

# The electoral screen

Analysis of the representation of men and women candidates in the  
media during the 2025 parliamentary elections

*Preliminary report*

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In the context of this electoral process, the media plays a crucial role as the main source of information for citizens and as a space for public debate. The way in which media institutions reflect candidates and campaign issues can significantly influence the perceptions of the electorate, amplifying or, conversely, marginalizing certain voices. A fair and inclusive election campaign therefore depends on ensuring balanced media coverage of all electoral competitors, regardless of gender. In the Republic of Moldova, this goal is supported by a robust regulatory framework that imposes strict standards of impartiality on the media during elections.

**The regulations in force stipulate the obligation of media institutions to inform the public in a comprehensive, objective, and truthful manner about the entire electoral process, respecting the principles of fairness, balance, and impartiality in covering all candidates.** According to *the Electoral Code of the Republic of Moldova*<sup>1</sup> and *the Regulation on the coverage of elections by media outlets*<sup>2</sup>, the media plays an essential role in informing voters and is subject to specific obligations during the election period. The regulatory framework stipulates that, during the election period, audiovisual programs and written materials concerning electoral competitors may only be broadcast or published in accordance with the Regulations on the coverage of elections approved by the Central Electoral Commission. The code prohibits candidates and their trusted representatives from appearing in programmes other than those of an explicitly electoral nature, in order to prevent uncontrolled interventions. Five categories of electoral programs are defined—news and current affairs, information programs, promotional programs, debates, and advertising—which may only be broadcast during the election period and must comply with the Audiovisual Media Services Code. At the same time, broadcasters are required to submit a statement of editorial policy within the first seven days of the election period, and failure to do so prevents the broadcast of election content. The Code requires the organization of electoral debates during prime time for providers who have declared such programs, and the debates must be structured in such a way as to ensure strict or proportional equality between participants. In addition, national media service providers must allocate free airtime to each electoral contestant – five minutes on television and ten minutes on radio – during the first 15 days of the campaign, dedicated to the presentation of electoral programs. Media institutions must also clearly distinguish between the official activity of a candidate holding public office and their electoral activity, reflecting both in a fair and impartial manner. At the same time, *the Audiovisual Media Services Code*<sup>3</sup> establishes the general framework for media activity, requiring respect for gender equality and pluralism and prohibiting the use of sexist language or scenes of violence or degrading behavior.

**However, even within a well-defined legal framework, there may be subtle deviations from the stated principles, leading to inequalities in the media visibility of candidates of different genders.** Experience from previous elections has shown that women candidates often tend to receive less visibility or different media coverage than men, sometimes being underrepresented or portrayed in stereotypical roles. Unequal media exposure can negatively influence women candidates' electoral chances, reinforcing the public's preconceived perceptions and discouraging women's political involvement. Therefore, monitoring and analyzing the media coverage of the campaign from a gender perspective is essential to identify any imbalances and to inform policies aimed at ensuring fair representation.

**The Partnership for Development Center (CPD) has been monitoring parliamentary and local elections from a gender equality perspective for more than 15 years.** The analysis of the regular parliamentary elections of September 28, 2025, covers several areas: (i) how men and women are presented on the list of candidates: compliance with the minimum representation quota of 40% for both sexes when drawing up the lists of candidates for the early parliamentary elections and the positioning of candidates on the

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc\\_id=148963&lang=en#](https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=148963&lang=en#)

<sup>2</sup> [https://a.cec.md/storage/ckfinder/files/Regulament\\_Reflectarea%20alegerilor%20in%20mass-media\(2\).pdf](https://a.cec.md/storage/ckfinder/files/Regulament_Reflectarea%20alegerilor%20in%20mass-media(2).pdf)

<sup>3</sup>

lists in accordance with the latest legislation (a minimum of four candidates for every ten places); **(ii)** the income and economic opportunities of men and women candidates: analysis of the income declarations of men and women candidates and correlation with their presence on the lists of candidates. **(iii)** access of men and women candidates to the media: the analysis covers four types of media products: news, talk shows, election debates, and commercials. The purpose of the monitoring is to identify the level of presence of women in general in the television media during the election campaign and to correlate this with their presence on the candidate lists. **(iv)** voters' perceptions of women and men candidates: this analysis was based on an opinion poll in which respondents comment on gender roles in the family, household, and society; **(v)** parties' electoral programs: examination of political commitments to gender equality and inclusion by assessing the measures and promises made in electoral programs and the willingness of parties to support legislative initiatives in this area; **(vi)** gender analysis of lower-level electoral bodies and the electoral apparatus: assessment of the composition of constituency councils, electoral offices, and electronic system operators to identify the degree of compliance with the principle of gender balance and barriers that may limit women's participation in election administration structures.

**This study is the fifth report produced by the Partnership for Development Center (CPD)** as part of the process of monitoring elections from a gender equality perspective and focuses on the access of men and women candidates to the media. The analysis is based on monitoring four types of media products—news bulletins, talk shows, election debates, and advertising spots—broadcast by national television stations. The main objective of the research is to determine the level of presence of women candidates in the television media during the election campaign and to correlate this visibility with their proportion on the candidate lists. Through this comparative approach, CPD aims to identify any gender discrepancies in the media coverage of the campaign and to offer recommendations for ensuring balanced and inclusive representation in the public sphere.

## REPRESENTATION OF GENDER DISTRIBUTION IN THE MEDIA

The reduced presence of women in the media is often associated with the dominance of a masculine image of politics, which reinforces social perceptions that discourage women's participation in the political sphere. During the parliamentary elections on September 28, 2025, assessing how the media portrayed women and men was of major importance. The analysis included four categories of media content broadcast between August 25 and September 14, 2025: election debates, campaign ads, talk shows, and news. Monitoring was carried out on 10 television stations, looking at the extent to which balanced gender representation was ensured: Exclusiv TV, Jurnal TV, Moldova 1, N4, Next TV, One TV, Pro TV Chisinau, R Live, TV8, and Vocea Basarabiei TV.

### ELECTION DEBATES

Between August and September 2025, 15 election debates were monitored, including their repeated broadcasts. The total broadcast time was 13 hours and 34 minutes, with the participation of 35 people.

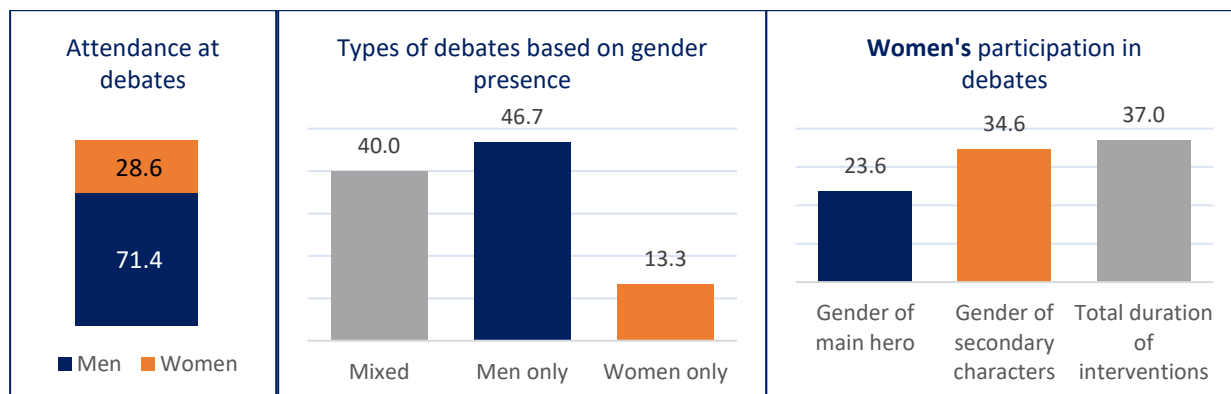
Table 1. Quantitative parameters of the monitoring of electoral debates

Parameter	Quantity
Number of units monitored, including repeats	15
Monitoring period	2 - 12.09.2025
Total broadcast time	13 hours 34 minutes
Total number of participants	35

Source: CPD calculations based on media monitoring, 2025

**Women remain less involved in electoral debates.** Although representation on electoral lists is becoming more balanced, women do not have the opportunity to present their political views in debates. Less than a third (28.6%) of participants in electoral debates were women. Moreover, almost half of the electoral debates were held with only men participants (46.7%). The share of these broadcasts was even higher than that of debates attended by both men and women candidates (40.0%). These frequencies are preceded by an extremely low proportion of debates in which only women candidates participated, accounting for only 13.3% of the total debates held. At the same time, we note that even in debates where women were present, they predominantly occupied the position of secondary heroes (34.6%), and the total duration of their interventions was approximately one third (37.0%). Therefore, even though women are present in electoral debates, they are mostly presented as secondary heroes and have rather limited interventions.

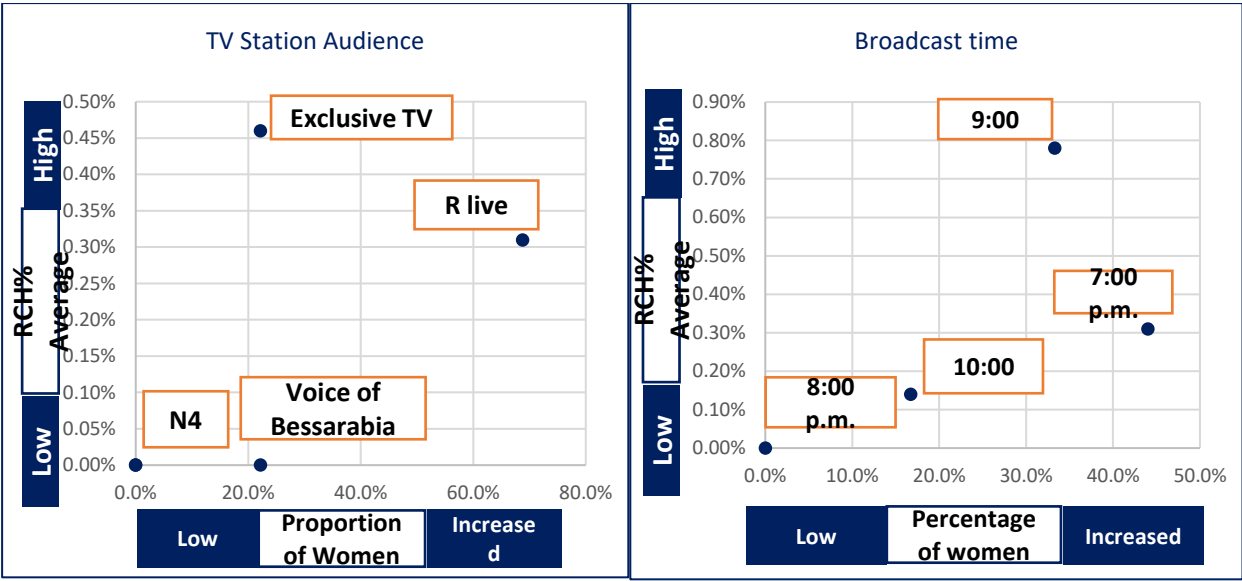
Figure 1. Presence in debates, depending on the gender of the candidates who participated and the type of hero, %



Source: CPD calculations based on media monitoring, 2025

**Women candidates became more present in debates broadcast during popular viewing hours, but on stations with limited audiences.** Of the television stations monitored by the CPD during this election, only four organized election debates, and only two of those stations invited women to participate. Although Exclusiv TV is among the stations with high viewership that broadcast election debates, the proportion of women who participated in them was approximately 20%. On the other hand, R Live is the television station that broadcast debates with a fairly high participation of women candidates, accounting for over 60% of the total participants. In terms of broadcast time, most women candidates participated in debates that were broadcast at 7:00 p.m., which is a time slot with fairly low viewership. At the same time, it is encouraging that 33% of the women candidates who participated in such exercises were present at the debates broadcast at 9 p.m., a time slot with fairly high viewership. The relatively low presence in the debates is largely determined by the decision of the electoral parties on who to delegate to such programs, giving priority to men candidates.

Figure 2. Audience of television stations that broadcast election debates with women candidates and their broadcast time, %



Source: CPD calculations based on media monitoring, 2025



Between August 25 and September 14, 2025, 85 talk shows were monitored, during which 85 interventions by participants were monitored. The total broadcast time was 94 hours and 20 minutes.

Table 2. Quantitative parameters of talk show monitoring

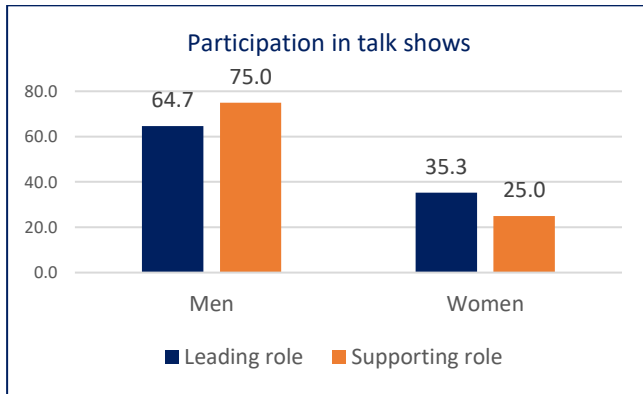
Parameter	Quantity
Number of monitored broadcasts	85
Number of monitored participant interventions	85
Monitoring period	August 25 - September 14, 2025
Total broadcast time	94 hours 20 minutes

Source: CPD calculations based on media monitoring, 2025

The participation of women candidates in talk shows is quite limited, both in terms of frequency and participation itself. Of the total number of participants in talk shows, women candidates accounted for less than a third (30.1%), while men candidates accounted for 69.9%. Although the proportion of women

candidates participating in talk shows is quite low, those who did participate mostly played the leading role. Among participants with secondary roles in electoral talk shows, women candidates accounted for four times less than men candidates. In conclusion, we can say that although women candidates manage to occupy leading roles in most cases when invited to talk shows, their overall presence remains much lower than that of men.

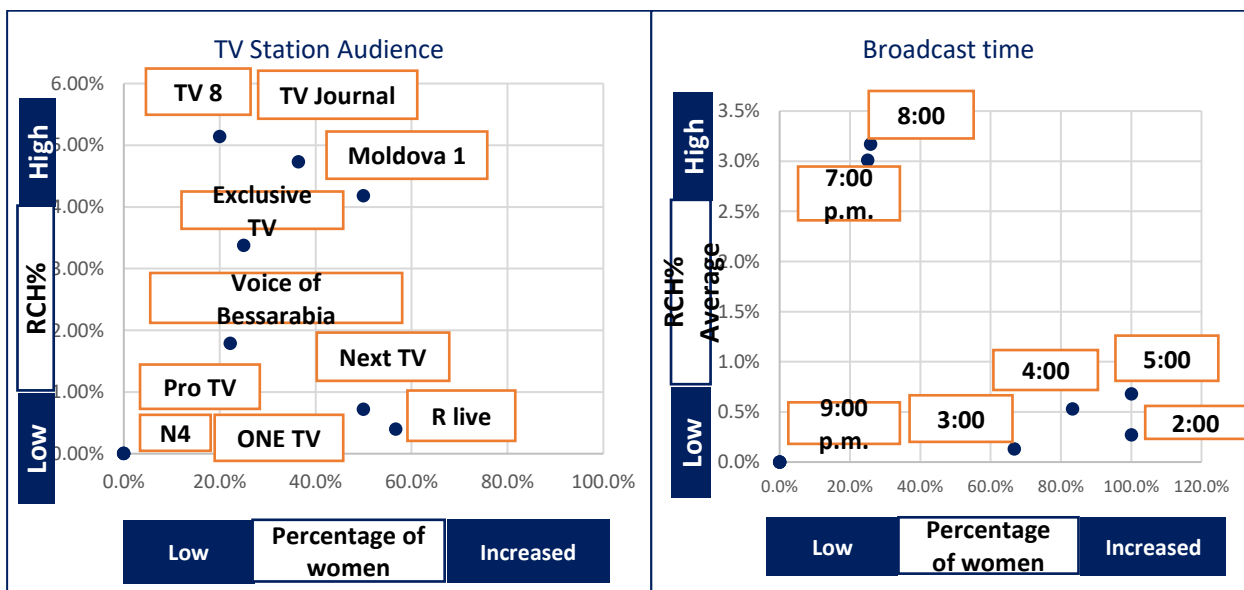
Figure 3. Participation of men and women candidates in talk shows, by type of role, %



Source: CPD calculations based on media monitoring, 2025

**Talk shows featuring women candidates are broadcast on TV stations with low ratings and at unpopular times.** While women candidates appear more frequently on certain channels, these are mostly television stations with limited impact on the general public. For example, stations such as R live and Next TV have managed to give women candidates more visibility, but their audience is lower compared to the dominant channels on the market. In contrast, stations with large audiences, such as Jurnal TVA or TV8, have broadcast debates with low women representation. In terms of broadcast times, it can be seen that women's participation is more associated with less-watched broadcast slots (starting at 2:00 p.m., 4:00 p.m., or 5:00 p.m.), periods when the general audience is low. Only a small proportion of the candidates' appearances were scheduled during peak viewing hours (7:00 p.m. and 8:00 p.m.), which considerably limits their electoral visibility and access to the general public.

Figure 4. Audience of television stations that broadcast election talk shows with candidates and their broadcast time, %



Source: CPD calculations based on media monitoring, 2025

A total of 796 news appearances were monitored, with a total broadcast time of 31 hours and 46 minutes.

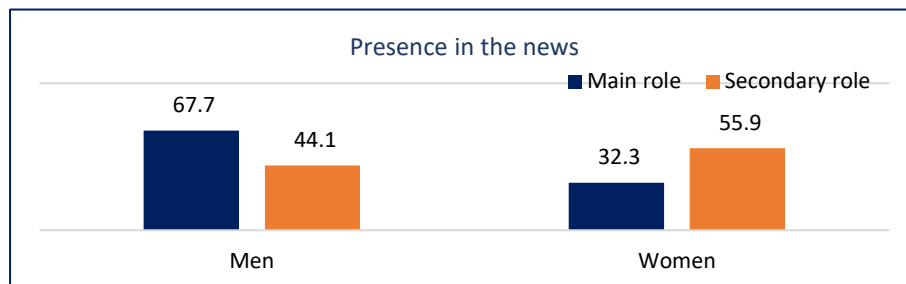
Table 3. Quantitative parameters of news monitoring

Parameter	Quantity
Number of monitored participant interventions	79
Monitoring period	August 25 - September 14, 2025
Total broadcast time	31 hours 46 minutes

Source: CPD calculations based on media monitoring, 2025

**News coverage during the election campaign shows a clear predominance of men in leading roles.** Men continue to dominate as protagonists in the news, playing the leading role in 67.7% of cases, while women appear in the foreground in only 32.3% of news items. This distribution highlights not only a numerical underrepresentation, but also a symbolic marginalization of women in media political narratives. In contrast, women are significantly more present in secondary positions, in 55.9% of news stories, compared to only 44.1% of men. This discrepancy suggests that women are often placed in supporting roles, without a central voice or clear authority in news stories. Thus, even when they are visible in the media, women remain in a peripheral position, which perpetuates a pattern of passive participation and contributes to the reinforcement of gender stereotypes in electoral discourse.

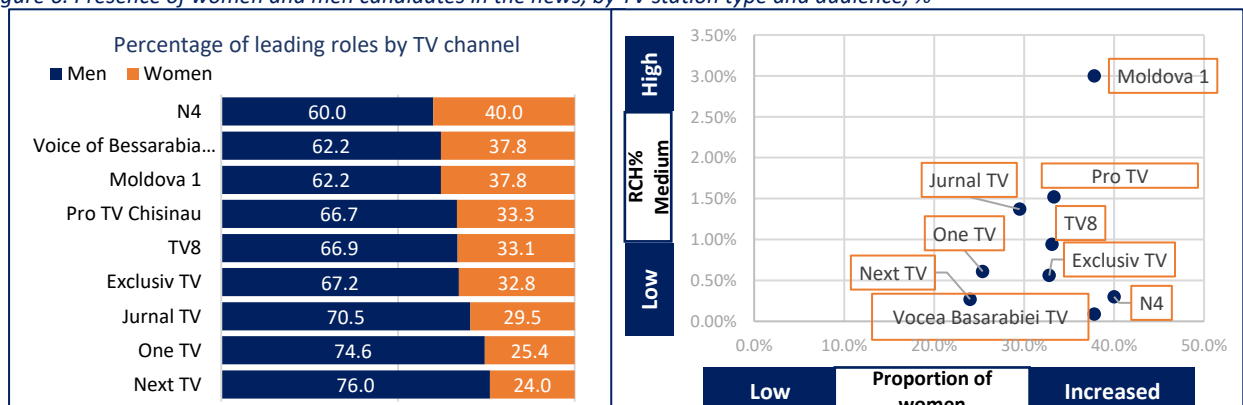
Figure 5. Presence of women and men electoral candidates in the news, by type of role, %



Source: CPD calculations based on media monitoring, 2025

**Most appearances of women in leading roles in the news are concentrated on channels with relatively low audiences.** For example, on stations such as Next TV, One TV, or Jurnal TV, the share of women in leading roles exceeds 70%. Moreover, the most frequent appearances of women in the news are recorded on channels with an audience share of less than 1.5%, such as Vocea Basarabiei, N4, Next TV, or Exclusiv TV. This distribution indicates not only a qualitative underrepresentation of women in the media, but also limited visibility in terms of impact. Even when women are presented in central positions in journalistic content, the general public's access to these messages remains limited, which reduces their potential to influence and consolidate an equal public presence in the election campaign.

Figure 6. Presence of women and men candidates in the news, by TV station type and audience, %



Source: CPD calculations based on media monitoring, 2025

**Between August and September 2025, 140 election spots aired on television were monitored.** The total number of airings monitored was 5,826, with a total broadcast time of 51 hours and 54 minutes.

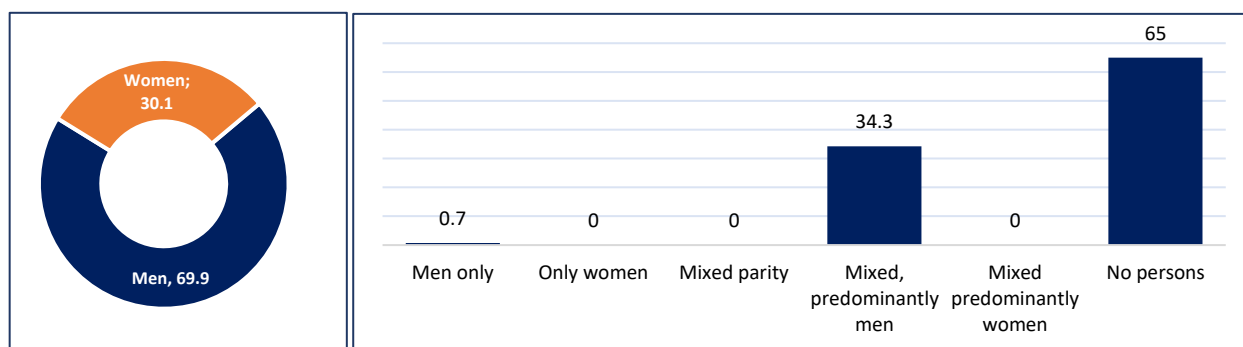
Table 4. Quantitative parameters of the monitoring of election ads

Parameter	Quantity
Number of units monitored	14
Number of broadcasts monitored	582
Monitoring period	August 28-September 14, 2025
Total broadcast time	51 hours 54 minutes
Total cost according to cost grids	\$375,741

Source: CPD calculations based on media monitoring

**An analysis of gender representation in election ads during the 2025 campaign reveals low visibility of women as protagonists.** Only 30% of the people who played a central role in the spots were women, confirming the persistence of systemic underrepresentation. Of the 140 spots analyzed, none were exclusively dedicated to women, and in the case of mixed spots, men continued to dominate in terms of presence and visibility. In fact, no ad achieved true gender balance, indicating a lack of a deliberate approach to ensuring parity. The most common format remained the mixed ad with a men predominance, accounting for 34.3% of all broadcast material. However, there has been a notable improvement compared to the 2021 parliamentary elections, when 66.1% of spots were exclusively men. In the 2025 campaign, this category fell to just 0.7%, signaling a decrease in the absolute exclusion of women from electoral communication, even if parity remains far from being achieved.

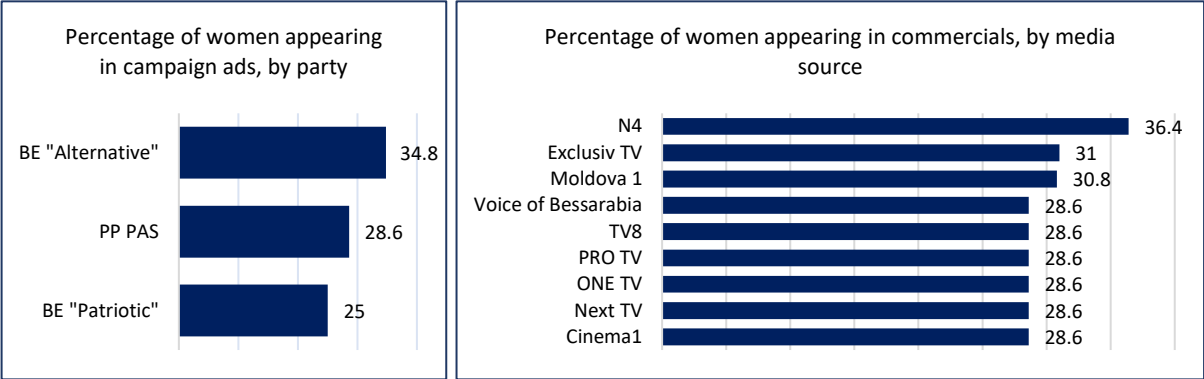
Figure 7. Share of women among participants in election ads, %



Source: CPD calculations based on media monitoring, 2025

**The representation of women in election ads varies according to political affiliation,** highlighting differences in approach between parties in terms of promoting gender equality. The "Alternativa" electoral bloc stands out with the highest share of women protagonists, representing 34% of all women appearances analyzed. In second place is the PAS Political Party, with a share of 28.6%, followed by the "Patriotic" Electoral Bloc, with 25%. These figures suggest a more pronounced trend towards inclusion among these parties, compared to others that either gave women less visibility or did not run any ads in this election campaign. In terms of broadcast channels, about one-third of the women featured appeared in spots aired on N4, Exclusiv TV, and Moldova 1, indicating a concentration of women representation on certain stations that either give more space to parties with a more inclusive approach or are preferred by these parties for disseminating their electoral messages. This concentration may contribute to limiting the overall exposure of women in the electoral media landscape, thus perpetuating unequal visibility in the eyes of the general public.

Figure 8. Share of women in the total number of participants in electoral spots, by party and broadcast channel, %



Source: CPD calculations based on media monitoring, 2025

## FINDINGS

**The election campaign confirms that the media landscape remains deeply unbalanced from a gender perspective.** Men candidates dominate election debates and broadcasts, while women have been visibly marginalized, with reduced presence, participation on less popular television channels and during less popular broadcast hours, as well as reduced speaking time.

**Election debates could not be used as a crucial tool for women candidates in the election race.** Only 28.6% of debate participants were women, even though they constituted a significant part of the electoral list. In addition, the total duration of women's interventions in the debates was 37%. As in other election programs, the debates in which women participated were broadcast by stations with a limited audience and at times that were not particularly popular.

**The news focused more on men candidates.** Of the 796 appearances by candidates, women appeared in 44% of the news broadcasts, predominantly in secondary roles (55.9%), while men were mostly in leading roles in news programs (67.7%). In addition, we note that the news items in which women were in the foreground were broadcast on television stations with relatively low audiences and at times with low viewership.

**Election commercials reinforce the same trend of exclusion.** Men candidates dominated these media products, appearing in over a third of all materials, while women accounted for 30%, appearing in mixed election commercials, where men predominated. Representation in election spots differs depending on political affiliation. Thus, the election spots that involved the most women belonged to BE "Alternativa", PP "PAS" and BE "Patriotic".

**Political talk shows offered women even less visibility.** Of the 85 programs monitored, only 35.5% of the main guests and 25% of the secondary guests were women. Moreover, they participated in talk shows broadcast by TV stations with low ratings and at unpopular broadcast times. This shows that women are often excluded from the spaces where political agendas are shaped and public perceptions are formed.

## ABOUT THE PARTNERSHIP FOR DEVELOPMENT CENTER

Created in 1998, *the Partnership for Development Center (CPD)* is a public institution that aims to contribute to the promotion of an inclusive discourse on gender issues, the status of women, and equal opportunities for women and men. The CPD is a non-governmental organization that advocates for the implementation of the concept of gender equality in all areas of life, the promotion of public policies in this field, addressing issues related to the role of women in society and their empowerment, and the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women. It is also a center for documentation, information, and training center for relevant NGOs and initiative groups.

**Purpose.** To develop and strengthen resources and mechanisms for the equitable empowerment of women and men in order to promote gender equality in the Republic of Moldova by supporting a coherent approach to influencing policies.

**Mission.** CPD promotes the values of gender equality as part of an open society in order to strengthen a genuine gender partnership.

**Vision.** CPD advocates for the building of a community with equal prospects and opportunities for its members, a society in which women and men are full citizens, able to solve problems together, benefit equally from new opportunities, and engage fully in political, economic, and social activities.

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