer and party, 2023 Source: Financial reports of political parties, Central Electoral Commission

As a contribution to election campaigns, the involvement in volunteering actions was not very popular.

A small number of members engaged in volunteering to support the election campaigns of the political parties they represent. Only two parties have registered a larger share: Our Party - 38.0% and the Party of Socialists of the Republic of Moldova - 37.6%. Women more frequently among others got involved in volunteering: The Party Schimbării benefited from the involvement of women to the extent of 66.7%, and the Party Renaștere - 64.7%. As in the previous elections, women are still much more likely to practice volunteering, as a form of contribution in election campaigns.

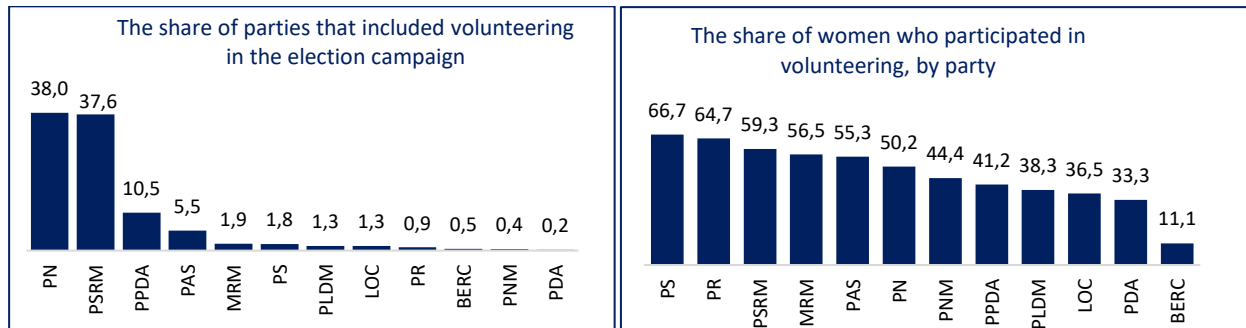


Figure 56. Involvement in volunteering, as a form of contribution in election campaigns, %
Source: Financial reports of political parties, Central Electoral Commission

Most of the money was spent on the election campaign to promote men and women candidates in Chisinau.

Over MDL 32 mln. were spent for the entire election campaign in the 2023 local elections. More than MDL 11 mln. were allocated in Chisinau, constituting approximately 35% of the total amount that was spent throughout the Republic. The Party „Acțiune și Solidaritate” incurred the largest expenses - approximately MDL 8 mln. for the promotion of its candidates in the local elections, followed by the Socialist Party of the Republic of Moldova, which incurred expenses in the amount of MDL 4.5 mln.

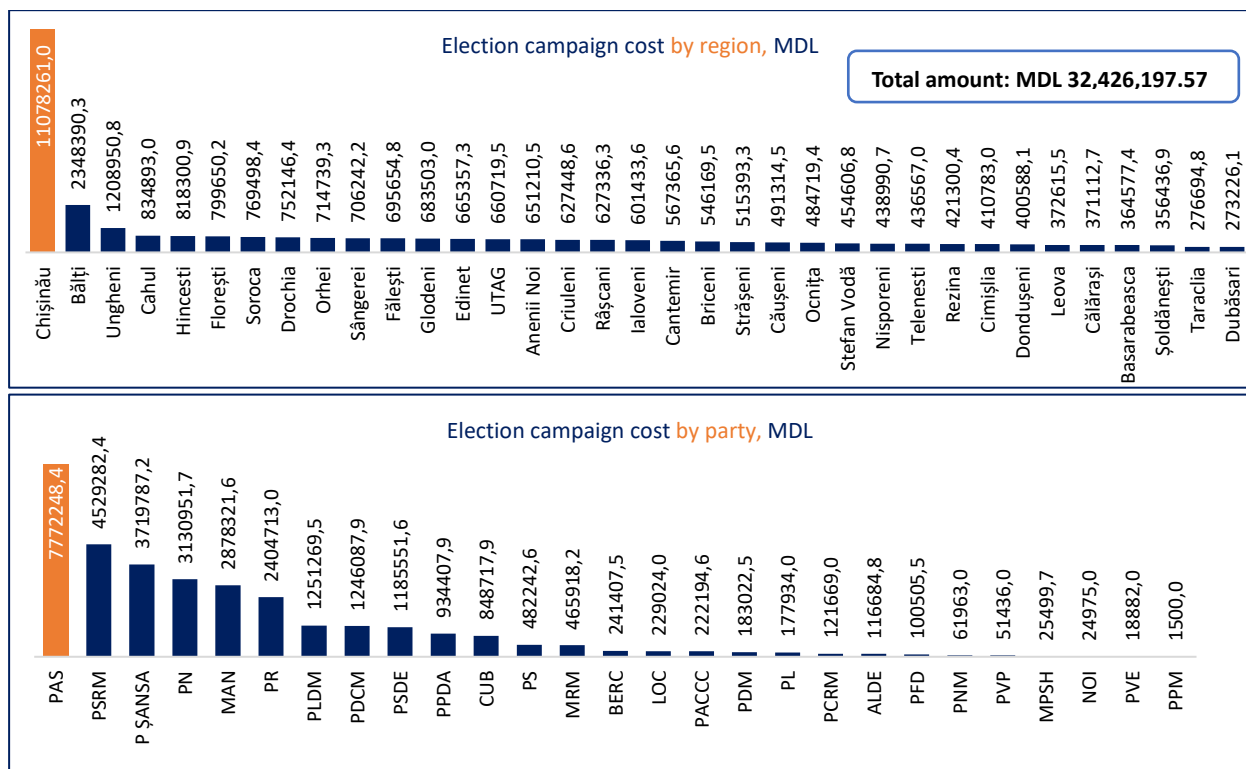


Figure 57. Election campaign cost by region and by party, MDL
Source: Financial reports of political parties, Central Electoral Commission

FINDINGS

The present analysis showed that financial capacity, access to resources influence the way women and men get involved in the election process, but also their chances of obtaining decision-making positions following the elections. Specifically, the analysis has revealed several main findings:

1. The average income of a man candidate for the position of mayor is 1.5 times greater than the income of a woman candidate. According to official data, the total average income of men candidates for mayor position was MDL 306,820 thousand, compared to MDL 201,472 thousand of women candidates, which represents a discrepancy of 34% in favor of men. At the same time, women candidates are more dependent on salary income – which constitutes over 75% of their total income, while men also rely on productive income – which constitutes over 30% of their total income. Since launching and participating in political life involves essential costs, women are less likely to advance without sufficient financial resources.

2. Women candidates own fewer and less valuable assets compared to men candidates. Candidates with greater capital filter easier into competitive parties, having greater chances to win. The analysis shows that only 5% of women candidates own a share/or shares in the capital stock of an enterprise, compared to 33% in case of men. At the same time, only 9% of women have bank accounts, compared to 19% of men candidates. The analysis shows that the value of assets declared by women candidates is also lower – for example, men own lands that value 6 times more than those owned by women.

3. During the election campaigns, women candidates were oftener involved in volunteering, and men made more donations, as ways of contribution. About 60% of those who donated were men, and 53% of those who supported through volunteering were women. Considering high costs of election campaigns, candidates with a greater willingness to contribute financially increase their chances of gaining elective positions.

4. Donations made by men were of a higher value. The average value of a donation made by men is higher than that of women, on average by MDL 1103.73, which constitutes about 15%. Also, the number of donations made is higher among men party members. The share of donations made by men is 60%, compared to 40% in case of women. The biggest gender discrepancy among donations is seen in the donation of goods, where approximately 73% were made by men and only 27% by women. Most monetary donations were made in cash, party members are more reluctant to donate by transfer, as it implies greater transparency about the source of income from which donations are intended to be made.

CHAPTER V

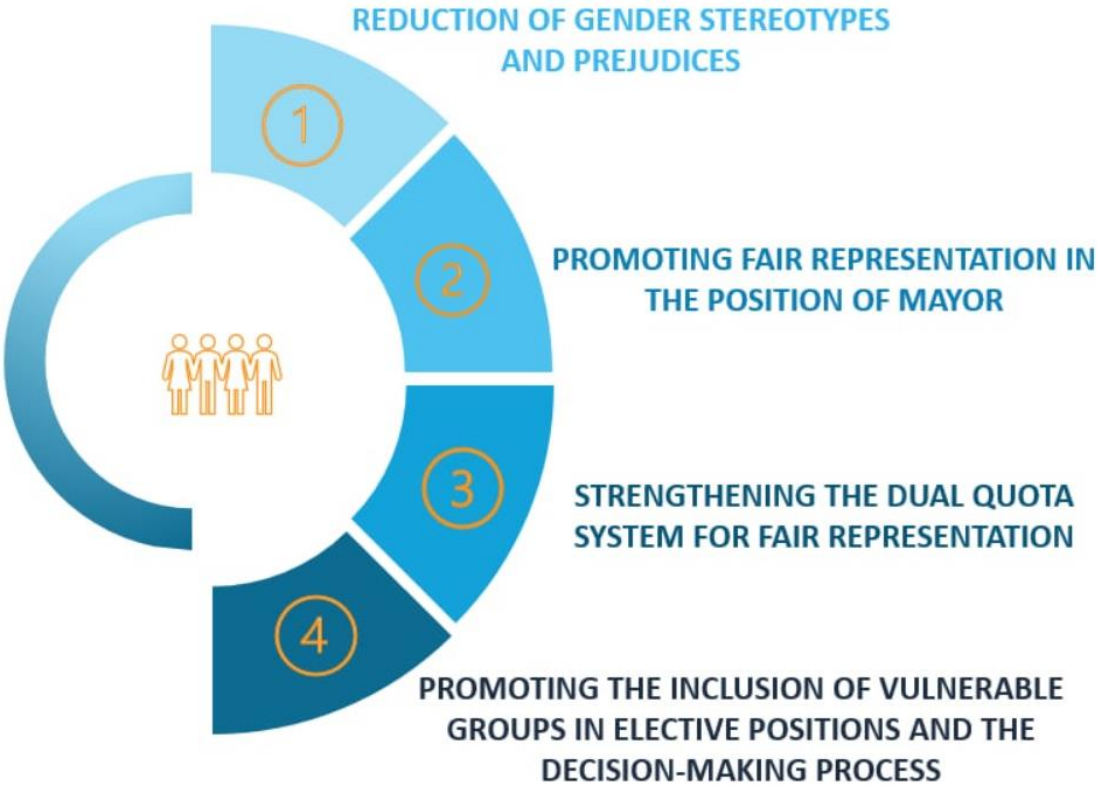
RECOMMENDATIONS

HOW TO TRANSFORM THE ELECTION PROCESS INTO A FAIR AND INCLUSIVE ONE: RECOMMENDATIONS AND BEST PRACTICES

Women's participation in public life is determined by a variety of factors, whether *political* (the electoral system, the status of political parties, candidate selection criteria), *social* (such as the social assistance system, parental leave schemes and measures of balancing work and family life), *economic* (e.g. the gender pay gap and access to professions and careers) or *cultural* (especially, gender role stereotypes). Access to media and funding is, also crucial for women active in politics.

The purpose of this chapter is to provide pragmatic and strategic recommendations, based on the observations and collected data, to reduce gender inequalities and promote a more inclusive participation in the election process and decision-making positions. Thus, taking into account the trends observed in the last four election polls and the findings from the monitoring process of 2023 local elections, from gender perspective, the recommendations were structured into four essential segments. They include both suggestions for legal amendments, as well as ideas for activities and examples of best practices applied in various countries.

This section is intended for central and local public authorities, as well as institutions involved in the organization and conduct of the electoral process, political parties, development partners and non-governmental organizations, emphasizing the need for a common and coordinated approach in this process.



In society, the prevailing political and social culture plays a crucial role in determining the representation of women in decision-making positions. This culture is often shaped by traditional norms, values and expectations related to gender roles, which can influence the perceptions and behaviors of both men and women in the political sphere. A specific example can be seen in such countries as Japan and South Korea, where traditional cultural norms regarding the role of women have contributed to a low representation of women in politics. Instead, in countries such as Sweden and Finland, which promote more gender-egalitarian social norms, can be noticed a significantly higher participation of women in politics and in leadership positions. To discourage these cultural norms and perceptions, it is essential to promote gender equality education and awareness-raising, starting at an early age and continuing through formal and non-formal education. Along with these educational initiatives, social factors as well as complex state interventions should be considered in order to ensure a holistic approach in reducing stereotypes and prejudices related to gender roles. Further, we will come up with a set of recommendations for activities and practices to reduce gender stereotypes that can be implemented in the Republic of Moldova.

- **Training and mentorship programs**

In international practice, these programs are implemented by non-governmental organizations, public institutions and political parties, having a significant impact especially in countries where stereotypes related to gender roles are still strongly rooted. They begin by strengthening women's self-confidence, helping them realize their potential and overcome their fears about involvement in politics, and continue by giving them the tools to excel in leadership positions. Training and mentoring programs increase women's access to political life and the decision-making process, thus improving representativeness and diversity in politics and bringing innovative perspectives and approaches to public policy-making. On the other hand, these programs contribute to changing the mindset of society. Through their successful examples, women become role models for future generations, proving that active involvement in politics is accessible and essential. Thus, a virtuous circle of women's empowerment is created, which is reflected not only in politics, but also in the whole society. From developing leadership and communication skills, to understanding the election process and managing campaigns, these programs cover a wide spectrum of needs. They prepare women not only to participate in elections, but also to lead with vision and competence.

["Elect HER" \(Great Britain\)](#): An initiative dedicated to the promotion and support of women's participation in politics. The aim of this project is to increase the representation of women in elective positions, with a focus on different levels of governance, including local, district and national levels. "Elect HER" provides training, resources and support to women interested in running for political office or who already hold such positions.

[Women Power Politics – Helene Weber Kolleg](#): A well-established initiative focused on mobilising women to take up political positions at the local level. The creative combination of a variety of interconnected tools: the Helene Weber Award, a comprehensive mentorship program, local projects by award winners and an informative website. This cross-party project is supported by the Federal Government. A multilateral approach model is also relevant for other countries.

[Vital Voices Global Partnership](#): This international NGO offers a mentoring and leadership program for women around the world. The program focuses on developing leadership, communication and campaigning skills, giving women the tools to become effective leaders at the local level.

[EMILY's List \(United States of America\)](#): Organization that supports pro-choice democratic women by providing them with training, resources and support to participate in the elections and win public positions.

[She Should Run \(United States of America\)](#): A non-profit organization that encourages and supports women to run for public positions by providing mentoring programs, educational resources and a supportive community.

[Akademie für Potentialentfaltung \(Austria\)](#): It offers specific programs for the development of female leaders in Austrian politics, focusing on empowerment, leadership and campaign strategies.

[Canberra Women in Politics \(Australia\)](#): Initiative that provides training and workshops for women who want to get involved in Australian politics, with a focus on skills development and networking.

[Women of the Future \(Australia\)](#): This Australian initiative brings together women from different sectors of the public life, including politics, to develop leadership skills and promote cooperation between them. It serves as a hub for women of influence in Australia.

[Cherie Blair Foundation's Women in Public Life Program \(Global\)](#): The program focuses on empowering women around the world to participate actively in political and public life by providing them with access to mentorship, training and resources.

[IGNITE \(United States of America\)](#): IGNITE is a non-profit organization focused on mobilizing and training young women to get involved in politics. Provides leadership development programs and supports women to run for public positions.

[Emerge America \(United States of America\)](#): Emerge America is an Organization that provides political training programs for progressive women in the United States of America. Their goal is to prepare women to run for elective positions and become leaders in their communities.

[Asian Women Leadership University \(South Coreea\)](#): This is an example of an educational institution that provides training and skill development programs for women leaders throughout the Asian region. These programs contribute to strengthening the presence of women in politics and in public positions.

Specific recommendation: We note with concern that during the last elections, the increase in the level of stereotypes and prejudices against women involved in politics became evident. Even though the double quota system has brought significant improvements in the number of women elected to public positions, further measures are still needed to ensure a more equitable representation of women at all levels of governance. In the Republic of Moldova, we have witnessed in the last 10 years a significant increase in the number of training and mentoring programs, dedicated to women who want to get involved in politics. These programs have been developed not only for women in general, but also for specific groups such as young women, women with disabilities, Roma women and those from the security and defense sector, just to name a few examples. Most of these programs are implemented by non-governmental Organizations with the support of development partners and have been instrumental in preparing women to take active roles in politics. In addition, international Organizations such as IREX and NDI have been actively involved in organizing programs which include not only the pre-election period, but also strengthen the capacities of women's and youth Organizations from political parties. In this context, it is recommended to continue and strengthen the training and mentoring programs, which provide women with the necessary tools to participate and hold leadership positions in the political system of the Republic of Moldova.

- **Experience exchange and interaction between women in politics**

The appearance of women politicians in the public and media space can help combat stereotypical views. The more women politicians are present and vocal in the public and media space, the more increases the interest among young girls to get involved in politics. The significant participation of women within central and local authorities, promoting openly common causes, as well as the building dialogues and partnerships between them, will contribute to a greater credibility for women politicians. Through collaboration and synergy, they can influence and shape the political agenda, having a significant impact on decisions and implemented policies.

National and international events, as a method of interaction, also strengthen relationships and the image of women politicians. Strengthening women's participation in politics and public positions can be achieved by organizing regional, national and international forums that bring together women in various public positions at different levels of governance. These: (i) would facilitate the experience exchange between women politicians on the challenges and successes related to access to public positions, election campaigns and the management of public affairs, identification of effective solutions and strategies to overcome existing obstacles to women's participation in politics; (ii) would create opportunities to increase the visibility of women politicians, giving them the opportunity to publicize their successes and contributions in different areas of governance, thus strengthening the positive image of women in politics; (iii) would create the right context for establishing cooperation and partnerships to address issues of common interest, such as promoting equal opportunities, combating gender stereotypes or developing women-friendly policies. These partnerships could have a significant impact on the decision-making process and implemented policies, (iv) allow the speeches of successful women politicians in these forums to serve as role models and sources of inspiration for girls and young women who want to get involved in politics, thus increasing their interest and involvement in political life and ensuring a healthy succession of women leaders in politics.

Women in the World Summit (United States of America): This annual event brings together political leaders, activists and powerful women from around the world to discuss and develop solutions to global issues related to women and gender equality. The summit offers a special platform for the exchange of ideas and experiences.

[Women Deliver \(Global\):](#) Women Deliver is a global conference that brings together political leaders, activists and Organizations from around the world to discuss and act on women's health and rights. The event addresses issues related to sexual and reproductive health, as well as women's participation in politics.

[European Women's Lobby Annual General Assembly \(European Union\):](#) Organized by the European Women's Lobby (EWL), this annual gathering brings together member Organizations from across the European Union to discuss and develop common strategies to promote women's rights and gender equality in Europe.

[African Women Leaders Network \(African Union\):](#) This is an example of a regional initiative that brings together women leaders from Africa to promote peace, security and development on the continent. The events and forums organized by this group are essential for strengthening the role of women in politics and in the decision-making process.

[National Women's Conferences \(Australia\):](#) Australia holds national women's conferences, which aim to discuss and develop policies and initiatives for the improvement of the status of women in society and politics.

[The Conference of Women Parliamentarians \(Canada\):](#) In Canada, this conference brings together women from Federal and Provincial Parliament to discuss and develop policies and initiatives that advance women's rights and gender equality.

[Women in Public Service Project \(United States of America\):](#) This global initiative was launched at Wellesley College and brings together women in public positions from around the world to promote women's participation in government leadership.

[The Art of Leadership for Women' \(Canada\)](#) - A conference that brings together women from various fields to discuss leadership and career development.

Specific recommendation: Annually, in the Republic of Moldova, can be organized a national forum dedicated to women who hold public positions at the local and national level. This event would provide a crucial platform for discussing the barriers women have to face in their political careers and for developing support and solidarity strategies for the future. At the same time, a tradition could be established of organizing regional forums in various areas of the country, followed by a large-scale national event. March, the month which symbolizes women's rights, could be chosen as a symbolic moment to hold these meetings, to bring together women from all domains, not just politics, and to

promote exchanges of ideas and experiences in order to strengthen women's participation and influence in Moldovan society.

- **Building networks of women in specific positions**

At the international level, there is a practice to create women's networks in certain domains to promote the exchange of experience, mutual support and common advancement. These networks were instrumental in promoting women's representation and influence in various spheres of society. They have played a crucial role in combating gender inequalities and promoting women's rights around the world. In the political sphere, networks of women MPs and mayors have been created to support women in leadership positions in the local or national governments. These networks promote gender policies, develop action plans to address women's issues and strengthen women's voice in political decision-making.

[Women Mayors Network in the United States](#): This network supports women mayors in cities and communities across the US and promotes cooperation and experience exchange among them.

[‘The Women Mayors’ Network \(WoMN\)](#)’ is a network of women mayors that operates internationally and aims to strengthen and promote the role of women in local administration and urban governance. This network brings together women mayors from different countries to facilitate the exchange of experience, cooperation and the development of common strategies to address urban and community issues.

[Australian Local Government Women's Association - ALGWA](#): As previously mentioned, ALGWA supports women mayors across Australia and promotes women's representation and involvement in local public administration

Specific recommendation: It is recommended to create a network of women from local public administration (National Network of Women from Local Public Administration) or ‘National Network of Women Mayors’, which can have a well-defined Organizational structure and would aim to represent women from different regions of the country before the central public authorities. The Organizational structure of this network could include leadership and coordination, regional working groups to focus on the specific problems of each area, active members who contribute to the experience exchange and solution development for women's problems from local public administration. The network could also work with the Women MPs Platform to address national policy issues and bring women's perspectives into the political debate. An essential component would be the implementation of mentoring programs for women in their first term or those who want to be more actively involved in local public administration. This network would serve as a strong voice of women from local public administration and promote the exchange of experience and mutual support among its members.

- **Joint initiatives of women in politics**

In the political world, solidarity and collaboration between women has become essential in promoting gender equality, and addressing critical issues affecting women and marginalized communities. Joint initiatives of women in politics have evolved in response to the need to meet the challenges and amplify the voice of these groups within global, national and local political structures. The aim of these initiatives is to promote and advance the gender equality agenda, fight against inequalities, support women's rights and contribute to positive changes in society. They are a manifestation of solidarity that crosses the obstacles of party, position and political color to support a common cause – the rights and welfare of women.

[C140 for Climate \(C140 for Climate, also known as ‘Women Political Leaders - Climate Campaign’\)](#): is a global network of mayors of the world's largest cities, united in action to confront the climate crisis. The aim of this campaign is to promote environmental policies and actions, focusing on sustainable solutions and adaptation to

climate change. The C140 connects more than 90 of the world's largest cities, representing more than 650 million people and a quarter of the global economy. C140 cities are advocating for reducing greenhouse gas emissions, combating air pollution and meeting the commitment of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change.

['Women's Manifesto for Local Councils: 2023 Northern Ireland Local Elections'](#) is an essential document that represents the voice and interests of women in the democratic process. It articulates women's aspirations and priorities in local policy and decision-making, addressing a wide range of issues from gender equality and women's rights to health, education, housing and infrastructure. This manifesto serves as a mobilization and advocacy tool, encouraging candidates and political parties to pay more attention to women's issues and needs in the election process. By promoting this manifesto, it aims to ensure a fair and responsible representation of women in local councils, to contribute to building a fairer and more inclusive community.

Specific recommendation: Women in politics should unite under the umbrella of collective initiatives ('Women Mayors against Gender-Based Violence' or 'Women Councilors for a Gender-Sensitive Local Budget') to promote a cause of crucial importance, such as equality of gender, combating violence, supporting women in accessing jobs, developing care services in the territories and others. This cooperation should be a means to make their voices more audible and remarkable in the political space, but also a means to bring about significant changes in society. Through this unity, women politicians can help combat stereotypes about women in public positions and inspire the changes needed to build a fairer and more inclusive society.

- **Annual awards appraising outstanding achievements by women in various fields**

This kind of recognition is essential to highlight successful role models and encourage other women to fight for positive change in society. The awards should cover a wide range of fields, such as politics, business, culture, education, health and civic works, to reflect the diversity of women's contributions to society. The establishment of these awards would emphasize the importance of gender equality and promote women's engagement in the country's development. Through public appreciation of efforts and achievements, an enabling environment can be created for women to express their potential and to continue influence positively the social, economic and political changes in the Republic of Moldova. This initiative would represent a significant step towards promoting women's rights and gender equality in the society.

[The Women of the Year Awards \(United Kingdom\)](#) is an annual event that celebrates and appreciates the significant contributions of women in a variety of fields. This award ceremony was initiated in 1955 and has since become one of the most prestigious events in the United Kingdom, honoring women from all levels of the society who have made an outstanding impact.

[Gloria Steinem Award](#) is a significant appreciation of women's exceptional contributions to the advancement of women's rights and gender equality. This award is named after the famous American feminist Gloria Steinem, who was and continues to be a strong voice for women's rights and for promoting positive changes in the society. The award honors individuals and Organizations that have demonstrated their commitment and dedication to the cause of gender equality. This is an important award to recognize leaders in the feminist movement and to encourage continuing efforts towards positive social change.

[Prix Simone de Beauvoir pour la liberté des femmes \(France\)](#) is a distinction that appraises the significant contributions of women in various areas of French society. This is an important award in the context of promoting women's rights and gender equality in France. Over the years, the award has been given to women who have excelled in art, culture, science, politics or civil society fields and who have made a notable impact on society. This award serves as a means of recognizing women who inspire and break new ground for women in France and beyond the country's borders. It is an important gesture to highlight the achievements of women and promote gender equality in the French society.

[The Order of Honor for Women](#) (The Order of the Precious Crown, or 瑞宝章, Zuihō-shō in Japanese) is a national decoration in Japan that appraises outstanding contributions of women to the development and improvement of

the society. This order was established in 1888 under the name of the Order of Honor for Women and has undergone several changes over time, including its name.

Specific recommendation: There is a proposal to establish a special award to celebrate and recognize the outstanding contribution of women in the field of gender equality. This award could celebrate successful role models, leaders and innovators among women who have had a significant impact on promoting gender equality in Moldova. Although there are current initiatives made by lifestyle magazines that appreciate women in various fields, these awards are not necessarily related to the impact on human rights and gender equality. Moreover, the selection criteria and awards associated with these initiatives are not always known to the general public. Of course, there are notable examples of non-governmental Organizations and individuals who have been awarded for outstanding contributions in the field of human rights, such as the annual awards offered by the European Union Delegation in Moldova or the UN Awards. However, it is important to note that in both mentioned examples, the selection criteria for awarding prizes may have some limits or restrictions.

- **Conducting national campaigns to raise awareness among the population regarding the need for fair representation in public positions**

Campaigns to raise awareness and to combat the stereotypes about women in politics are essential for promoting gender equality and increasing women's participation in politics. These campaigns can change public perceptions of women's competence and role in politics, helping to eliminate gender prejudices. To succeed, these campaigns should focus on educating and raising public awareness, promoting successful role models, and engaging young people in the fight against gender stereotypes. By promoting a more inclusive and fair political culture, these campaigns can have a significant impact on society and the representation of women in public positions.

[Campaign#NameItChangeIt \(USA\)](#)- represents a significant effort to change the way women politicians are perceived and treated in the public space and media in the United States of America. Launched in 2010 by organizers such as the Women's Media Center, She Should Run and Political Parity, the campaign has become a significant effort to bring changes in the way women candidates are portrayed and treated in the public environment. The slogan of the #NameItChangeIt Campaign is 'When You Attack a Woman You Attack Us All,' which expresses solidarity and support for women politicians. This slogan suggests that when a woman is attacked or denigrated in politics, this affects the entire community of women and highlights the importance of protecting the rights and dignity of all women in the political field.

[Campaign#AskHerToStand \(Great Britain\)](#) - is an initiative that was launched by the '50:50 Parliament' Group. It was officially launched in 2016 with the aim of encouraging and supporting women to stand in Great Britain Parliamentary Elections and achieve a more equitable representation in the Parliament. The name of the campaign, '#AskHerToStand,' suggests the idea of encouraging people in the community, regardless of gender, to identify and encourage talented and competent women to enter politics and run for parliamentary positions. The campaign encourages people to directly ask capable women to get involved in politics and propose them to run. The main aim of the campaign is to increase the number of women standing as candidates in Great Britain Parliamentary Elections and to achieve a large representation of women in the UK Parliament. It aims to combat the under-representation of women in politics and promote gender equality in the decision-making process.

[#NotTheCost \(Global\)](#) - The #NotTheCost Campaign was launched by NDI in March 2016. The main aim of this campaign is to combat violence and sexual harassment directed against women in the political context, with a focus on gender-based violence that occurs during election campaigns and in the political environment. The name of the campaign, #NotTheCost, suggests that violence and sexual harassment should not be a 'cost' that women have to pay to get involved in politics or public life. Instead, the campaign states that all women have the right to free political participation and without fear of violence or harassment. Through awareness and action, the campaign aims to change this reality and provide a safe environment for women in politics.

Specific recommendation: There is a proposal to develop national campaigns for awareness-raising of the population regarding the importance of fair representation in public positions. These campaigns should emphasize not only the need for gender equality in the political space, but also the real benefits that diversity brings to the decision-making process. Promoting successful examples of women in politics, inspiring stories of women who have managed to overcome obstacles and get important positions in public administration will serve as motivating role models for potential candidates and for society as a whole.

2

PROMOTING FAIR REPRESENTATION IN THE POSITION OF MAYOR

In the context of continuous efforts to promote gender equality in all area of society, the representation of women in decision-making and leadership positions, especially in the role of mayor, still remains a significant aspect. According to data and analyses of long-term trends, there is a provision that in the Republic of Moldova the share of women holding the position of mayor will reach the 30% threshold by 2035. This projection, while indicating progress, emphasizes the need for focused actions to accelerate this positive trend. 2023 local elections monitoring highlighted a number of factors influencing women's participation in politics, reiterating the considerable impact of gender roles. Caring responsibilities, the lack of support from the family (an aspect deeply linked to traditional gender structures), but also the low self-perception of personal capabilities constitute significant barriers to women wanting to get involved in electoral processes and in a broader sense, in the political life. We will explore further a series of specific measures that can contribute to creating a more favorable environment for the participation of women in politics, based on the previously stipulated recommendations.

- **Carrying out a gender audit at the level of LPA**

The gender audit is a widespread practice around the world. The gender audit process involves a rigorous analysis of current policies and practices of the authorities, with the aim of identifying and removing any obstacles that may prevent the equal participation of both genders. This includes a detailed examination of the representation of women and men in different decision-making roles and levels, emphasizing the need for fair representation and balanced involvement in the decision-making process. The results of this process are synthesized in a detailed report that provides a complete assessment and proposes specific recommendations for optimizing gender equality. The implementation of the changes suggested by the audit is crucial to the continuous improvement of Organizational policies, practices and processes. This leads to the strengthening of a fair and inclusive work environment that values the diversity and contribution of each member of the community. Therefore, gender audit not only fulfills a legal or moral obligation, but also contributes to more effective governance and sustainable social development by recognizing and capitalizing the full potential of all individuals, regardless of gender. Currently, many private sector companies and Organizations conduct gender audits to assess the composition of their workforce, gender pay gaps, representation of women in leadership positions, and others. These audits help identify inequalities and develop policies and programs to promote gender equality in the Organization.

In 2015, the Parliament of the Republic of Moldova was subjected to an extensive [gender audit](#) process, which aimed to evaluate the Parliament's ability to integrate the gender dimension in its activity, to identify critical challenges and to provide recommendations on how Parliament can become a gender-responsive institution¹. As a result of this exercise, considering the recommendations offered for the effective implementation of the gender equality agenda, was developed and approved the Gender Action Plan (GAP) and the Common Platform of Dialogue of Women MPs was established for the first time. This structure was administered by a Coordination Council, consisting of 5 representatives appointed by each of the parliamentary factions.

[OSCE Guide: 'Realizing Gender Equality in Parliament - A Guide for Parliaments in the OSCE Region'](#): This guide developed by the OSCE provides assistance to parliaments in the OSCE Region in addressing gender issues and promoting gender equality in parliamentary work. The guide provides resources and tools to assess and improve gender perspectives in parliaments, including recommendations for developing policies and practices that promote gender equality.

[ILO Guide: 'A Manual for Gender Audit Facilitators - The ILO Participatory Gender Audit Methodology'](#): This guide developed by the ILO provides instructions and resources for facilitators conducting gender audits using the ILO's Participatory Gender Audit Methodology. It provides a detailed approach to assessing and improving gender perspectives in the context of employment and workplaces, including the private sector.

[UN Women Guide: 'Gender Audit Guide'](#): This guide developed by UN Women provides a comprehensive approach to conducting gender audits in different contexts and domains. It provides tools and guidelines for assessing and improving gender perspectives in various aspects of the society, including policies, programs and practices related to gender equality.

Specific recommendation 1: It is recommended to develop a comprehensive methodology to conduct gender audits at the level of Local Public Authorities (LPAs) of level I and II in Moldova. This methodology should include aspects related to the operation of mayoralties, district/municipal/local councils and their subordinate institutions. The guide should provide specific instructions and tools for assessing and improving the gender perspective in all these entities.

Specific recommendation 2: It is proposed to initiate a pilot program to conduct gender audits at the level of Local Public Authorities (LPA) of level I and II in different regions of Moldova. This program should focus in particular on the position of mayor, considering the slow progress of women in this position. The purpose of this tool is to assess and improve the gender perspective within the LPA, particularly with regard to the representation and involvement of women in local leadership. Expected results include increasing the participation of women in the position of mayor and improving gender policies and practices at the LPA level.

- **Enhance accountability of political parties in promoting gender equality**

As early as 2012, Council of Europe's Parliamentary Assembly adopted a resolution with recommendations to political parties regarding the representation of women in politics. This resolution, known as Resolution 1898 (2012) - Political parties and women's political representation, emphasizes the importance of equal representation of women in political life and the crucial role of political parties in this promoting. It highlights the significant discrepancies in the representation of women in the national structures of the member states of the Council of Europe and proposes a number of measures and best practices for political parties with the aim of improving the participation and representation of women in politics. The Assembly considers that in addition to ensuring strict compliance with electoral law, including legislative quotas, and introducing voluntary measures, political parties are encouraged to promote a cultural change favorable to gender equality in politics and society in general, including: (i) Introduce a formal commitment to gender equality and mainstream of gender perspectives in their statute; (ii) Organize campaigns and activities to attract women; (iii) Ensure that party structures selecting candidates for elections are fully representative of society and therefore include a proportional presence of women; (iv) Introduce a minimum quota of 40% of the underrepresented gender in their executive decision-making bodies at all levels; (v) Develop mentoring and training programs to enhance the ability of talented women to occupy positions of political responsibility; (vi) Develop training programs to strengthen women's media skills and ensure that they are offered a fair chance to speak for the party on a wide range

of issues; (vii) Ensure that, during election campaigns, airtime allocated to the party is distributed proportionately between women and men candidates.

Many political parties around the world adopted gender quotas within their Organizations long before they became mandatory by law. These gender quotas are applied both in the selection of party candidates and in their internal structures and levels. As early as the 1970s and 1980s, some parties, such as the Spanish Socialist Party and the Social Democratic Party of Germany, implemented gender quotas that required a significant proportion of women in their ranks. This practice was adopted to promote balanced representation of the genders and to discourage the under-representation of women in politics. Over time, other parties such as the SPD in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Liberal Democratic Party in Norway and the Labor Party in Iceland have followed suit, adopting internal policies to ensure a fair proportion of women candidates and in leadership positions. These initiatives have shown that political parties can act voluntarily and proactively in promoting gender equality in politics, even before it becomes mandatory by law.

Specific recommendation: It is recommended that political parties adopt voluntary quotas in their statutes at all levels, stipulating that at least 40% of people in governing structures shall be of the opposite gender.

- **Clarifying the issues on the financing of political parties for promotion of women in political processes**

In the Republic of Moldova, political parties benefit from annual funding from the state budget through the Central Electoral Commission. The amount of this funding is set at 0.1% of the state budget revenues, excepting the revenues with a special purpose provided by the law. According to provisions of the Law No. 294/2007, 7.5% of the funding is granted to political parties in proportion to the number of women elected in the parliamentary elections; 7.5% - proportional to the number of women elected in local elections; 5% proportional to the number of young people elected in the parliamentary elections. Also, the Law provides that 20% from the annual allocations from the state budget shall be used to promote and encourage women's participation in political and electoral processes, and 10% - shall be used to promote and encourage the participation of young people. However, the Promo-Lex Reports⁷ show that there is not any Law that defines exactly the type of activities or programs that should be included in these expenditure categories. This lack of clarity has led to various interpretations, each party having a different understanding of what should be included in this category of expenditure. This finding raises important questions regarding the transparency and financial control of political parties in the Republic of Moldova and underlines the need for a clearer and more detailed regulation in this area. It also highlights the importance of ensuring adequate monitoring of expenditures on youth and women's programs to promote greater transparency and accountability in political party funding.

Specific recommendation 1: Based on the above, we recommend that CEC develops and approves detailed guidelines/instructions regarding the expenditures to be reported for young people and women's programs. At the same time, since there is a lack of understanding among political parties as to what these programs should include, we suggest some examples of activities that can be carried out and reported as expenditures for youth and women's programs:

- Organize personal and professional development workshops and seminars for young people and women, covering topics such as communication skills, leadership, negotiation and time management.
- Launch a mentoring program within the party, where more experienced members offer support and advice to younger or less experienced members, both in terms of political careers and personal development.

⁷[The 2019 Report](#), [the 2020 Report](#), [the 2021 Report](#), [the 2022 Report](#)

- Create an online or offline resource center dedicated to young people and women, where they can access information about the political process, their rights, opportunities for involvement and other useful resources.
- Organize awareness raising campaigns and civic education for young people and women, with the aim of encouraging them to be involved more in politics and decision-making processes.
- Develop and implement an internship program for young men and women, giving them the opportunity to learn about politics in a practical environment and to develop their skills.
- Organize networking events and social gatherings exclusively dedicated to youth and women party members to provide opportunities for them to meet and connect with each other.
- Support and promote the participation of young people and women in conferences, political events or other relevant activities, by covering the costs of participation or by providing scholarships.
- Organize public debates and discussions on issues of interest to young people and women, giving them a platform to express their views and concerns to party members and the community.
- Award scholarships to young men and women from the party who wish to continue their education in the fields relevant to politics or public administration. These scholarships could cover fees, living costs and other education-related expenses to support the personal and professional development of the beneficiaries.

Specific recommendation 2: It is recommended that the political parties which have youth and women's Organizations, should develop a specific action plan, and the money allocated for youth and women's programs from the state public budget should be used by these Organizations to implement these plans.

3 STRENGTHENING DOUBLE QUOTA SYSTEM FOR FAIR REPRESENTATION

The double quota system had a significant impact in increasing the number of women in Parliament and in district and local councils. Due to this system, which requires a minimum representation of 40% of each gender on the lists of candidates and the positioning provisions, which ensure that every 10 seats are occupied by persons of opposite gender, today we have the largest number of female MPs in the history of the Republic Moldova and a fair representation at the level of local councils, with less progress at the level of district councils. However, the monitoring of the election polls reveals that in the 2019 and 2023 local elections there were deviations in the application of the double quota system: the gender quota and/or positioning provisions were not respected. One of the difficulties encountered is of a mathematical nature. The number of councilors is publicly determined by the decision of the Central Electoral Commission, according to the provisions of the Electoral Code and of the Law No. 436/2006 on Local Public Administration, depending on the number of inhabitants of the administrative-territorial unit on 1 January of the year the elections take place. At the level of district councils, the smallest number of seats is 27, 33 or 35, with the exception of Chisinau Municipality, which has 51 seats. In case of local councils, the smallest number is of 9 councilors, and the largest is 23, most of them having 11 or 13 seats. When it is an odd number of total council seats, such as 27, 33 or 35, it is difficult for parties to meet exactly the 40% quota for either gender. For example, in case of a 27-seat council, 40% would mean 10.8, and this cannot be ensured exactly. As a result, parties are forced to round up the number of candidates, which can lead to an under-representation of women. Furthermore, when the number of seats is odd and the positioning provisions specify that 4 out of every 10 seats must be of the opposite gender, the situation becomes even more complicated. For example, in a council with 33 seats, there should be 13 seats for women and 13 seats for men according to the 40% quota. However, the application of this rule becomes problematic because it cannot be followed exactly. Thus, parties may face difficulties in ensuring an adequate gender balance on their candidate lists. Thus, there arises the need to make changes on the positioning provisions in the electoral legislation and select more flexible options, adapted to the specifics of each council. For example, the formula with 2 opposite gender seats for every 5 seats, or the formula with at least one opposite gender seat for every 3 seats, depending on the size of the councils. This

approach would ensure a fairer gender balance, taking into account the difference in size of councils and the practical difficulties faced by political parties in meeting current gender quotas.

In Serbia, it was decided to introduce an alternation of the representation place for every 4th candidate on the list. Macedonia has stipulated that at least one candidate for 3 positions on the candidate lists should be of the opposite gender. Another example of quota adoption comes from Poland, which specified that at least one woman should be among the top 3 candidates on any list. In Portuguese constituencies, lists cannot have more than 2 consecutive candidates of the same gender. In case of Belgium, only the following specification was chosen: the 2 top candidate positions on the list of candidates cannot be held by candidates of the same gender. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Electoral Code stipulates that on the first two positions on the list of candidates there should be a candidate from the gender category that is under-represented. Among the first five positions on the electoral list at least two positions should be held by persons of different gender, and on the first eight positions on the electoral list at least 3 candidates should be of the opposite gender. In Spain the quotas are applicable not only for the entire party list, but for every 5 positions on the list.

Recommendation: It is recommended to amend the Electoral Code by introducing the 2/1 positioning provisions for all lists of candidates - for every 3 seats, one should be allocated to a candidate of the opposite gender. Change of the positioning provisions would ensure more equitable representation for eligible places. The monitoring of the electoral process highlights a low representation of women on the first 5 positions of the electoral lists, these being the positions with the highest chances of gaining access to the Parliament. Change of the positioning provisions and the way the lists of candidates are drawn up would completely reduce the current obstacles to comply with the double quota system, and women would have more chances to occupy eligible positions and be adequately represented in the Parliament and other legislative bodies.

4

PROMOTING THE INCLUSION OF VULNERABLE GROUPS IN THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS

Promotion of equitable gender representation in the decision-making and electoral process is closely related to the concept of inclusion. While the focus is on ensuring a fair distribution of men and women in public and elective positions, it is important to ensure the diversity and inclusion of marginalized groups. Ensuring equitable representation is not limited to gender, but also addresses other dimensions of diversity such as ethnicity, age, disability and sexual orientation. Promoting inclusion in public positions is essential to create a genuine democratic framework that reflects the diversity and complexity of the society. As follows, we come up with specific proposals regarding the promotion of inclusion in public positions.

- **Accessibility of polling stations**

According to non-governmental Organizations⁸ and studies in the field⁹, accessibility is the main problem that prevents the social inclusion of people with disabilities in the Republic of Moldova. The ability of a person with disabilities to get from home to an educational institution or workplace, to carry out his/her activities using appropriate assistive technologies and to access other public services provided by the authorities are essential conditions for his/her participation in social life. The acknowledgement of the importance of accessibility at the European level has been confirmed by the establishment of funding guidelines for European projects.

⁸ [Report on the observation of the General Local Elections of 5 November 2023 from the perspective of the inclusion of the disability dimension](#)

⁹ <https://www.parlament.md/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=sVWB7n7Wlw0%3D&tabid=202&language=ro-RO>

Ensuring the access of people with disabilities to electoral processes is imperative. Currently, of the more than 2,000 polling stations in Moldova, only 18 are fully accessible. According to the study '[Equal access for all to polling stations](#)', carried out in 2022, approximately 72% or 1448 of the public institutions where elections are usually held are inaccessible. Only 0.89% or 18 polling stations are fully accessible out of the total of 2017 evaluated institutions, and 27% (551) are partially accessible. Although the national legal framework includes provisions aimed at ensuring the accessibility of public space for people with disabilities, the conditions stipulated are not fully observed, thus people with disabilities are kept outside of various socio-economic opportunities. Moreover, in the Republic of Moldova there is no authorized institution responsible for evaluating existing accessibility conditions. If buildings are not accessible to people with disabilities, their right to vote is violated. It is imperative that the authorities of the Republic of Moldova pay special attention to solving this problem and promote effective measures to improve accessibility for the benefit of people with disabilities.

At the international level, the participation of persons with disabilities in the electoral process is a right guaranteed by international documents, such as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and the Montreal Declaration on Intellectual Disabilities. According to them, disabled people have the right to vote and political participation without discrimination. Article 29 of the CRPD states that persons with disabilities have the right to participate in political and public life, including voting and being elected. Access to all stages of the electoral process, including election campaigns, accessible ballot boxes and relevant information in an accessible format, should be guaranteed.

In the Republic of Moldova, the legal framework includes certain provisions related to accessibility. Article 17 (1) from [the Law No. 60](#) on Social Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities (Chapter III ACCESSIBILITY) stipulates the following: [...] the central and local public authorities, [...] assess the situation in the field and take concrete measures to facilitate access for people with disabilities on an equal basis with others, the physical environment, to transportation, to information and communication means, including information technology and electronic communications to other utilities and services open or provided to the public, both in urban as well as in rural areas, in accordance with current standards. At the same time, objective 6 of the [National Program for Social Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities for 2017-2022](#) - Ensuring accessibility to infrastructure, to transportation, to information and communications for persons with disabilities - involves the following actions: [...] undertaking by each public institution of the assessment of the level of accessibility of the infrastructure, based on a technical questionnaire developed and approved by the authorities responsible for the construction field.

Specific recommendation 1: It is recommended the urgent development of a plan to make polling stations accessible. Considering the next two election years, presidential elections planned for the autumn of 2024 and parliamentary elections in 2025, it is imperative that accessibility for people with disabilities be a priority. The accessibility plan should include concrete measures to remove physical and communication barriers to polling stations, as well as to ensure a non-discriminatory and inclusive electoral process. It is essential that the responsible authorities allocate sufficient resources and cooperate closely with relevant Organizations on disability rights to implement this plan.

Specific recommendation 2: At the local level, it is necessary that (i) the Parliament, the Government and the subordinate institutions, LPAs I and LPAs II periodically carry out (annually and before each election) an assessment / self-assessment exercise of the accessibility conditions of public buildings in the community; (ii) allocate an annual quota for accessibility in the budget; (iii) promote accessibility norms and standards in civil constructions; (iv) develop local / district accessibility plans; (v) apply penalties to those who access public funds and violate accessibility standards at built / renovated facilities.

- **Collecting data on candidates from an inclusion perspective**

Collecting data on candidates is essential for a deeper understanding of the composition and diversity of candidates in the electoral process. These data (on age, profession, belonging to vulnerable groups

such as disabled and Roma) provide valuable information for assessing representativeness and inclusion within government institutions and for identifying potential barriers or discrimination. There are currently significant gaps in the availability of candidate data. Although the Central Electoral Commission collects information on age and profession, this data has not yet been published for public use, which limits transparency and access to relevant information. In addition, data on Roma and disabled candidates is missing, and candidates are not required to submit this information voluntarily. Collecting this data is crucial to assess and monitor progress in ensuring adequate representation of these groups in the electoral process. This could contribute to greater accountability and commitment from electoral authorities and candidates in promoting inclusive and fair participation in the electoral process. It could also facilitate the development of specific policies and programs to support and encourage the participation of these groups in political and public life.

In 2023, the OSCE in the [‘Recommendations on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities to Participate in Political and Public Life in the OSCE Region, Dublin, 2023’](#) recommends that ‘participating States collect, regularly update and publish disaggregated data on the political participation of persons with disabilities, including their representation in national parliaments, with the aim of identifying and removing barriers in the exercise of political rights. Participating States should inform ODIHR of their efforts to enhance disability inclusion in national parliaments, facilitating peer review and exchange of best practices among OSCE members.’

Specific recommendation: It is recommended that the Central Electoral Commission identify solutions for the transparent collection and publication of data on candidates, including information on age, profession and membership of vulnerable groups such as the disabled and Roma. At the same time, the CEC should develop and implement measures to encourage candidates to voluntarily provide the requested information, highlighting the importance of this data in promoting fair and diversified representation in government institutions.

- **Approval of inclusion ‘quotas’ and financial incentives for parties that promote the inclusion of marginalized groups**

The experience of gender quotas has demonstrated their effectiveness in increasing women's participation in decision-making and politics. Thus, introducing a similar mechanism to promote other vulnerable groups could be beneficial. The implementation of inclusion quotas for marginalized groups, such as people with disabilities, ethnic minorities or other disadvantaged categories, would ensure their greater representativeness in power structures and in the decision-making process. These quotas can create equal opportunities for those groups to make their voices and needs heard within political institutions. In international practice there are three forms of quotas that can be approved: (i) *Quotas introduced in electoral law* - a quota that requires a certain number of people from a marginalized group, such as people with disabilities, to be included on the list of candidates; (ii) *‘Reserved’ positions provided by law* - a certain number of positions in public institutions/at the workplace to be allocated to people from a marginalized group. These positions can be completed either by nomination or by election; (iii) *Voluntary party quotas* - when political parties agree to include a certain number of people from a marginalized group on their candidate lists.

In the [Guidelines on Promoting the Political Participation of Persons with Disabilities](#) developed by the OSCE, can be found essential recommendations to support the political participation of persons with disabilities. Among these recommendations is the proposal to introduce inclusion quotas for people with disabilities in the electoral and political process. These quotas would provide a clear and mandatory framework for political parties and other relevant Organizations, setting a minimum percentage of disabled candidates that should be included on lists and in governing structures. By establishing specific quotas, the aim is to ensure adequate representation of people with disabilities in political and decision-making life.

Quotas for [ethnic minorities](#) exist in various countries around the world, but the implementation and extent of these quotas varies significantly. Some countries with quotas or similar mechanisms to ensure representation of ethnic minorities include:

Columbia: Seats are allocated to members of indigenous groups.

New Zealand: Seats are allocated to members of indigenous groups.

Croatia: Seats are allocated to various ethnic communities such as Hungarians, Italians, Czechs, Slovaks and Serbs.

Pakistan: A small percentage of seats are reserved for Hindus and Christians.

Lebanon: The seats in the Parliament are divided equally between Christians and Muslims.

Belgium: The seats in the upper house are divided between three language groups - the Flemish, the French and the German.

India: Seats are reserved for Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe members

Specific recommendation 1: It is recommended to amend the Electoral Code to introduce representation quotas, both for persons with disabilities and for ethnic minorities, in the process of drawing up lists of candidates for elections, as follows:

- 5% representation quota for persons with disabilities: this quota will ensure that persons with disabilities are fairly represented in electoral processes and power structures, thus promoting a better understanding and addressing the specific needs of this community.
- 5% representation quota for ethnic minorities: this quota will support the participation and representation of ethnic minorities in political life, contributing to a more inclusive society and a more representative government for all citizens.

Specific recommendation 2: Along with quotas, financial incentives for parties that adopt inclusive policies and practices can strengthen their commitment to diversity and equity. The offer of financial incentives may include additional subsidies, reimbursement of campaign expenditures or other advantages for parties that demonstrate a strong commitment to the inclusion of marginalized groups.

Recommendations for Political Parties: It is recommended that political parties integrate these quotas not only in the lists of candidates for public elections, but also in the structure of the internal governing bodies. This approach will ensure that diversity and inclusion become central values in the Organizational culture of the political parties, positively influencing the decision-making process and the promoted policies.

ABOUT CENTER PARTNERSHIP FOR DEVELOPMENT

The Center Partnership for Development (CPD), founded in 1998, is a non-profit institution that promotes an integrative approach to gender issues, women's rights and equal opportunities for men and women. CPD asserts itself as a non-governmental structure, which advocates for the implementation of the concept of gender equality in all areas of life, the promotion of public policies in the field, addressing issues related to the role of women in the society and their empowerment, the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women, simultaneously being a documentation, information and training center for relevant NGOs and initiative groups.

Purpose. Develop and strengthen resources and mechanisms of equal empowerment of women and men to promote gender equality in the Republic of Moldova by means of lobby and advocacy.

Mission CPD promotes gender equity values as an integral part of an open society to consolidate an authentic gender partnership.

Vision CPD advocates for building a community with equal perspectives and opportunities for its members, where both men and women have equal rights, are able to solve problems together, can benefit equally by the new opportunities and can be fully involved in social, economic and political activities.

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