REPRESENTATION, POWER, AND GENDER INEQUALITIES IN THE 2025 PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS

Chisinau 2025

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INTRODUCTION

On 28 September 2025, the Republic of Moldova held ordinary parliamentary elections to elect 101 members to the XII-th legislature of the Parliament of the Republic of Moldova - the country's sole legislative and supreme representative body of its people. The validity of the election depends on a turnout of at least one-third of registered voters. Access to parliamentary seats is subject to meeting the electoral threshold established by law: 5% for political parties, 7% for electoral blocs, and 2% for independent candidates. This election represents a critical test for strengthening democracy in the Republic of Moldova and for evaluating the extent to which principles of equal opportunity and fair representation between women and men are upheld.

Electoral polls are more than mere voting exercises; they serve as pivotal moments that reflect a society's level of democratic maturity. They provide a framework for assessing how effectively democratic principles, particularly gender equality enshrined in legislation, are translated into practice and manifested in candidate selection and election processes. Elections thus act as a barometer of societal openness to equitable participation of women and men in political life, highlighting both progresses achieved through policies and regulatory mechanisms and the persistent remaining barriers – from stereotypes and discriminatory attitudes to unequal access to resources and public visibility.

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 28 September 2025 covers several areas: **(i)** how men and women are represented 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 lists in accordance with the latest legislation (a minimum of four candidates for every ten places); **(ii)** the income and economic opportunities of male and female candidates: analysis of the income declarations of male and female candidates and correlation with their presence on the lists of candidates; **(iii)** access of male and female 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 female and male 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.

Chapter I: WHEN TRADITION OVERSHADOWS EQUALITY

How are gender roles seen in the decision-making process?

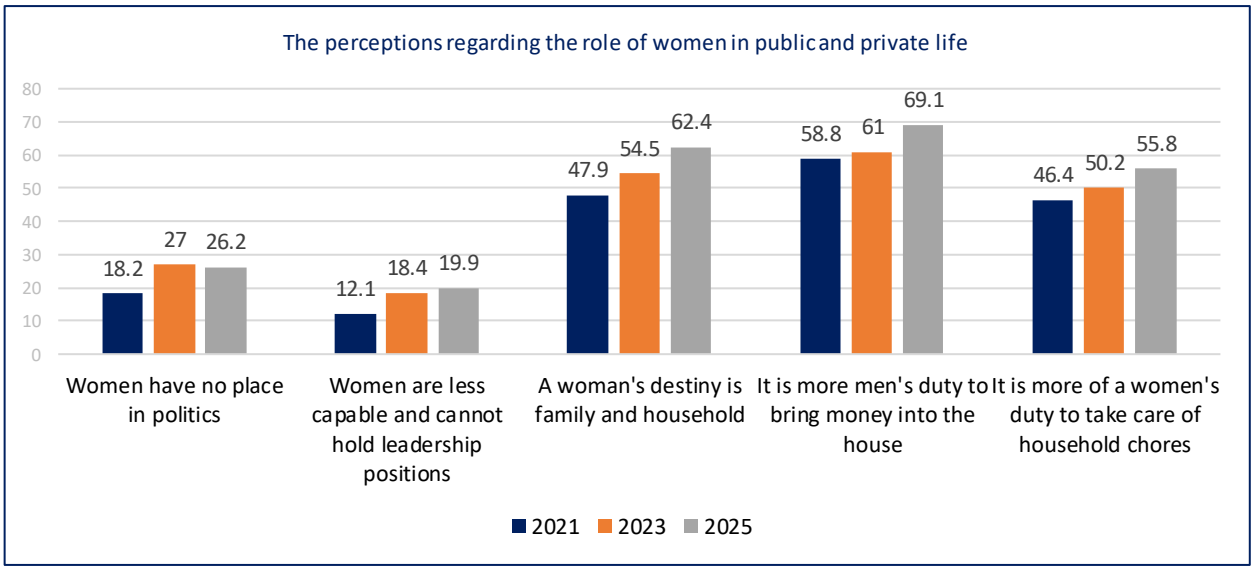
CONTEXT

This chapter presents the first analysis in a series of reports prepared by the Center "Partnership for Development" (CPD) within the framework of the 2025 Parliamentary elections. Its primary objective is to examine voters' perceptions regarding gender roles, the involvement of women and men in politics, and the extent to which these perceptions influence their participation in the electoral process. This analysis focuses on how stereotypes and social attitudes shape the real chances of women and men to access elective positions and to be accepted by the electorate as legitimate political leaders. Through this research, CPD aims not only to measure the persistence or evolution of gender stereotypes but also to provide a robust empirical foundation for public policies, educational programs, and awareness campaigns. The ultimate goal is to reduce gender biases, promote equal participation of women and men in political life, and strengthen an authentic and inclusive democracy in the Republic of Moldova.

PERCEPTIONS OF VOTERS ON WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN POLITICAL LIFE

Gender stereotypes about women's roles in society not only persist but have become increasingly pronounced. Recent data indicate that, despite minor fluctuations, these stereotypes remain deeply rooted among a significant portion of the population and are even gaining strength. The proportion of respondents who believe that women "have no place in politics" increased from 18.2% in 2021 to 26.2% in 2025, thus showing a consolidation of negative attitudes toward women's participation in the political process. Similarly, the perception that women are "less capable of holding leadership positions" remains consistently high at nearly 20%, confirming the persistence of prejudices regarding women's competencies. Stereotypes related to private life are even more entrenched. The share of those who believe that "a woman's destiny is family and household" increased sharply from 47.9% in 2021 to 62.4% in 2025. At the same time, almost 70% of respondents agree that "it is primarily men's duty to secure the family financially", while over 55% believe that "household chores" should fall mainly on women. This paradoxical trend can be explained by several factors. First, traditional societal expectations continue to dictate that women should prioritize family and household responsibilities, making their involvement in politics appear as a deviation from these roles. Second, the multiple crises faced by the Republic of Moldova between 2020 and 2024 – such as the energy crisis, the pandemic, security challenges, and inflation – were associated with political leaders in power, many of whom were women. Although these crises were global and structural, responsibility for their consequences was disproportionately attributed to women in leadership positions, reinforcing critical perceptions and fueling the false rhetoric that women are less competent to govern a state. Another major factor contributing to the reinforcement of stereotypes is the visible rise in hate speech and sexist attacks against female politicians. According to Promo-LEX report[1] on hate speech during the 2024 elections, women were among the most frequently targeted social groups, alongside the LGBTQI+ community and politicians in general, facing dozens of cases of sexist and defamatory attacks in the media and on social networks. These attacks not only reflect but also amplify traditionalist views, discouraging women from entering politics and reinforcing public opinion that their role should remain confined to family and childcare.

Figure 1. Perceptions of the population regarding the role of women in public and private life, 2021-2025, %



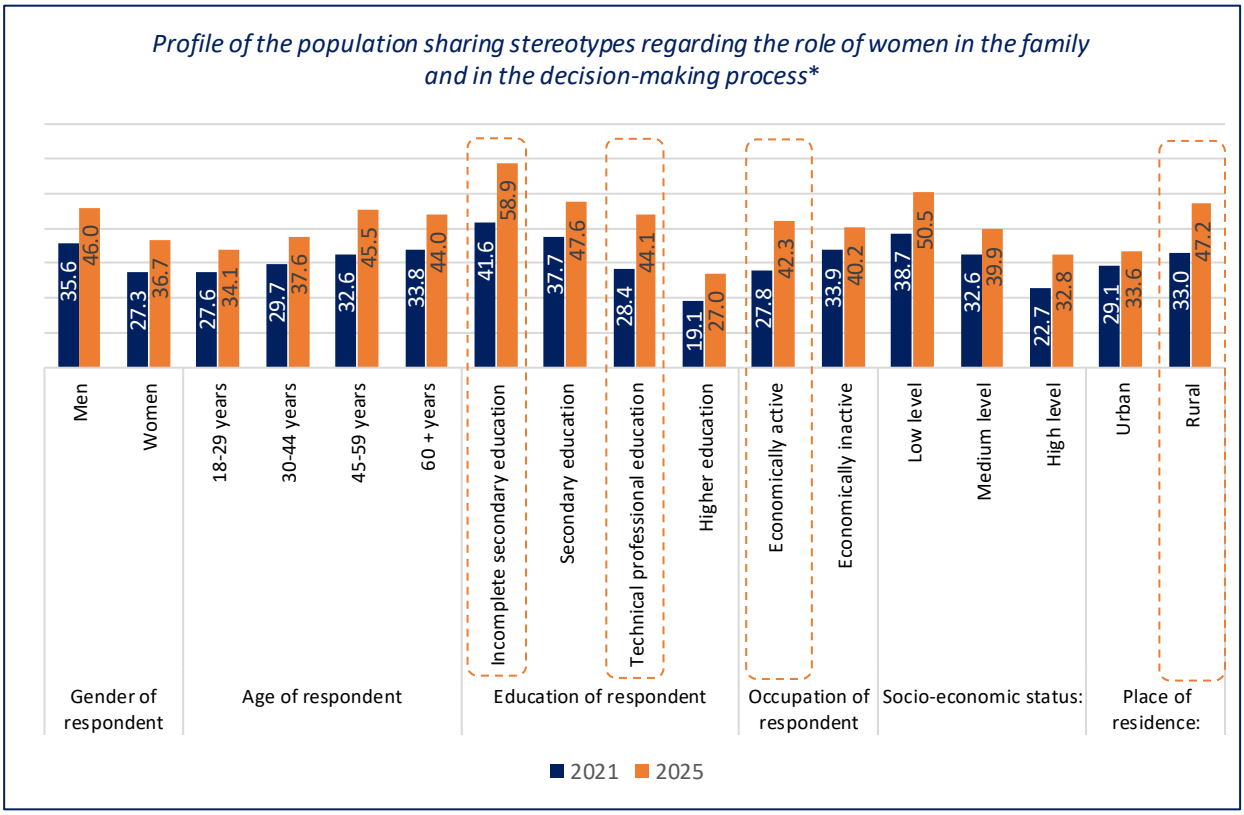
Source: CPD Study, 2025

[1] https://promolex.md/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/raport-du_ap_rrc_2024_machetat_2025-1.pdf

Gender stereotypes are particularly prevalent among men, individuals with lower levels of education, and those living in rural areas. According to the bellow-mentioned data, in the period between 2021–2025 a significant increase in the proportion of people from certain social categories who endorse stereotypes about women's roles in the family and decision-making processes has been registered. The most notable rise is among men, where the share grew from 35.6% in 2021 to 46% in 2025 (an increase of 10.4 percentage points), confirming that men remain the primary carriers of traditionalist views, as almost every second man holds such beliefs. Educational attainment also shows marked differences. Respondents with incomplete or general secondary education exhibit the highest levels of agreement with stereotypical statements (58.5% and 47.6%, respectively), while among those with higher education, the share is significantly lower (27%). Residence further accentuates these disparities: nearly half of rural inhabitants share gender stereotypes, compared to 33.6% of urban respondents, reaffirming the stronger traditionalist culture in rural areas. Occupational status also reveals similar patterns, with stereotypes more widespread among economically inactive individuals (43.3%) than among those who are economically active (32.3%). Socio-economic status also matters since stereotypes are more common among low-income groups (36.5%) and less prevalent among those with medium or high incomes. An alarming trend emerges when analyzing age groups. While the proportion of people aged 60+ who share gender stereotypes remains high (45.5%), there is a sharp increase among young people aged 18–29, reaching 37.6% in 2025 compared to 27.6% in 2021. This indicates a troubling perpetuation, and even consolidation, of traditionalist attitudes among the youngest generation, contrary to the expectations of greater openness toward gender equality.

Figure 2. Profile of the population sharing stereotypes regarding the role of women in the family and in the decision-making process, by socio-demographic categories, 2021, 2025, %

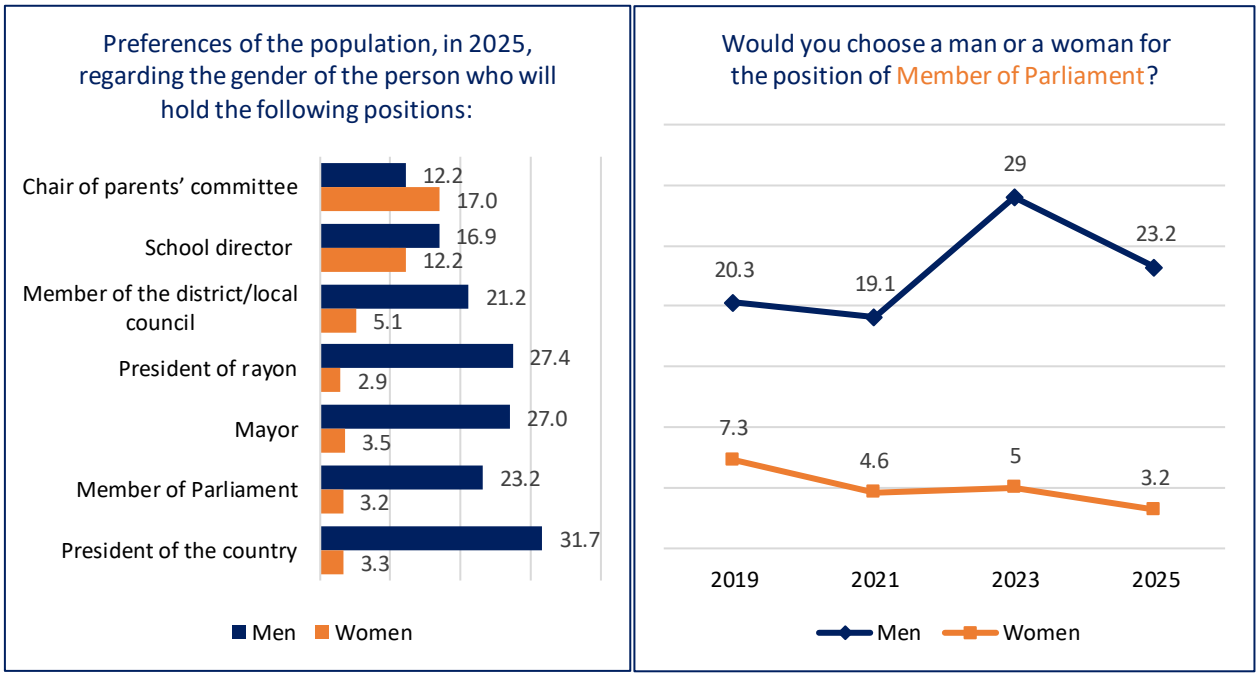
**Average of respondents who said they Totally agree or rather agree with the following statements: "Women have no place in politics"; "Women are less capable and cannot hold leadership positions", "A woman's destiny is the family and the household", "It is more of a women's duty to take care of household chores".*



Source: CPD Study, 2021 - 2025

Voter preferences remain strongly oriented toward men in public and elective positions. Research data show that most respondents continue to associate leadership roles with men, while women are favored only for positions perceived as "closer to family and community". For instance, nearly one-third of citizens (31.7%) would prefer a man as president of the country, compared to just 3.3% who would choose a woman. Similar trends are observed for other key positions: member of Parliament (23.2% for men vs. 3.2% for women), mayor (27% vs. 3.5%), and president of the rayon (27.4% vs. 2.9%). Even at the local level, speaking about rayon or municipal councils, the preference for men remains approximately four times higher than for women. The only roles where women receive slightly greater preference are those linked to education and family: the position of school director (17% for women vs. 16.9% for men) and chair of the parents' committee (12.2% for both genders). This pattern confirms the persistence of traditional perceptions that women are better suited for education and caregiving, while men are considered more appropriate for state leadership positions. The evolution of preferences for the position of member of Parliament between 2019 and 2025 reinforces this conclusion. In 2023, nearly one in three voters preferred a man for this role, while only 5% favored a woman. Although the preference for men declined slightly to 23.2% in 2025, the gap remains overwhelming (3.2% for women). These findings directly reflect earlier responses regarding gender roles, where women are perceived as belonging to the family and household sphere, and men as more suitable for leadership and political representation.

Figure 3. Preferences of the population regarding the gender of the person for public and elective positions, by gender, %

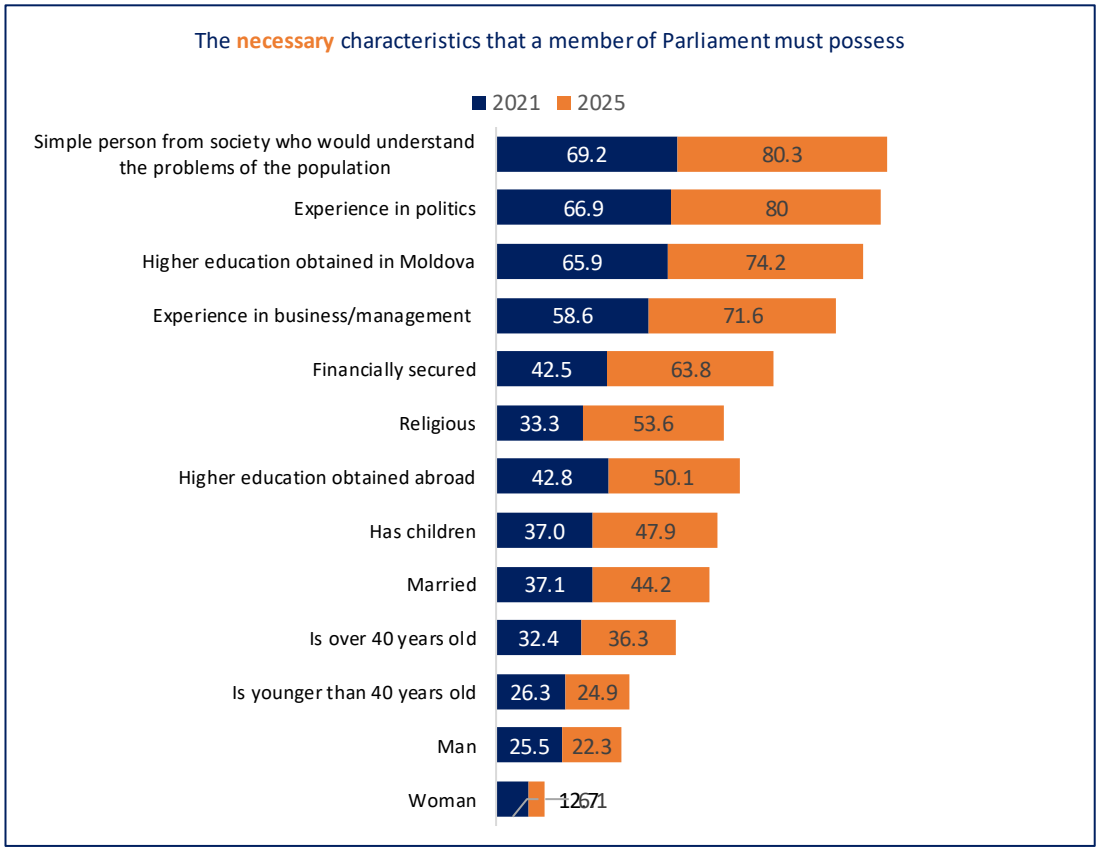


Source: CPD Study, 2019 – 2025

Voters attribute to members of Parliament a set of characteristics they consider essential to be perceived as legitimate representatives of society. The five most valued qualities are: being an ordinary person who understands the problems of citizens (80.3%); having political experience (80.0%); possessing business or management experience (71.6%); holding higher education obtained in Moldova (74.2%); and having financial resources (63.8%). Beyond these criteria, it is observed that the importance of traditional and conservative elements has grown significantly. Thus, the share of respondents who consider the following criteria as decisive for a member of Parliament has increased significantly: religious affiliation as a decisive criterion increased from 33.3% in 2021 to 53.6% in 2025; being married rose from 37.1% to 44.2%; and having children increased from 37.0% to 47.9%. The age criterion has also become more relevant: 36.3% of respondents prefer members of Parliament over 40 years old, while only 24.9% favor younger candidates. This trend is concerning, as criteria related to private life, family status, or age—rather than professional competence—are gaining ground, reducing the chances for unmarried, childless, young, or non-religious individuals to be perceived as legitimate politicians and, consequently, limiting diversity

in decision-making. Even more troubling, these preferences, combined with the declared bias toward men (22.3% vs. only 6.1% for women), reinforce the stereotypical image of a political leader: a man over 40, married, with children, religious, politically and managerially experienced, educated in Moldova, financially secure, and perceived as "a simple person who understands people's problems."

Figure 4. Characteristics considered as necessary for an ideal member of Parliament, 2021, 2025, %

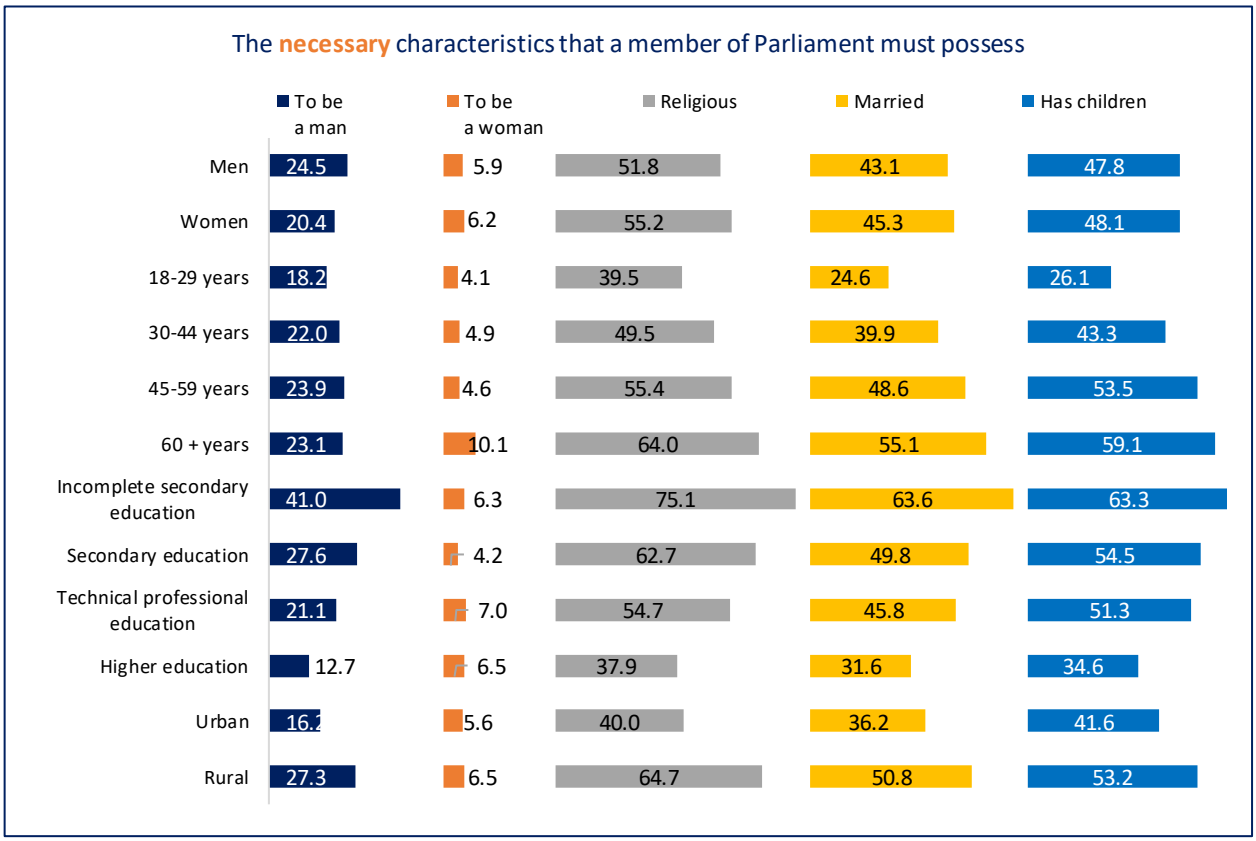


Source: CPD Study, 2021 – 2025

Traditionalist characteristics, such as gender, religion, marital status, and having children are considered "necessary" primarily by men, aged people, and those with lower levels of education. This research aimed to identify differences among socio-demographic groups regarding the characteristics deemed essential for a member of Parliament. The findings reveal that these perceptions are unevenly distributed across society, following a clear pattern shaped by gender, education, place of residence, and age. Thus, men are mentioning far more frequently than women that a member of Parliament should be male (24.5% compared to 20.4%), suggesting a tendency to legitimize their own social position and a stronger resistance to women's political participation. Paradoxically, some women also share this view, indicating the persistence of internalized stereotypes. Education level significantly differentiates attitudes: respondents with incomplete or general secondary education are most attached to religious and family-related criteria, with three out of four considering that a member of Parliament must be religious and over 60% believing that being married and having children are essential. In contrast, among those with higher education, these shares are roughly half, confirming that education plays a crucial role in reducing traditionalist perceptions and shifting focus toward competence rather than private life. The place of residence also influences opinions: in rural areas, nearly one in three respondents believe that a member of Parliament must be male, and two-thirds consider religion as an essential characteristic — compared to only 16% and 40% in urban areas. This reconfirms the stronger influence of traditional norms in rural communities. Age differences further highlight a conservative orientation among older respondents: nearly two-thirds of those aged 60+ prioritize religion, and more than half emphasize marital status and children as essential criteria. Among younger respondents, these values decline significantly, with only about a quarter considering marriage or children as necessary. This polarization shows that, although younger generations are distancing themselves from traditional patterns, they are not sufficiently

counterbalancing the influence of older generations. Overall, support for traditionalist criteria—gender, religion, family status, and children—remains strongest among men, individuals with low education, rural residents, and the elderly. This reality demonstrates not only the persistence of gender stereotypes but also their reinforcement through social, educational, and cultural conditions, which intensify symbolic barriers to women's participation in politics in certain groups.

Figure 5. Support for traditionalist characteristics for members of Parliament by socio-demographic groups, %



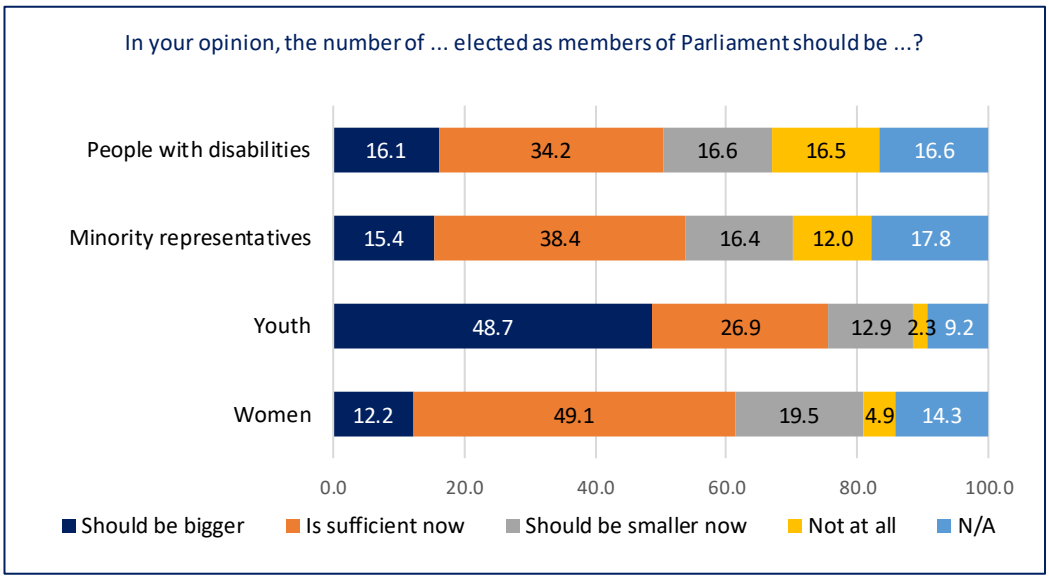
Source: CPD Study, 2025

PERCEPTIONS OF VOTERS ON THE UNDER-REPRESENTED GROUPS IN KEY POSITIONS

Voters believe that only young people require greater representation in Parliament, while for women, persons with disabilities, and minorities, most respondents consider the current level to be sufficient. Research data reveal clear differences in perceptions of parliamentary representation. Young people are the only group for which nearly half of respondents (48.7%) think their presence should increase, indicating an expectation for renewal within the political class. In contrast, for women, almost half of respondents (49.1%) believe the current level is adequate, and only 12.2% support greater representation. This view may be linked to the fact that, following the implementation of the double quota system, women's share in Parliament remained at 40% during the previous legislature.

The situation differs for persons with disabilities: 34.2% of respondents consider representation sufficient, despite the absence of any member of Parliament with disabilities. A similar pattern emerges for minorities, where 38.4% of respondents believe representation is adequate, even though the previous legislature included only one member of Parliament who identified as Roma.

Figure 6. Perceptions of the population regarding the representation of women, youth, people with disabilities and minorities in Parliament, %

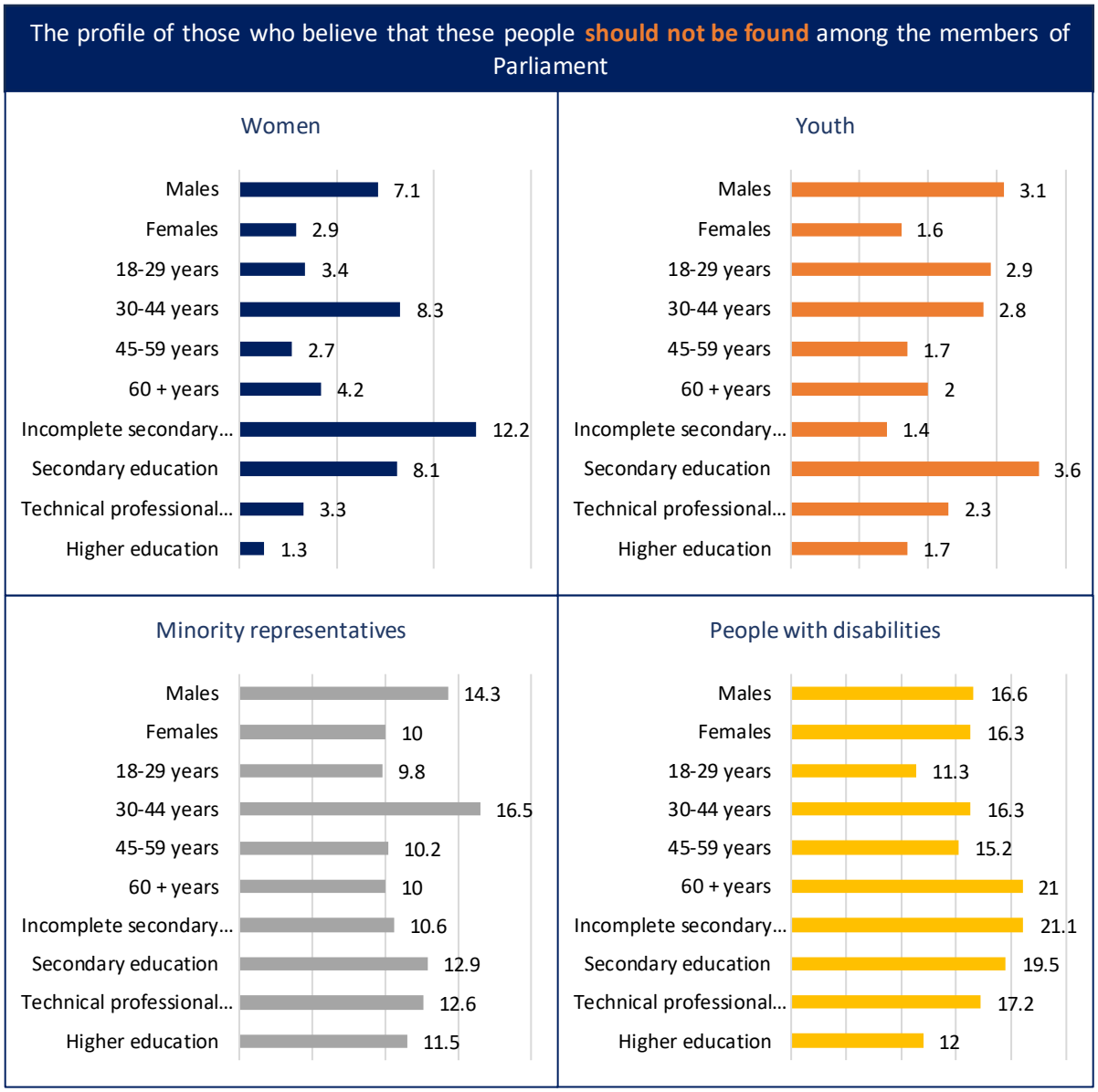


Source: CPD Study, 2025

Although the percentages are not very high, certain segments of the population explicitly exclude women, young people, persons with disabilities, and minorities from parliamentary representation. For women, opposition is strongest among men (7.1%) and individuals with lower education, representing 12.2% among those with incomplete education and 8.1% among those with general secondary education. In the case of young people, rejection levels are lower but peak among respondents with general secondary education (3.6%), suggesting that critical attitudes are linked more to socio-educational status than to age itself. For minorities, exclusion is noticeably higher: 16.5% of respondents aged 30–44 and 14.3% of men believe this group should not be represented in Parliament. High values across all education levels (10–13%) indicate that bias against minorities is widespread and not limited to educational background. The most alarming situation concerns persons with disabilities, where opposition is significantly stronger: 21% of respondents over 60 and 21.1% of those with incomplete education believe they should not be in Parliament at all. On average, between 15% and 20% of the population shares this exclusionary attitude, confirming the persistence of deep-seated prejudices and structural discrimination. Overall, resistance to diverse representation in Parliament is fueled primarily by men, individuals with low education, and older age groups. The strongest prejudices target persons with disabilities and minorities,

underscoring that the inclusion of these groups remains one of the greatest challenges for representative democracy in the Republic of Moldova.

Figure 7. The profile of respondents who exclude certain social categories from parliamentary representation (women, youth, minorities, people with disabilities)

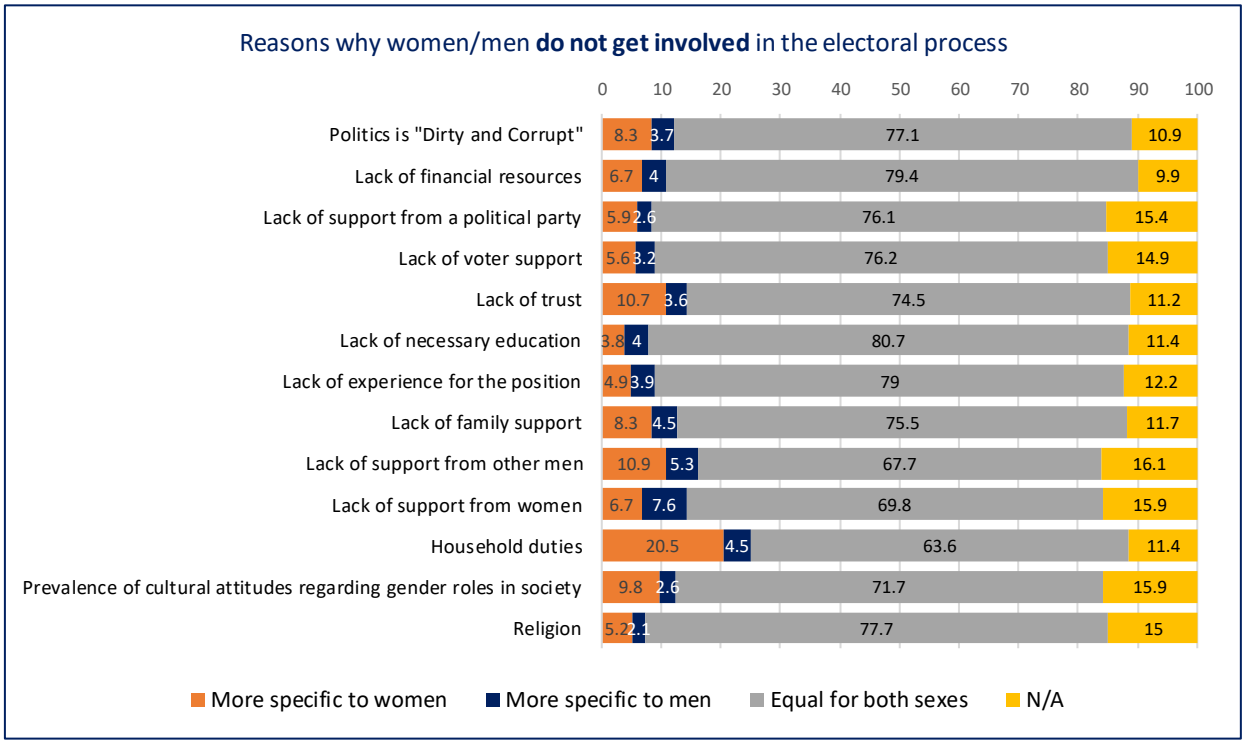


Source: CPD Study, 2025

Household responsibilities and traditional gender roles remain the primary barriers limiting women's participation in politics. Research data indicate that many reasons cited for low political engagement are perceived as affecting both women and men equally, such as the belief that "politics is dirty and corrupt" (77.1%), lack of financial resources (79.4%), or insufficient support from parties and voters (over 75%). These factors reflect the broader political context in the Republic of Moldova and are not explicitly linked to gender differences. However, several obstacles are perceived as more specific to women. The most prominent are household responsibilities, mentioned by 20.5% of respondents, confirming that caregiving and household duties continue to restrict the involvement of women in political life. Other barriers more frequently associated with women include lack of trust (10.7%), lack of family support (8.3%), and cultural pressure related to gender roles (9.8%). These findings demonstrate that, beyond structural challenges common to all, women face additional disadvantages stemming from family obligations and social stereotypes. On the other hand, some obstacles are perceived as more specific to men, though the shares

are relatively low. These include lack of support from other men (5.3%) and lack of support from women (7.6%), suggesting that men in political competition may feel a stronger sense of isolation within their own networks.

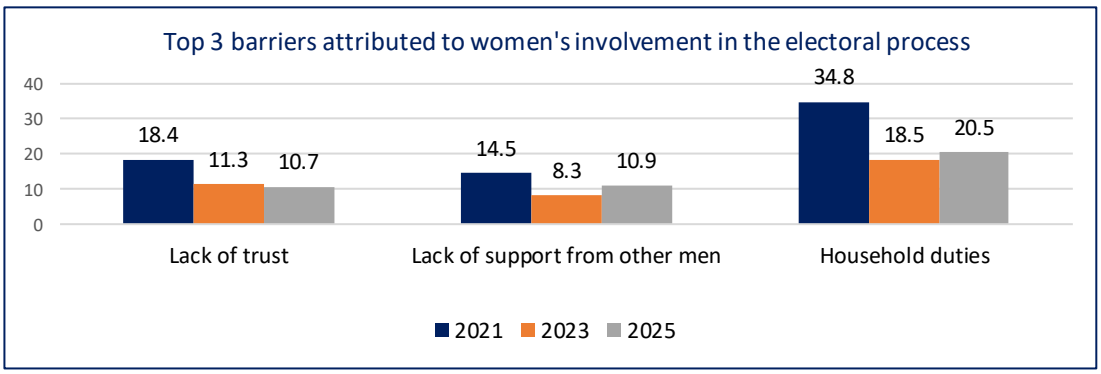
Figure 8. Perceived barriers for the involvement of women and men in the electoral process, %



Source: CPD Study, 2025

Perceptions of barriers to women's political participation have evolved in recent years, yet traditional roles and lack of support remain central challenges. Household responsibilities continue to be the most frequently cited obstacles: although their prevalence has declined from 34.8% in 2021 to 20.5% in 2025, this figure confirms that caregiving and domestic duties are still widely perceived as major limitations to women's involvement in politics. Another significant barrier is lack of trust, which decreased from 18.4% in 2021 to 10.7% in 2025, suggesting a gradual shift in attitudes – possibly influenced by the increased visibility of women in leadership roles and the implementation of gender quotas. Regarding the lack of support from male networks, this remains an important factor, with fluctuating values (14.5% in 2021, 8.3% in 2023, and 10.9% in 2025). The persistence of this barrier underscores the role of male solidarity in access to resources and political careers, and how its absence can disadvantage women. Overall, the data indicate a decline in the perceived importance of most barriers; however, household responsibilities and insufficient support from male networks continue to be regarded as structural obstacles to women's political participation.

Figure 9. Perceived barriers to women's involvement in the electoral process



Source: CPD Study, 2021 - 2025

INVOLVEMENT OF VOTERS IN THE ELECTORAL CAMPAIGN AND THEIR PERCEPTIONS

Over half of the citizens from the Republic of Moldovan (51.9%) fall into the category of passive individuals with little or no interest in the electoral campaign or the voting process. One of the important aspects of this analysis focuses on voters' behavioral patterns during the electoral campaign, particularly their level of interest in the electoral process, exercising the right to vote, etc. Citizen engagement was measured using an index based on 6 indicators[2] reflecting the level of interest in the electoral process. The intensity of involvement was rated on a scale from 1 (low interest) to 5 (high interest). Based on this index, respondents were grouped into three main categories based on their involvement and interest in the electoral process: (i) citizens showing active involvement, (ii) moderately involved citizens, and (iii) citizens with low level of interest and involvement. The data show that nearly one-third (30.5%) demonstrate moderate involvement, while only 17.7% of the citizens can be considered active – those who follow news and electoral debates, analyze candidate profiles, or attend campaign rallies with the candidates. From a democratic perspective, this trend is concerning, as voters' passivity can affect both the quality of public debates and the effective exercise of voting rights. It is reasonable to assume that those citizens who are actively engaged in the campaign are also the most likely to vote, while passive individuals are at a high risk to remain outside of the electoral process. Thus, differences in involvement not only reflect a certain level of interest in politics but also serve as predictors of actual voting behavior of citizens and presence for the ballot.

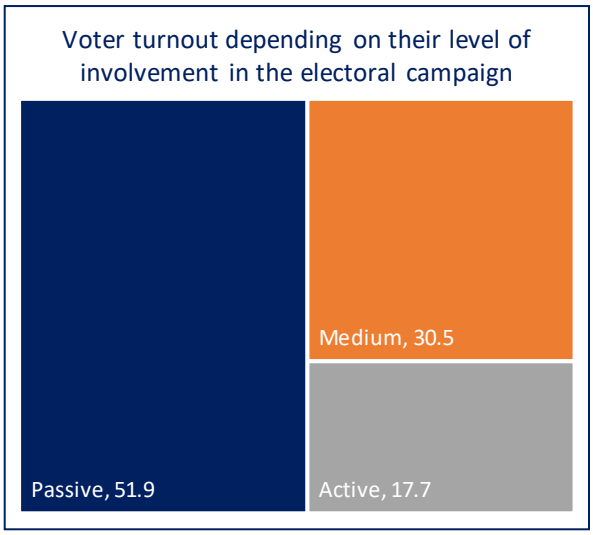
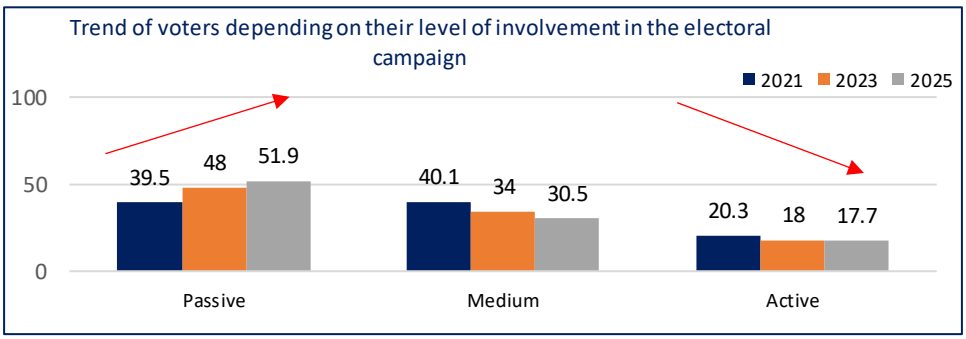


Figure 10. Groups of voters according to their level of involvement in the electoral process, %
Source: CPD Study, 2025

The growing share of passive voters is an alarming trend. Analysis of voter engagement during electoral campaigns reveals a negative dynamic: in 2025, the proportion of passive voters exceeded 50%, marking an increase of 12.4 percentage points compared to the previous parliamentary elections. Respectively, the share of active voters dropped to 17.7%, continuing a steady decline of approximately 2 percentage points per election cycle. This trend reflects not only a decline of interest in electoral processes but also a decline in citizens' confidence in the effectiveness of their participation.

Figure 11. Trend of voter groups according to their level of involvement in the electoral process, %

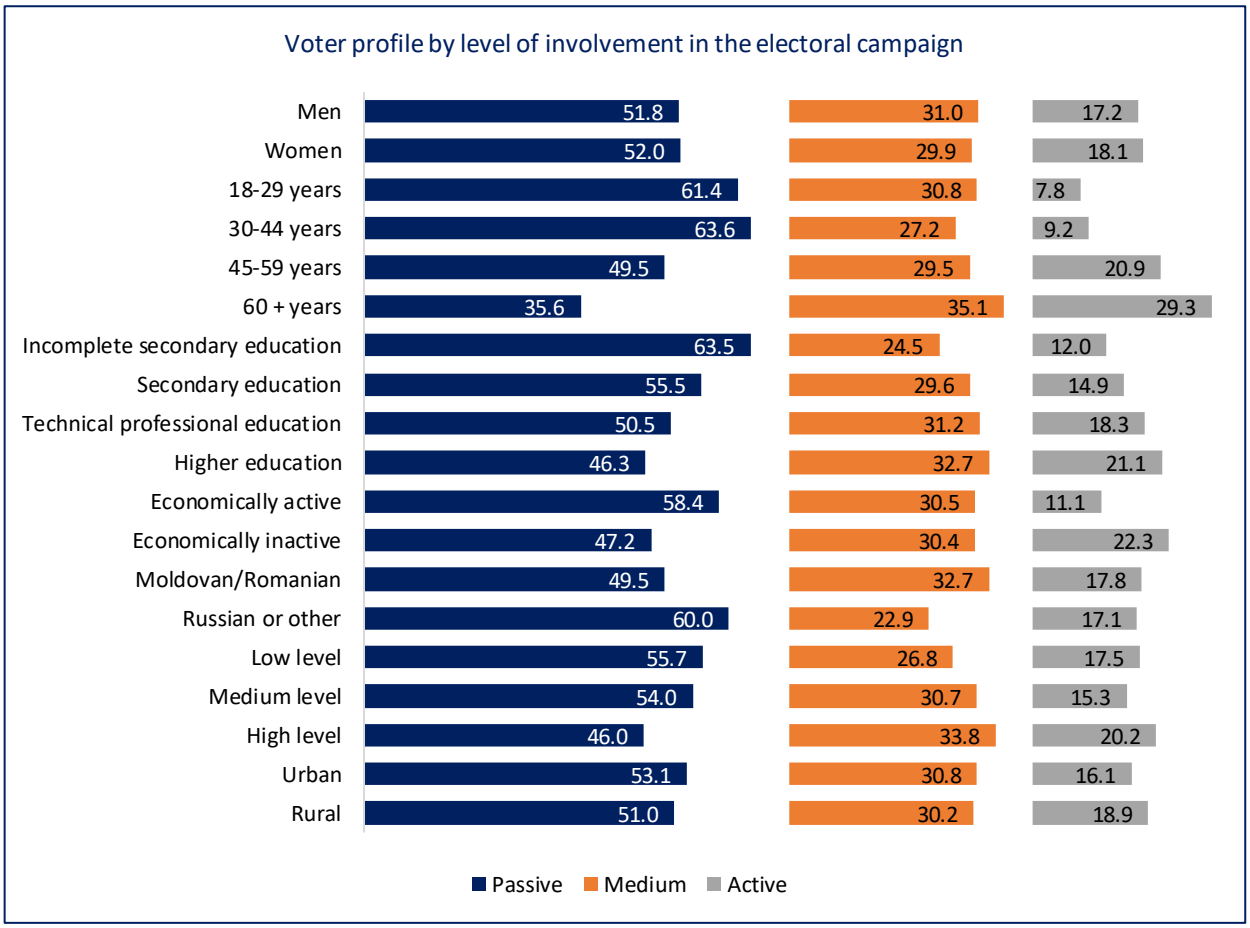


Source: CPD Study, 2021-2025

[2] The items assess: how often citizens follow election-related news; how frequently they watch election debates; the extent to which citizens analyze candidate profiles; how interested voters are in attending meetings with electoral candidates; how often they discuss or share information about electoral competitors with colleagues, family, or friends; and the level of interest citizens have in participating in electoral activities organized by candidates.

To increase electoral participation, it is crucial to mobilize young people, individuals with low education and low income, as well as linguistic minority communities – groups where passivity is most pronounced. Data reveal significant disparities in voter engagement across social categories. The least involved are young people aged 18–29 (61.4%) and 30–44 (63.6%), as well as those with incomplete education (63.5%) and low income (55.7%). Similarly, population speaking Russian or other languages besides Romanian/Moldovan show higher levels of passivity (60%). In contrast, the highest engagement is observed among citizens over 60 (29.3% active) and those with higher education (21.1% active). These findings suggest that efforts to boost participation should focus on mobilizing youth, less-educated individuals, low-income groups, and linguistic minorities. In these segments, lack of interest and limited access to information are most acute, making civic education programs, targeted information campaigns, and the creation of accessible spaces for participation potentially the most effective strategies.

Figure 12. Voter groups according to their level of involvement in the electoral process, by demographic characteristics, %

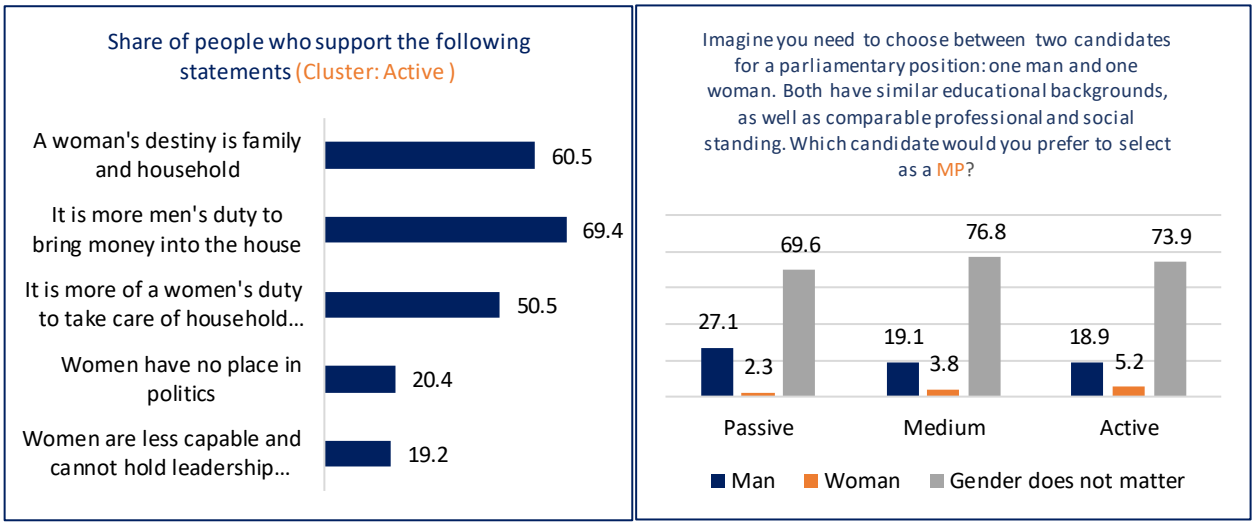


Source: CPD Study, 2025

Greater civic engagement reduces explicit preferences for men in politics but does not eliminate traditional stereotypes about gender roles within the family. The data reveals a paradox: **active** voters, i.e. those most interested in electoral campaigns and informed about the political process continue to reproduce traditional stereotypes regarding family roles. Nearly 70% believe that men should be the primary breadwinners, 60% consider that family and household are a woman's destiny, and half assign household chores mainly to women. However, when it comes to politics, only one in five respondents openly states that women should not be involved or are less capable. This discrepancy can be explained by the fact that stereotypes tied to the private sphere are deeply rooted and less socially contested, whereas in politics, there are public and legislative measures (such as gender quotas) that have normalized women's presence to some extent. In other words, active voters are more willing to accept women as political actors but continue to assign them traditional family roles. Interestingly, when asked to choose between a man and a woman with equal qualifications, the majority (70–77%) claim that gender does not

matter. Nevertheless, the passive voters show a stronger bias, with 27.1% preferring a man, and this fact is an indicator that lack of information and low exposure to public debates reinforces prejudices. Active and moderately involved respondents are more open to accept women (5.2% and 3.8%, compared to only 2.3% among passive voters). Overall, the findings suggest that civic engagement and exposure to political discourse reduce explicit gender bias in the public sphere but fail to erode traditional norms about gender roles in family settings. This separation between "politics" and "private life" reflects an incomplete process of cultural shift: women are "tolerated" in politics but still are perceived as primarily responsible for family and household duties.

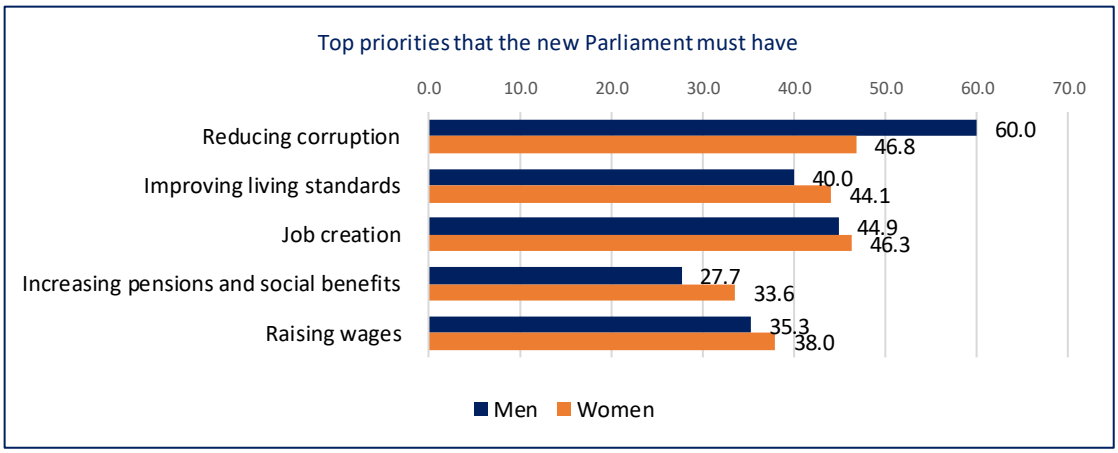
Figure 13. Share of gender stereotypes and electoral preferences among active, passive and medium-involved voters



Source: CPD Study, 2025

Top priorities for the new Parliament: combating corruption, improving living standards, and creating jobs. Data show that reducing corruption emerges as the highest priority for citizens, particularly among men (60%) and nearly half of women (46.8%). The next two major concerns, shared by both genders, are improving living standards (44.1% of women and 40% of men) and job creation (46.3% of women and 44.9% of men). These findings confirm that the public agenda is dominated by issues of integrity and economic well-being. Gender differences become more evident in areas related to social protection. Women place greater emphasis on increasing pensions and social benefits (33.6% compared to 27.7% of men) and raising wages (38% compared to 35.3%). This suggests that women, being more frequently affected by wage disparities and caregiving responsibilities, associate their own and their families' well-being with direct financial support measures.

Figure 14. The main priorities of citizens for the new Parliament, disaggregated by gender



Source: CPD Study, 2025

FINDINGS FROM CHAPTER I

This section provides a synthesis of conclusions of the study on voter perceptions in the Republic of Moldova regarding women's and men's participation in political life, representation of underrepresented groups, and the level of engagement in the electoral campaign.

1. **Family and children are the destiny of a woman:** 62% of voters believe a woman's primary role is caring for family and household, while nearly 70% think that men should be the main breadwinners. This shows that despite legislative progress, such attitudes confirm that traditional norms remain deeply entrenched in society.

2. **Growing reluctance toward women in politics:** The share of respondents who believe that women "have no place in politics" rose to 26% in 2025, signaling worsening attitudes toward women's involvement in decision-making. Additionally, approximately one in five still considers women "less capable" of holding leadership positions - a level that has remained largely unchanged, and this fact confirms the persistent gender bias in Moldovan politics.

3. **Profile of those supporting gender stereotypes:** Gender stereotypes are most prevalent among men (46%), individuals with low education (up to 58%), rural residents (47%), and those aged 60+ (45%). These stereotypes are also common among low-income and economically inactive groups, while only about 25% of respondents with higher education share these views.

4. **Youth are the only group that is seen by voters as needing greater representation:** Nearly half of voters (49%) want more young people in Parliament; however, only 12% are in favor of more young women. At the same time, over one-third consider that the representation of persons with disabilities and minorities as being sufficient, even though these groups are almost absent from the Parliament.

5. **More than half of voters are passive.** Half of the citizens of the Republic of Moldova (51.9%) can be categorized as passive voters, and the share continues to grow. These individuals show little or no interest in electoral campaigns or the voting process. Passivity is highest among young people (over 60% under the age of 45), those with lower education and income. Conversely, civic engagement is strongest among people over 60 (approximately 29% being active voters) and those with higher education (21% active).

6. **The ideal member of Parliament continues to have a traditionalist profile.** The preferred image of a member of Parliament, as seen by many voters, aligns with conservative norms: approximately 22% of respondents prefer that a member of Parliament be a man (vs. ~6% preferring a woman), while the importance of criteria such as religiosity, marital status, and having children have seriously increased and each of them is seen as "necessary" by nearly half of citizens. Combined with expectations of political experience, higher education (in-country), own financial resources, this shapes the ideal politician as a man over 40, married, with children, religious, and well-established.

7. **Corruption as top priority:** Fight against corruption is seen as the leading priority for the new Parliament agenda by 60% of men and 46.8% of women. Other major concerns shared by both sexes include improving living standards of the population and creating jobs (indicated by 40–46% of respondents). At the same time, women place relatively greater emphasis on social protection measures such as pensions and wage increases (34% women vs. 28% men), reflecting gendered differences in needs and perspectives.

8. **Civic engagement does not eliminate stereotypes:** Although active voters largely claim gender does not matter in elections, 69.4% still believe men should provide for the family, and 60.5% think a woman's destiny is the household. This paradox shows that exposure to political debates reduces bias in the public sphere but fails to dismantle traditional norms in private life.

METHODOLOGY

This chapter has been prepared based on data collected to identify persistent stereotypes regarding gender roles in social life, including women's participation in politics. The data were gathered by the Center for Sociological and Marketing Investigations "CBS-RESEARCH" during the month of August 2025.

Profile of the studied population:

		Total		Gender			
				Male		Female	
		Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Total		1117	100.0%	486	100.0%	631	100.0%
Respondent's gender:	**Male**	486	47.4%	486	100.0%	0	0.0%
	Female	631	52.6%	0	0.0%	631	100.0%
Respondent's age:	**18-29 years old**	206	14.2%	100	15.6%	106	12.8%
	30-44 years old	268	30.8%	116	33.4%	152	28.4%
	45-59 years old	246	28.9%	118	30.1%	128	27.7%
	60+ years	397	26.2%	152	20.8%	245	31.0%
Respondent's education:	**Incomplete secondary education**	131	12.9%	51	11.6%	80	14.0%
	Secondary education	289	23.5%	135	24.9%	154	22.2%
	Technical professional education	349	30.0%	164	32.3%	185	27.8%
	Higher education	345	33.7%	135	31.2%	210	36.0%
Respondent's occupation:	**Economically active**	370	41.7%	178	46.8%	192	37.1%
	Economically inactive	747	58.3%	308	53.2%	439	62.9%
Language of communication:	**Romanian**	866	77.4%	369	75.5%	497	79.2%
	Russian or other	251	22.6%	117	24.5%	134	20.8%
Socio-economic level:	**Low level**	389	33.4%	144	29.5%	245	36.8%
	Medium level	377	33.4%	174	34.8%	203	32.2%
	High level	351	33.2%	168	35.7%	183	31.0%
Residence:	**Urban**	493	45.0%	224	46.6%	269	43.6%
	Rural	624	55.0%	262	53.4%	362	56.4%

ANALYTICAL APPROACH REGARDING THE VOTERS' CLUSTERS

To assess the citizens' level of interest in the electoral process, within this analysis the population under survey was classified into three groups based on 6 specific indicators. The intensity of interest was measured on a scale from 1 (low interest/involvement) to 5 (high interest/involvement).

How interested are you in the following elements of this election campaign?

Items	Numerical value				
	Not at all interested	Not really interested	Neutral	Somewhat interested	Very interested
I frequently follow election-related news.	1	2	3	4	5
I frequently follow election debates.	1	2	3	4	5
I analyze the profile of electoral candidates	1	2	3	4	5

I take part in the rallies of electoral competitors.	1	2	3	4	5
I inform the colleagues/family members and friends about the electoral competitors	1	2	3	4	5
I take part in electoral activities organized by electoral competitors	1	2	3	4	5

Using the arithmetic mean approach, the citizens have been categorized into three groups based on their level of interest in the electoral process: **(i) low interest** – individuals showing no interest in the electoral process, or who are showing this interest in a reduced manner, with an average score up to 2.5 points; **(ii) moderate interest** – individuals with a medium level of interest towards the electoral process, scoring between 2.6 and 3.5 points; **(iii) high interest** – individuals demonstrating strong interest, with scores ranging from 3.6 to 5 points.

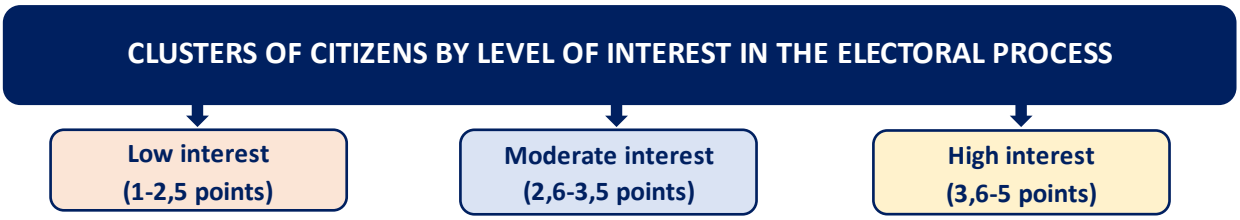


Figure 15. Clusters of respondents according to the level of engagement and interest in the electoral process
Source: Authors' calculations, 2025

Profile of the Studied Population:

		Gender:								
		Total			Male			Female		
		Passive	Medium	Active	Passive	Medium	Active	Passive	Medium	Active
Total		**51.9%**	**30.5%**	**17.7%**	**51.8%**	**31.0%**	**17.2%**	**52.0%**	**29.9%**	**18.1%**
Respondent's gender:	**Male**	51.8%	31.0%	17.2%	51.8%	31.0%	17.2%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
	Female	52.0%	29.9%	18.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	52.0%	29.9%	18.1%
Respondent's age:	**Ages 18-29**	61.4%	30.8%	7.8%	67.2%	27.2%	5.6%	55.1%	34.7%	10.1%
	Ages 30-44	63.6%	27.2%	9.2%	57.7%	32.4%	9.9%	69.7%	21.7%	8.6%
	Ages 45-59	49.5%	29.5%	20.9%	52.6%	29.5%	17.9%	46.6%	29.5%	23.9%
	Age 60+	35.6%	35.1%	29.3%	29.8%	33.8%	36.5%	39.2%	35.9%	24.9%
Respondent's education:	**Incomplete secondary education**	63.5%	24.5%	12.0%	56.8%	31.7%	11.5%	68.4%	19.1%	12.5%
	Secondary education	55.5%	29.6%	14.9%	56.8%	26.5%	16.7%	54.2%	32.7%	13.1%
	Technical professional education	50.5%	31.2%	18.3%	53.4%	26.6%	20.0%	47.4%	36.1%	16.6%
	Higher education	46.3%	32.7%	21.1%	44.5%	39.0%	16.5%	47.6%	27.7%	24.7%
Respondent's occupation:	**Economically active**	58.4%	30.5%	11.1%	56.5%	34.3%	9.2%	60.6%	26.1%	13.3%
	Economically inactive	47.2%	30.4%	22.3%	47.7%	28.1%	24.2%	46.9%	32.2%	20.9%
Language of communication:	**Moldovan / Romanian**	49.5%	32.7%	17.8%	48.2%	34.8%	17.0%	50.7%	30.8%	18.5%
	Russian or other	60.0%	22.9%	17.1%	62.9%	19.3%	17.8%	56.8%	26.7%	16.4%
Socio - economic level :	**Low level**	55.7%	26.8%	17.5%	62.6%	19.9%	17.5%	50.7%	31.8%	17.5%
	Medium level	54.0%	30.7%	15.3%	50.6%	33.7%	15.7%	57.2%	27.8%	15.0%
	High level	46.0%	33.8%	20.2%	44.1%	37.6%	18.3%	48.0%	29.9%	22.1%
Residence:	**Urban**	53.1%	30.8%	16.1%	52.3%	33.4%	14.3%	53.8%	28.3%	17.9%
	Rural	51.0%	30.2%	18.9%	51.4%	29.0%	19.6%	50.6%	31.2%	18.3%

Chapter II: THE 2025 PARLIAMENTARY ELECTION: SNAPSHOT OF AN ELECTORAL COMPETITION

Analysis of candidates and elected people from the perspective of gender equality

CONTEXT

This chapter represents the second report prepared within the monitoring process of Parliamentary elections held on 28 September 2025, aiming to evaluate the extent to which electoral competitors comply with legal requirements regarding the application of the double quota system and the principles of equal opportunities, as well as to provide a detailed analysis of the demographic and socio-economic characteristics of the candidates. Overall, 22 electoral competitors were examined: 14 political parties, four electoral blocs, and four independent candidates. It should be noted that the registration of the "Moldova Mare" Party was cancelled by the decision of CEC on 26 September 2025.

GENDER REPRESENTATION ON CANDIDATE LISTS

According to the current legislation of the Republic of Moldova, access to Parliament is conditional upon meeting the electoral threshold: 5% for political parties, 7% for electoral blocs, and 2% for independent candidates. Between 20 July and 19 August 2025, the political parties, electoral blocs, and independent candidates submitted the required documents to the Central Electoral Commission (CEC) in order to be registered as electoral competitors.

The CEC Regulation (Decision No. 1204/2023, amended in 2025) stipulates, as first condition, that the nomination of candidates must adhere to principles of legality, transparency, fairness, and equal opportunities. Electoral officials are required to review all files openly, impartially, and without discrimination. Parties and electoral blocs may submit candidate lists containing between 51 and maximum of 111 individuals, while independent candidates must present subscription lists with 2,000–2,500 signatures. A favorable provision applies to women: independent female candidates may register with at least 1,000 signatures. The regulation also outlines the procedures for submission, verification, and the lottery of documents to establish the order of insertion into the voting ballot. For independent candidates, the process involves establishment of an initiative group to collect necessary signatures, although individual collection by the candidate is also permitted. The CEC sets the location and the timeframe for the submission of documents, establishes the committees for reception of these documents, and verifies compliance with legal requirements. Submitted lists must include biographical data, declarations of assets, and, where applicable, the competitor's electoral symbol.

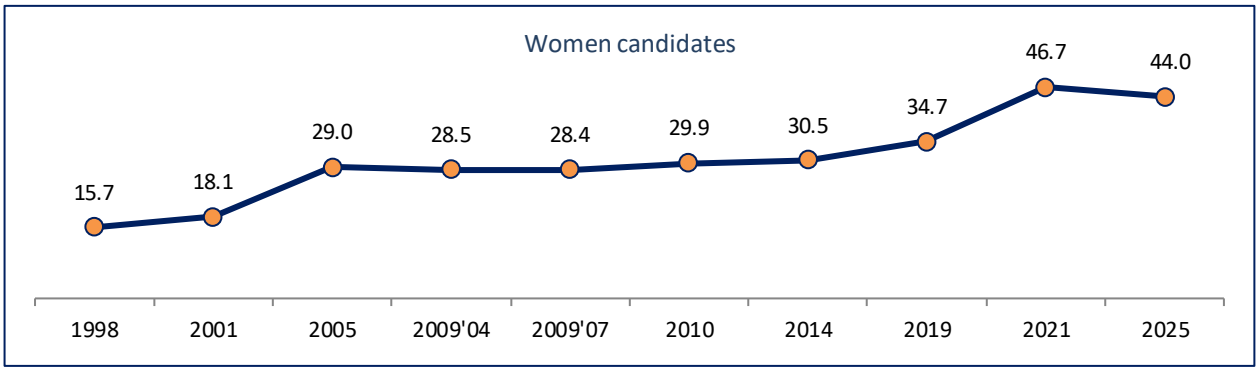
From a gender perspective, the law introduces explicit mechanisms to ensure a fair representation of both sexes. According to Article 68 para.(3) of the Electoral Code No. 325/2022 the candidate lists for parliamentary and local elections shall respect a minimum representation quota of 40% for each sex, while the positioning of candidate on the lists shall be based on the formula "at least four candidates of the opposite sex for every ten seats". The legal framework underlines the mandatory character of these provisions; failure to comply may result in the rejection of the list by the CEC. Parties and electoral blocs are entitled to modify or amend the lists of candidates up to 30 days before the election day (within the limits set by Article 111 para.(2) of the Electoral Code). Up to 10 days before the election day, they may also modify the order of candidates on the list, may exclude individuals, or even may withdraw the entire list. These changes must be approved by the party's competent body and validated by the CEC within five days. The CEC may refuse those modifications that fail to comply with Articles 68 para.(3) and 115 of the Electoral Code. Additionally, the Law on political parties and CEC decisions require political entities to allocate part of public subsidies to promote the participation of women and youth in politics, and for each woman elected at the parliamentary or local level the parties receive proportional financial supplements.

In total, 23 electoral competitors were registered, of which 15 requested amendments to candidate lists under Articles 68, 111, and 115 of the Electoral Code, and the CEC adopted 49 decisions in this regard, including 26 amendments.

Based on the above mentioned, the following section presents the main findings regarding candidate representation on electoral lists, analyzed from a gender perspective.

The 2025 Parliamentary elections were characterized by a relatively balanced representation of women on candidate lists. According to data from the Central Electoral Commission, women accounted for 44.0% of all registered candidates, reflecting the maintenance of a relative gender balance in electoral lists. This outcome is largely attributable to legislative provisions requiring political parties to ensure a minimum gender quota of 40% when compiling candidate lists. However, compared to the 2021 Parliamentary elections, when women represented 46.7% of candidates, there is a slight decline in the share. This trend suggests that legislative mechanisms alone are insufficient and must be reinforced by genuine political commitment and concrete measures that guarantee not only women's numerical presence on candidate lists but also their effective participation in electoral competition and subsequent decision-making processes

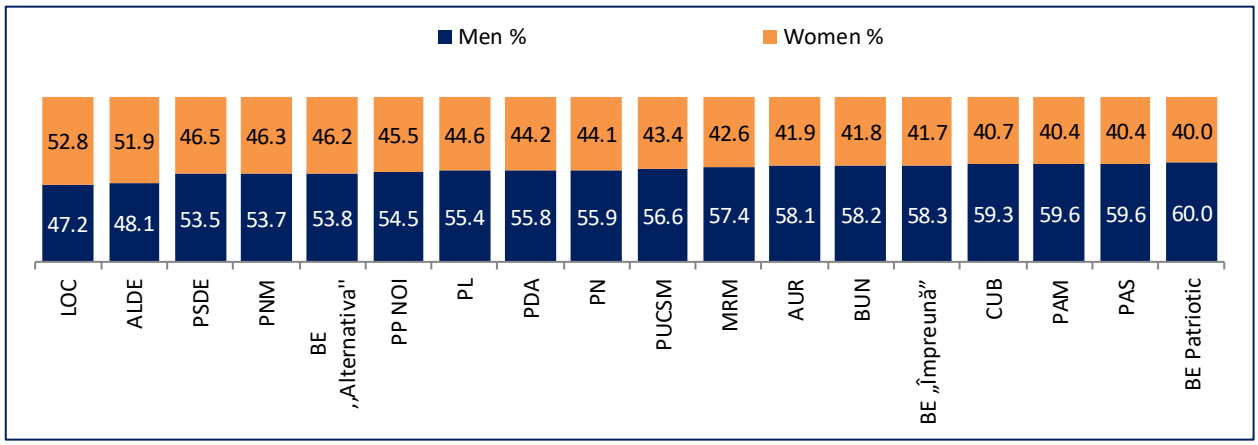
Figure 15. Share of women among candidates for the position of MP, %



Source: CPD calculations based on data provided by the Central Electoral Commission, 2025

Although compliance with the gender quota was a mandatory condition for participation in the electoral competition, the way political parties implemented this requirement reveals significant differences in their commitment to promoting gender equality. All parties contesting the 2025 Parliamentary elections adhered to the provisions of the Electoral Code[3], which stipulates a minimum threshold for gender representation on candidate lists. However, a comparative analysis of the lists shows contrasting approaches: some parties limited themselves to meeting the minimum legal requirement, while others exceeded it, including more than 50% women among their candidates (e.g., PP LOC, PP ALDE). This variation reflects two key aspects:(i) the different degree to which parties embrace gender equality as a political value and strategic objective in candidate selection process; and (ii) the greater capacity of certain entities, particularly those with smaller lists, to ensure balanced representation.

Figure 16. Share of women and men on the lists of candidates nominated for the position of MP, by electoral competitors, %



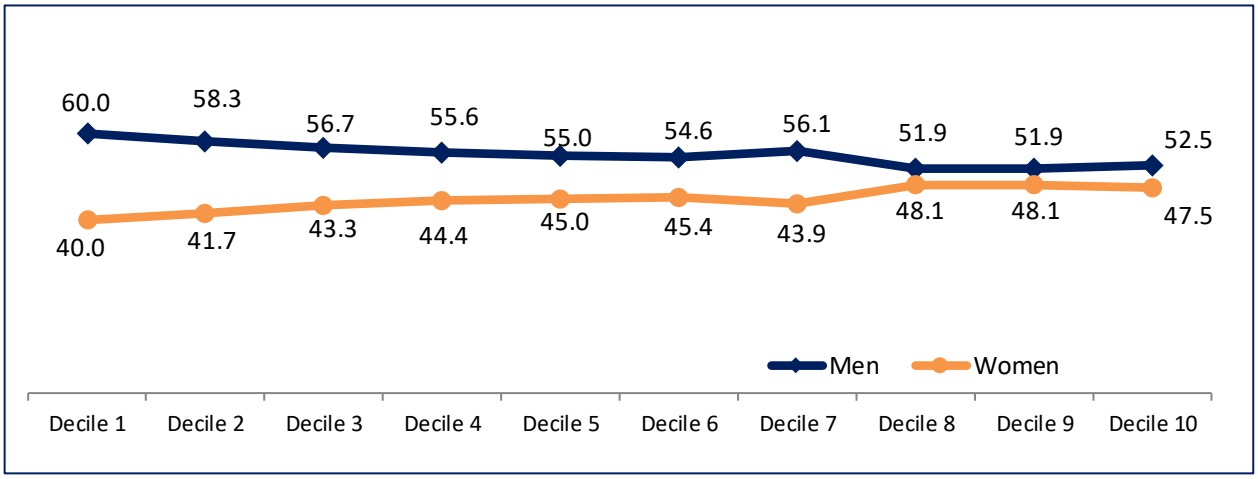
Source: CPD calculations based on data provided by the Central Electoral Commission, 2025

The proportion of women in the top positions on candidate lists exceeds the 40% threshold. However, their representation within the most competitive segments offers a more nuanced perspective on parties'

[3] The Electoral Code, art.68 para. (3), https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=149860&lang=ro#

commitment to gender equality. While women's overall presence on candidate lists appears relatively balanced, an analysis of their positioning reveals notable variations. On the first 10 places that are also considered the most competitive and with the highest likelihood of securing parliamentary mandates women account for 40.0% of the total number of candidates, while in the following decile (positions 11–20), their share rises slightly to 41.7%. Although these figures suggest near-parity in the eligible zones, they mark a slight decline compared to the 2021 elections, when women represented 42.7% in the first decile. This trend indicates that, despite overall progress, political parties remain cautious about placing women in the most winnable positions, which may ultimately limit their effective representation in Parliament.

Figure 17. Positioning of women and men on the lists of candidates nominated for the position of MP, by gender and deciles, %



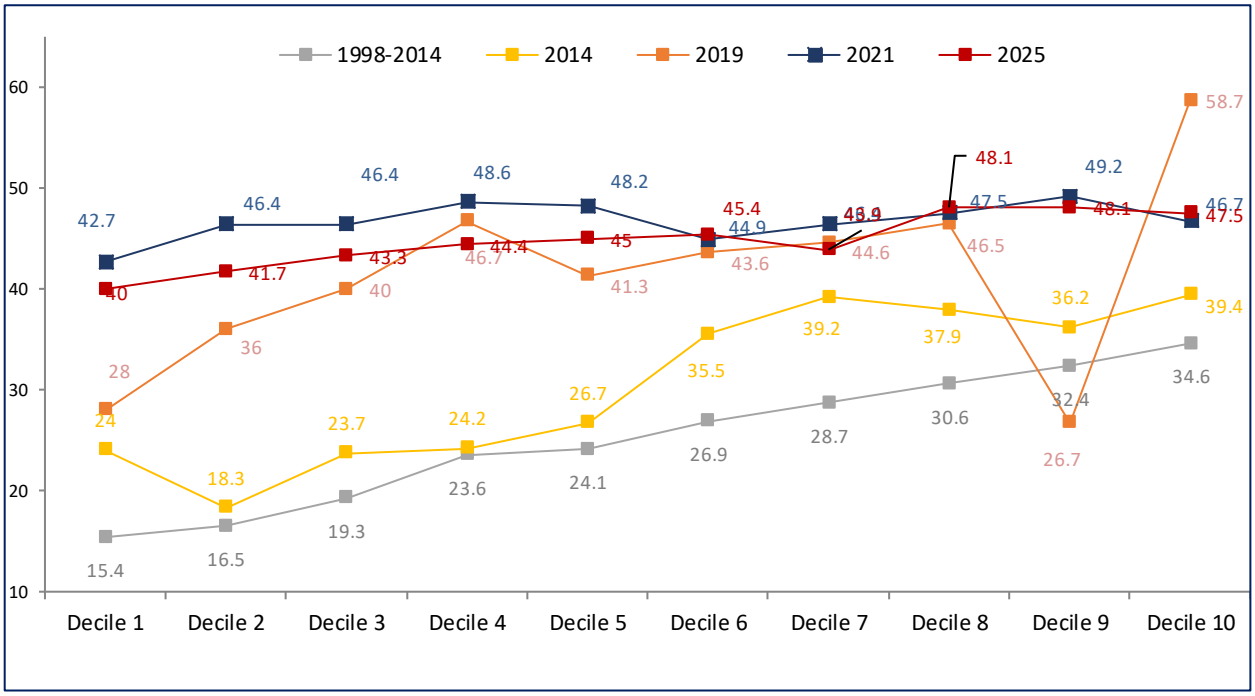
Source: CPD calculations based on data provided by the Central Electoral Commission, 2025

Legislative changes introducing the double quota system have fundamentally transformed the positioning of women on electoral lists. The figure below illustrates the trend in candidate placement by deciles, highlighting the impact of electoral legislation on women's real chances of eligibility. A closer analysis of this evolution shows that, prior to 2016, women were disproportionately placed at the bottom of lists: their share increased significantly in the last deciles, where chances of being elected were minimal, while their presence in the top deciles associated with the highest probability of winning the mandates was considerably lower. In 2016, the 40% gender quota was introduced for the first time, but it applied only to the overall list without regulating the order of candidates. This allowed parties to formally meet the numerical requirement while continuing to assign most female candidates to less competitive positions lower on the lists. In 2019, the double quota system was approved only for local elections, introducing a special provision: each group of 10 candidates had to include at least 3 individuals of the opposite sex. Although this formula gradually influenced candidate distribution, it did not fully eliminate the tendency to concentrate women in lower deciles. The decisive change occurred in 2021, when the double quota system was fully implemented: a minimum of 40% representation for each sex and at least four candidates of the opposite sex in every group of ten positions. From that point onward, women's representation became balanced across the entire list, including in the top deciles i.e the most competitive positions. The gap between women's share at the top and bottom of the lists disappeared, and this demonstrated that legislative amendments not only reinforced the compliance with quotas but also transformed the practices of political parties by turning a formal obligation into a genuine mechanism for ensuring equal opportunities during the electoral competition. It is important to note that this quota operates symmetrically, protecting both women and men in cases where one sex risks underrepresentation. A clear example is the 2023 local general elections[4], when some parties submitted lists with a lower proportion of men, and the Central Electoral Commission required them to comply with the rules on balanced representation.

[4] https://progen.md/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/Raport-Alegeri-combinat-1.pdf

Thus, the double quota system, as long as it is maintained, will contribute to ensuring fair representation of both sexes on electoral lists and will guarantee real chances of eligibility equally for women and men.

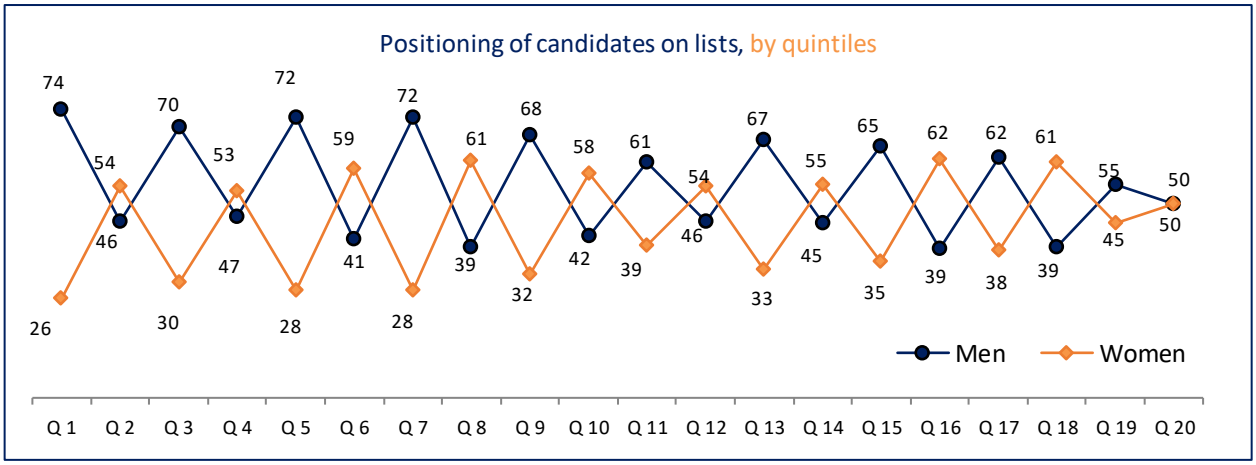
Figure 18. Trend in the positioning of women on the lists of candidates nominated for the position of MP, by years and deciles, %



Source: CPD calculations based on data provided by the Central Electoral Commission, 1998-2025

Although political parties formally comply with gender quota requirements, men continue to dominate the top positions on candidate lists, while women are disproportionately concentrated in quintiles with lower chances of securing a mandate. The figure below illustrates that in the first quintiles, i.e. those considered most competitive, the proportion of men is significantly higher, exceeding 70% in certain segments (Q1, Q3, Q5, Q7). Despite meeting the 40% quota, women are more frequently positioned in middle and lower quintiles, where eligibility prospects are minimal. These disparities demonstrate that compliance with numerical quotas does not automatically ensure equal access to winnable positions. To address this imbalance, additional regulatory measures may be necessary, such as introducing placement rules for every five seats or adopting the "zipper" formula (alternating male and female candidates). This approach, commonly referred to as the "zipper" or "zebra" system, obliges parties to alternate candidates by gender, thereby guaranteeing a 50/50 distribution across the entire list.

Figure 19. Positioning on the lists of candidates nominated for the position of MP, by gender and quintiles, %



Source: CPD calculations based on data provided by the Central Electoral Commission, 2025

Positioning indicators reveal that, although women have gained ground over the past two decades, men continue to dominate the top positions on electoral lists, particularly the first five spots. Data show that the average placement of men remains consistently more favorable than that of women: in 1998, the gap represented 10 positions, and in 2025 it is still maintained at 3 positions. Regarding the top of the lists, men maintain an almost complete dominance. Across most electoral cycles, the number of men occupying the first position has far exceeded that of women, the difference reaching 16 in 2025. Analysis of the top five positions confirms the same trend: in 1998, only 5.3% of these positions were held by women, while in 2025 their share increased to 25.6%. Although progress is evident, men still hold over 70% of these highly competitive positions, which are critical for eligibility. This imbalance is partly explained by the fact that the first position on the list is typically reserved for party leaders—and most political parties in the Republic of Moldova continue to be led by men.

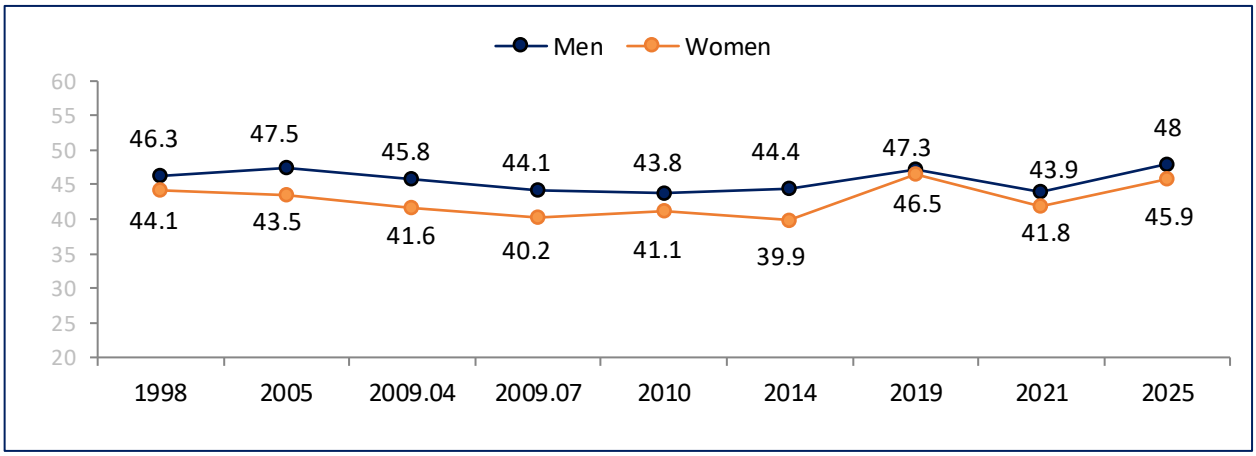
Table: 1. Main indicators of the positioning on lists

		Elections									
Indicator		**1998**	**2001**	**2005**	**2009.04**	**2009.07**	**2010**	**2014**	**2019**	**2021**	**2025**
Average position on lists	**Men**	46	48	48	49	48	47	44	43	43	38
	Women	56	56	53	55	56	58	53	50	45	41
	Difference	10	8	5	6	8	11	9	7	2	3
No. of people at the top of the list	**Men**	13	17	10	10	8	18	18	12	18	17
	Women	2	0	1	2	0	2	2	3	4	1
	Difference	11	17	9	8	8	16	16	9	14	16
Percentage in the top 5 positions	**Men**	94.7%	94.1%	78.2%	78.3%	90.0%	85.0%	76.9%	72.0%	73.0%	74.4%
	Women	5.3%	5.9%	21.8%	21.7%	10.0%	15.0%	23.1%	28.0%	27.0%	25.6%

Source: CPD calculations based on Central Electoral Commission data, 1998-2025

The average age of candidates nominated for the position of member of Parliament in 2025 is higher than in the previous elections. Having analyzed the trends since 1998, the data show that the average age of candidates in 2025 reached 47.2 years and is the highest value recorded so far, being preceded by the 2019 elections with an average of 46.9 years. In all other electoral cycles, the average age remained below 45 years. From a gender perspective, the pattern is consistent: on average, male candidates are older than female candidates. This difference persists in 2025, with men being approximately two years older than women. The fact that the overall average age exceeds 46 years suggests that young people continue to face significant barriers in accessing political positions.

Figure 20. Trend in the average age of women and men on the lists of candidates nominated for the position of MP, years

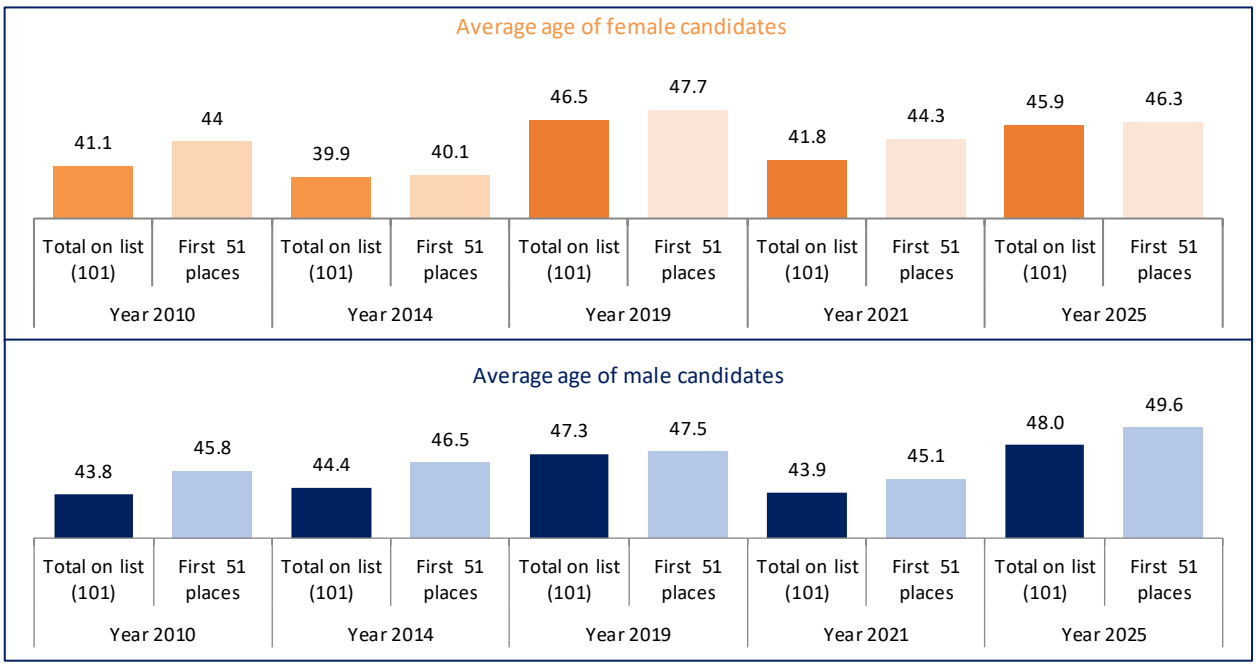


Source: CPD calculations based on data provided by the Central Electoral Commission, 1998-2025

Age remains an important factor influencing candidate placement on electoral lists. Electoral competitors tend to nominate older candidates, both men and women, for positions considered more

eligible. Historical data show that the average age of candidates in the first half of the list is typically 2–3 years higher than the overall average, with smaller differences observed among women. In the 2025 elections, men placed in the first 51 positions have an average age of 49.6 years—1.6 years older than the general average for male candidates. For women, the difference is unsignificant: those placed at the top of the lists are only 0.4 years older than the overall female average. These findings suggest that political experience and seniority remain key criteria for candidates nominated to the most competitive positions.

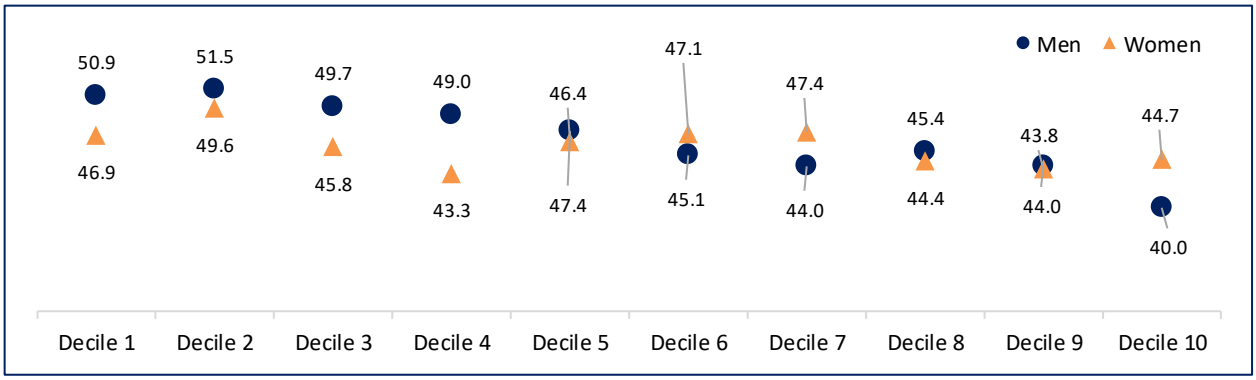
Figure 21. Trend in the average age of candidates on the lists of candidates for the position of MP, by gender, years



Source: CPD calculations based on data provided by the Central Electoral Commission, 2010-2025

A detailed analysis of electoral lists reveals that young candidates are predominantly placed toward the bottom of the lists, where chances of entering the Parliament are minimal. Data show that the average age of candidates in the first decile is 48.9 years, while in the last decile (positions 91–111[5]) it drops significantly to 42.3 years. The 6.6-year gap between these extremes indicates a systematic tendency to position younger candidates at the end of lists, thereby providing less chances of accessing into the Parliament. This ranking has important implications for political renewal and youth participation in decision-making, suggesting that parties favor more experienced candidates and may be reluctant to provide real opportunities for younger generations. Moreover, this dynamic intersects with gender factors, disproportionately affecting young women who belong to two underrepresented categories in eligible positions.

Figure 22. Average age of candidates nominated for the position of MP, by decile and gender, years

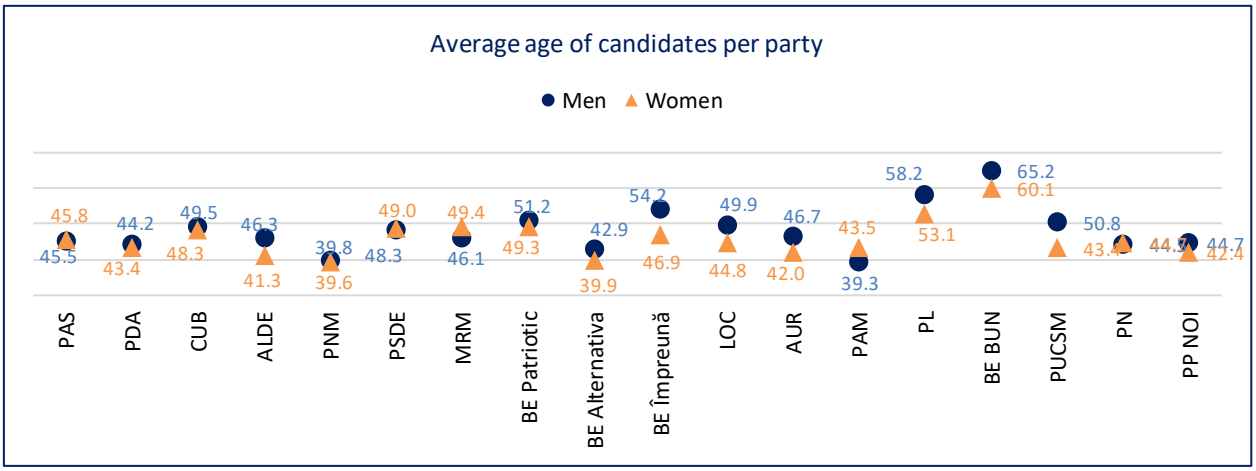


Source: CPD calculations based on data provided by the Central Electoral Commission, 2025

[5] According to the Electoral Code, art. 111 para. (2), the political party or electoral bloc shall submit a list of candidates of no less than 51 people and no more than 111 people, https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=149860&lang=ro#

The comparative assessment reveals significant differences among political parties regarding the average age of their candidates. Some parties have promoted lists dominated by younger candidates, with average ages ranging between 39 and 41 years, signaling greater openness toward integrating youth into decision-making structures. In contrast, other parties maintain a componence dominated primarily of individuals aged 55 to 62 years, reflecting a preference for candidates with extensive political experience or adherence to a more conservative organizational culture. These disparities can influence not only the internal dynamics of the parties, but also the nature of electoral campaigns and the promoted political priorities, including those focused on areas such as youth engagement, digitalization, and gender equality.

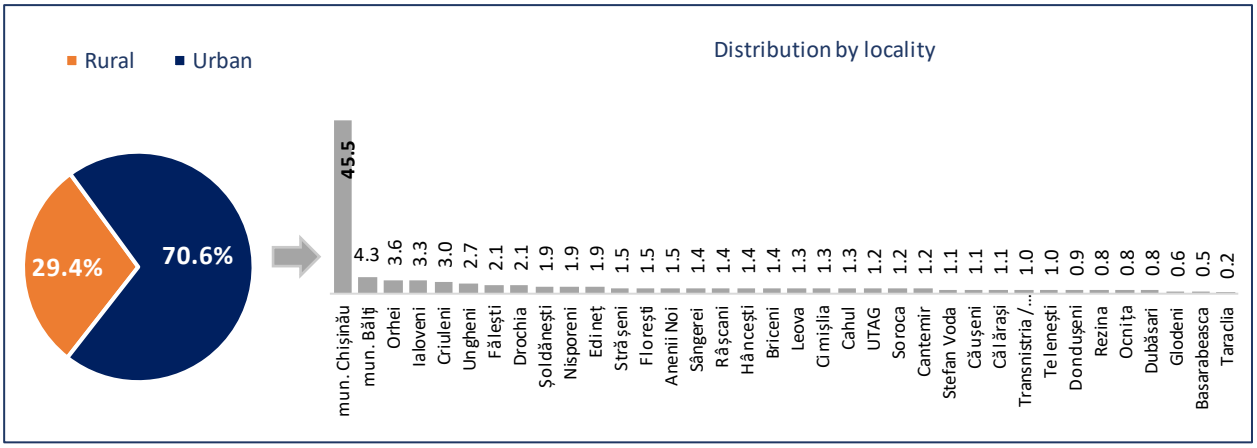
Figure 23. Average age of candidates nominated by each party for the position of MP, by gender and electoral competitors, yea rs



Source: CPD calculations based on data provided by the Central Electoral Commission, 2025

Approximately 70% of candidates originate from urban areas, and nearly half are coming from Chișinău. Figure 24 illustrates that the selection of candidates for the parliamentary elections is heavily concentrated in cities: 70.6% of registered candidates come from urban areas, while only 29.4% are from rural localities. More than 45.5% of candidates originate from Chișinău municipality, followed by Balti, Ialoveni, Comrat, and Criuleni, each contributing around 4%. The remaining rayons account for smaller shares, most representing about 1% of the total. This distribution underscores the centralization of political life, as parties primarily recruit people from the capital and a few major urban centers where political networks, resources, and visibility are concentrated. Rural areas remain underrepresented, largely due to depopulation and limited political infrastructure. Consequently, while gender quotas ensure balance between women and men, the geographical reality reveals that participation in national elections is dominated by urban candidates. To reflect the country's diversity, parties should expand recruitment efforts to rural communities.

Figure 24. Distribution of candidates nominated for the position of MP, by gender and area of residence, %

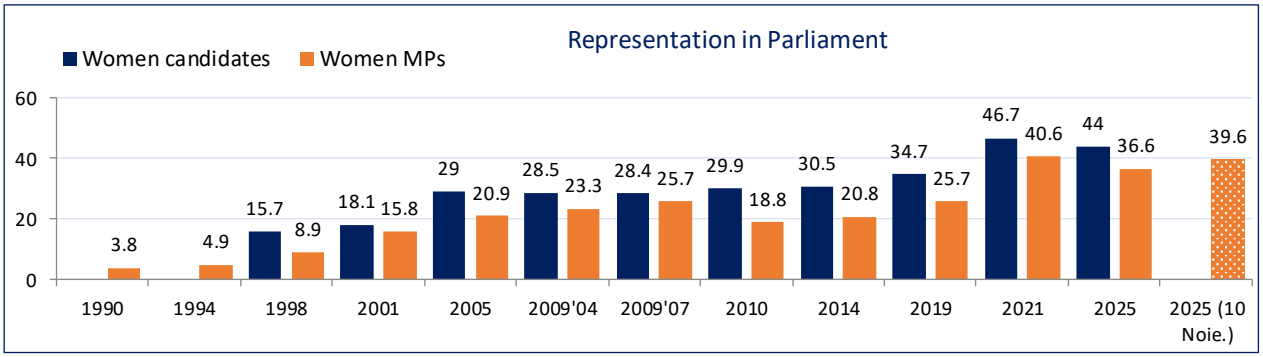


Source: CPD calculations based on data provided by the Central Electoral Commission, 2025

GENDER REPRESENTATION IN THE PARLIAMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA

The share of women MPs in the XII-th legislature of the Parliament of the Republic of Moldova has declined compared to the previous election. Following the parliamentary elections of 28 September 2025, women hold 36.6% of the total number of seats, which is 4 percentage points less than before. This decrease is attributed both to the lower number of female candidates in the electoral race and persistent structural barriers, including worsening of social attitudes toward women in decision-making roles. However, after several reshuffles in November, the proportion of women increased to 39.6%, up by 3 percentage points compared to the initial results. Despite the slight decline, the current share and the one in the previous legislature remain the highest recorded in Moldova's parliamentary history, underscoring the importance and necessity of maintaining legal provisions that ensure gender-balanced representation in Parliament.

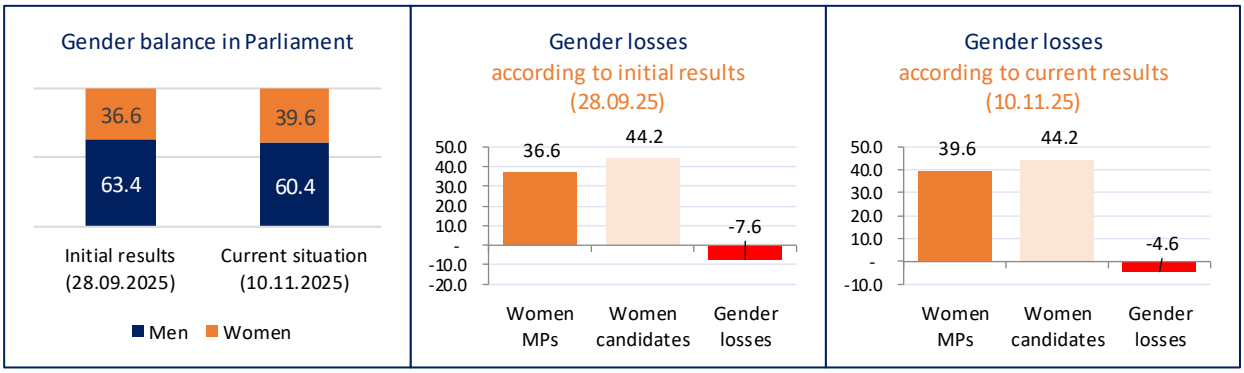
Figure 25. Trend of women's representation in the list of candidates and elected MPs, %



Source: CPD calculations based on data provided by the Central Electoral Commission, 1990-2025

Women remain underrepresented in the current Parliament, holding just over one-third of the seats compared to men. Following the latest reshuffles, men account for 63.4% of seats, while women represent only 39.6% of the total members of Parliament elected. The analysis also highlights an increase in the so-called "gender loss" during the electoral process, representing the gap between the share of female candidates and the proportion of women elected. In these elections, initial data show a gender loss of 7.6 percentage points: although women comprised 44.2% of candidates, only 36.6% secured parliamentary mandates. Compared to the previous election[6], this loss grew by 1.5 percentage points, indicating a decline in women's ability to convert formal participation into effective representation. Subsequent changes in Parliament's composition reduced this gap to 4.6%. While the current situation has improved, the trend demonstrates that, despite legislative progress and measures promoting gender equality, women continue to face systemic obstacles limiting equitable access to elected positions.

Figure 26. Gender share and gender loss in the new Parliament, by sex, %

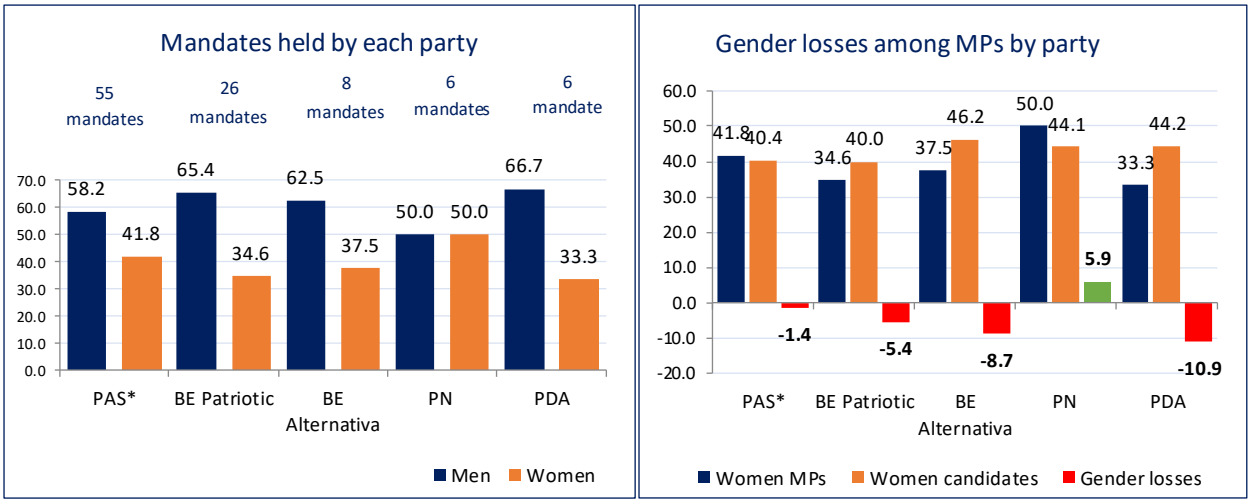


Source: CPD calculations based on data provided by the Central Electoral Commission, 2025

[6] https://progen.md/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Raport_Alegeri-Parlamentare-anticipate-2021.pdf

Among the parties that secured parliamentary mandates, only "Our Party" Party achieved gender-balanced representation, with three female and three male MPs. In contrast, other political parties report a female representation of around 35%, falling short of gender parity. Although the legal framework mandates a double gender quota during the electoral process and thus requiring at least 40% women on candidate lists and their alternation within deciles (the "positioning quota"), this proportion is not reflected in the final composition of Parliament. The discrepancy largely stems from candidate placement practices: women are often positioned toward the end of each decile, significantly reducing their chances of election, particularly when parties win fewer seats. Thus, while gender quotas are formally respected at the registration stage, the final outcome demonstrates that equal opportunities remain more declarative than effective, and this underscores the need for stricter enforcement and continuous monitoring of the provisions regarding equal positioning on the lists. This situation is being reflected in the gender loss registered by the parties, i.e. the gap between the share of female candidates and the proportion of women elected. The largest gender loss occurred within the *Partidul Demnitate și Adevăr*, where the difference reached 10.9 percentage points. Conversely, "Our Party" Party stands out with a positive trend: the share of women elected exceeded their representation on candidate lists by 5.9 percentage points. This example confirms that when women are placed in eligible positions, electoral results can reflect more accurately the principle of equitable representation.

Figure 27. Gender share and gender loss in the new Parliament, per party, by sex, %
** On 10.11.2025*



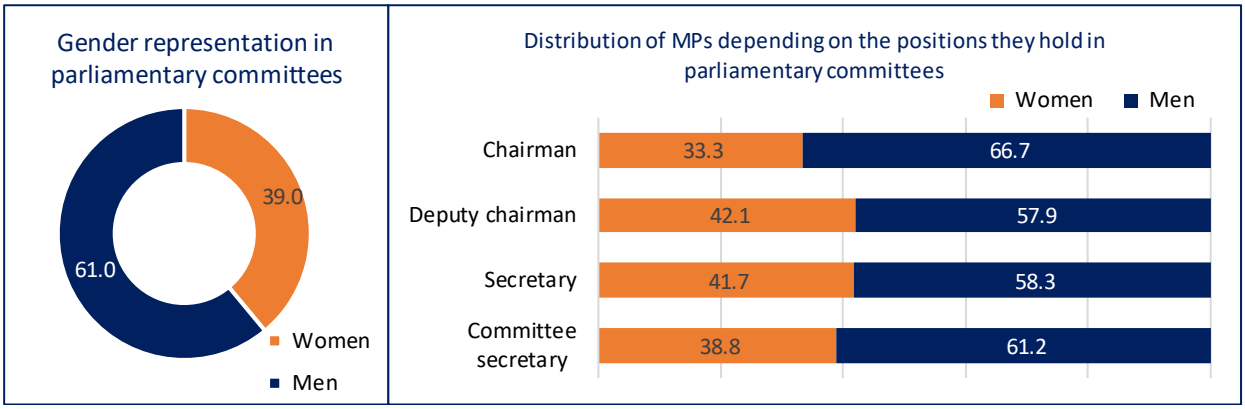
Source: CPD calculations based on data provided by the Central Electoral Commission, 2025

Gender representation within parliamentary structures shows a modest trend toward balance. Analysis of Parliamentary committee composition indicates that women account for 39% of members, compared to 61% men which indicates a slightly higher proportion than their overall share in Parliament (36.6%). This suggests that women achieve greater visibility within their committee activity, where much of the legislative process occurs.

However, leadership roles within committees continue to reflect traditional gender imbalances. Men hold 66.7% of chair positions, leaving women underrepresented in these roles associated with formal authority and decision-making power. Thus, even if women display an active presence in the activities of parliamentary committees, they are less visible in the positions that involve formal authority and increased decision-making power. On the other hand, in the positions of deputy committee chair and committee secretary a relatively balanced representation of MPs men and women is observed, signaling a positive shift toward shared responsibilities and recognition of women's competencies within internal structures. This balancing at the intermediate level could create premises for a more equitable participation in senior management positions as well, if the trend is reinforced by appropriate institutional policies and practices. Overall, among parliamentary committee members, gender distribution mirrors broader patterns: approximately 40% are women and slightly over 60% are men. Thus, while women actively contribute to parliamentary work and gradually strengthen their presence in internal structures, their access to top decision-making positions remains limited. This underscores the need to promote balanced

representation not only numerically but also functionally, in order to ensure women's presence in key roles and make them capable of influencing strategic directions and major political decisions.

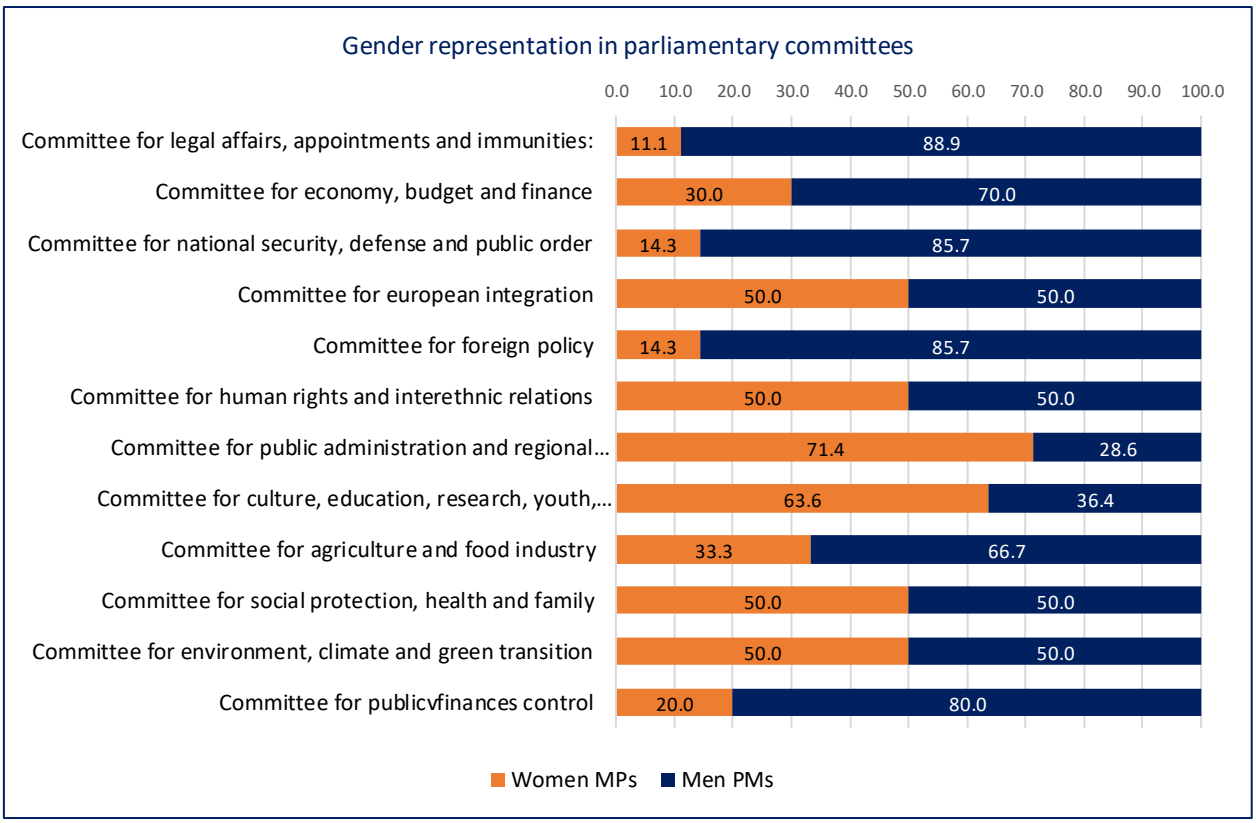
Figure 28. Gender representation in parliamentary committees, by gender and function, %



Source: CPD calculations based on data provided by the Parliament of the Republic of Moldova, 2025

Data indicate that women's participation in parliamentary committees is closely linked to the thematic focus of these bodies. Committees dealing with the domains traditionally perceived as "male", such as Parliamentary Committee on Legal Affairs, Appointments and Immunities, Parliamentary Committee on Foreign Policy, or Parliamentary Committee on Public Finance Control are almost entirely dominated by male MPs. This distribution mirrors existing patterns of gender segregation in the professional sphere, where men traditionally prevail. Conversely, women have a stronger presence in committees addressing public administration, culture, education, and other social sectors. This suggests that the allocation of members across committees continues to reflect entrenched stereotypes about gender roles in politics and society.

Figure 29. Gender representation in parliamentary committees, by gender and committee, %

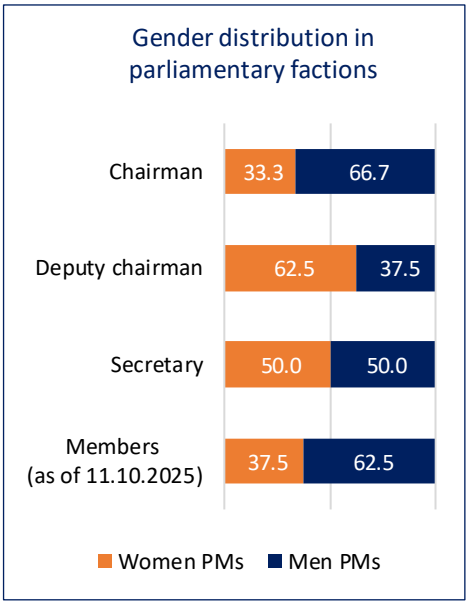


Source: CPD calculations based on data provided by the Parliament of the Republic of Moldova, 2025

Gender representation within parliamentary fractions generally mirrors the overall distribution of women and men in the Parliament. However, leadership and control roles within fractions are assigned internally by each political party, which creates variations in women's participation at the decision-making level. Currently, only two women hold the position of fraction chair, representing 33.3% of the total. In contrast, women occupy 62% of positions of deputy-chair thus showing a significantly higher share. This distribution highlights a persistent tendency for men to be appointed into strategic leadership roles, while women are more often assigned to coordination and operational management functions.

Figure 30. Gender representation in parliamentary fractions, by sex and position, %

Parliamentary fractions	Chair	Deputy Chair	Secretary
Party of Communists of the Republic of Moldova	F	M	M
Alternativa	M	F	F
Our Party	M	F	M
Party of Socialists of the Republic of Moldova	M	F	F
Party Action and Solidarity	F	both sexes	M
Democracy at Home	M	M	F



Source: CPD calculations based on data provided by the Parliament of the Republic of Moldova, 2025

FINDINGS FROM CHAPTER II

This section summarizes the key conclusions from the analysis of candidates in the parliamentary elections of 28 September 2025. It offers a concise overview of major trends in gender representation, age structure, territorial distribution, and candidate positioning, highlighting both progress achieved and persistent limitations within the electoral process. These findings provide valuable benchmarks for understanding the dynamics of electoral competition and for anticipating future developments.

1. Gender representation is balanced but slightly declining: Women represent 44.2% of all candidates on electoral lists, which reflects a near-parity balance. However, this share is slightly lower than in the 2021 elections (when it represented 46.7%). While the current level is largely attributable to the double quota system that is mandatory under the law, the decline highlights the urgent need for sustained political commitment to preserve and further strengthen women's participation in political life.

2. Party commitment to gender quotas varies: All political parties complied with the legal requirement of at least 40% female representation on candidate lists; however, their approaches differ significantly. Some parties adhered strictly to the minimum threshold, while others exceeded the legal requirements and included more than 50% of women in their lists. This variation reflects contrasting levels of commitment, ranging from treating the quota as a formal obligation to embracing it as a strategic priority for promoting gender equality and balanced representation.

3. Women remain underrepresented in top positions: Despite overall near-parity on candidate lists, men continue to dominate the most competitive positions. Among the top 10 positions considered most eligible, women account for approximately 40% of candidates. However, within the top 5 positions, their share falls to just 25.6%. In the majority of political parties, the first position on the list is held by a man; for instance, in 2025, only a few lists were headed by women. This indicates that, despite progress, women's access to the most competitive positions is still limited.

4. Double quota ensures fair representation: The introduction of the double quota system has significantly improved gender balance on candidate lists, ensuring that neither women nor men are represented at less than 40%. This mechanism provides real and equal opportunities for both sexes across the entire list. As long as the system is applied, gender balance will be maintained. However, analysis of candidate positioning particularly in the most competitive quintiles shows that further refinement is needed. Possible solutions include adopting a "3/2" formula for each quintile or implementing a "zipper" system (alternating female and male candidates), which would guarantee balance not only across the list as a whole but also in positions most relevant for eligibility.

5. Age influences candidate placement in the lists: Parties tend to prioritize older candidates for top positions. In the first 10 positions, the average age is 48.9 years, while in the last 10 positions it falls to 42.7 years, showcasing a difference of more than 5 years. This pattern indicates that younger candidates are systematically placed toward the bottom of lists, reducing their chances of election.

6. Most candidates come from urban areas and from Chisinau: Approximately 70.6% of candidates originate from urban areas, with nearly half coming from Chișinău. Bălți Municipality contributes 4.3%, followed by rayons such as Ialoveni, Comrat, and Criuleni. This strong urban concentration reflects greater resource availability and political infrastructure in cities, as well as the fact that the population in rural areas is smaller in numbers and predominantly elderly.

7. Women hold only one-third of parliamentary seats. Women's representation in the new legislature declined to 36.6%, four percentage points less than in the previous election. This decrease is linked to a lower number of female candidates and persistent structural and cultural barriers. Nevertheless, the current level remains higher than in earlier legislatures, reaffirming the importance of maintaining gender quotas as a mechanism for promoting balanced representation.

8. Gender gap in parliamentary elections is increasing. The gap between the share of women candidates (44.2%) and women elected (36.6%) indicates a gender loss and reached 7.6 percentage points, an

increase compared to previous elections. This trend indicates that, despite legislative measures, women's ability to convert candidacy into effective representation has diminished.

9. The uneven application of gender quotas on electoral lists reduces the effectiveness of equality measures. Only "Our Party" achieved a real parity (50/50), while most other parties maintain female representation at around 35%. Although the 40% quota is formally respected on candidate lists, women are frequently placed in less eligible positions, limiting their chances of accessing into the Parliament. The largest gap was recorded in *Partidul Demnitate și Adevăr* (–10.9 pp), while "Our Party" Party demonstrated a positive outcome (+5.9 pp), confirming the decisive role of equitable positioning in achieving gender balance.

10. Strategic leadership roles in parliamentary structures remain predominantly male: Strategic leadership roles within parliamentary structures remain predominantly male. Gender representation in the internal organization of Parliament generally mirrors the overall composition of the legislature, yet significant disparities persist at the leadership level. For instance, women make up only 39% of members in parliamentary committees. When it comes to committee chairs, men hold 66.7% of these positions, while vice-chair and secretary roles are more evenly distributed between genders. A similar pattern is evident within parliamentary factions: only two women serve as faction chairs (33.3%), whereas women constitute the majority in deputy-chair positions (62%). This suggests that strategic leadership roles are still largely male-dominated, while women are more frequently assigned to coordination and support roles. Committee assignments of MPs women and men also reflect traditional gender divisions: women are more represented in social policy areas, whereas men dominate committees focused on legal, economic, and foreign policy issues.

Chapter III: THE IMPACT OF RESOURCE AVAILABILITY

Analysis of candidates' incomes in the 2025 parliamentary elections

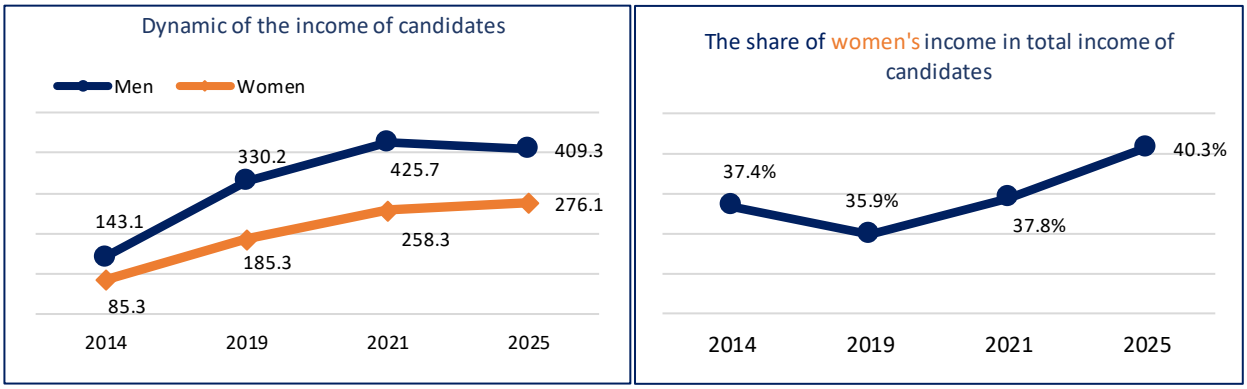
CONTEXT

This chapter represents the third report prepared within the monitoring process of Parliamentary elections held on 28 September 2025, aiming to analyze the income profiles of candidates, offering a detailed overview of their financial status and examining how economic resources influence political participation and candidate positioning on electoral lists. In addition, the chapter includes an assessment of candidates' incomes and expenditures during the electoral campaign.

EARNINGS OF CANDIDATES FOR PARLIAMENTARY SEATS

Women candidates to the position of member of Parliament have lower financial capital. The analysis of income declared by the candidates in the 2025 parliamentary elections reveals a significant gender gap in financial resources at the beginning of the electoral race. In 2025 women candidates reported average incomes of 276.1 thousand lei, compared to 409.3 thousand lei for men, this meaning that women hold only 40.3% of the total cumulative income of all candidates. Despite this disparity, a positive trend is observed. Compared to the 2021 elections, when women declared an average income of 258.3 thousand lei, their earnings increased modestly to 276.1 thousand lei in 2025. In contrast, the income declared by men registered a slight decline, narrowing the gap but not eliminating it. This dynamic suggests gradual improvement in women's access to financial resources, yet indicating the persistence of certain systemic inequalities that need targeted public policy interventions.

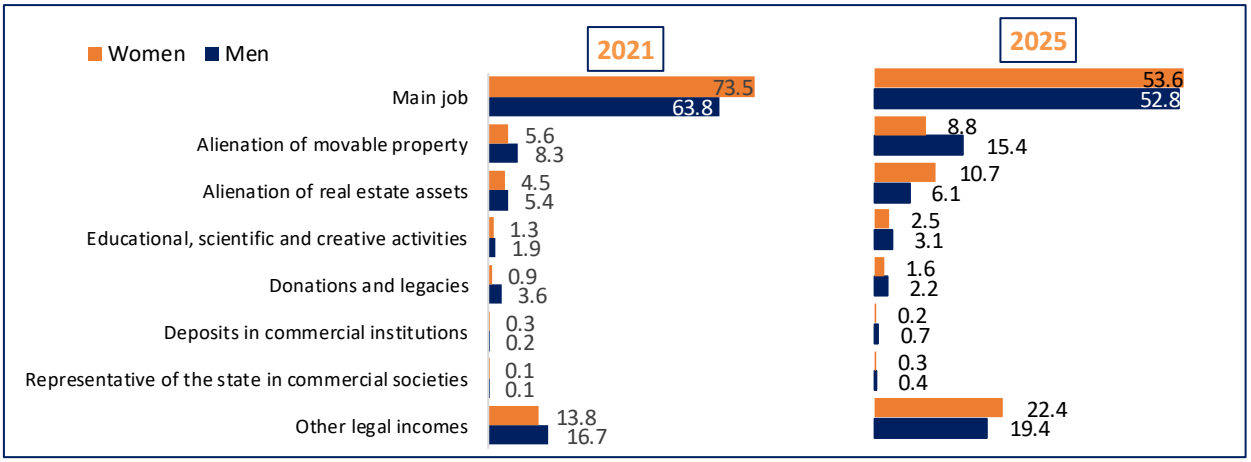
Figure 32. Income of candidates for the position of MP, males and females, in monetary (thousand lei) and percentage value



Source: CPD calculations based on CEC data

Salaries remain the primary source of income for the men and women engaged in the electoral rase. In this election, the sources of income of the candidates are more diverse compared to the previous parliamentary elections[7], the wages from their primary employment still account for roughly half of the total declared income, making them the main source of income. Additionally, the second most significant category consists of earnings from other lawful economic activities, such as pensions, scholarships, allowances, primes, and intellectual property rights, all representing about one-fifth of the total declared income.

Figure 33. Sources of income of candidates for the position of MP, by gender, in %

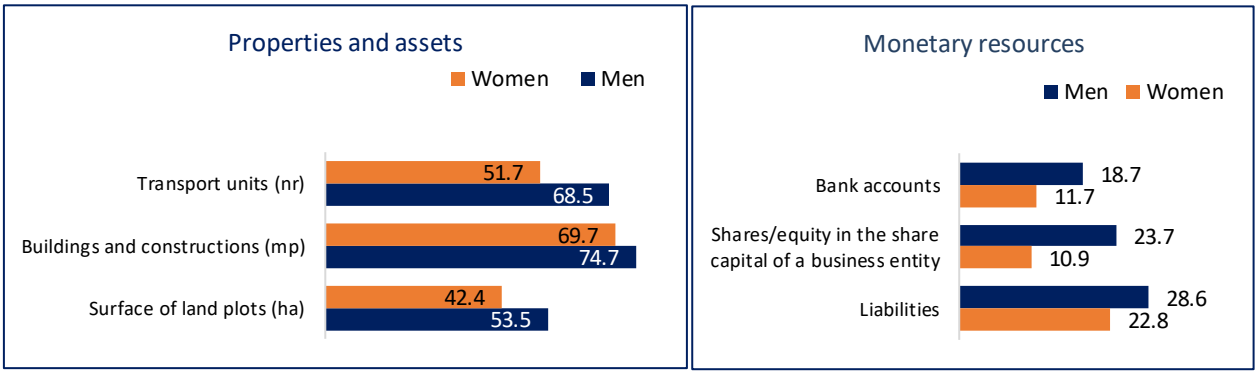


Source: CPD calculations based on CEC data, 2021, 2025

[7] https://progen.md/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Raport_Alegeri-Parlamentare-anticipate-2021.pdf

Dependence of women candidate on wage income limits the accrual of capital and access to income-producing assets. In this order of things, women own assets such as land, vehicles, or buildings, considered key indicators of financial independence, to a significantly lesser extent than men. These disparities become even more pronounced when examining monetary resources and financial investments. Only 10.9% of female candidates report holding shares in the share capital of an economic entity, compared to 23.7% of male candidates. Similarly, a smaller proportion of women have bank accounts (11.7% versus 18.7% for men), highlighting their limited engagement with the formal financial system. These figures underscore systemic barriers that hinder women's ability to launch and compete on equal footing in electoral contests and fully participate in political life.

Figure 34. Share of candidates who own property, assets and monetary resources



Source: CPD calculations based on CEC data, 2025

Beyond owning fewer assets and properties, women also hold assets of significantly lower value compared to men. For instance, the cadastral value of land owned by women is about 1.6 times lower than that of the land plots owed by men, and this fact indicates a limited access not only to property but also to higher-value forms of capital. Likewise, the average size of real estate owned by women is 125.6 sq. m, compared to 156 sq. m in case of men and the difference is reflected also in the cadastral value, which is approximately 1.8 times lower to the detriment of women. Nevertheless, an encouraging recent trend shows that women's access to higher-value assets is improving at a faster pace in 2025, while men's growth remains slower or even stagnant in some categories of assets. This evolution suggests a gradual reduction in inequalities related to access to resources, though sustained progress will require targeted policies and measures to ensure a lasting balance.

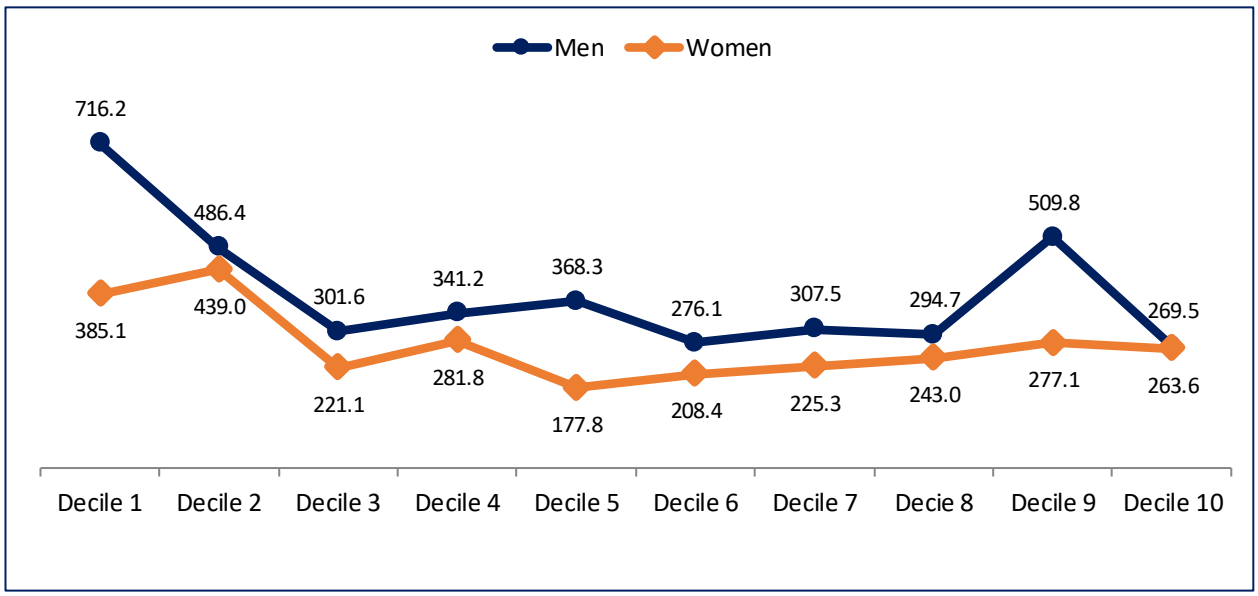
Table 2. Value of assets declared by the candidates for the position of MP

		2021			2025		
		Females	Males	% F vs M	Females	Males	% F vs M
Revenue (thousand lei)		**258.3**	**425.7**	**60.7%**	**276.1**	**409.3**	**67.5%**
Owned land	Area (sqm)	1.36	1.37	**99.3%**	1.05	2.36	**44.7%**
	Cadastral value (lei)	22950.31	77309.3	**29.7%**	54851.42	85103.82	**64.5%**
Real estate owned	Area (sqm)	62.92	168.67	**37.3%**	125.56	155.87	**80.6%**
	Cadastral value (lei)	246004.2	350300.5	**70.2%**	427450.18	752811.45	**56.8%**
Owned cars	unity	0.5	0.8	**62.5%**	0.8	1.2	**66.7%**
	Value (lei)	66858.68	152529.8	**43.8%**	169808.27	298147.67	**57.0%**
Bank accounts (lei)	Value (lei)	23185.86	48940.66	**47.4%**	48684.14	134525.67	**36.2%**
Equity shares in the capital of economic agents (lei)	Value (lei)	35874.14	53519.64	**67.0%**	427450.18	752811.45	**56.8%**

Source: CPD calculations based on CEC data, 2025

Candidates placed at the top of electoral lists are predominantly those with the highest incomes and this trend is particularly evident among men. Data show that men consistently report higher earnings than women across all deciles of the lists, with the most pronounced gap in the first deciles: the candidates leading the lists declare average incomes of approximately 716.2 thousand MDL, while women in equivalent positions report only 385.1 thousand MDL. This disparity persists in intermediate segments of the lists, where men's incomes remain above 300 thousand MDL, compared to less than 230 thousand MDL for women. From a gender perspective, these findings confirm that structural economic inequalities systematically favor male candidates, granting them significant advantages in securing top positions on electoral lists and, consequently, in political competition.

Figure 35. Income of candidates for the position of MP depending on their positioning on the list, by gender and deciles, in thousands of MDL



Source: CPD calculations based on CEC data, 2025

INCOMES AND EXPENDITURES DURING THE ELECTION CAMPAIGN

The total cost of the electoral campaign for 2025 parliamentary elections reached approximately 50 million MDL, marking a 20% increase compared to the previous parliamentary elections[8]. Although electoral competitors declared total revenues exceeding 58 million MDL, not all available resources were fully utilized in the process of electoral promotion. An analysis of the ratio between expenses incurred and the number of votes obtained reveals significant disparities among parties that have accessed into the Parliament. The highest cost per vote was recorded by the Political Party *Alternativa*, with an average of 67.38 MDL per vote, followed by *Partidul Nostru* with an average cost of 56.03 MDL per vote. In contrast, other political entities demonstrated greater efficiency in utilizing financial resources, by achieving comparable electoral results with substantially lower investments. Overall, the examination of campaign expenditures highlights not only differences in financial capacity among competitors but also variations in resource efficiency. These findings suggest that electoral success depends not solely on the size of the budget but also on the strategic management of financial resources.

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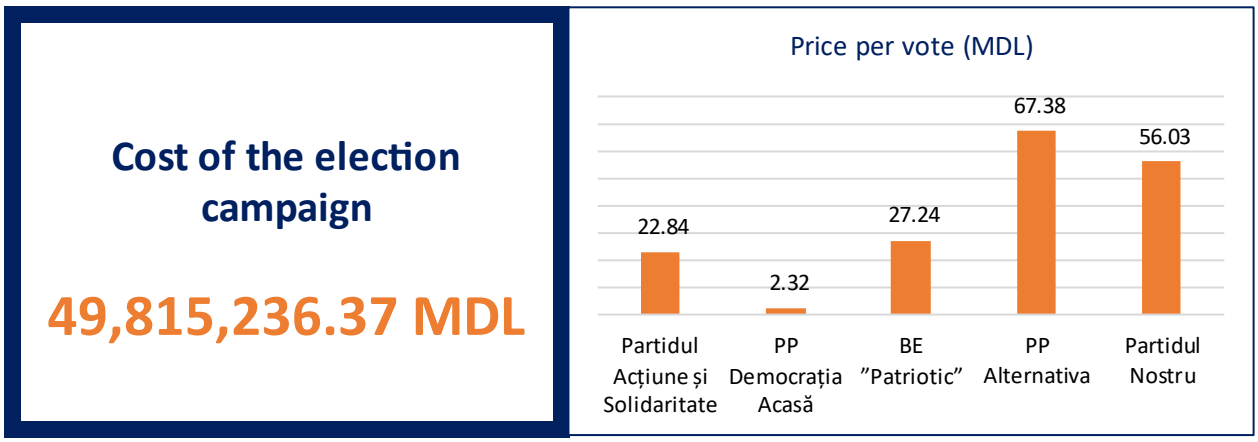
Figure 36. Cost of the electoral campaign and the price per vote received by each party, in MDL



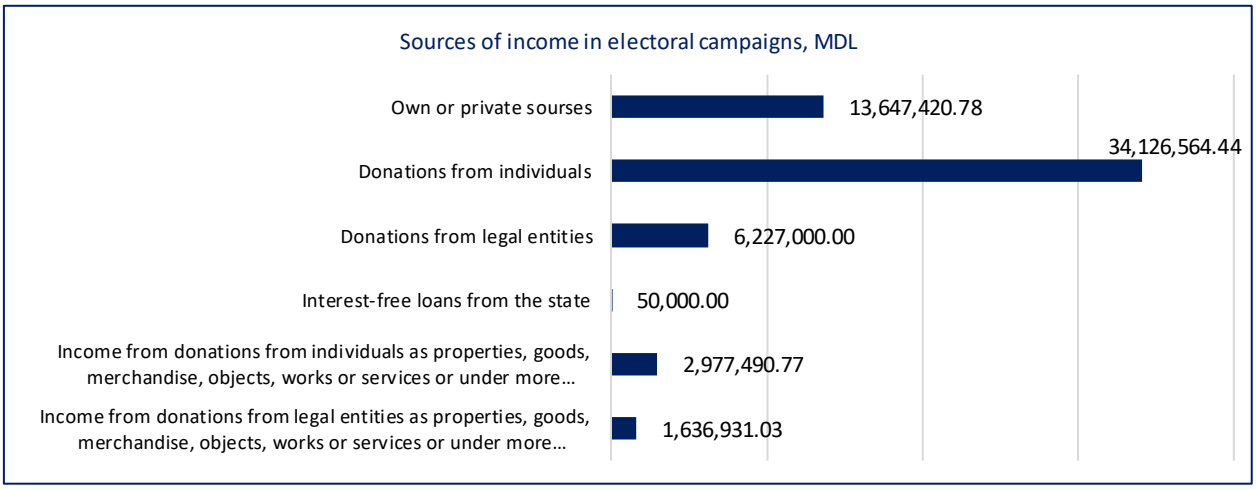
Source: CPD calculations based on CEC data, 2025

The main sources of income in the electoral campaign for the 2025 parliamentary elections were donations from individuals, similar to previous elections. Although the sources of financing were relatively diversified, the majority of resources collected by parties came from direct contributions by individuals, indicating stability in political financing patterns compared to previous campaigns. This reliance also suggests a limited capacity of parties to attract institutional funding or consolidate long-term financial reserves. Thus, donations from individuals accounted for the largest share of declared income and represented over 34 million MDL. These contributions serve not only as the primary financial resource but also as an indirect indicator of the level at which parties have mobilized their supporters. The second largest source represents parties' own or private funds, totaling approximately 13.5 million MDL. The figure reflects significant internal financial involvement of political entities to support their own campaigns. Donations from legal entities ranked third, amounting to about 6.2 million MDL, a level comparable to previous electoral cycles. Non-monetary contributions, such as goods, properties, and services, were also reported, with an estimated value of nearly 5 million MDL from both individuals and

8 https://alegeri.md/w/Alegerile_parlamentare_din_2021_%C3%AEn_Republica_Moldova#:~:text=Finan%C8%9Barea%20campaniei%20electorale

legal entities. Although it is harder to quantify and monitor, these contributions represent an important component of the electoral support, particularly for parties with limited financial resources. In conclusion, persistent dependence on individual contributions is observed and while this support can be an indicator of active civic engagement, it raises concerns about transparency and control over the origin of funds. Furthermore, the current structure of political financing suggests a polarization in resource access: large, consolidated parties are able to mobilize substantial donations, whereas smaller parties rely heavily on limited contributions from their members and supporters.

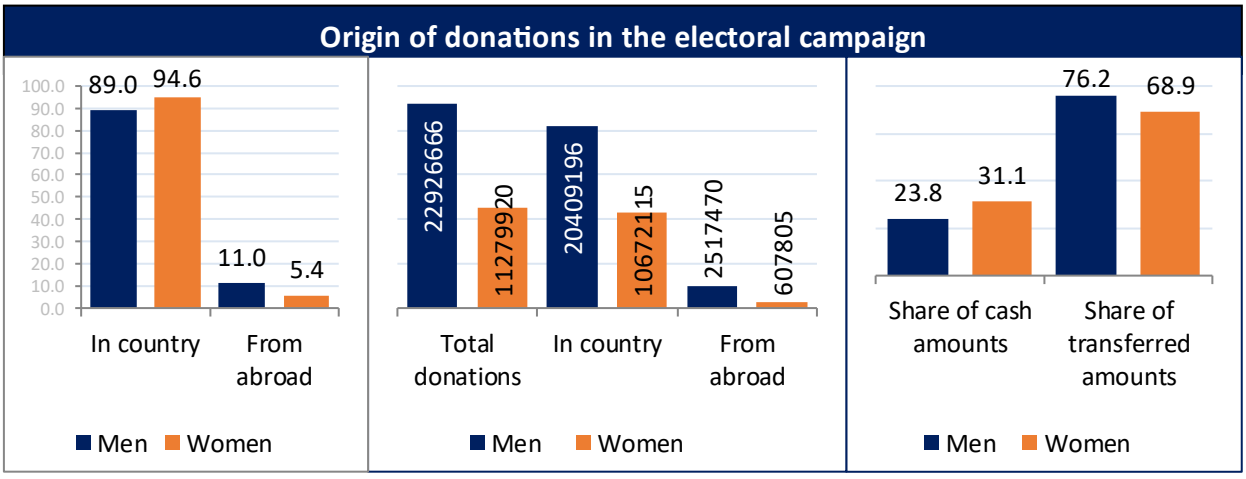
Figure 37. Cost of the electoral campaign and price per vote received by each party, in MDL



Source: CPD calculations based on CEC data, 2025

Men continue to be the main donors of electoral campaigns. Most financial contributions originate within the country, with 89% of male donors and 94.6% of female donors residing in the Republic of Moldova, indicating a predominantly domestic involvement in the financing of electoral campaigns. However, the differences in donation amounts between women and men remain significant. The total amount donated by men is roughly twice bigger than the one contributed by women, and the gap becomes even more pronounced for donations from abroad, where men's contributions are up to four times higher as compared to the donations coming from women. Regarding the payment methods, most supporters of political party made their donations via bank transfer. For men, 76.2% of the total donated amount was transferred by bank, while among women this share was 68.9%. Thus, although women's participation in financing of electoral campaigns is visible, the differences in both volume and value of donations compared to men remain considerable.

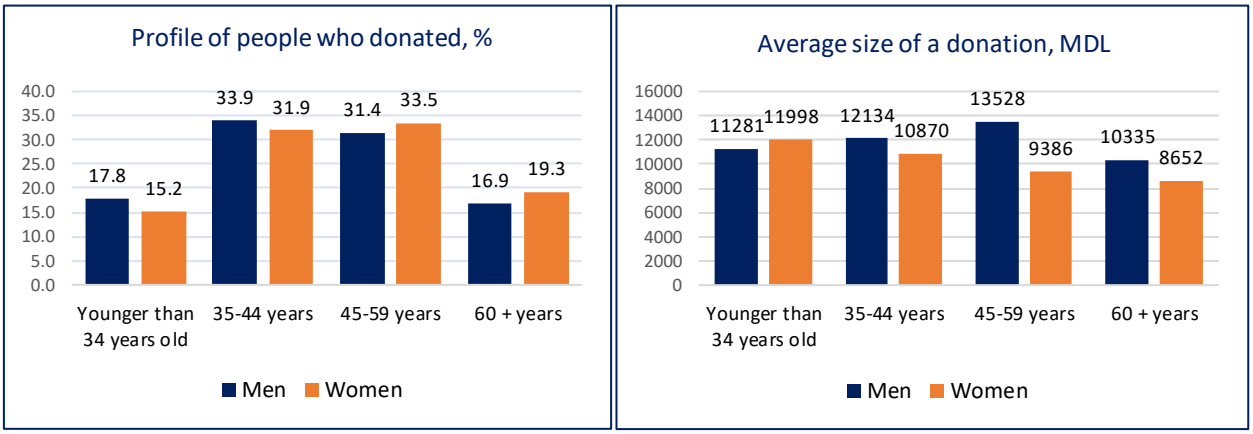
Figure 38. Origin of donations in the electoral campaign, by gender and type of transfer, in MDL and in %



Source: CPD calculations based on CEC data, 2025

The demographic analysis of donors shows that individuals aged 35 to 59 constitute the most active segment in the financing of electoral campaigns. Both women and men in this age group represent the majority of people having contributed for the support of political parties. This trend is natural, given that this period in a person's life, which allows people to be more consistently involved in civic and political activities. Regarding the average value of donations, significant differences emerge across age groups and genders. The most generous donors are men aged 45–59, with an average contribution of 13,528 MDL, followed by men aged 35–44, who donated an average of 12,134 MDL. On the other hand, an interesting pattern appears among female donors: young women under 34 years old, although representing only 15.2% of all female donors, provided the highest average donations within the female sample. This finding may indicate subtle but promising changes in the political engagement of the younger generation.

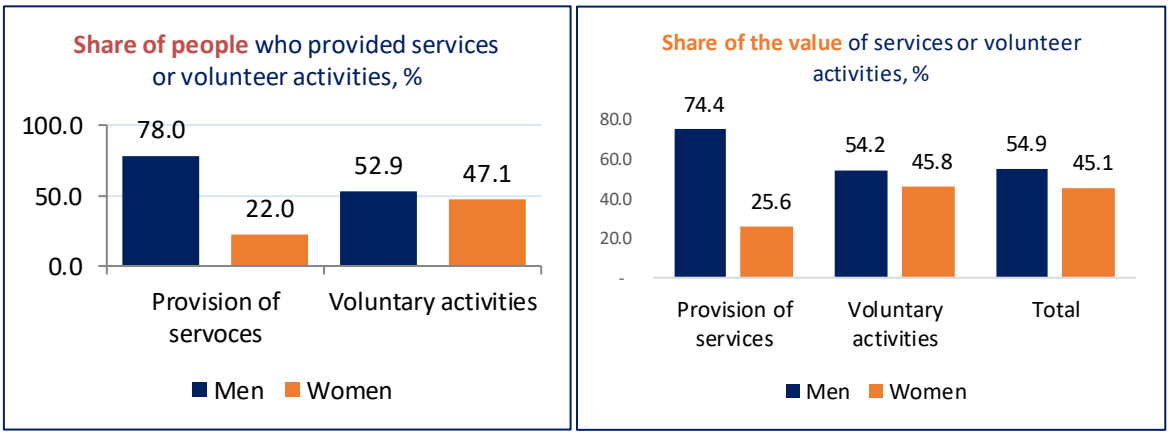
Figure 39. Profile of people who made donations in the electoral campaign and the average size of a donation, by age and gender, in % and MDL



Source: CPD calculations based on CEC data, 2025

The analysis of participation in service provision and volunteer activities during electoral campaigns reveals notable gender disparities, both in terms of involvement and the value of contributions. Regarding the share of people involved, a clear dominance of men is observed in service provision, representing 78% of the people involved, compared to only 22% women. In contrast, volunteer activities show a more balanced distribution of genders: 52.9% of volunteers are men, while 47.1% are women. The gap persists also when examining the value of contributions: men account for 74.4% of the total cost of services provided, while women contribute 25.6%. For volunteering, the difference is smaller: men generate 54.2% of the estimated value, compared to 45.8% for women. In conclusion, men continue to dominate professional service provision in electoral campaigns, whereas women demonstrate growing involvement in volunteer activities, approaching near parity in this area.

Figure 40. Share of people who provided volunteer services or activities in the electoral campaign and their value, by gender and type of transfer, in MDL and in %



Source: CPD calculations based on CEC data, 2025

FINDINGS FROM CHAPTER III

The overarching finding is that societal barriers such as wage gaps, dependence on social transfers, and limited access to capital are mirrored in the financial profiles of candidates. Female candidates report substantially lower incomes than their male counterparts and are far less likely to own property or financial assets, confirming that structural economic inequalities extend into electoral competition. This section summarizes the key conclusions from the analysis of candidates' income, assets, and financial resources in the parliamentary elections of 28 September 2025, and highlights how financial capacity influences political participation and positioning on electoral lists. The main findings of this unequal reality are presented below.

1. Female candidates report significantly lower incomes than male candidates: In the 2025 parliamentary elections, a women candidate declared an average annual income of approximately 280.7 thousand MDL which is around 33% less than the average income of a male candidate (417.5 thousand lei). Thus, although women represent nearly half of all candidates, they account for only about 40% of total declared income.

2. Salaries remain the primary source of income for all candidates. Approximately 50% of the cumulative income of both female and male candidates comes from salaries obtained at their main employment, this remuneration being by far the most important source of income. The second-largest category includes other legal income, such as pensions, allowances, scholarships, primes, and royalties, etc. which accounts for approximately 20% of the total declared income.

3. Women candidates are less likely to own land, vehicles or real estate: Female candidates enter the electoral race with significantly fewer assets such as land, vehicles, or real estate, assets indicating a certain degree of financial independence, as a rule. The proportion of female candidates owning such assets is considerably lower than that of male candidates.

4. Limited financial access for female candidates. Women candidates remain underrepresented in business and banking sectors. Only 13.8% of female candidates report owning shares in a company, compared to 27.2% of men. Similarly, only 12% of women have bank accounts, compared to 19% of men, this fact indicating lower participation of women in the formal financial system.

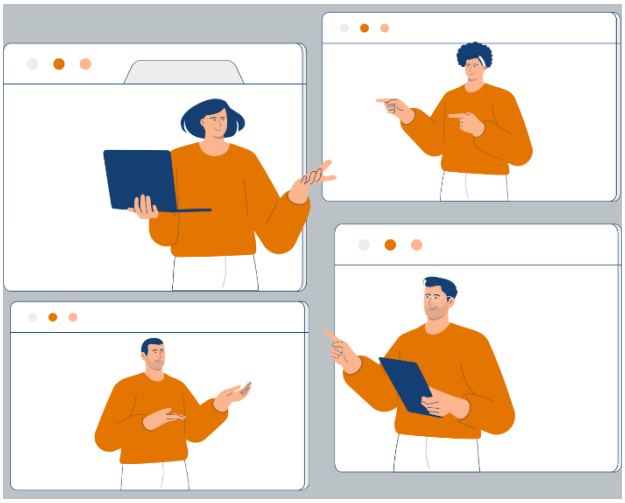
5. The assets owned by female candidates are significantly lower in value: The land and real estate owned by women are, on average, considerably smaller in size and lower in value than those owned by male candidates. For example, the average size of homes owned by women is about 129 m² (compared to 165 m² in case of men), and the value of land owned by women is about 1.6 times lower.

6. Men dominate the incomes at the top of electoral lists. Male candidates consistently report higher incomes across all list segments as compared to female candidates, with the gap being most pronounced at the top positions. Leading male candidates declared an average income of about 707 thousand lei, nearly double than the female candidates (approximately 370 thousand lei). Even in mid-list positions, men report an average over 300 thousand lei, while the incomes of women are decreasing below 230 thousand lei.

7. Economic gender gaps are narrowing slowly. Compared to 2021, women candidates' average income has increased slightly (from 60% to 67% of men candidates' income), while the access of women to valuable assets has improved at a somewhat faster pace. However, female candidates remain economically disadvantaged, and persistent inequalities require sustained public policy interventions to be diminished.

8. The funding of the campaigns is dominated by middle-aged men. Individuals remain the primary source of campaign financing, contributing over 34 million lei of the total declared income. Men donated twice as much as women, with the most active donors being men aged 35–59.

9. Women gain ground in volunteering, while men dominate electoral services provision. Men account for 78% of individuals providing electoral services and have generated 74.4% of the total value of these services. In volunteer activities, gender distribution is more balanced: 52.9% of volunteers are men and 47.1% are women. The value of volunteer contributions is similarly close with 54.2% from men and 45.8% from women.



Chapter IV: WHAT DO THE CANDIDATES PROMISE TO DELIVER?

An analysis of Electoral Programs of Candidates in the 2025 Parliamentary Elections

CONTEXT

This chapter focuses on monitoring and evaluation of electoral programs through the lens of gender equality and social inclusion. The analysis examines the extent to which political commitments made by parties and independent candidates incorporate principles of fairness and non-discrimination, as reflected in their programs, and assesses their willingness to support legislative initiatives promoting equal opportunities and protecting vulnerable groups. In the electoral race for the September 2025 elections, out of a total of 32 applications submitted for registration, the Central Electoral Commission approved 22 electoral contestants: 15 political parties, four electoral blocs, and four independent candidates. The present report covers all these electoral contestants and their political programmes, with the exception of the "Democrația Acasă" Party, which did not submit an electoral programme and therefore could not be included in the comparative assessment. In addition, the report also examined the electoral programme of the political party "Moldova Mare", even though it was later excluded from the electoral competition, in order to ensure comprehensive documentation.

METHODOLOGY FOR ELECTORAL PROGRAMS ANALYSIS

This analytical report is based on a comprehensive review of the electoral programs of both male and female candidates for the 2025 parliamentary elections. The programs were collected through multiple channels: official websites of electoral competitors, direct requests, and monitoring of social media platforms (Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube).

To evaluate the level of inclusion and promotion of gender equality within these programs, a scorecard-based assessment tool was applied, which allowed assessing the level of inclusion and the degree of promotion of gender equality within the electoral programs. The analysis covered 9 key areas: **(i)** Gender equality and inclusion as politically endorsed values; **(ii)** Health; **(iii)** Education; **(iv)** Social protection; **(v)** Rural development; **(vi)** Agriculture; **(vii)** Infrastructure; **(viii)** Labor market and economic autonomy; (ix) Protection against gender-based violence. For each area, 38 specific evaluation indicators were defined, as follows:

Assessment area	Indicators for assessing electoral programs	Level of inclusion and promotion of gender equality			
		Beginner (0.0 – 0.74 points)	Medium (0.75 - 1.50 points)	Consolidated (1.51-2.18 points)	Advanced (2.19 - 3.0 points)
Gender equality and inclusion as politically endorsed values	• The electoral candidate promotes, at a general level, gender equality, inclusion, human rights • A general discourse as a political actor, centered on inclusion and non-discrimination, is evident • During the political career, the candidate has taken measures and actions that demonstrate openness to aspects of inclusion, non-discrimination, and equal opportunities. • Other aspects that would suggest the existence of political will towards these topics				
Health	• Access to health services, including sexual and reproductive health • Prevention and treatment of diseases specific to gender or vulnerable groups • Maternal and child health (e.g. support for prenatal and postnatal care) • Improving working conditions of employees in the health care system • Other measures to ensure inclusion and reduce inequalities				
Education	• Universal access to quality education (flexibility of curricula, educational infrastructure, prevention of school dropout, supportive teaching staff, inclusive education, etc.) • Improving the status and working conditions of education employees • Correlating vocational training with existing labor market needs • Other measures to ensure inclusion and reduce inequalities				

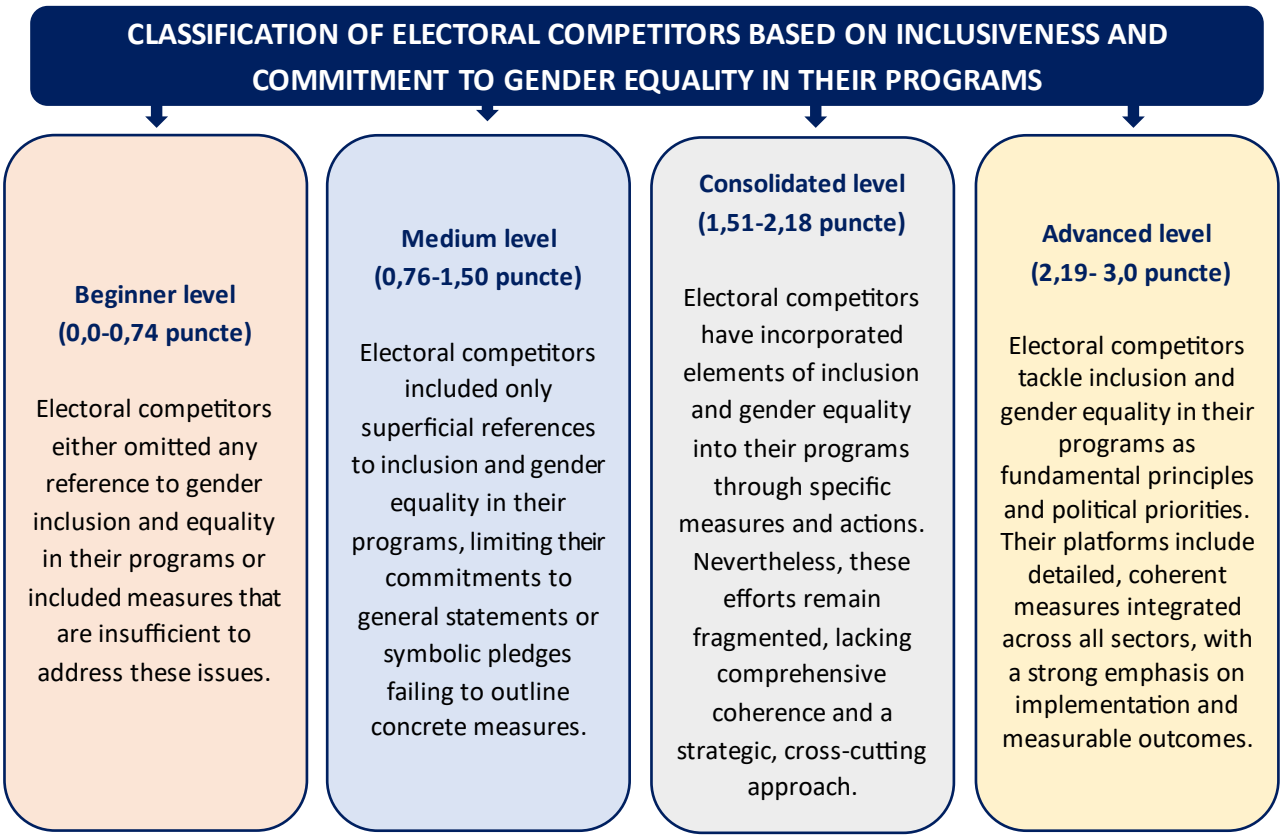
Social protection	• Support for families with children/single-parent families • Care services (for children, the elderly, people with disabilities, etc.) • Protection measures for vulnerable groups (pensions, allowances, social assistance) • Other measures to ensure inclusion and reduce inequalities				
Rural development	• Support programs for women and vulnerable households in rural areas • Access to infrastructure and basic services in rural areas (e.g. transportation, drinking water, sanitation, etc.) • Local economic development policies, including in the field of rural employment, micro crediting, entrepreneur training, etc. • Equal opportunities for access to quality education and health services for the rural population • Other measures to ensure inclusion and reduce inequalities				
Agriculture	• Equal access to agricultural resources (land, credit) for women and vulnerable groups • Training and support measures for agricultural entrepreneurship (e.g. training, crediting facilities) • Social protection policies for seasonal workers and small agricultural producers • Other measures to ensure inclusion and reduce inequalities				
Infrastructure	• Investments in gender-sensitive infrastructure (e.g. urban design taking into account safety, the needs of women and people with disabilities) • Accessible public transport and safe lighting • Public services adapted to diverse needs (e.g. access ramps, adapted toilets) • Other measures to ensure inclusion and reduce inequalities				
Labor market and economic autonomy	• Support for female entrepreneurship and vulnerable people (e.g. microcredit funds, mentoring); • Reducing informal work and facilitating the transition to formal forms of employment • Work-life balance measures (e.g. parental leave, flexible schedules) • Other support measures in the economic sphere				
Protection against gender-based violence	• Legislation and services to prevent and fight domestic and gender-based violence • Support measures for victims (centers, services, hotlines) • Social and economic reintegration programs for survivors (e.g. psychological counseling, training courses) • Campaigns on awareness and education against violence (e.g. school programs, training for authorities)				

	• Other support measures				

The assessment areas of electoral programs were classified into four levels, depending on the indicators used in the assessment process:

Level of inclusion and gender equality	Appraisal
Beginner *(0.00 - 0.74 points)*	The electoral program contains no references or is extremely limited in terms of the subject addressed
Moderate ***(0.75 - 1.50 points)***	The electoral program refers to the subject under assessment in a general manner, without clear commitments, concrete measures or identified resources.
Consolidated *(1.51 – 2.18 points)*	The electoral program includes specific commitments and measures on the subject under assessment; however, these remain limited in scope and detail.
Advanced *(2.19- 3.0 points)*	The electoral program treats the subject under assessment as a priority, through complex, well-defined measures, correlated with other areas of public policy and with a high degree of feasibility.

By applying the arithmetic mean, we assessed the degree of inclusiveness and gender equality among electoral competitors. Based on these results, the parties were classified as follows:

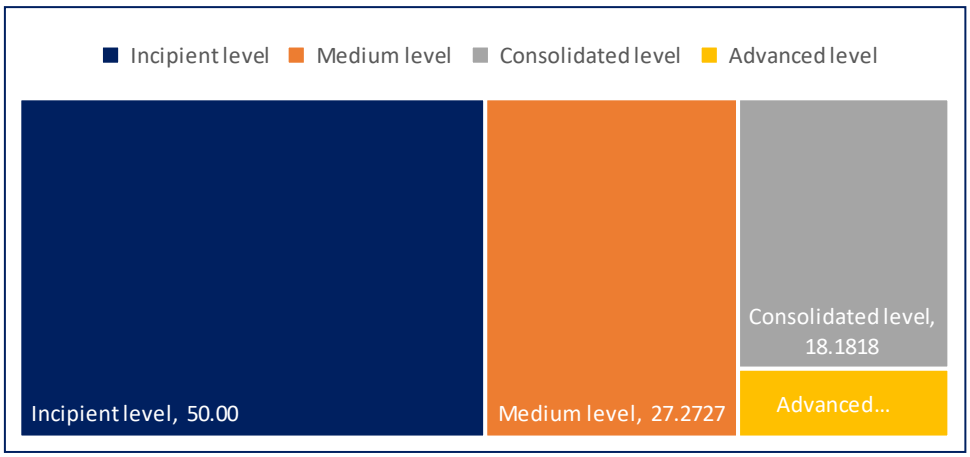


INCLUSION AND EQUALITY WITHIN ELECTORAL AGENDAS

The analysis of electoral programs from the perspective of gender, social inclusion, and alignment with the actual responsibilities of MPs reveals significant shortcomings. Notably, several parties failed to publish any electoral program, reflecting a lack of transparency and accountability toward the electorate. Among the programs that were made public by some electoral competitors, the language is often overly general and vague, dominated by declarative statements and populist rhetoric, while concrete measures and clear implementation timelines are largely absent. Furthermore, many documents demonstrate a misunderstanding of the institutional role of the members of Parliament. Numerous promises and proposals extend beyond the scope of the MP's mandate, falling under the jurisdiction of other authorities such as the Government or local administrations. For instance, commitments to create new jobs at th local level or develop community infrastructure are objectives that typically do not fall within the direct authority of an individual member of Parliament. This tendency may stem either from candidates' insufficient knowledge of parliamentary competencies or from a deliberate use of populist promises aimed at attracting votes without substantive policy backing that an MP can directly influence.

The dimension of gender equality and social inclusion is largely overlooked in the electoral platforms for the 2025 parliamentary elections. Analysis of the electoral programs reveals significant gaps: half of the electoral competitors (50%, 11 parties) are at an incipient stage, indicating the absence of clear measures or commitments in this area. Nearly one-third (27.3%, 6 parties) fall into the intermediate category, mentioning the aspects related to equality and inclusion only superficially, through vague references such as "equal rights" or "fighting discrimination", without identifying target groups or proposing concrete actions and resources for implementation. Only 13.6% of parties (3) reach a consolidated level, presenting more structured measures with a greater potential impact, though still being incomplete and lacking comprehensive integration across policy areas. A minimal share of competitors, just 9.1% (2 parties), achieve an advanced level, treating equality and inclusion as central principles embedded throughout their proposed policies. The predominance of the incipient level underscores not only the lack of political will but also a disconnection between public discourse and written commitments, suggesting that gender equality and inclusion are addressed marginally, merely as secondary themes rather than strategic priorities.

Figure 41. General classification of electoral competitors according to the level of inclusion and equality promoted, %



Source: Authors' calculations based on the analysis of electoral programs, CPD, 2025

Electoral competitors have presented to the voters diverse electoral programs, yet the degree of integration of principles on gender equality and inclusion varies significantly. Overall, the approach remains rather modest, with parties achieving an average score of only *0.90* (on a scale from 0 to 3, where 0 indicates complete absence of commitments and 3 represents an advanced level). Only two parties reached the advanced level, demonstrating concrete measures and explicit commitments to promoting women's participation and protecting vulnerable groups. The majority of competitors remain at an

beginner or medium levels, offering sporadic and indirect references to these subjects, often without addressing equal opportunities or, even worse, promoting messages that are contrary to inclusion.

The parties with the highest scores are the Party Action and Solidarity (2.19 points) and the European Social Democratic Party (PSDE), both positioned at the advanced level. Following the analysis of the PSDE program it stands out for comprehensive approach to gender equality and social inclusion in the electoral program, combining explicit commitments to promote women's participation in decision-making structures with policies that indirectly support the economic autonomy of women and other vulnerable groups. The program includes multiple interventions by PSDE that justify its score, such as support measures for parents (daycare centers, expansion of nursery services), assistance measures for persons with disabilities and the elderly (financial aid, support services, community centers, etc.). Also, the electoral competitor proposes initiatives to improve access to health and education for all disadvantaged groups under assessment through the development and modernization of infrastructure adapted to the needs of different disadvantaged population groups, the creation of optimal working conditions for specialists, and the improvement of the quality of services. These measures focus primarily on disadvantaged communities mainly in rural areas and are complemented by support initiatives for farmers and micro-enterprises, with an emphasis on empowering women in these sectors. Notably, PSDE is among the few parties that explicitly address gender-based violence in its electoral program.

Having analyzed the electoral programs, but also the existence of the political will to promote inclusion and equity, we note that the program **of the Action and Solidarity Party (PAS)** is distinguished by a relatively inclusive approach. It aims to reduce inequalities and barriers faced by people with disabilities, women from vulnerable groups, parents with children, but also other categories in risk situations, such as discrimination on the labor market, limited access to services or economic vulnerability. The party proposes measures to develop health and education infrastructure, regional development, expand and improve the quality of health services, education, social protection, improve the working conditions of specialists in these fields, etc. Education benefits from a large chapter, aiming at modernizing the infrastructure and equipping schools, including making them accessible for children with special needs. Improving working conditions and salaries for teachers are also among the priorities. In social protection, PAS advances an extensive set of financial support and inclusion measures for families with small children, people with disabilities and the elderly. A notable element is the commitment to the integration of people with disabilities not only through infrastructure and care services, but also by strengthening them for independent living. Agriculture and rural development are supported through subsidies, capacity-building and financial and technical support for local farmers and producers, which, even if not explicitly targeting vulnerable groups, contributes to creating opportunities and improving access to essential services for rural communities. However, the dimension of gender-based violence remains insufficiently covered, the only references being related to the prevention of bullying and violence in the educational environment, an element that had diminished considerably the overall score attributed to this electoral program.

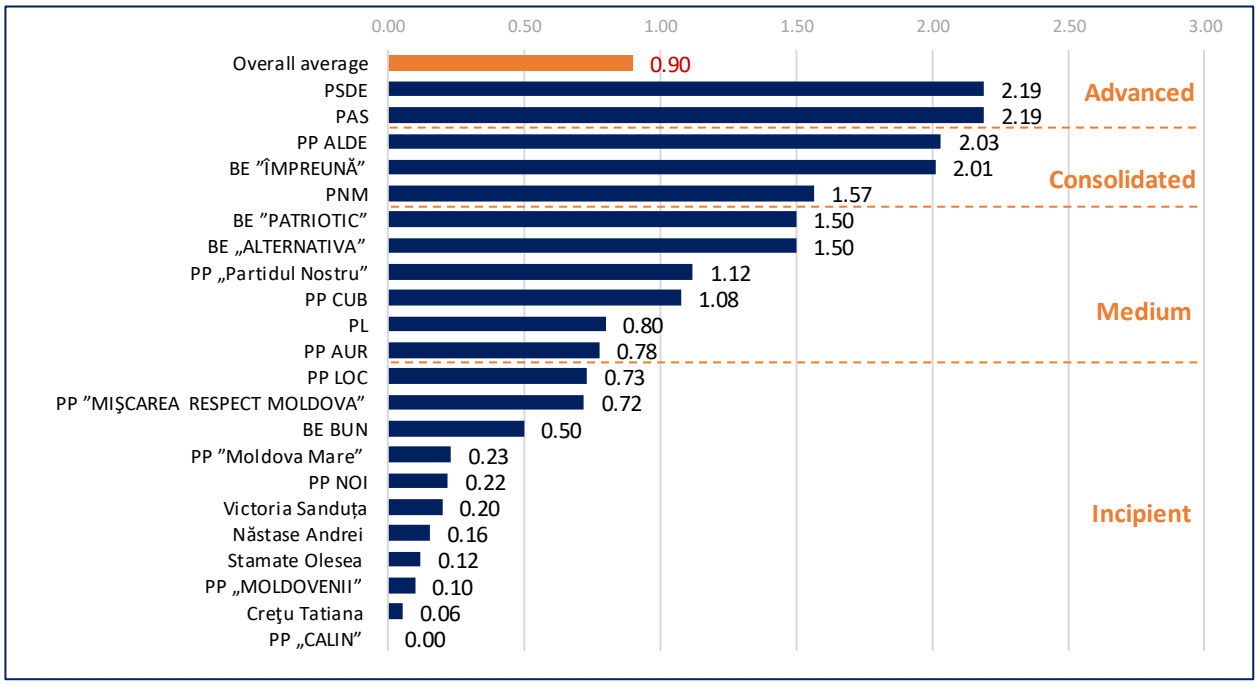
Only three parties achieved a consolidated level in promoting the principles of gender equality and inclusion, among them being the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (with 2.03 points), the Electoral Bloc "Împreună" (with 2.01 points), and the National Moldovan Party (with 1.57 points). The **PP ALDE** presents a comprehensive program emphasizing the prevention of domestic violence, with a strong focus on health and service networks for women and children. It advocates for establishing protection centers against violence in every district and expanding oncological screening programs, earning high scores in health and violence prevention. The program also includes support for persons with disabilities and investments in inclusive education. While agriculture and labor market measures are addressed, gender-specific provisions are absent; for instance, subsidies are proposed for employers hiring persons with disabilities, but no recommendations target women farmers. The **Electoral Bloc "Împreună"** adopts a community-oriented approach, proposing community centers for all vulnerable groups and extensive mobility programs (including accessible rural public transport) and infrastructure. It stands out in education and social protection through scholarships, student assistance services, and investments in after-school centers. In agriculture and rural development, the bloc focuses on supporting small farmers and local markets, though without gender-specific measures. **PP PNM** prioritizes harmonization with the EU Common Agricultural Policy, proposing subsidies per hectare, tax exemptions for job-creating farmers, and

free advisory services. In the field of social protection, it advocates for increasing the minimum pensions and substantial child allowances. However, the program does not explicitly address gender equality, offering housing for young people and support for pensioners without specific provisions for rural women or vulnerable groups.

The Electoral Bloc "Patriotic", "Alternativa", the Coalition for Unity and Welfare Party and "Our Party" Party rank at the medium level in terms of integration of inclusion and equity principles in their electoral programs. The Electoral Bloc „Patriotic" proposes an extensive social agenda (pension increases, services for retirees, and substantial agricultural subsidies), but focuses exclusively on promoting the traditional family and omits measures for protecting women victims of violence, entirely lacking gender-sensitive provisions. **The Electoral Bloc "Alternativa"** emphasizes fiscal incentives for businesses and local development projects but neglects the gender dimension. **PP CUB** adopts a pro-European stance, mentioning a fund for social and local modernization, yet fails to include explicit measures for women or minorities. **PP "Our Party"** promises significant investments in social housing and facilities for youth but completely ignores gender-based violence and women's rights. These parties are followed by two other competitors scoring below 1 point, though slightly more advanced than those at the beginning level. The Liberal Party and **the Alliance for the Union of Romanians**. Their low scores stem from incomplete programs or the total omission of gender and inclusion perspectives. PL (0.80) promotes a unionist agenda focused on tax reductions and unification with Romania, without measures for equal opportunities or women's protection. PP AUR (0.78) pledges higher salaries and pensions and labor market integration with Romania but fails to address violence prevention or support for women's integration in agriculture.

The final group, classified at the beginner level, consists of parties scoring below 0.74 points in the assessment process and is represented by: PP The League of Cities and Communes (0.73) and PP Respect Moldova Movement (0.72), which focus primarily on local or general issues without addressing gender or vulnerable groups, as well as the Electoral Bloc BUN (0.50) framing union with Romania as a universal solution to all existing barriers and inequalities. These are followed by smaller parties and independent candidates such as PP Moldova Mare, PP Noua Opțiune Istorică, Victoria Sanduța, Andrei Năstase, Olesea Stamate, the Political Party "Moldoveni", Tatiana Crețu, and the Christian-Social Union of Moldova, whose scores range between 0.00 and 0.23 points. Their low ratings result from either the absence of electoral programs or platforms limited to patriotic declarations without concrete social measures. None of these actors explicitly address gender equality or protection against violence.

Figure 42. Average level of integration of inclusion and equality in electoral programs, by electoral competitors

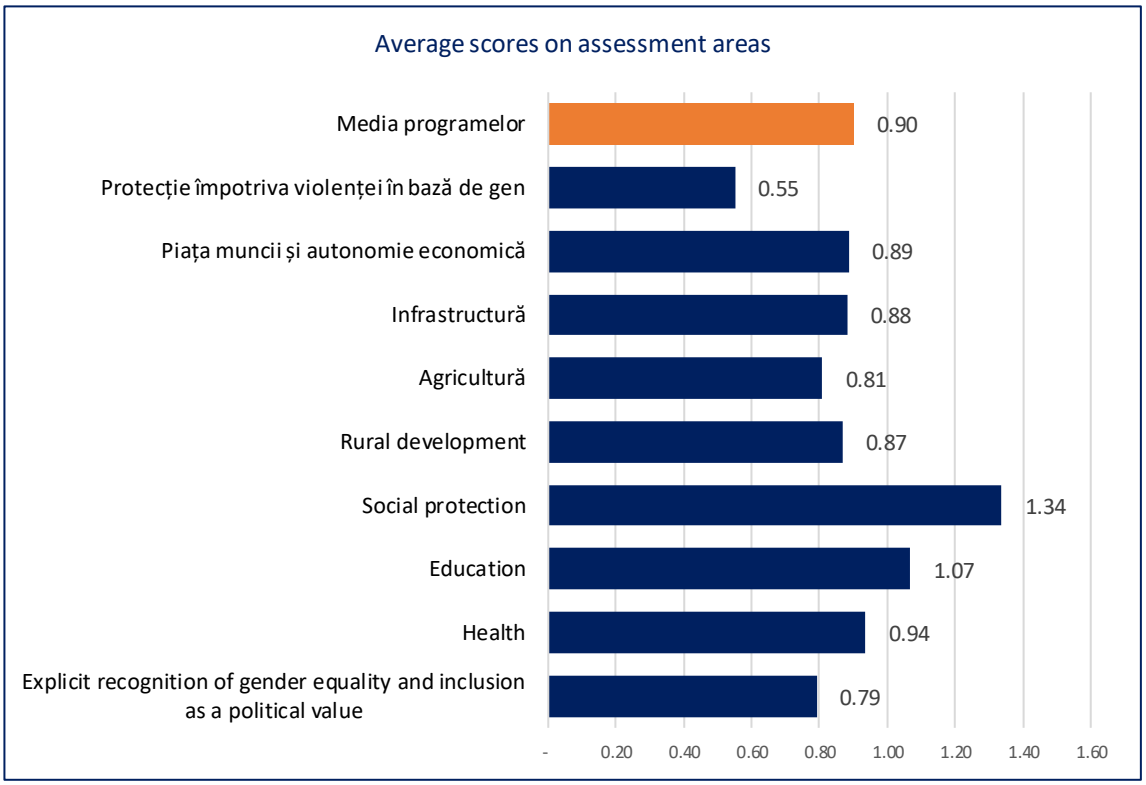


Source: Authors' calculations based on the analysis of electoral programs, CPD, 2025

The detailed analysis of electoral programs reveals significant disparities in how inclusion and equity are addressed across different areas of evaluation. In certain intervention domains, parties have

formulated more inclusive objectives that incorporate measures aimed at ensuring equity for diverse groups. In other areas, these concerns are treated superficially or are almost entirely absent. The most developed commitments are found in traditional socio-economic sectors such as social protection and education, where many political formations propose actions with potential inclusive impact. Conversely, issues such as combating gender-based violence or explicitly recognizing gender equality as a core political value remain insufficiently addressed, exposing major gaps in programmatic commitments. This indicates that, within party agendas, gender equality and inclusion are often approached tangentially and being integrated primarily where they align with general social policies, while neglected in areas requiring dedicated strategic engagement.

Figure 43. Overall level of integration of inclusion and equality, by assessment areas, points



Source: Authors' calculations based on the analysis of electoral programs, CPD, 2025

In the area of education, **certain electoral programs extensively address inclusion and equal opportunities, while others almost entirely omit these aspects.** Parties with advanced approaches in education, such as PP PSDE, PP PAS, PP ALDE, and BE ”Împreună” integrate concrete measures to ensure equal access. For instance, PP PAS proposes a comprehensive modernization of the education system, including school renovation and equipment upgrades, expansion of nursery networks (creating approximately 5,000 new commercials), and curriculum enrichment with subjects such as financial, media, and health education. The PP PAS program also includes continuous teacher training, incentives for teachers (e.g., *First House* facilities for young teachers), anti-*bullying* initiatives, and remedial programs designed to support personalized learning aiming to help the pupils in overcoming difficulties. PP PSDE prioritizes equitable access to education, advocating additional funding for rural schools. An important objective is the modernization of school infrastructure (water, sewage, internet), particularly in disadvantaged communities. Another example is the BE ”Împreună” which analyzes structural vulnerabilities in education (such as demographic decline, underfunding, staff shortages) and proposes inclusive solutions: investments in nurseries and kindergardens, direct support for children from vulnerable families (school supplies, free meals in kindergardens, transportation), and community education centers in disadvantaged areas. These parties treat education as a strategic priority, aiming to improve overall quality while ensuring inclusion for marginalized groups, such as children with disabilities and ethnic minorities. In contrast, parties with beginner approaches such as PP PL, PP AUR, or newer formations like PP NOI, PP CALIN, and PP ”Moldova Mare” either omit inclusion entirely or limit

themselves to vague statements. Some programs are mentioning only general intentions (e.g., investments in schools through diaspora funds) without detailing inclusive curricula or support for disadvantaged students. PP AUR, for example, frames education primarily through the lens of unification with Romania, proposing system harmonization, mutual diploma recognition, and scholarships for Moldovan youth in Romania. These objectives overlook the problem of inclusion: they fail to provide any measures for inclusive education, adapting institutions for students with special needs or ensuring the equal support for boys and girls. Parties with the lowest scores either exclude education from their platforms or offer generic promises without reference to vulnerable groups. Therefore, critical gaps persist: there are no provisions for preventing school dropout in poor communities, promoting inclusive education for children with disabilities, or training teachers to work effectively in disadvantaged environments.

A pronounced contrast is evident in the health sector. Parties with the highest scores—such as PP ALDE, PP PSDE, and PP PAS propose policies aimed at expanding access to medical services while integrating gender and inclusion perspectives. PP ALDE program stands out for its emphasis on prevention and universal access, introducing innovative measures such as the ”Youth Health Voucher” program, which offers a package of free medical services (tests, basic dentistry, psychological counseling) to 200,000 young people annually, benefiting both women and men. PP ALDE also advocates for modern health education in schools through a mandatory ”Health and Responsibility” course (covering nutrition, chronic disease prevention, mental health, and balanced sexual education), an initiative directly addressing the needs of young women and men. The measures proposed by PP ALDE further target vulnerable groups through its ”Total Inclusion” strategy, which aims to adapt the medical system for persons with disabilities and marginalized communities, while the program includes substantial investments in prevention (such as free screening for oncological and cardiovascular diseases targeting 100,000 patients annually) and a dedicated oncological screening program for 100,000 women each year, addressing a critical health need for women. On the other hand, other parties with advanced scores, such as PP PAS and PP PSDE, focus on strengthening primary healthcare and expanding health infrastructure in rural areas, which has strong inclusive implications. For example, PP PSDE acknowledges challenges such as the exodus of medical professionals and outdated infrastructure, proposing structural reforms: revising medical university curricula, doubling residency positions, digitizing medical records, increasing staff salaries, and equipping emergency services. While these measures do not explicitly target women, they significantly improve access for vulnerable groups (e.g. rural populations and the elderly), and support the reduction of health inequalities by area/territory. In contrast, parties with low scores (e.g., PP PL, PP AUR, PP NOI, PP CALIN) either omit health entirely or address it superficially, without references to gender or social inclusion. Some of their programs limit themselves only to generic statements such as ”ensuring equal access to quality health services for all citizens,” without specifying how vulnerable categories (pregnant women, persons with disabilities, ethnic minorities, etc.) will be served. Some platforms mention intentions to prioritize primary care and prevention but fail to detail specific areas like sexual and reproductive health or support for medical personnel in disadvantaged regions. PP AUR, for instance, approaches health exclusively through cooperation with Romania (for access to medicines, harmonization of standards), food security, neglecting any gender perspective. Meanwhile, parties such as PP NOI and PP CALIN do not include a dedicated health chapter in their programs. In some cases, healthcare is not mentioned at all as a separate domain.

In the area of infrastructure, only a few electoral programs demonstrate genuine integration of inclusion principles, while most omit this perspective entirely. PP PAS stands out for its ambitious investment plan aimed at reducing urban–rural disparities and addressing community needs. Its program includes the rehabilitation and construction of thousands of kilometers of roads, new bridges over the Prut, modernization of water and sewage systems, and expansion of public street lighting. A noteworthy measure is the construction of modern sanitary facilities in all rural schools to eliminate outdoor toilets and improve hygiene conditions for students. This intervention will particularly reduce a major inequality that affects particularly girls in rural areas (where access to decent facilities influences school attendance). Other advanced programs also propose gender-sensitive and inclusive infrastructure. For example, BE ”Împreună” advocates a national plan for local and national infrastructure projects aimed to ensure adequate living conditions in every locality, under the principle that ”no one is left behind.” Its proposals

include expanding rural public transport (through the *"Buses for Villages"* program), **building** multimodal stations, and reducing isolation in small communities. The *"Buses for Villages"* initiative aims to connect larger villages to the public transport network with vehicles accessible to persons with disabilities, facilitating mobility for rural residents, including women, and improving access to services and opportunities. Similarly, PP ALDE integrates objectives for making urban infrastructure accessible. Its program commits to fully adapt public buildings and a significant portion of urban transport for persons with disabilities, which denotes a significant concern for inclusion. Measures such as expanded street lighting, accessible public transport, and urban planning that prioritizes women's safety reflect a consolidated approach that recognizes infrastructure not neutral, but rather designed to serve different categories of the population equally. In contrast, parties with low scores in this area either present major gaps or limit their vision to large-scale investments without an inclusion component. PP PL, for example, does not include in its electoral program projects that take into account women's safety in public spaces or making transport accessible to people with reduced mobility. The program of that party is limited to general investments (roads, water, sewage, public transport in rural areas) aimed at improving life in villages, but does not contain programs dedicated to women or vulnerable households in rural areas. Other parties, such as PP AUR and PP NOI, lack a dedicated section on infrastructure and transport, mentioning only incidental needs (e.g., laboratories and running water in schools) without a coherent strategy for community development. This absence signals a lack of vision in leveraging infrastructure to reduce inequalities. Instead, some platforms emphasize large scale projects (highways, railways, airports) or resort to populist rhetoric, ignoring practical aspects such as public lighting (critical for women's safety) or adapting local transport for the elderly and persons with disabilities.

Social protection is the area where the objectives related to inclusion and equality, on average, are most consistently integrated, and this fact indicates that most parties have taken into consideration, to varying degrees, the needs of vulnerable groups while shaping their social policies. However, significant differences exist between programs. PP PSDE stands out with a comprehensive and well-structured approach that addresses multiple vulnerable categories and reflects a consolidated inclusion perspective. Recognizing challenges such as the lack of childcare services, PP PSDE proposes concrete solutions: creating a national network of free daycare centers and nurseries to provide educational activities for children and support for parents, facilitating mothers' professional reintegration. The program also includes subsidies for nurseries serving low-income and single-parent families, development of home care services, and establishment of community centers for the elderly people. Moreover, legislative reforms proposed by PP PSDE aim to promote shared family responsibilities (e.g., increased family responsibility though paternal involvement) and support informal caregivers (monthly assistance and raising the professional level of personal assistants for persons with severe disabilities). This integrated policy set demonstrates a deep understanding of the concept of social inclusion, offering not only financial aid but also accessible services that enable single mothers, the elderly, and persons with disabilities to lead dignified, active lives within their communities. Other parties, such as PP ALDE and BE "Împreună" also propose significant measures. PP ALDE, for instance, combines health and social protection policies, offering free cancer screening for women (for the early detection of cancer) and subsidies for employers hiring persons with disabilities, thus facilitating labor market integration. BE "Împreună" and other left-leaning parties advocate for reducing socio-economic inequalities through support mechanisms for families with children and youth, such as increased allowances, social housing, tax incentives, and mentoring programs for disadvantaged youth. Such measures reflect an advanced approach where social protection extends beyond uniform financial benefits to include targeted, personalized interventions that account for gender and vulnerability. In contrast, parties with limited approaches towards social protection focus narrowly on demographic or financial aspects, and these omissions reveal the absence of an integrated vision. The AUR party frames social protection primarily through unification with Romania. For example, they propose harmonization of the pension system with the Romanian one and partial liberalization of contributions (allowing allocation to private funds). While potentially beneficial, these measures lack safeguards for gender equity (women, who often receive lower pensions, could be disadvantaged). No support is provided for vulnerable groups. Similarly, AUR and comparable parties fail to prioritize vulnerable populations, as shown by the absence of commitments toward large families, homeless individuals, or ethnic minorities. Emerging parties such as PP NOI and PP CALIN offer no coherent

solutions in the field of social protection, limiting themselves to vague slogans about "welfare" without substantive content. In the absence of clear strategies, critical needs ranging from childcare access for single mothers to social inclusion for persons with disabilities remain unaddressed. While parties with robust visions propose measures like community centers and personalized assistance, those at the lower end either avoid the topic or restrict themselves to generic promises of income growth, disregarding the fact that vulnerable groups require dedicated interventions to achieve real and equal opportunities.

Electoral programs addressing the labor market range from detailed strategies for integrating disadvantaged groups to simplistic visions focused solely on general economic growth. Among the leaders are PP PSDE and PP ALDE, which provide notable examples of incorporating gender equality and inclusion into employment policies. PP PSDE, for instance, sets ambitious macroeconomic goals of doubling GDP and creating over 300,000 well-paid jobs while correlating these macro objectives with targeted inclusion measures at the micro level. PP PSDE program promotes partnerships between vocational schools and businesses and the development of dual education systems to align training with labor market needs. Moreover, PSDE directly addresses a major barrier to women's labor market participation notably the lack of childcare services, by expanding free nurseries and day care centers, facilitating mothers' return to professional activities. This policy acknowledges that unequal care responsibilities are a key driver of economic gender inequality. Additionally, PSDE program supports social entrepreneurship in vulnerable communities and initiatives to reduce dependency on social assistance through social economy projects, creating jobs tailored to disadvantaged groups. PP ALDE stands out for its focus on integrating persons with disabilities, proposing a 50% wage subsidy for employers hiring individuals with disabilities and committing to fully adapt public buildings and urban transport to improve access of this category of people to their jobs. PP ALDE also plans to train rehabilitation specialists to ensure long-term maintenance and rehabilitation support for employees with disabilities. Concurrently, the party will work to extend subsidies in the health sector (for employers hiring persons with disabilities in the medical domain), this fact representing an integrated approach addressing both physical and professional barriers. PP PAS offers another consolidated approach, introducing measures such as increased subsidies for employers recruiting persons with disabilities and supporting their entrepreneurial integration by launching the "Mobility for Dignity" program, which provides assistive equipment and housing adaptations to reduce employment barriers. Moreover, PAS also proposes the "After 16" initiative to help young people with mental disabilities transition from school to work through vocational training and supported employment. These measures reflect PAS's sustained effort to directly tackle the causes for exclusion from the labor market, whether they are due to lack of childcare services for the parents (particularly mothers), discrimination, workplaces that are inaccessible for persons with disabilities, or lack of entrepreneurial support for vulnerable groups. In contrast, parties at the beginner level of policy development regarding the labor market address the issue superficially, often ignoring gender dimensions and the needs of disadvantaged categories. For example, the economic program of PP PL speaks broadly about business development and youth support and fails to include concrete policies for female entrepreneurship, neither measures to reduce informal work which disproportionately affects women. Thus PP PL proposes tax incentives and business loans at a broader level, but is overlooking microcredit lines or mentoring for women willing to start a business and omit strategies to combat undeclared work (e.g., many women are employed as nurses, caregivers or domestic workers without contracts). Correspondingly, PP AUR focuses on national labor market sovereignty, advocating equal labor rights for Moldovan citizens both in Romania and in their own country. It supports the elimination of all forms of discrimination in terms of wages and taxation and states that Moldova should no longer be treated as a source of cheap labor. However, its concrete measures center on fiscal coordination with Romania and equal treatment for companies from both countries, which are macro-level objectives that exclude specific provisions for women, long-term unemployed individuals, or other vulnerable groups. Other parties (such as PP NOI and PP "Moldova Mare") fail to present any employment measures, limiting themselves to populist promises of well-paid jobs and halting labor migration without offering any training programs, parental support, or incentives for hiring disadvantaged categories.

The analysis of agricultural policies reveals a pronounced polarization between parties that propose coherent strategies focused on modernizing the sector and supporting small farmers, and those that rely

on generic promises or overlook the topic entirely. Only a few parties treat agriculture as a strategic sector requiring fair and inclusive modernization. European Social Democratic Party (PSDE) presents an ambitious modernization package, including rapid compensation for natural disasters, state-guaranteed loans for farmers, a unified agricultural tax, and access to technologies through subsidies and grants, alongside the development of agro-industrial centers. Its social-democratic vision emphasizes revitalizing rural areas and supporting small producers through cooperatives and long-term state contracts; however, the program lacks measures to ensure equal access to land or credit for women. The Moldovan National Party (PNM) aligns with the EU Common Agricultural Policy, advocating for direct payments per hectare, tax breaks for job-creating farmers at the local level; accent is put on free consultancy, county-level agri-food markets, and financing for small producers, yet without addressing gender equality or the situation of seasonal workers. As an example. Similarly, PP PAS adopts an advanced approach towards inclusion, proposing advance subsidies, preferential loans for micro-farmers, free diesel distribution, and irrigation system rehabilitation. Its program includes support for seasonal workers during inactivity periods and advisory centers "Agricultural Chambers", but omits women's access to resources or training in agricultural entrepreneurship. A populist, protectionist stance is evident in PP Partidul Nostru, which calls for reinstating centralized procurement systems and guaranteeing markets for family farms; despite its focus on "peasants", the program lacks specific measures for female farmers. At an intermediate level, parties such as BE "Patriotic" (PSRM–PCRM) propose increasing the subsidy fund to 2.5 billion lei and refunding VAT and diesel excise taxes, without differentiating between large and small farms or disregarding the the fact that women also work in agriculture. BE "Alternativa" and PP Coalition for Unity and Welfare (PP CUB) promise special tax regimes and protection for local producers, promoting efficient irrigation and local processing of local products, yet fail to reflect the place and role of women within these processes. The "Respect Moldova" Movement focuses on social measures (growth of pensions, support for families) and only vaguely declares support for farmers and producers, without detailing credit access or training programs for family agriculture. The remaining competitors address agriculture minimally or omit it entirely. The Liberal Party, AUR, and the Bloc Unirea Națiunii frame the sector through identity lenses, such as unification with Romania or preserving traditions rather than agricultural policy in itself. The new parties such as PP NOI, PP CALIN, the Party "Moldova Mare" present no concrete plans for agricultural sector, ignoring issues like women's access to land, seasonal worker protection, or rural entrepreneurship. Independent candidates (e.g., Olesea Stamate, Victoria Sanduța) either exclude agriculture or limit themselves to general statements about safeguarding agricultural interests in EU negotiations, without offering solutions for small producers or vulnerable groups. This analysis demonstrates that, although a few programs propose complex measures for revitalizing the agri-food sector and supporting small households, the gender dimension and protection of seasonal workers remain largely outside the interests of electoral competitors. Most political competitors thus lack a coherent vision linking agriculture with equal opportunities and social inclusion.

In the field of rural development, the analysis of electoral programs reveals a polarization similar to that observed in agriculture. Some political parties propose coherent programs aimed at social inclusion and reducing urban vs. rural disparities. On the other hand, other formations limit themselves to general promises or avoid the topic completely. Among the parties that specifically address rural development are PP PSDE, PP PAS, the Electoral Bloc "Împreună" and PP PNM. Their programs view the village not only as a space requiring modernization and integration into the national economy but also as a place of solidarity and equal opportunities. For example, PP PSDE's rural development program focuses on three main directions: access to quality public services, infrastructure development, and strengthening social cohesion. Proposed measures include investments in water supply and sewage networks in villages, modernization of local and regional roads, and expansion of nurseries and kindergartens to support mothers' professional reintegration in the rural area. The PP PSDE program also allocates funds for home care services for the elderly and persons with disabilities. An innovative element proposed by PSDE is the "Rural Resilience" program, which provides rapid compensation and guaranteed loans for farmers affected by drought or natural disasters. As can be seen, the party's policy is focused on revitalizing the village, but the program itself does not differentiate by gender in terms of access to land or financing; however, the program does not differentiate by gender in terms of access to land or financing. PP PAS approaches rural development through integrated infrastructure projects: road rehabilitation, expansion of public lighting,

construction of bridges, and creation of public transport networks connecting villages to major cities. The program includes modernization of schools and health centers and installation of modern toilets in all educational institutions, which is an important measure for girls' comfort and for ensuring school attendance. PAS also proposes support mechanisms for seasonal agricultural workers and rural youth but does not include measures to ensure women's access to resources or entrepreneurial training. BE "Împreună" focuses on connecting villages to services and opportunities, explicitly identifying vulnerable categories such as the elderly, persons with disabilities, children, and youth. Its program includes community centers in each locality, mobile health services, and the "Buses for Villages" initiative to provide accessible public transport for persons with disabilities. The creation of a fund for modernizing basic infrastructure (water, sewage, energy) is another notable measure. Although gender language is absent, the approach is transversal, aiming to reduce isolation and rural poverty. PP PNM proposes alignment with European and Romanian rural development standards through standardization of public services across counties, establishment of regional markets, and county-level agricultural advisory services for all farmers. The program also includes investments in transport and internet infrastructure in the villages and initiatives to reintegrate youth by supporting rural SMEs. However, the gender dimension appears only implicitly, with no concrete measures for women in rural areas. Partial approaches to rural development are found in the programs of BE "Patriotic", BE "Alternativa" and PP CUB. BE "Patriotic" promises massive investments in basic infrastructure and construction of 18 regional industrial platforms to create jobs. Although it declares concern for rural areas, the program does not consider gender differences or disparities between large farms and small households. BE "Alternativa" proposes special tax regimes and protection for local producers but does not explicitly address the social dimension of the village, the program focusing more on economic incentives. PP CUB and other center-right parties emphasize decentralization and local autonomy, supporting infrastructure investments but failing to present initiatives for social services or resource access for vulnerable groups in rural areas. Minimalist approaches are observed in case of parties that either omit rural development entirely or subsume it under broader objectives. Unionist parties (PL, AUR, Blocul BUN) address rural issues through the lens of unification with Romania, assuming implicitly that this will resolve rural challenges without proposing concrete national public policies. The "New Historical Option" Party, "Moldova Mare" and PP CALIN lack clear rural development programs, while some independent candidates (e.g., Olesea Stamate, Victoria Sanduța) do not mention the topic at all, this fact suggesting that rural development is not a priority for them. Overall, the analyzed programs fail to address essential issues such as equitable access to land, credit facilities for women, care services, or infrastructure adapted to the needs of rural communities.

Protection against gender-based violence is a clear indicator of political will to support gender equality, and the differences between electoral competitors' programs are significant. Only a few parties propose comprehensive actions to prevent and fight against domestic and gender-based violence. A notable example of good practice is PP ALDE, which advances an ambitious approach: creating a network of protection centers against domestic violence, with at least one center in each district, ensuring nationwide coverage. The same party includes strong prevention measures, such as annual medical and psychological screening for approximately 250,000 schoolchildren, national programs to prevent sexual and physical abuse among children, and parenting education courses in schools and community centers. The program also integrates gender considerations into health policies, providing free cancer screening for women (100,000 beneficiaries annually) which is an intervention that, while health-related, directly impacts fight against violence (because many victims of gender-based violence often lack access to medical services). Additionally, ALDE plans national awareness campaigns and strengthened legal protection for women and children. Thus, the issue is addressed both preventively and through sanctions against aggressors to discourage the phenomenon. Other parties also demonstrate a consistent and mature approach towards this subject. For example, BE "Împreună" provides measures related to violence in its social objectives, focusing on fighting against human trafficking and criminal networks, promoting legal education in schools, and running campaigns on citizens' rights. While these initiatives do not directly target domestic violence, they contribute to creating a safer and more informed environment for victims seeking help. Emerging parties also make noteworthy commitments. The Moldovan National Party (PNM), for instance, explicitly pledges to fight against gender-based violence, even though the topic is not detailed in its electoral program. PNM promotes the principle of zero tolerance toward violence against women and supports

initiatives in this regard, which denotes a certain ideological sensitivity towards this issue. On the other hand, many parties show major gaps in addressing gender-based violence. In some cases, violence is mentioned only tangentially, without concrete measures or coherent solutions. For example, a mid-level program (e.g. prepared by PAS) includes one single explicit reference to violence, limited to the educational environment: a program to prevent bullying and violence in schools and universities, alongside doubling the number of school counselors and psychologists. While useful for preventing youth violence, the program fails to address domestic or gender-based violence. There are no provisions regarding specific legislation on prevention and fight against violence, victim support services (shelters, emergency lines), or reintegration programs for women survivors. The problem thus is addressed partially, while the most critical segment – violence against women in the private space – is avoided. Other major parties (PL, AUR) and the most of smaller ones (PP NOI, PP CALIN, PP Moldova Mare, etc.) completely ignore the issue. The Party AUR, for instance, known for its ultra-conservative rhetoric, not only omits any aspect related to domestic violence but emphasizes in its campaigns the reference to "traditional values", which often minimizes any problems related to family violence.

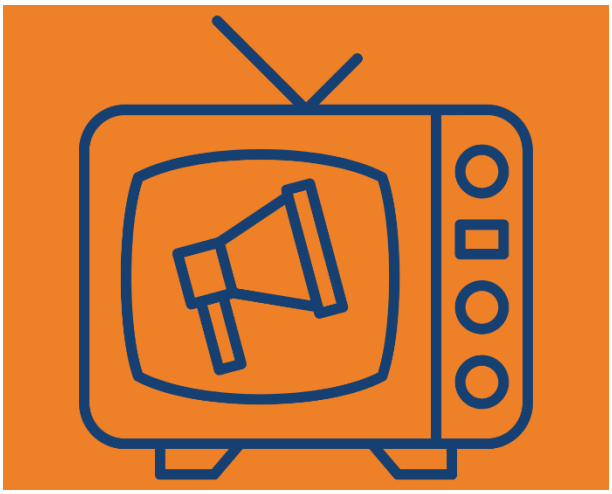
FINDINGS FROM CHAPTER IV

The analysis of electoral programs of the candidates for the 2025 parliamentary elections reveals significant shortcomings. Many political parties have failed to make clear public commitments regarding gender equality and social inclusion, and some have failed to publish any electoral program. The principles of equal opportunities and non-discrimination appear only marginally in most electoral platforms, with few notable exceptions. The main findings of this analysis are summarized below:

1. **Lack of platforms or vague wording:** Several parties and candidates have not presented any public electoral program, while many of those that did rely on general and populist language, lacking concrete measures or clear implementation timelines. This reflects a weak commitment to the electorate.
2. **Confusion regarding the role of parliamentarians**: Many programmatic documents reveal a misunderstanding of the institutional role of the members of Parliament. Numerous promises exceed parliamentary competencies, falling instead under the responsibilities of other authorities (Government or local administrations).
3. **Gender equality and social inclusion – rarely addressed topics**: About 50% of assessed electoral competitors include no clear measures or references to gender equality or social inclusion. Nearly one-third limit themselves to vague mentions such as "equal opportunities" or "combating discrimination," without identifying target groups or specific actions.
4. **Real commitments appear more as isolated cases**: Only around 4.5% of electoral competitors treat equal opportunities and social inclusion as core principles integrated across their platforms. In practice, just one or two formations propose advanced programs with coherent measures aligned with other policies.
5. **Low overall score:** On a scale of 0 to 3, the average score for mainstreaming gender equality and social inclusion is only 0.90. This modest level shows that equal opportunities remain a marginal issue on the electoral agenda.
6. **Parties with strong platforms:** Only five parties stand out positively: the European Social Democratic Party (PSDE), Action and Solidarity Party (PAS), Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE), Electoral Bloc "ÎMPREUNĂ," and Moldovan National Party (PNM). Each scored above 1.5 out of 3. Their programs include relatively comprehensive measures for vulnerable groups, ranging from expanding nurseries and daycare centers to subsidies for small farmers, incentives for employing persons with disabilities, and shelters for victims of domestic violence.
7. **Parties with symbolic approaches:** At the opposite end are parties that address these areas superficially or lack defined programs altogether. Many small parties and independent candidates score near zero—either due to the absence of a coherent platform or an exclusive focus on patriotic slogans (e.g., unification with Romania) without concrete social proposals. Topics such as gender equality, fight against violence, or inclusion of disadvantaged groups are completely omitted.
8. **Social protection – present but rarely inclusive:** Although social protection is among the most frequently addressed areas, most programs focus on general promises (pension increases, child allowances, social assistance). Few include measures that effectively support vulnerable groups, such as accessible care services (nurseries, home care for the elderly and persons with disabilities), support for single parents, or incentives for integrating disadvantaged individuals into the labor market.
9. **Education and health – addressed but with inclusion gaps:** While education and health are common themes, only a few parties explicitly reference inclusive education or reproductive health. Parties present programs which often mention investments in schools and hospitals (infrastructure modernization, equipment, staffing). For instance, they promote school renovations or expanding family doctor networks in rural areas, but neglect essential issues like preventing school dropout in poor communities, integrating children with special needs, or ensuring women's access to specific health services which are insufficiently addressed, or completely lacking.

10. **Gender-based violence – the most neglected topic:** Fighting violence against women and domestic violence is the least present subject in electoral platforms. Only one or two parties propose concrete measures in this regard. A notable example is ALDE, which pledges to establish shelters in every district and launch national prevention campaigns. Regretfully, most parties fail to mention services for victims, improved legislation, or reintegration programs for women survivors of violence.
11. **Equal opportunities – treated as peripheral subject:** Overall, the analysis reveals a gap between electoral speech and concrete commitments. Gender equality and social inclusion are addressed by most candidates as secondary themes. Only a few programs elevate them to strategic priorities, and this fact raises serious concerns about the real commitment of the future Parliament regarding the principles of equal opportunities for all citizens.

The results of this analysis show that equal opportunities, social inclusion, and the fight against gender-based violence remain largely marginal themes in the current electoral discourse—often treated superficially or omitted entirely by most political actors. Only a few parties integrate these principles coherently and translate them into concrete measures tailored to the needs of vulnerable groups. Lack of clear electoral programs or their total absence in certain candidates reveals a dysfunction in the current political culture. In a healthy democracy, participation in elections should imply not only the ambition to gain power but also the capacity to propose concrete, responsible, and equitable solutions for the entire society. This report serves both as a monitoring tool and a reference point, contributing to the evaluation of future commitments and to the consolidation of a political culture grounded in responsibility and respect for fundamental human rights.



Chapter V: THE ELECTORAL SCREEN

Analysis of the representation of male and female candidates in the media during the 2025 parliamentary elections

CONTEXT

This chapter examines male and female candidates' access to media coverage. The analysis is based on monitoring four types of media products—news bulletins, talk shows, election debates, and commercials – 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 of male and female candidates.

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 28 September 2025, assessing how the media portrayed women and men was of major importance. The analysis included four categories of media content broadcast between 25 August and 14 September 2025: election debates, commercials, 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.

Electoral debates

During the period August - September 2025, 73 electoral debates, including their repeated broadcasts, were monitored. The total broadcast time accounted for 80 hours and 26 minutes, with the participation of 113 people.

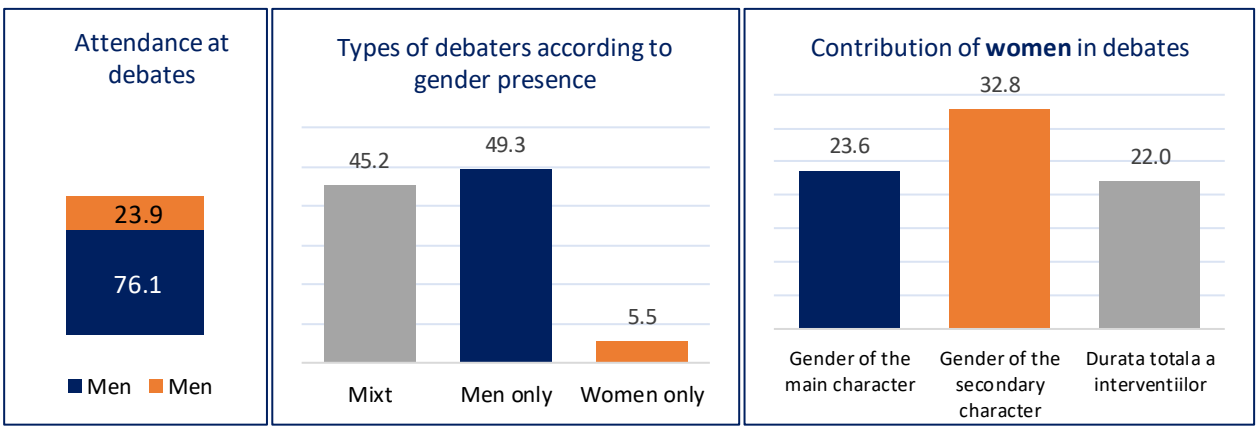
Table 3. Quantitative parameters of electoral debate monitoring

Parameter	Quantity
Number of units monitored, including repeated broadcasts	73
Monitoring period	2 - 26.09.2025
Total broadcast time	80 hours 26 minutes
Total number of participants	113 people

Source: CPD calculations based on media monitoring, 2025

Women remain significantly underrepresented in electoral debates. Although representation on candidate lists has become more balanced, women still have limited opportunities to present their political vision during these debates. In the 2025 elections, women accounted for less than one-third (23.9%) of debate participants. Moreover, nearly half of all debates (49.3%) featured only male participants—a higher proportion than mixed-gender debates (45.2%) with male and female candidates. Notably, only 5.5% of debates included exclusively female participants. The analysis of broadcasts also revealed that during the mixed debates, women were often relegated to secondary roles: they occupied predominantly observer positions (32.8%), and their speaking time represent less than a quarter (22.0%) of the total allocated time. These findings indicate that women participating in electoral debates were given limited opportunities to intervene, reinforcing their portrayal as secondary actors.

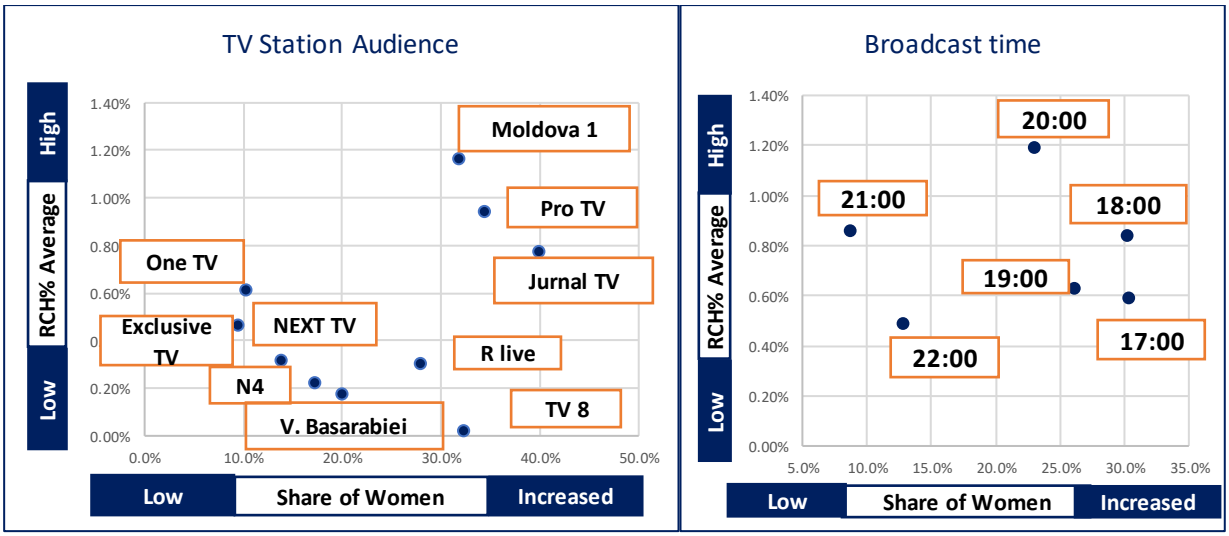
Figure 44. Attendance at debates, depending on the gender of the candidates who participated and the type of hero, %



Source: CPD calculations based on media monitoring, 2025

Female candidates have become more visible in debates broadcast during peak viewing hours and on channels with higher audience ratings. All 10 television stations monitored by CPD organized electoral debates during this campaign have organized electoral debates. It is encouraging that women were invited to major stations such as Moldova 1 and Pro TV, where their share among participants was around 30%. Jurnal TV, despite its lower popularity, recorded an even higher participation rate, where women represented 40% of debate participants. Regarding broadcast times, most female candidates appeared in debates aired at 17:00, a slot with relatively low viewership. However, it is noteworthy that 23.1% of female candidates participated in debates broadcast at 20:00, the time with the highest audience. For accuracy, it should be emphasized that women's participation in debates does not depend solely on media outlets. Their presence is largely determined by political parties enrolled in the electoral race, which decide whom to delegate and, as observed, tend to prioritize male candidates.

Figure 45. Audience of TV stations where electoral debates with electoral candidates were broadcast and their broadcast time, %



Source: CPD calculations based on media monitoring, 2025

Talk-shows

In the period between 25 August and 26 September 2025, 145 talk show broadcasts were monitored, during which 145 interventions by participants were monitored. The total broadcast time accounted for 158 hours and 33 minutes.

Table 4. Quantitative parameters of talk show monitoring

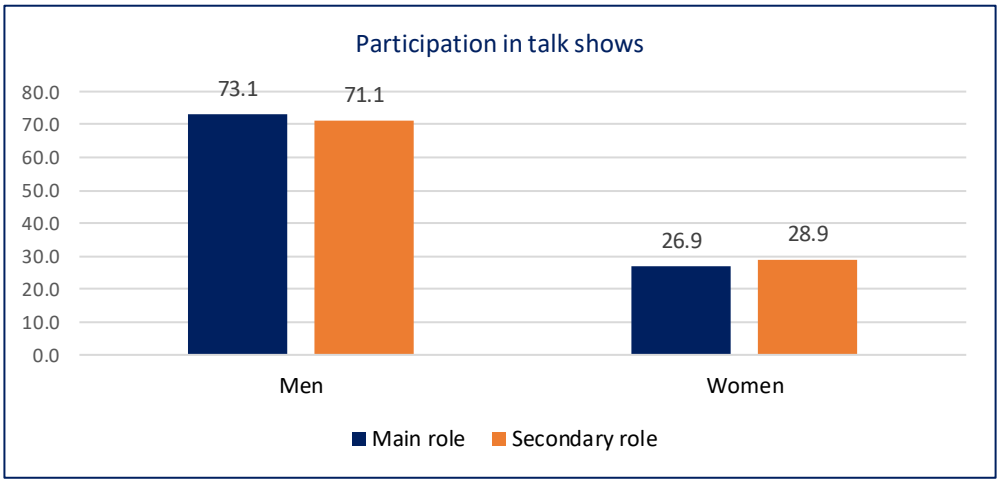
Parameter	Quantity
Number of broadcasts monitored	145
Number of participant interventions	145
Monitoring period	25.08 - 26.09.2025
Total broadcast time	158 hours 33 minutes

Source: CPD calculations based on media monitoring, 2025

Female candidates' participation in talk shows remains limited, both in frequency and overall presence. Of all participants in electoral talk shows, women represented only about one-quarter (27.9%), compared to 72.1% for male candidates. Although the share of female participants is low, those who were invited to participate in talk shows generally occupied leading roles. Among participants with secondary roles in electoral talk-shows, female candidates accounted for a share which was four times lower than their male counterparts. In conclusion, we can state that while women succeed to hold main positions in the majority

of situations when they appear on talk shows, their overall presence remains significantly lower than that of men.

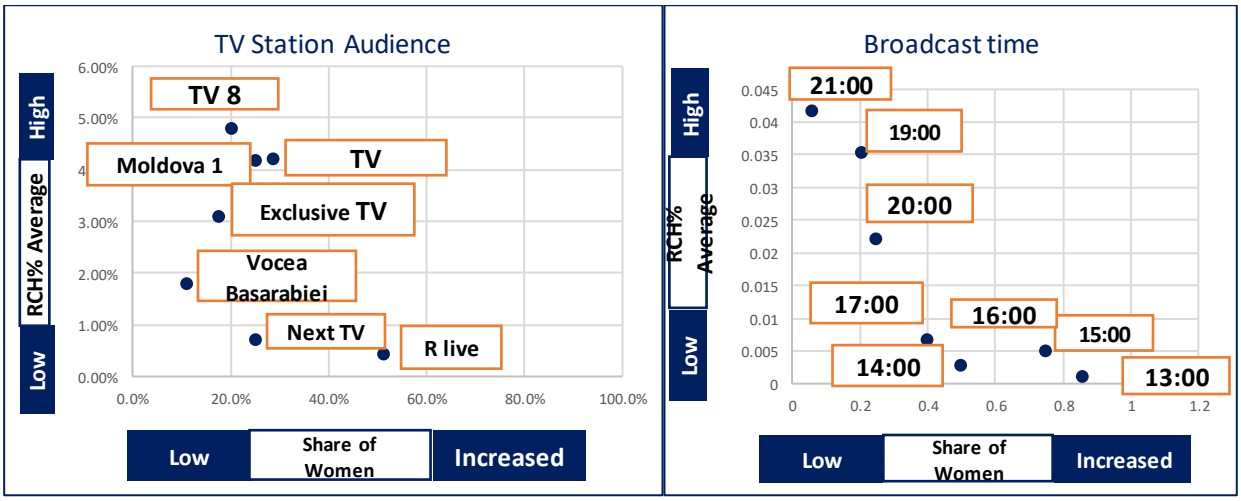
Figure 46. Participation in talk shows of electoral male and female candidates, by type of role, %



Source: CPD calculations based on media monitoring, 2025

Talk shows featuring female candidates are generally broadcast on channels with low viewership and during off-peak hours. While women appear more frequently on certain TV channels, these are mostly TV stations with limited impact on the broader audience. For example, R Live and Next TV provided greater visibility for female candidates, yet their audience reach is significantly lower compared to leading channels. In contrast, high-viewership stations such as Jurnal TV and TV8 aired debates with minimal female representation. Regarding broadcast times, it is observed that female participation is more often associated with less watched broadcast intervals (starting with 13:00, 15:00, or 16:00), when overall audience numbers are low. Only a small share of appearances occurred during prime-time slots (21:00, 19:00, and 20:00), which considerably limits female candidates' electoral visibility and access to the general public.

Figure 47. Audience of TV stations where electoral talk shows with female electoral candidates were broadcast and their broadcast time, %



Source: CPD calculations based on media monitoring, 2025

In total, 1561 news appearances were monitored, with a total broadcast time of 63 hours 45 minutes.

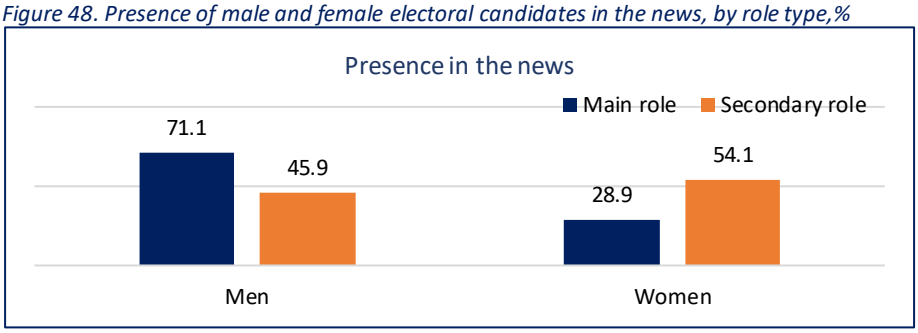
Table 5. Quantitative parameters of news monitoring

Parameter	Amount
Number of participant interventions monitored	1561
Monitoring period	28.08 - 26.09.2025
Total broadcast time	63 hours 45 minutes

Source: CPD calculations based on media monitoring, 2025

The coverage in the news during the election campaign reveals a clear predominance of men in leading roles. Men continue to dominate and appear as the main protagonists in 71.1% of news stories, while women occupy the foreground in only 28.9% of news. This imbalance reflects not just numerical underrepresentation but also a symbolic marginalization of women within political media narratives. Conversely, women are more frequently featured in secondary positions in 54.1% of news compared to 45.9% for men. This contrast suggests that women are often relegated to supporting roles, lacking a central voice or clear authority in the informational content. As a result, even when women are visible in the media, they remain on the periphery, perpetuating a model of passive participation and reinforcing gender stereotypes in electoral speech.

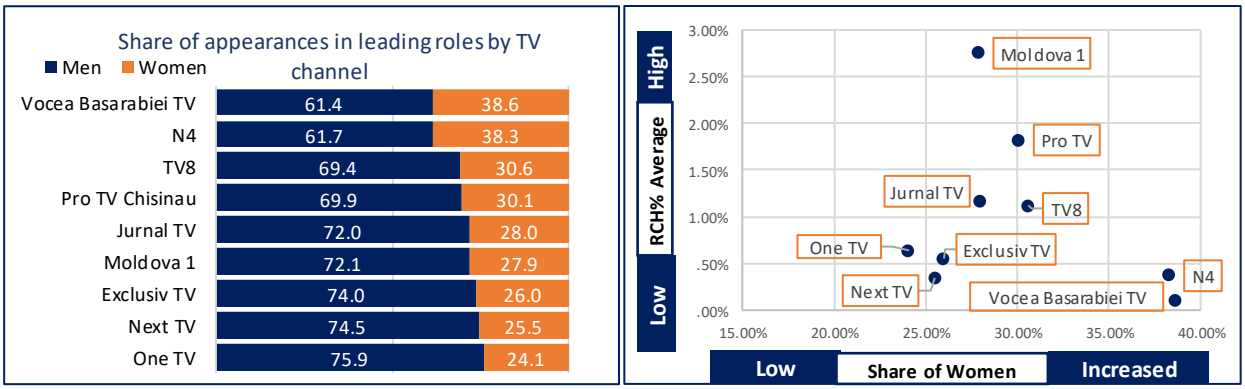
Figure 48. Presence of male and female electoral candidates in the news, by role type,%



Source: CPD calculations based on media monitoring, 2025

Women's appearances in leading roles in the news content are largely concentrated on channels with relatively small audiences. For instance, TV stations such as Next TV, One TV, and Exclusiv TV feature women in prominent positions in over 70% of cases. However, these channels typically have an audience share below 1.5%, including Vocea Basarabiei, N4, Next TV, One TV, and Exclusiv TV. This distribution highlights not only a qualitative underrepresentation of women in the broader media landscape but also a significant limitation in terms of visibility and impact. Even when women occupy central roles in journalistic content, access to these messages remains restricted, and this fact reduces their potential to influence and hinder the efforts to ensure equal public presence during the electoral campaign.

Figure 49. Presence of female and male electoral candidates in the news, by typ e of TV station and audience, %



Source: CPD calculations based on media monitoring, 2025

During the period August - September 2025, a number of 355 broadcast electoral commercials were monitored. The total number of monitored runs accounted for 12670, the total broadcast time being 115 hours 00 minutes.

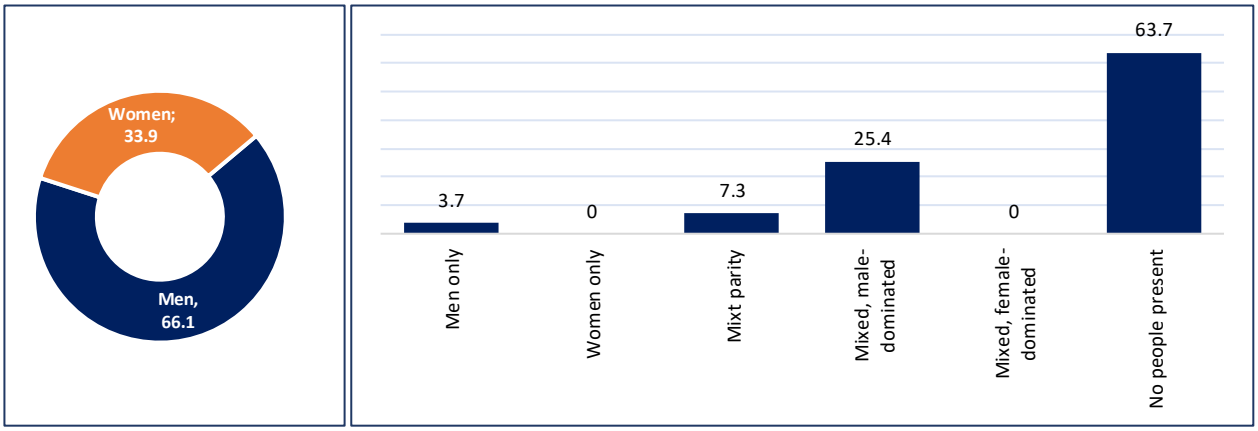
Table 4. Quantitative parameters of monitoring of electoral commercials

Parameter	Qualnity
Number of units monitored	355
Number of runs monitored	12670
Monitoring period	28.08-28.09.2025
Total broadcast time	115 hours 00 minutes
Total cost according to cost grids	964. 609 = - dollars

Source: CPD calculations based on monitoring of media institutions

The analysis of gender representation in electoral commercials during the 2025 election campaign reveals a limited visibility of women as protagonists. Only 33.9% of individuals featured in central roles were women, confirming the persistence of systemic underrepresentation. Among the 355 commercials analyzed, none showcased an exclusively female presence, and in mixed commercials, men continued to dominate in both presence and visibility. Notably, only 7.3% of the commercials achieved genuine gender balance, underscoring the absence of a deliberate effort to ensure parity. The most common format remains the mixed spot with male predominance, accounting for 25.4% of all broadcast materials. However, there is a significant improvement compared to the 2021 parliamentary elections, when 66.1% of commercials featured exclusively men. In 2025, this figure dropped sharply to just 3.7%, signaling a decline in the absolute exclusion of women from electoral communication, even though true parity is still far from being achieved.

Figure 50. Share of women in the number of participants in electoral commercials, %

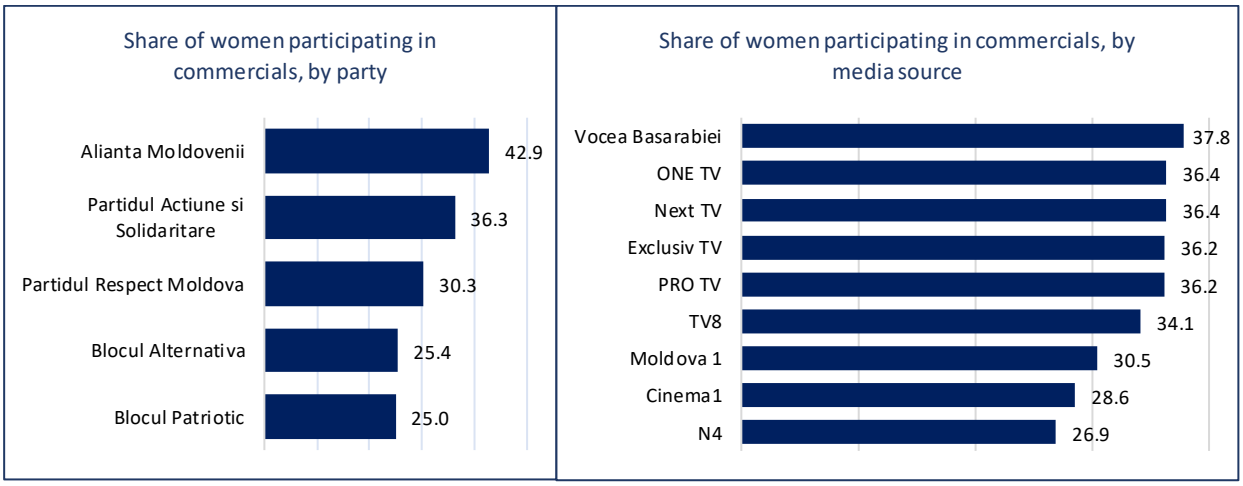


Source: CPD calculations based on media monitoring, 2025

Women's representation in electoral commercials varies significantly by political affiliation, reflecting distinct approaches to promoting gender equality. The Electoral Bloc "Alternativa" recorded the highest share of female protagonists, accounting for 34% of all appearances analyzed. It is followed by the Political Party PAS with 28.6%, and the Electoral Bloc "Patriotic" with 25%. These figures suggest a stronger trend toward inclusion within these formations, compared to others that offered women minimal visibility or did not broadcast any commercials during the campaign. In terms of broadcasting channels, roughly one-third of female appearances were concentrated on N4, Exclusiv TV, and Moldova 1. This pattern may indicate either a greater openness of these stations to parties with inclusive strategies or a preference by such parties for these platforms to convey their messages. Ultimately, this uneven distribution of

appearances limits women's overall visibility in the electoral media space, perpetuating an imbalanced representation in public perception.

Figure 51. Share of women in the total number of participants in electoral commercials, by party and broadcasting channel, %



Source: CPD calculations based on media monitoring, 2025

FINDINGS FROM CHAPTER V

The 2025 electoral campaign confirms that the media space remains deeply imbalanced from a gender perspective. Male candidates dominate debates and broadcasts, while women are visibly marginalized: through lower participation rates, appearances mainly on low-audience channels, unfavorable broadcast times, and limited speaking opportunities.

Electoral debates proved ineffective as a platform for women candidates to assert themselves. Only 23.9% of debate participants were women, despite their significant presence on electoral lists. Women's interventions accounted for just 22% of total airtime. Although some debates featuring women were aired on high-audience channels, most were scheduled at disadvantageous times, reducing the impact of their messages.

News coverage favored male candidates. Of 1,561 candidate interventions, women appeared in only 41.5% of news segments, mostly in secondary roles (54.1%), while men held 71.1% of leading positions. Furthermore, news featuring women in prominent roles were typically broadcast on low-audience channels and during off-peak hours.

Electoral commercials reflected the same exclusionary trend. Male candidates dominated these media products, appearing in over two-thirds of the total materials, while the share of women was 33.9%. In most cases, women appeared in mixed electoral commercials, where the share of men was predominant. The representation of women in electoral commercials varied depending on political affiliation. Thus, most women were involved in the electoral commercials of PP Alianța Moldovenii, PP PAS and PP Respect Moldova.

Political talk shows offered women even less visibility. Of the 145 broadcasts monitored, only 26.9% of main guests and 28.9% of secondary guests were women. Moreover, the vast majority of them participated in talk shows broadcast by TV stations with low ratings and at unpopular broadcast times. This pattern underscores women's exclusion from spaces where political agendas are shaped and public perceptions formed.

ANNEX NO. 1. EVALUATION OF ELECTORAL PROGRAMS

Electoral competitors	Assessment area									Average programs
	Gender equality and inclusion as a politically endorsed value	Health	Education	Social protection	Rural development	Agriculture	Infrastructure	Labor market and economic autonomy	Protection against gender-based violence	
Average domain	**0.79**	**0.94**	**1.07**	**1.34**	**0.87**	**0.81**	**0.88**	**0.89**	**0.55**	**0.90**
Political Party "Action and Solidarity Party" (PAS)	3.00	2.50	2.50	2.70	1.80	2.00	2.30	2.40	0.50	**2.19**
Olesea Stamate	-	0.30	0.50	0.10	-	0.20	-	-	-	**0.12**
Năstase Andrei	-	0.20	0.20	1.00	-	-	-	-	-	**0.16**
Political Party Coalition for Unity and Welfare (CUB)	0.50	1.50	1.00	1.00	1.50	1.00	1.30	1.40	0.50	**1.08**
Crețu Tatiana	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.50	-	**0.06**
Political Party Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE)	2.80	2.10	1.70	2.30	1.20	1.50	2.20	1.80	2.70	**2.03**
Political party Moldovan National Party PNM	2.00	1.30	2.20	3.00	0.60	1.50	1.50	1.00	1.00	**1.57**
Political Party European Social Democratic Party PSD	2.50	1.50	1.70	2.50	2.50	2.50	2.50	2.00	2.00	**2.19**
Political Party RESPECT MOLDOVA MOVEMENT PPMRM	0.50	0.80	2.30	1.50	0.20	0.50	0.20	0.50	-	**0.72**
Electoral Bloc "Patriotic of Socialists, Communists, Heart and Future of Moldova" BE Patriotic	-	2.20	1.40	2.20	2.00	2.00	1.20	2.00	0.50	**1.50**
Electoral Bloc "ALTERNATIVA"	1.50	1.50	1.60	1.90	1.50	0.80	2.00	1.20	1.50	**1.50**

Political Party League of Cities and Communes PP LOC	1.00	1.00	1.50	1.50	0.10	1.00	-	0.50	-	**0.73**
Political Party ALLIANCE FOR THE UNITY OF ROMANIANS PP AUR	0.30	0.80	0.30	1.30	1.50	1.20	1.00	0.50	0.10	**0.78**
Electoral Bloc "IMPREUNA"	1.80	2.00	2.80	3.00	2.30	1.40	1.50	1.00	2.30	**2.01**
Political Party Alliance "MOLDOVANS" PPAM	-	0.20	0.30	-	0.30	-	-	0.10	-	**0.10**
Liberal Party PL	0.50	0.50	0.50	1.5	0.70	0.70	0.80	1.70	1.00	**0.80**
Electoral Bloc "Unity of the Nation" Bloc BUN	-	0.20	-	1.00	1.30	-	1.50	0.50	-	**0.50**
Political Party "Our Party"	-	1.50	1.90	1.70	1.20	1.20	1.10	1.50	-	**1.12**
Victoria Sanduța	1.00	-	0.30	0.50	-	-	-	-	-	**0.20**
Political Party "Christian-Social Union of Moldova" CALIN	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	**-**
Party "New Historical Option" PP NOI	-	0.30	0.50	0.20	0.30	0.20	0.10	0.40	-	**0.22**
Party "Moldova Mare"	-	0.20	0.30	0.70	0.10	0.10	0.20	0.50	-	**0.23**

Chapter VI: ELECTORAL MANAGEMENT

Analysis of lower-level electoral authorities from the perspective of gender representation

CONTEXT

This chapter explores the gender distribution within the composition of lower-level electoral bodies — namely, the second-level constituency electoral councils (CECE II), the first-level constituency electoral councils (CECE I), and the polling station electoral bureaus (BESV), as well as among the SIAS "Elections" operators who support their operations. The analysis focuses on assessing the representation of women and men across institutional levels, appointment mechanisms, and the types of duties performed, with the aim of identifying structural imbalances and persistent patterns of gender segregation in the administration of electoral processes. This approach provides a comparative and layered understanding of gender participation within the operational architecture of elections.

ESTABLISHMENT OF LOWER-LEVEL ELECTORAL AUTHORITIES

The organization of electoral processes in the Republic of Moldova is regulated by the Electoral Code No. 325/2022 and operates through a hierarchical system of electoral bodies. This system comprises three levels: the Central Electoral Commission (a permanent national body), district electoral councils (at the territorial level, Level II – second-level administrative-territorial units and Level I – localities), and precinct electoral bureaus (PEBs), at the polling station level).

Second-level District Electoral Councils (DEC II) are permanent bodies composed, according to the law, of an odd number of members (minimum 7, maximum 11). Each DEC is chaired by a civil servant, while the remaining members are appointed before each election according to procedures set by the Electoral Code: two members proposed by the district court, two are designated by the rayon council (second-level local public authority), and each political party represented in Parliament is entitled to nominate one member. The Central Electoral Commission confirms the composition at least 50 days prior to the election.

First-level District Electoral Councils (DEC I) are established exclusively for local elections and correspond to Level I administrative-territorial units (cities, communes). They follow similar rules: an odd number of members (7–11), with two designated by the local council and one nominated by each parliamentary party. If vacancies remain, the Central Electoral Commission fills the remaining spots. For special circumstances, the Electoral Code provides for distinct electoral bodies, for example, constituencies for the diaspora and the Transnistrian region. These bodies are administered by separate councils located in Chișinău and temporarily established for the electoral period. This legal framework ensures that lower-level electoral bodies are constituted uniformly and transparently before each election, based on a clear calendar and legal criteria outlined in Article 35 of the Electoral Code.

Precinct electoral bureaus (PEBs) represent the basic level of the voting process administration. Polling stations are established by district electoral councils at least 35 days before election day, in each locality, in compliance with legal limits on the number of voters per station: a minimum of 30 and a maximum of 3,000 individuals for one polling station, with a tolerance of up to 10% above the ceiling allowed under justified conditions. Subsequently, for each polling station, a precinct is established by the district electoral council no later than 25 days before voting. Each precinct has also an odd number of members between 5 and 11, appointed as follows: 3 members are proposed by the local council (local public authority) of the of the administrative-territorial unit where the polling station is located, and one member is nominated by each political party represented in Parliament. If parties or local authorities fail to submit nominations within the legal deadline, vacancies are filled by the district electoral council, based on the proposals from the CEC, selecting individuals from the Register of Electoral Officials. This mechanism ensures the full completion and functionality of all precinct electoral bureaus. According to the law, members of electoral bureaus must be qualified persons: they should have completed electoral training courses and obtained certification from the Center for Continuous Electoral Training. For polling stations located abroad, Article 39 of the Electoral Code sets specific rules: the polling stations are organized under diplomatic missions and consular offices of the Republic of Moldova, with the consent of host state authorities. Precinct electoral bureaus in the diaspora may include up to 15 members, compared to 11 members in the country, and two members proposed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Integration who serve ex officio as chairman and secretary. This provision ensures both involvement of diplomatic staffing in managing polling stations abroad and maintains direct coordination with central authorities. Overall, Articles 38 and 39 of the Electoral Code detail the procedures for establishing polling stations and their management bodies, ensuring representativeness, professionalism, and transparency in administering the electoral process.

In the context of the ordinary parliamentary elections held on 28 September 2025, the organization of hierarchical electoral bodies fully complied with the applicable legal provisions. For this national election, the entire country constituted a single national electoral constituency for the election of Parliament; however, for administrative purposes, the Central Electoral Commission (CEC) operated through

permanent territorial councils. Accordingly, the CEC established 37 second-level district electoral councils, corresponding to all Level II administrative-territorial units, including the Chisinau municipality, Gagauzia autonomy, as well as special constituencies for polling stations abroad and for voters residing on the left bank of the Nistru River. According to CEC decisions, each council consisted of nine members, and the total number of members across these 37 councils represented 337 designated individuals. It is important to note that level I electoral councils were not created for these parliamentary elections, as they are only required for local elections, where each locality has its own communal or city electoral council. Regarding the polling stations, there were opened 2,274 stations both within the Republic of Moldova and abroad, each with having a precinct electoral bureau. Of these, 301 stations were organized abroad, and 12 served voters from localities on the left bank of the Nistru River (located on the territory controlled by constitutional authorities). Consequently, a total of 2,274 precinct electoral bureaus of the polling station were established. The number of members appointed to these PEBs was significant, reflecting the scale of the election: approximately 19,622 members served in domestic precincts alone (an average of eight members per office), supplemented by several thousand members in overseas precincts (where PEBs often had smaller teams due to lower numbers of voters assigned to each station from diaspora, approximately 3,000–4,515 members in total). Additionally to the members of these bodies, a number of 3,725 operators of the State Automated Information System "Elections" were involved, along with other auxiliary staff necessary for managing electoral lists and efficient data transmition.

The gender analysis presented below examines the distribution of women and men within the lower-level electoral bodies involved in the organization of parliamentary elections of 28 September 2025. Overall, the study reviewed 334 members of the 37 second-level district electoral councils (DEC II); 19,622 members of the precinct electoral bureaus (PEBs) across the country, and 4,547 operators of the State Automated Information System "Elections" (SIAS "Elections"), who supported both DEC II and PEBs activities, including those in polling stations located abroad[9]. This categorization by institutional level enables a comparative and segmented assessment of gender balance, taking into account the scope of responsibilities, appointment mechanisms, and the specific functions assigned to each electoral body.

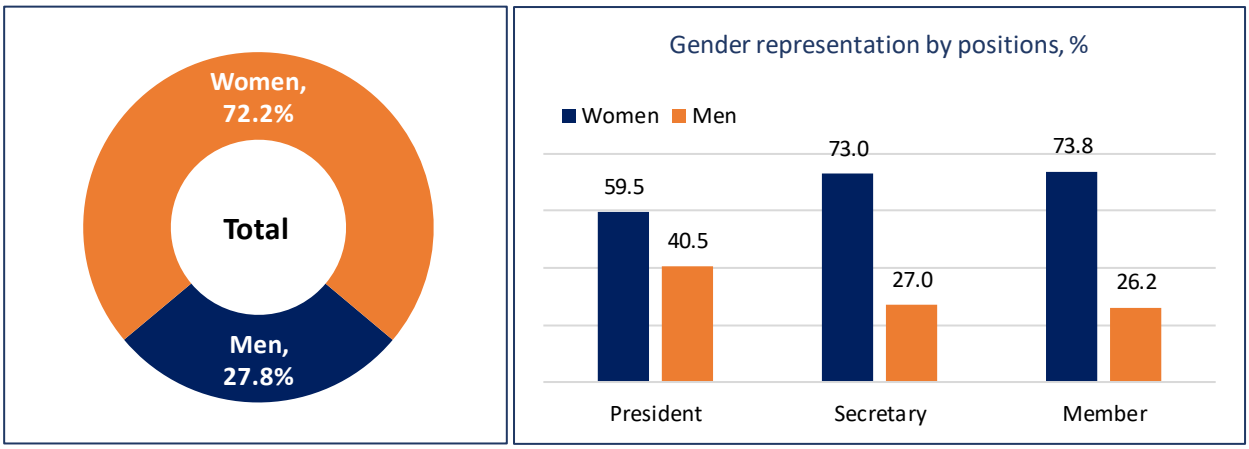
[9] This data was updated on 08 October 2025.

GENDER STRUCTURE OF LOWER-LEVEL ELECTORAL BODIES

DISTRICT ELECTORAL COUNCILS

The gender composition of the 37 district electoral councils reveals a clear predominance of women, who accounted for approximately 72% of all members. This distribution can be attributed, on one hand, to the nature of electoral activities, particularly at the local level, that is closely linked to administrative work, which is a sector where women are more frequently represented. On the other hand, it reflects the broader trend of feminization within public administration and technical-organizational institutions, where women traditionally hold a strong presence. A closer look at roles within these councils highlights an interesting dynamic: although women dominate numerically, men are proportionally better represented in leadership positions. Specifically, 40.5% of council chairman positions are filled by men, while women hold the majority of secretary roles (73%) and member positions (73.8%). This suggests a degree of gender segmentation within the hierarchy structure – women actively participate in the electoral process, yet men more often occupy decision-making roles. This phenomenon may be explained by institutional factors (such as administrative experience or seniority in public office), as well as cultural and social norms that perpetuate the perception that leadership positions require a type of "authority" traditionally associated with male roles.

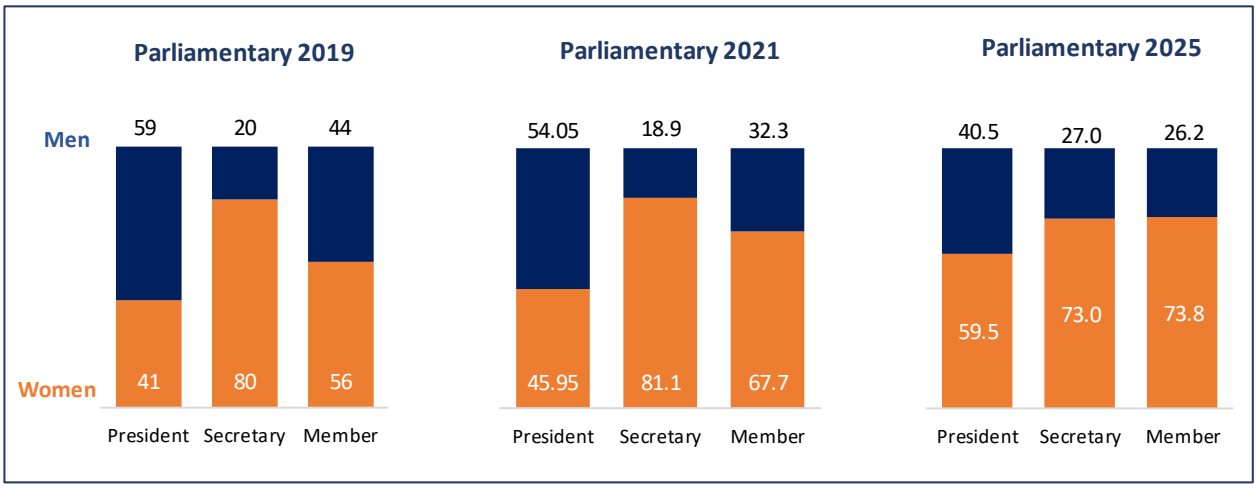
Figure 52. Gender representation in District Electoral Councils, 2025



Source: Central Electoral Commission

The dynamic analysis of the gender composition of district electoral councils reveals a consistent trend toward increasing women's participation in these structures. In 2019, women held 41% of chair positions; whereas by 2025, their share has risen to nearly 60%, marking a significant shift toward more balanced representation at the decision-making level. At the same time, women continue to dominate the positions of secretary and members, maintaining over two-thirds of these roles. Although gender gaps in leadership have narrowed over time, men remain proportionally better represented in chair roles compared to their overall share in council composition (see Figure 2). This evolution reflects, on one hand, a gradual improvement in gender balance, and on the other, the persistence of traditional institutional models in the distribution of authority positions. The growing involvement of women can be linked to professionalization processes and the increasing openness of electoral administration, as well as policies promoting gender equality, which have indirectly strengthened women's participation in managing electoral processes at the local level.

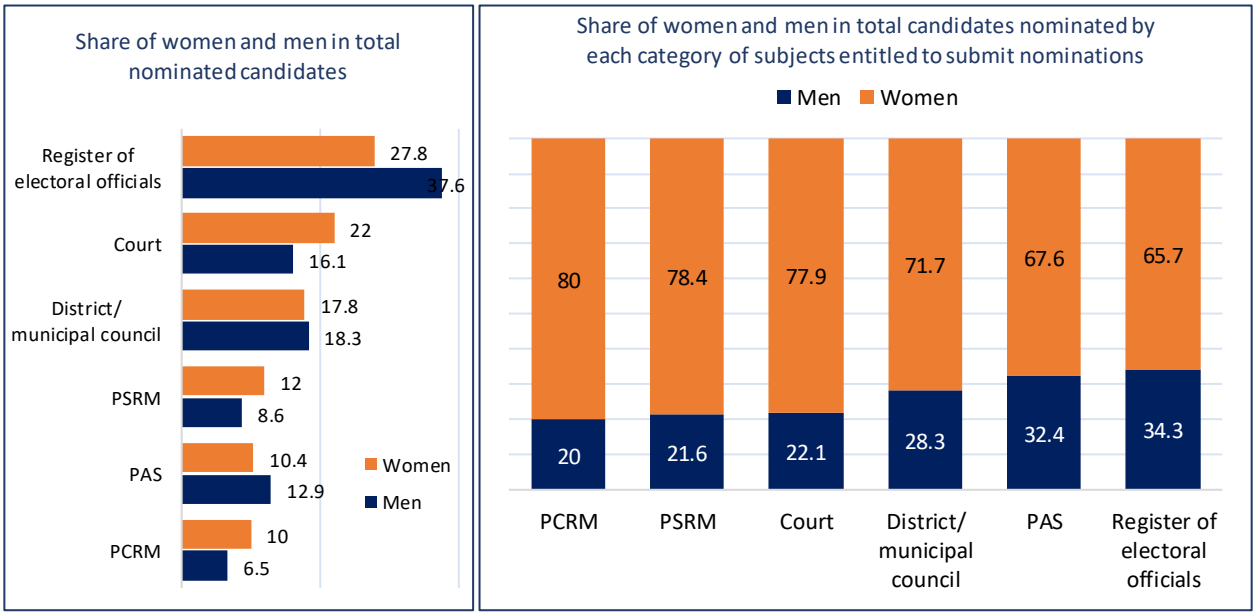
Figure 53. Gender composition of District Electoral Councils, in dynamics, %



Source: Central Electoral Commission

The analysis of gender distribution by the entity appointing district electoral councils' members reveals notable differences. Parliamentary political parties and local authorities predominantly assign women to membership positions, with percentages exceeding 70%. This trend may suggest a preference for appointing women to roles of a primarily administrative and operational nature, while men remain more closely associated with positions perceived as strategic. Consequently, the Register of Electoral Officials, which serves as the most consistent source of council members, shows a more balanced gender distribution, with men accounting for over one-third of its members. This can be explained by provisions in the Electoral Code, which stipulate that if political parties or local councils fail to nominate all required candidates on time, the Central Electoral Commission fills vacancies with individuals from the Register. Therefore, this procedural mechanism gives the Register a decisive role in shaping the composition of electoral councils and, indirectly, their gender structure. Thus, while political and local appointments tend to reproduce traditional patterns of role distribution, the intervention by the Commission contributes to increasing women's representation within these bodies.

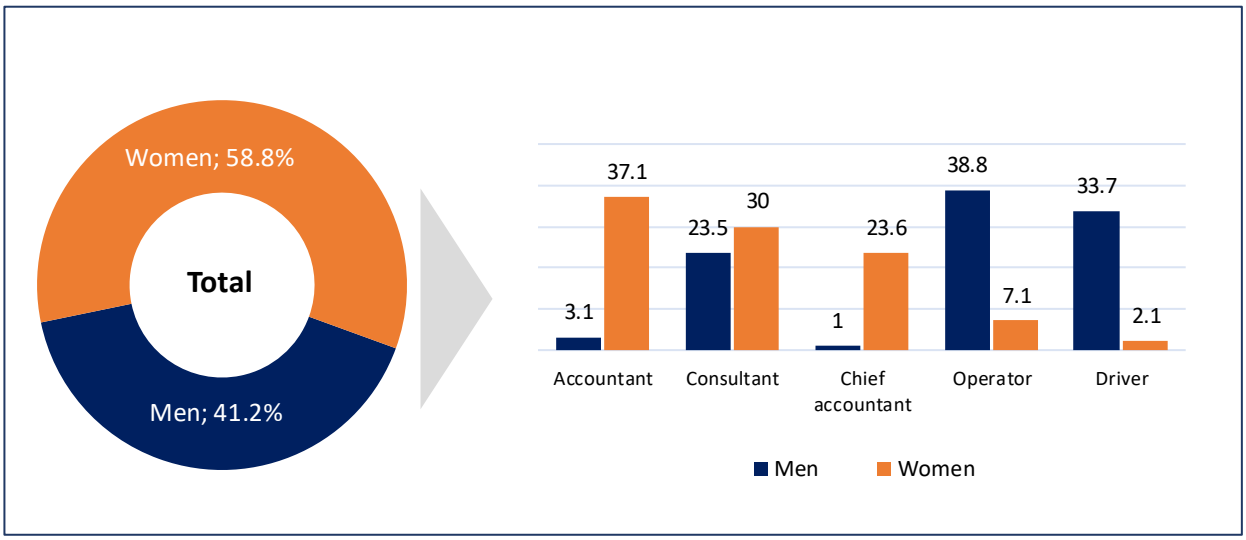
Figure 54. Gender distribution by entity appointing DEC/DEC members, %



Source: Central Electoral Commission

The staffing structure of District Electoral Councils reflects a relatively balanced gender representation overall, yet significant gender segregation persists across job categories. Among all support staff, the distribution is close to fragile parity, with women accounting for 58.8% and men for 41.2%. However, a closer look by type of functions reveals pronounced polarization. Administrative and financial roles, such as Accountant (37.1% women) and Chief Accountant (23.6% women) are predominantly held by women. In contrast, men dominate technical and logistical positions, including Operator (38.8% men) and, especially, Driver (33.7% men). This division suggests that, despite an overall numerical balance, task allocation continues to mirror traditional gender norms regarding the nature of work and the skills associated with it.

Figure 55. Gender composition of the District Electoral Councils, %

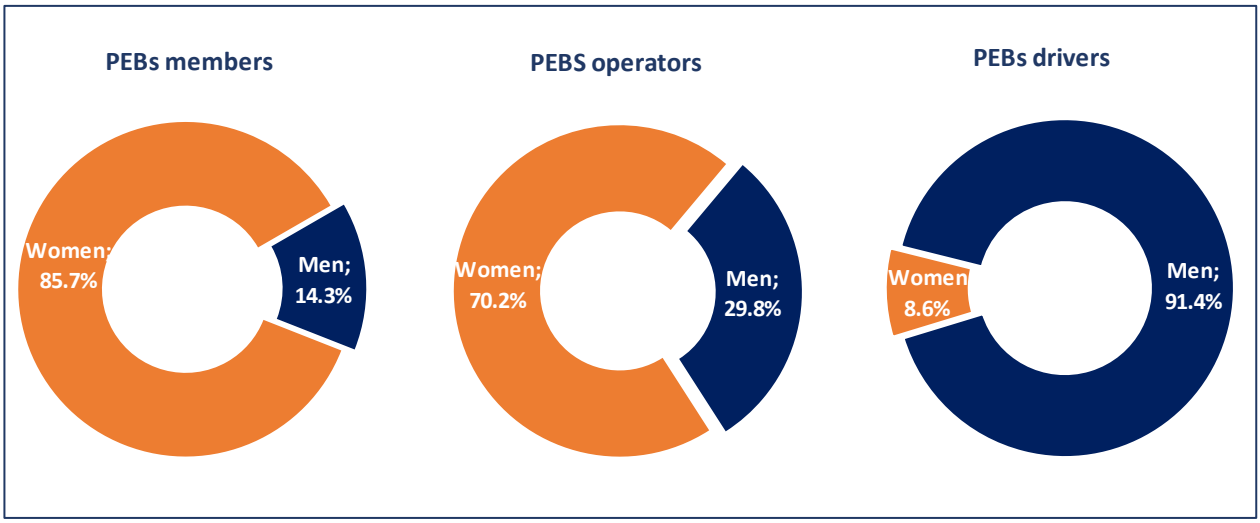


Source: Central Electoral Commission

PRECINCT ELECTORAL BUREAUS

The composition of the Precinct Electoral Bureaus (PEBs) for the parliamentary elections of 28 September 2025 further underscores the highly feminized nature of lower-level electoral bodies. Women make up 85.7% of PEBs members, and their share among operators reaches 70.2%. This distribution demonstrates that, in terms of direct implementation of electoral processes, whether administrative, logistical, and operational activities, women's presence is overwhelming. The responsibilities of PEBs members include organizing the voting process, managing documentation, ensuring compliance with procedures, and maintaining attention to detail, tasks traditionally associated with administrative skills, where women have historically been more involved. Moreover, work within PEBs is often perceived as a temporary assignment rather than a position of political authority, making it more accessible and acceptable for women. This strong operational involvement contrasts sharply with women's presence in political decision-making roles. While women constitute the absolute majority in electoral structures, their visibility in electoral competition remains limited: only 44.2% of candidates on electoral lists were women, and just 36.6% succeeded in obtaining parliamentary mandates. This disparity highlights a clear gender divide within the electoral architecture: women are heavily represented in roles that ensure the functioning of the electoral process, yet remain marginal in spaces where political power and strategic decisions are exercised. Thus, the electoral system reflects not only a numerical imbalance but also a structural one: women sustain most of the electoral process through their work but remain underrepresented in positions that shape political direction.

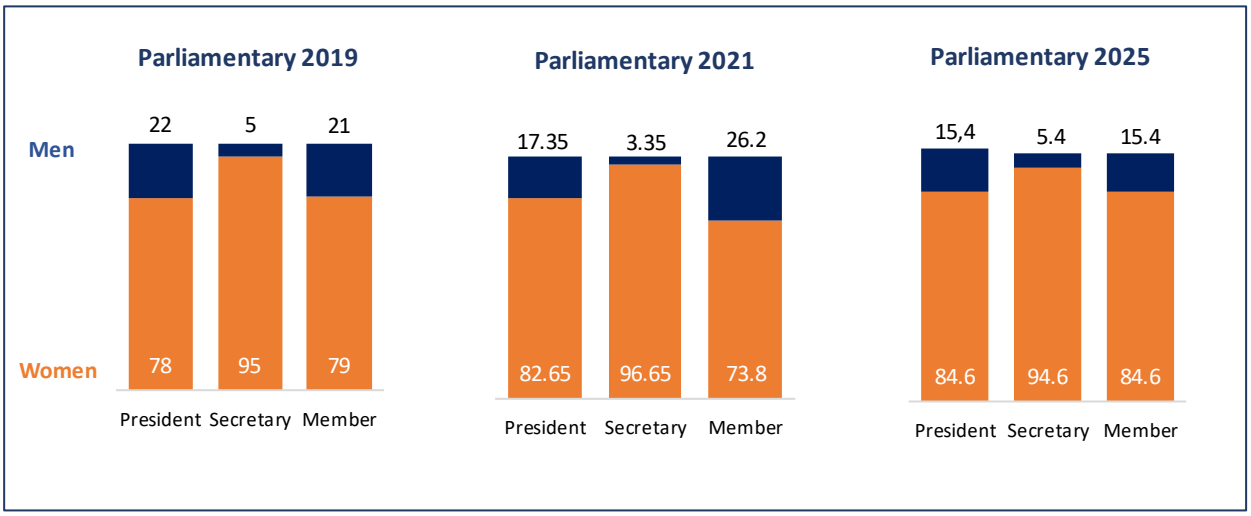
Figure 56. Gender composition of Precinct Electoral Bureaus (PEBs)



Source: Central Electoral Commission

The dynamic analysis of gender composition within PEBs confirms a consistent and pronounced trend of female predominance, visible across all levels and especially in key positions. Women overwhelmingly occupy secretarial roles, with their share remaining extremely high up to 94.6% in 2025 compared to 96.65% in 2021. This pattern reflects not only women's preference for administrative and document-management tasks but also the persistence of social norms that associate coordination, drafting, and protocol duties with female roles. At the same time, although men continue to hold a stronger presence in chair and member positions, their share is steadily declining. For example, the proportion of men serving as chairs dropped from 22% in 2019 to 15.4% in 2025, signaling a gradual increase in women's participation in roles with greater decision-making authority. Nevertheless, differences across positions suggest that, while women are increasingly visible at all levels of the electoral structure, task distribution remains gender-segregated. Women continue to dominate administrative functions, whereas men maintain a relatively stronger presence in roles associated with formal authority.

Figure 57. Gender composition of precinct electoral bureaus (members), in dynamics, %

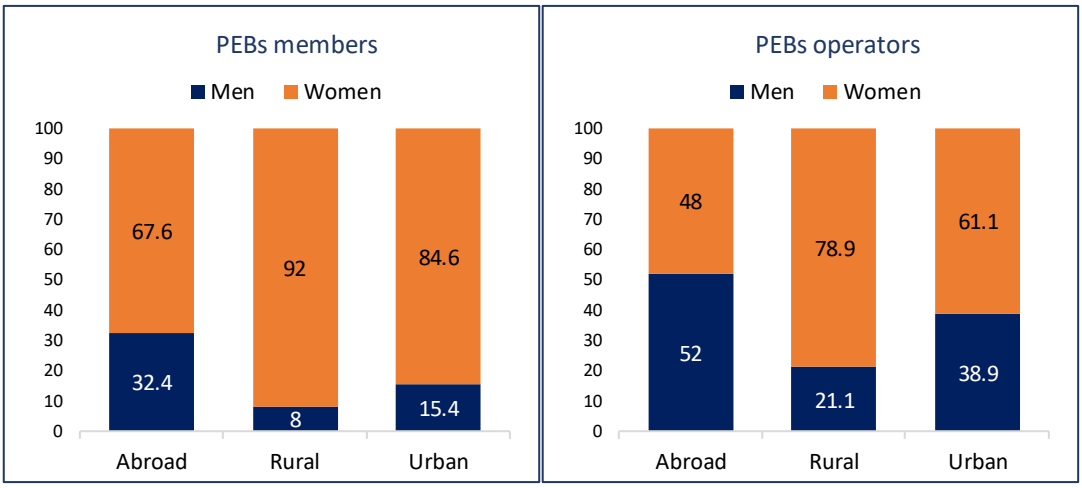


Source: Central Electoral Commission

In rural areas, women account for over 90% of PEBs members, confirming the tendency for women to be involved where organizational work, administrative responsibilities, and a permanent local presence are required. In contrast, the higher proportion of men in urban precincts and polling stations abroad (reaching up to 32.4% in the diaspora), can be linked to their greater access to competitive professional environments and international exposure. These data reveal a hierarchical pattern of participation:

women are overwhelmingly represented at the implementation level, while men dominate spaces associated with decision-making, prestige, and influence.

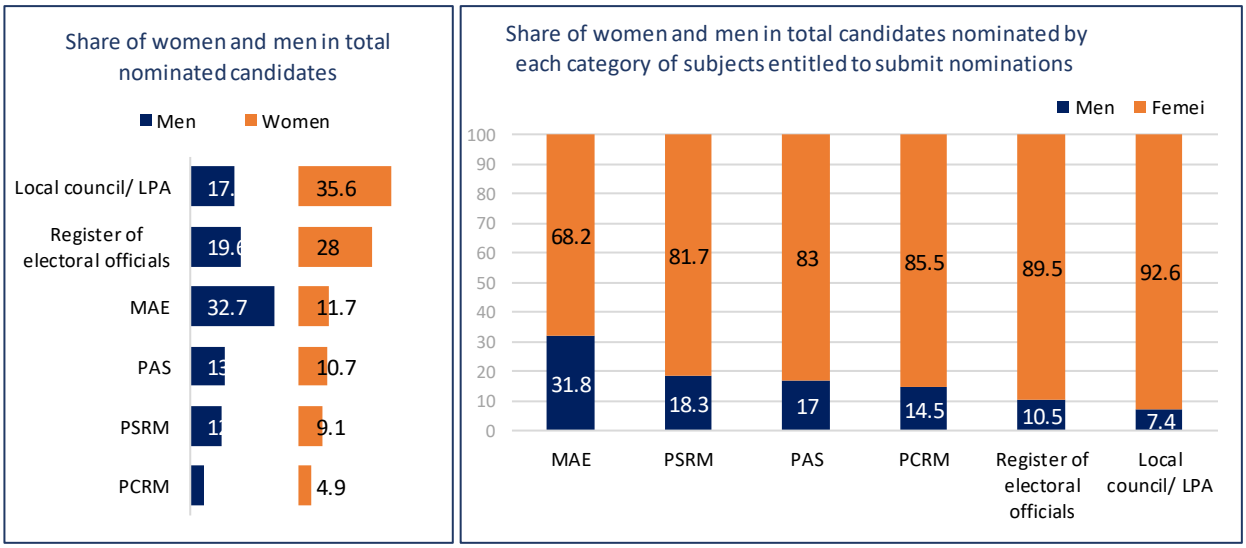
Figure 58. Gender distribution of PEBs members and operators, by area of residence, %



Source: Central Electoral Commission

Men serving as PEBs members most often come from institutional structures, such as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MAE), which accounts for 32.7% of all nominated males, and the Registry of Electoral Officials, with 19.6%. Women, by contrast, are more frequently delegated by local councils/LPAs (35.6%) and by the Registry of Electoral Officials (28%). This polarization reflects a structural feminization of local electoral administration (LPA and Registry), where women are heavily involved in administrative tasks at the local level. Although political parties have a smaller contribution to the formation of PEBs, they also display a gender distribution with a slight predominance of women. In conclusion, this separation shows that the gender imbalance in favor of women is systemic, amplified by the main sources of personnel (LPA and Registry), while men are selected predominantly for the precincts located abroad.

Figure 59. Share of men and women in precincts electoral bureaus, by delegating entity, %

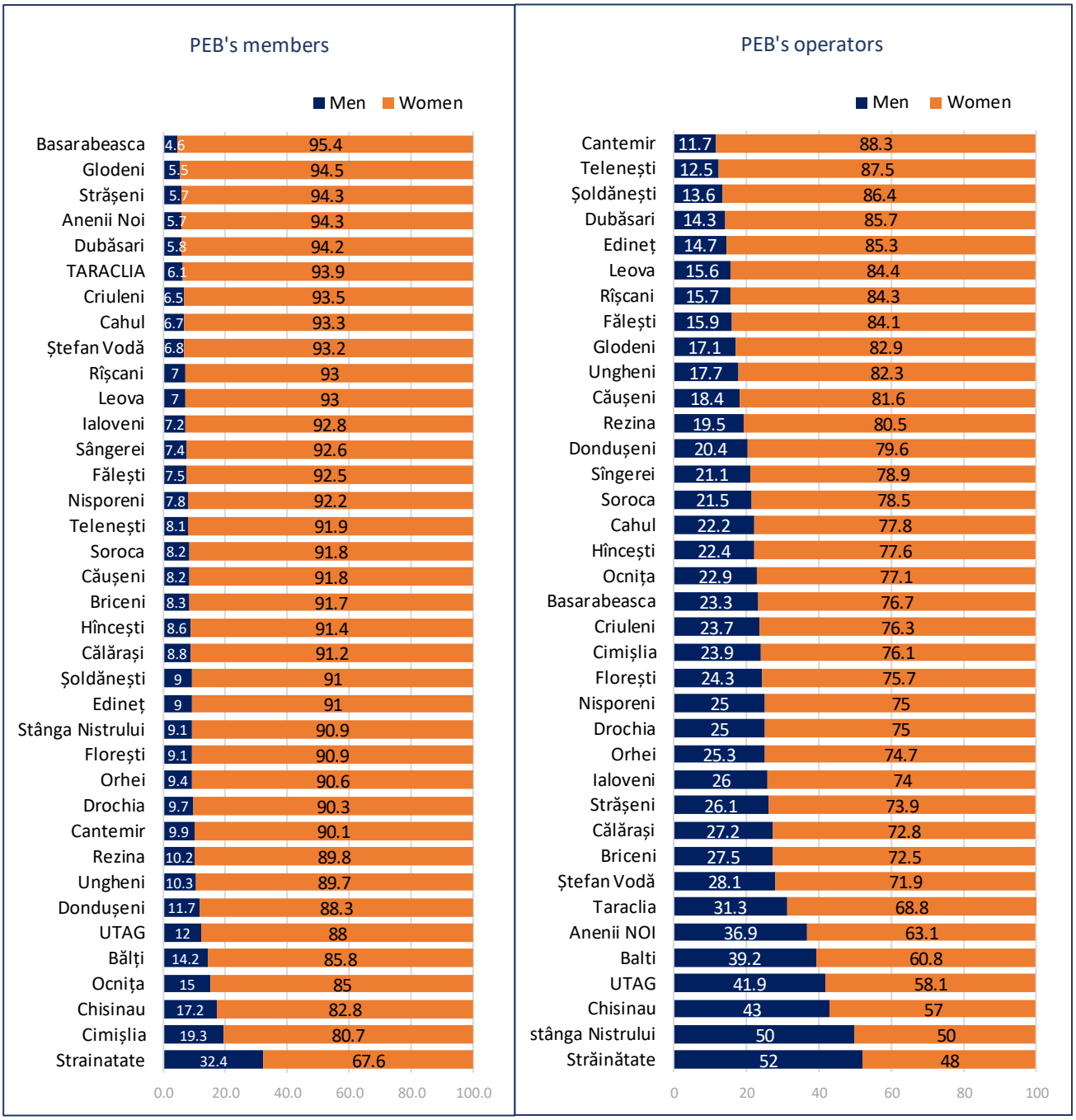


Source: Central Electoral Commission

In most administrative-territorial units, women make up more than 90% of the members of precinct electoral bureaus. The highest male representation among PEBs members is observed at polling stations located abroad (32.4%) and in Chisinau (19.3%), indicating that large urban centers and the diaspora have more balanced staffing structures. For PEBs operators, although women remain the majority nationwide, the gender distribution is considerably more balanced. Notably, PEBs located abroad are the only category

where men (52%) outnumber women (48%), likely reflecting the gender profile of individuals engaged in activities abroad. Conversely, southern and eastern districts record the lowest shares of male operators. This geographic pattern of inequality underscores the need for gender balance strategies tailored to local contexts, prioritizing interventions in districts where disparities are most evident.

Figure 60. Gender distribution of PEBs members and operators, by territory, %



Source: Central Electoral Commission

RECOMANDĂRI

RECOMMENDATIONS

The monitoring of Parliamentary elections of 28 September 2025 aimed to evaluate the application of gender equality principles throughout all stages of the electoral process. Center Partnership for Development (CPD) adopted a multidimensional approach, examining candidate list structures, the socio-economic profile of competitors, media access, electoral program content, voter perceptions, and the composition of electoral institutions. This integrated perspective made it possible to identify common trends in political participation and inclusion. The findings reveal that, although the legislative framework and recent efforts have contributed to more balanced participation, substantive equality remains far from being achieved. Gender stereotypes and discriminatory attitudes are still deeply rooted, shaping public perceptions of women's roles in politics. Women continue to be underrepresented in eligible positions on electoral lists and generally have fewer economic resources than male candidates. Electoral platforms often included vague or absent commitments to equality and inclusion, and female candidates' visibility in the media remained lower than that of their male counterparts. These results underscore the need for comprehensive, well-coordinated interventions. The following chapter of recommendations builds on these observations and proposes concrete actions to strengthen the regulatory framework, correct structural imbalances, and promote inclusive political participation. In absence of such measures, progress risks remaining fragmented, and gender equality will continue to be largely a declarative objective rather than a practical reality.

Based on these findings, the chapter containing recommendations outlines five key directions for intervention:

(i) ***Strengthening the double quota system*** – to ensure the transition from mere numerical representation to meaningful and influential participation of women; **(ii)** ***Fighting the stereotypes about women in politics*** – aimed at eliminating attitudinal barriers that undermine equal participation; **(iii)** ***Supporting women in public office*** – through measures that reduce resource gaps and create an enabling environment for women leaders to emerge; **(iv)** ***Making political parties accountable*** – to rigorously integrate gender equality into their policies and practices, publicly committing to clear objectives in this regard; **(v)** ***Increasing women's visibility in the media*** – to guarantee balanced, non-discriminatory coverage of electoral competition and women's role in politics. By addressing these areas simultaneously, the recommendations seek to dismantle systemic obstacles identified in the gender analysis and consolidate progress toward a truly inclusive and gender-equitable electoral process and political environment.

1. STRENGTHENING THE DOUBLE QUOTA SYSTEM

In any democratic system, formal equality of rights does not automatically guarantee fair access to elected office or genuine participation in decision-making process. International experience demonstrates that, without corrective measures, certain groups remain systematically underrepresented in political structures, and this fact is due not to the lack of interest or competence, rather because of structural barriers rooted in historical, economic, cultural, or institutional factors. In this context, inclusive representation mechanisms, such as electoral quota systems and rules on candidate positioning are not intended to artificially privilege specific groups, but to ensure balanced access to power and uphold democratic pluralism. These instruments help create a more open, diverse, and responsive political environment that reflects society as a whole. By establishing minimum representation and ensuring fair distribution on candidate lists, such measures prevent automatic reproduction of existing imbalances and encourage active participation by underrepresented groups. Moreover, genuine diversity in decision-making bodies enhances the quality of legislation and public policy by introducing multiple perspectives and strengthening the legitimacy of democratic institutions in the eyes of citizens. Therefore, quota systems should not be seen as a deviation from democratic principles, rather as an evolving expression thereof, aimed at achieving substantive equality and effective political inclusion.

- ### Revision of Candidate Placement Rules

The double quota system (comprising a 40% representation quota and rules on the positioning of male and female candidates on lists) has been implemented in the Republic of Moldova since 2016. Under this mechanism, political parties are required to ensure a minimum quota of 40% for each gender when drafting candidate lists for parliamentary and local elections. Later, in 2019, an additional obligation was introduced to comply with new placement norms requiring at least four candidates of the opposite sex for every ten positions on the list. For the 2019 general local elections, a temporary derogation from the legal provisions allowed that the lists meet the minimum 40% quota for both sexes and include at least three candidates of the opposite sex per evert 10 positions. Starting in 2021, both the representation quota and placement provisions have been applied in full, without exceptions, to all types of elections. Consistent implementation of these rules has had a visible impact: in 2021, Moldova recorded the highest number of female MPS in its history, and local councils achieved almost equitable gender representation.

Although the double quota system has driven notable progress in gender representation, the implementation of candidate placement provisions continues to face barriers that limit its effectiveness. While all political parties formally complied with the rule during the 2025 parliamentary elections, the results reveal rather regression than progress: only 37 women were elected as MPs, representing 36.6% of the Parliament, which is below the level of 39.6% achieved in the previous legislature (2021). This outcome persists despite legal requirements for parties to ensure at least 40% female candidates on their lists and maintain a balanced distribution (a minimum of four candidates of each gender per ten positions). The explanation lies in the *formalistic* application of the quota: women were included numerically but not positioned in places with real chances of winning. Expert analysis shows that, although the rule theoretically requires women to appear in every decile of the list, it does not guarantee placement at the top of the list where election chances are significantly higher. As a result, women are often concentrated at the bottom of each ten-seat block, meeting the minimum requirement "on paper" without securing eligible positions.

During the 2023 local elections, the same issue regarding the positioning of women on candidate lists persisted, compounded by mathematical challenges. The number of council seats is determined by the Central Electoral Commission in accordance with the Electoral Code and Law No. 436/2006 on Local Public Administration, based on the population number of each administrative-territorial unit as of 1st of January of the election year. At the district council level, the smallest councils typically have 27, 33, or 35 seats, except for Chisinau municipality, which has 51. Local councils range from a minimum of 9 seats to a maximum of 23, with most having 11 or 13. When the total number of seats is odd, such as 27, 33, or 35, parties face difficulties in precisely meeting the 40% gender quota. For example, in a council with 27 seats,

40% equals 10.8 seats, which cannot be applied exactly. As a result, parties must round the number of candidates, often leading to underrepresentation of women. The challenge becomes even greater when the placement rule applies simultaneously, requiring at least four candidates of the opposite sex for every ten positions. For instance, in a council with 33 seats, 13 should be reserved for women (or vice versa) under the 40% quota. However, strict compliance with the positioning rule becomes problematic, as it cannot be fully observed in such cases.

The current barriers, such as technical challenges with small lists and the tendency to place women in ineligible positions, can be addressed through legislative amendments that reinforce placement provisions. International experience offers at least three viable options for reforming the candidate positioning formula:

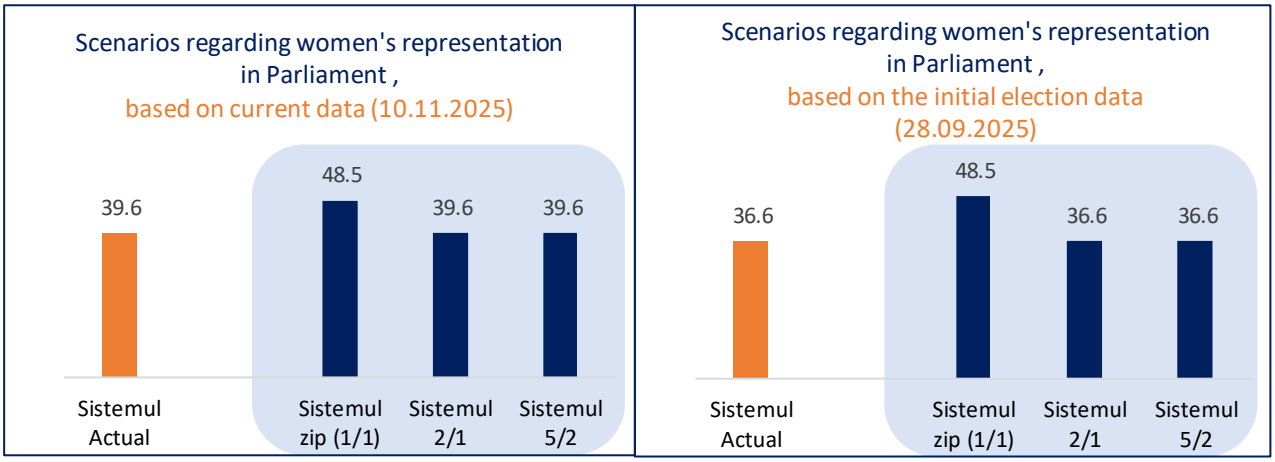
1. **The "2 out of 5" Rule: For every five positions on the candidate list, at least two must be occupied by individuals of the opposite sex.** This ensures balanced distribution within each consecutive block of five seats, preventing situations where the first five positions are exclusively male or female. In practice, parties would be required to include at least two candidates of the opposite sex in every group of five. This approach – essentially *dividing* the 4/10 quota into smaller segments – would strengthen diversity and guarantee women's presence throughout the list, including in top positions.
2. **The "1 in 3" or "2/1" Rule provides that for every three positions on the list, at least one candidate must be of the opposite sex**. This rule guarantees gender diversity even in very small segments (thus ensuring no block of three consecutive candidates is unisex). Such an algorithm offers the advantage of adapting to specific short lists for local council elections. For example, in a council with nine seats, the rule would secure at least three women on the list; combined with the 40% quota, the party would still need to include at least four women to meet the legal threshold.
3. **The "Zig-zag" or "Zebra" System provides for alternations of male and female candidates *position by position* across the entire list.** This method would lead to an almost perfect parity of *50/50* and would completely eliminate the possibility of one gender occupy more than one place consecutively. In a more practical manner, if the first candidate is male, the second must be female, the third would be male, and so on, or vice versa. Strict alternation ensures both numerical and positional balance, The "zig-zag" system is requiring parties to secure women *equal chances of eligibility*, as it places them equally in the positions considered "safe" on the list. Additionally, it sends a strong message to voters about the party's commitment to gender equality by presenting a visibly balanced list: *half women, half men* in regular alternation.

In Serbia, legislation introduced alternating representation by requiring that every fourth candidate on the list be of the opposite sex. In North Macedonia, the law requires that at least one candidate in every group of three positions on an electoral list must be of the opposite sex. Poland applies a similar principle, stipulating that at least one woman must be among the first three candidates on any list. Portugal prohibits more than two consecutive candidates of the same sex on electoral lists within electoral districts. Belgium enforces a rule that the first two positions cannot be occupied by candidates of the same sex. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Electoral Code requires that the first two positions include a candidate from the underrepresented sex, while the first five positions must include at least two candidates of the opposite sex, and the first eight positions must include at least 3 candidates of the opposite sex. Spain goes further by applying quotas not only to the entire party list but also to each group of five consecutive positions.

Application of such placement systems as zip (1/1), 2/1, or 3/2 would not only increase women's representation in Parliament but also help correct persistent imbalances in local elections, creating a fairer and more functional framework for gender equality in electoral competition. The two graphs illustrate the potential impact of introducing alternative placement rules regarding women's representation in the Parliament elected in 2025. The graph on the right shows the situation immediately

after the elections (28.09.2025), while the one on the left reflects the current composition (10.11.2025), following reshuffles and redistributions of MP mandates. Estimates prepared by CPD simulate how the proportion of women elected would have changed if party lists had been structured according to the zip system (1/1 alternation), the 2/1 system, or the 5/2 system (3/2). The results are striking: under the current system, women's representation stood at 36.6% immediately after the elections and 39.6% after reshuffles. In contrast, the zip system would have achieved near parity (48.5%), while the 2/1 and 5/2 systems would have significantly improved women's chances of securing eligible positions. Although these last two options show results close to the actual figures, it is important to note that the estimates are based on mandates already obtained. In reality, if these placement formulas had been applied when lists were drafted, women would have occupied higher positions, giving them real chances of winning seats in the first allocation round. These conclusions are equally relevant for local elections, where applying the gender quota is even more challenging due to short lists (11, 13, or 15 positions). The current "4 out of 10" formula does not ensure balanced distribution across small segments. In such situations, placing women at the bottom of these lists—while formally respecting the quota—greatly reduces their chances of being elected, particularly in district and municipal councils.

Figure 1. Share of women in legislative governing bodies, classified according to the placement provisions applied



Source: CPD calculations based on data provided by the Central Electoral Commission, 2025

Specific Recommendation: It is proposed to revise Article 68 para.(3) of the Electoral Code No. 325/2022 to strengthen the rule on candidate placement within electoral lists. Currently, the provision states: "Candidate lists for parliamentary and local elections shall respect the minimum representation quota of 40% for both sexes, and the positioning of candidates shall follow the formula: at least four candidates of the opposite sex for every ten positions."
It is recommended to replace this formula with one of the following options:
Strict alternation (1/1) – alternating male and female candidates throughout the list;
2/1 system (at least one candidate of the opposite sex in every two positions).
3/2 system (at least two candidates of the opposite sex for every five positions).
These formulas would ensure a more balanced and effective distribution, reduce the risk of women being concentrated at the bottom of lists, and significantly increase their chances of securing eligible positions.

- **Adoption of inclusion quotas and financial incentives for parties promoting marginalized groups**

The experience of applying gender quotas has demonstrated the effectiveness of this mechanism in increasing women's participation in decision-making and political processes. Thus, building on this success, introducing similar mechanisms to promote other vulnerable groups could yield equally positive results. Implementing inclusion quotas for marginalized groups, such as persons with disabilities, ethnic minorities, or other disadvantaged categories, would help ensure fairer representation in power structures and decision-making processes. These quotas create equal opportunities for these groups to have their

voices heard and advocate for their needs within political institutions. International practice identifies three main types of quotas that can be adopted: *(i) quotas introduced by electoral legislation* - legal provisions requiring the inclusion of a specific number of candidates from marginalized groups e.g., persons with disabilities, on the electoral lists; *(ii) "reserved" places provided for by law – the allocation* of a certain number of positions in public institutions or workplaces for members of marginalized groups, filled in either by appointment or election; *(iii) voluntary party quotas* – situation in which political parties decide, through internal rules, to include a certain number of people from marginalized groups on their lists of candidates.

The OSCE Guidelines on Promoting the Political Participation of Persons with Disabilities offer essential recommendations to strengthen the inclusion of persons with disabilities in political life. Among these is the proposal to introduce inclusion quotas for persons with disabilities within electoral and political processes. Such quotas would establish a clear and binding framework for political parties and relevant institutions, setting a minimum percentage of candidates with disabilities to be included on electoral lists and in leadership structures. The goal is to ensure adequate representation and meaningful participation of persons with disabilities in decision-making.

Similarly, quotas for ethnic minorities are widely applied across the world, though implementation methods and the scope of these measures vary significantly. Several relevant examples are outlined below :
Colombia: *Seats are allocated to members of indigenous groups.*
New Zealand: *Reserved seats for the Māori population.*
Croatia: *Representation for ethnic communities such as Hungarians, Italians, Czechs, Slovaks, and Serbs.*
Pakistan: *A small percentage of seats reserved for Hindus and Christians.*
Lebanon: *Parliamentary seats divided equally between Christians and Muslims.*
Belgium: *Upper House seats of the Legislative body are distributed among Flemish, French, and German linguistic groups.*
India: *Reserved seats for members of caste and scheduled tribes.*

Specific Recommendation 1: It is recommended to amend the Electoral Code to introduce representation quotas for persons with disabilities and ethnic minorities, applicable in the process of elaboration of candidate lists for elections, as follows:

- 5% representation quota for persons with disabilities: this quota will ensure fair representation of persons with disabilities in electoral processes and decision-making structures, thereby promoting 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, fostering a more inclusive society and a more representative government for all citizens.

Specific Recommendation 2: In the process of complementing the quotas, providing financial incentives for parties that adopt inclusive policies and practices could strengthen their commitment towards diversity and equity. Such financial incentives could include additional subsidies, reimbursement of campaign expenses, or other benefits for parties that demonstrate a clear and visible commitment to including marginalized groups.

Recommendations for Political Parties: Political parties should integrate gender quotas not only in candidate lists for public elections but also within their internal governing bodies. This approach would embed diversity and inclusion as core organizational values, positively influencing decision-making and policy development.

- **Introducing gender quotas to ensure equitable representation within the Government**

The Government, as the supreme executive authority, plays a fundamental role in implementing state policies and should reflect the diversity of the society it serves. Equal participation of women and men in political life is a cornerstone of democracy and a key objective for the Republic of Moldova. Balanced gender representation within the Executive contributes to more inclusive and effective policymaking, ensuring that the perspectives of both halves of the population are considered in the decision-making processes. Despite some progress toward gender equality, women remain underrepresented at the governmental level. The current situation is quite expressive: in 2025, the new "Munteanu Government" includes only 4 women out of 18 members - three fewer than in the previous cabinet. This decline raises concerns about the commitment of authorities towards gender equality and represents a setback in achieving equitable representation. Low presence of women in government not only excludes the perspectives of half of the population but also undermines the democratic principle of equal participation.

It is worth recalling that in 2016, significant legislative initiatives sought to address this imbalance. Through Law No. 71/2016, the Parliament introduced, for the first time, a mandatory minimum quota of 40% for each gender, both on party candidate lists and in the composition of the Government. This provision marked a historic step toward promoting gender equality in politics, aligning Moldova with international commitments and theoretically ensuring fair representation at the executive level. the gender quota obligation for the composition of the Government was not subsequently maintained. The adoption of the new Law on Government (No. 136/2017) and subsequent amendments to the electoral system omitted or repealed these affirmative measures, so that compliance with the 40% quota is no longer guaranteed by law. Consequently, in the absence of a strong legal framework, the appointment of women to ministerial positions has remained a discretion of political actors, resulting in significant fluctuations and, as observed today, persistent underrepresentation in the Executive.

In 2023, Spain[10] adopted legislation on equal representation, requiring that each gender holds at least 40% of ministerial positions in the Government. In New Zealand, political will led to achieving full gender parity in the Executive for the first time, with women even outnumbering men in the cabinet. Other countries, such as Canada, Sweden, and Rwanda have formed gender-balanced governments either through legal provisions or strong political commitments. By 2019, at least nine countries, including France, Spain, Nicaragua, Albania, and Costa Rica, had cabinets where women occupied 50% or more of ministerial positions.

Specific Recommendation: It is proposed to amend the Law on the Government (No. 136/2017) or other relevant normative acts to reintroduce the obligation for the nominal list of Government members to comply with a minimum quota of 40% for each gender, as originally stipulated by Law No. 71/2016. This quota should apply not only to the initial componence of the cabinet but also to all subsequent reshuffles, ensuring balanced gender representation throughout the entire mandate. When appointing the Government and presenting it to Parliament, the designated Prime Minister and parliamentary factions must guarantee compliance with this quota. Any proposal regarding the componence of the cabinet failing to meet the 40% requirement should be rejected by Parliament and returned for adjustment. By law, both the President of the Republic and the Parliament should refuse to appoint or invest a government that does not respect this representation standard. This condition must be enforced both at the time of appointment and during reshuffles to prevent the erosion of women's participation in the Executive.

[10] https://www.weforum.org/stories/2023/03/spain-gender-equality-cabinet-law/#:~:text=for%20women%20in%20politics%2C%20after,of%20cabinet%20roles

2. FIGHTING THE STEREOTYPES ABOUT WOMEN IN POLITICS

Fighting gender stereotypes in politics is not only a moral imperative and a matter of social justice but also a fundamental condition for strengthening democracy. Stereotypes, particularly those that associate women with the private sphere (household, family, caregiving) and men with the public sphere (leadership, decision-making) act as symbolic barriers that restrict equal participation. These beliefs, internalized from childhood and perpetuated by institutions such as family, school, political parties, and the media, create a public climate where women's presence in leadership positions is perceived as an exception rather than the norm.

- ### Curriculum Development and Prevention of Gender Stereotypes

A key pillar of change is integrating the principle of gender equality into the national curriculum, starting with the preschool through secondary education, in order to ensure the early transmission of non-discriminatory values. The development of egalitarian attitudes begins during early childhood education. Preschool curricula should be designed to combat gender stereotypes and provide all children with equal opportunities for growth. For example, in Sweden[11], kindergartens increasingly practice gender-sensitive education, offering children equal opportunities in life regardless of gender. Preschool educators are trained to avoid differential gender-based treatment encouraging girls to explore technical or sports activities and boys to develop empathy and creativity, thus dismantling stereotypes that certain games or roles "belong" to one gender only. In primary school, curricula can explicitly integrate the principles of gender equality and inclusion, reinforcing respect and equal opportunities from an early age. Many education systems have revised their textbooks and teaching materials to eliminate sexist bias and highlight women's contributions alongside men's in various fields. Educational modules on stereotypes and diversity are also being introduced from primary school onward. For instance, in the UK[12], the new curriculum *Beyond Gender Stereotypes* has been piloted in 40 primary schools (starting with 2025), aiming to help children (both girls and boys) to identify, understand, and overcome gender stereotypes through age-appropriate activities. In higher education, universities from a large number of countries implement programs and frameworks to promote gender equity, such as the *Athena SWAN Charter* in the UK and HeForShe commitments in Canada, aiming to diversify access to underrepresented fields and balance representation in academic positions. Similarly, vocational education and lifelong learning must ensure equal opportunities for women and men through accessible courses, professional retraining support, and encouragement to enter non-traditional fields. These measures collectively help reduce structural inequalities and foster socio-economic inclusion

In addition to updating school curricula, gender-sensitive training of teachers is essential. Teachers play a critical role in shaping students' attitudes, and without proper training they may unintentionally reinforce the stereotypes (for example, by having different expectations of behaviour or performance based on student's gender). Initial and continuous training programs should equip educators with gender-sensitive pedagogical tools, enabling them to use inclusive language and examples and to intervene effectively when stereotypes arise in the classroom.

Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE) and UNICEF have developed a gender-responsive pedagogy model[13] designed to train teachers in recognizing and responding to the different needs of girls and boys. The accompanying manual covers key topics such as lesson planning, classroom interaction, classroom design, prevention of sexual harassment, and managing puberty-related issues, the model being used in both initial and continuous teacher training in countries in countries such as Burkina Faso, Kenya, Malawi and others. Analysis by the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) Program shows that gender-responsive pedagogy improves student participation in learning activities and helps reduce stereotypes. Implementation of this model in Ethiopia, Malawi, and Tanzania has resulted in a 10% increase in girls' academic performance and a reduction in school dropout rates.

[11] https://sweden.se/life/society/the-swedish-school-system

[12] https://edexec.co.uk/news-new-school-curriculum-aims-to-break-gender-stereotypes/#:~:text=A%20new%20free%2C%20evidence,them%20to%20build%20healthy%20relationships

[13] https://www.unicef.org/esa/media/6726/file/GRP-A-Toolkit-for-Teachers-and-Schools-2020.pdf#:~:text=Gender,has%20been%20used%20as%20a

Gender equality must also be promoted beyond the formal education system through continuous education, vocational training, and adult literacy programs. Women often face specific barriers to accessing lifelong learning, ranging from family responsibilities that limit their time to persistent stereotypes about the "appropriate" roles for them in the labor market. It is essential that *lifelong learning* policies must integrate a gender perspective by introducing measures such as flexible schedules for qualification and requalification courses (to accommodate individuals with childcare duties), providing childcare services during training programs, and conducting awareness campaigns to encourage both women and men to explore non-traditional fields.

- **Gender Equality Awareness Campaigns**

Awareness-raising campaigns to challenge stereotypes about women in politics are essential for promoting gender equality and increasing women's participation in public life. Such initiatives can significantly influence public perceptions of women's competence and leadership roles, helping to eliminate gender bias. To be effective, these campaigns should focus on education and public awareness, highlight successful female role models, and actively engage young people in combating gender stereotypes. By fostering a more inclusive and equitable political culture, these efforts can drive societal change and enhance women's representation in decision-making positions.

#NameItChangeIt Campaign (United States)
The campaign represents a critical step towards changing the way women politicians are perceived and treated in the public sphere and in the media in the United States. Launched in 2010 by organizations such as the Women's Media Center, She Should Run, and Political Parity, this campaign has become a vital tool in addressing sexism and ensuring fair treatment of female candidates in public discourse. Its slogan, "When You Attack a Woman, You Attack Us All" sends a powerful message of solidarity and support for women in politics. The slogan emphasizes that attacks on a female politician affect the entire community of women and highlights the importance of protecting the rights and dignity of all women in political life.
#AskHerToStand Campaign (United Kingdom)
An initiative of the "50:50 Parliament" group. It was officially launched in 2016 and aims to encourage and support women to stand for parliamentary election races in UK and achieve more equitable representation in Parliament. The campaign title reflects its core mission to directly encourage and inspire talented and capable women to enter politics and candidate for parliamentary offices. The campaign invites community members, regardless of gender, to identify suitable women for leadership roles and actively support their candidacy. Its ultimate goal is to increase the number of female candidates in parliamentary elections and substantially improve women's representation in the British Parliament, combating underrepresentation and promoting gender equality in decision-making.
#NotTheCost (Globally)
Launched by the National Democratic Institute (NDI) in March 2016, this global campaign seeks to end violence and sexual harassment against women in politics, focusing on gender-based violence manifested during election campaigns and within political spaces in general. The core message of the campaign — violence and harassment should never be the "cost" of political participation of women in the public life. The campaign underscores that all women have the right to engage in public life freely, safely, and without fear. Through awareness-raising, advocacy, and monitoring, the campaign works to challenge harmful norms that have been tolerated so far and create a secure, inclusive political environment for women worldwide.

Specific Recommendation: It is proposed to develop national awareness campaigns emphasizing the importance of equitable representation in public office. These campaigns should not only advocate for gender equality in political space but also highlight the tangible benefits that diversity brings to decision-making processes. Showcasing successful examples of women in leadership and sharing inspiring stories of those who have overcome barriers to attain key positions in public administration can serve as powerful motivators both for potential female candidates and for society as a whole.

3. SUPPORTING WOMEN IN PUBLIC OFFICE

Political representation of women has been strengthened by reforms such as financial incentives for parties and introduction of the *double quota* system (a combination of gender quotas on candidate lists and budgetary bonuses for compliance). These measures have proven effective in increasing the number of women elected. For example, applying the 40% quota alongside financial incentives raised women's representation in the Parliament of the Republic of Moldova to nearly 40%. However, access to office alone is not enough. Women in decision-making positions often face entrenched gender biases and stereotypes that limit their opportunities for professional advancement. They are subjected to disproportionate public scrutiny—from sexist attacks targeting their appearance or private lives, aimed at delegitimizing them, to symbolic violence and harassment that have become a "norm" in political life. Such experiences discourage participation and erode confidence among women leaders. Many female politicians report having to work twice as hard to be taken seriously and to have their voices heard, facing subtle barriers invisible to their male counterparts. Such obstacles, ranging from institutional biases to unequal support, impact women's performance in public office and undermine the quality of governance. Therefore, a package of complementary measures beyond quotas and incentives is needed to provide institutional support for elected women and strengthen their leadership capacities.

- ### Building leadership capacities for women in public office and implementing mentorship programs

To strengthen the influence of women in public office, it is essential to conduct a systematic assessment of the needs and barriers faced by each female leader. The 2021 report on the needs of women MPs in the Republic of Moldova demonstrated that individual analysis based on questionnaires and interviews helped identify personal and professional competencies across five areas: legislative activity, gender equality, management, leadership, and sectoral expertise. The assessment revealed three major obstacles: underrepresentation of women in parliamentary structures, a low number of individual legislative initiatives, and limited visibility of women MPs. Moreover, respondents emphasized the urgent need to develop legislative skills, a domain considered to be a top priority on a scale of 0 to 5, and cited the lack of technical support as a key factor discouraging them from initiating draft laws. Based on these findings, it is recommended to implement an individualized development program combining mentoring and personalized coaching. Training should be tailored to each woman's specific needs, focusing on drafting and analyzing legislation, integrating the gender perspective into legislation, planning and coordinating parliamentary work, developing leadership skills, and strengthening sectoral competencies. The report also highlights women MPs' preference for individual training and underscores the importance of expert consultations, experience-sharing, and mentoring relationships with former parliamentarians or peers from other countries.

*In Australia, **EMILY's List**[14] runs a long-standing mentoring program that pairs female candidates from Labour Party with sitting or former Members of Parliament. Operating for nearly 18 years, the program has matched around 350 women with mentors who provide guidance, access to resources, and campaign support; in many cases, these mentoring relationships continue beyond elections.*

- ### Relaunching and strengthening the Platform of women PMs

In 2015, the Parliament of the Republic of Moldova underwent a comprehensive gender audit[15] aimed at assessing its capacity to integrate gender considerations into its activity, identifying critical challenges, and formulating recommendations in order to transforming it into a gender-sensitive parliament. Following this exercise, and in line with the recommendations for effective implementation of gender equality agenda, the Gender Equality Action Plan (GEAP) was developed and approved, and for the first time, the

[14] https://iknowpolitics.org/sites/default/files/summary_of_mentorship.pdf#:~:text=Australia%20The%20EMILY%27s%20List%20Australia,right%20for%20them%20to%20stand

[15] Gender Audit of the Parliament of the Republic of Moldova. Towards fostering a more gender sensitive institution | United Nations Development Programme

Joint Dialogue Platform of Women MPs was established. The Platform was managed by a Coordination Council composed of five representatives designated by each parliamentary faction. Its main objectives were: (i) creating a space for dialogue among women MPs to discuss key public policy issues impacting women at national, regional, and international levels; (ii) advocating for the implementation of national gender policies and gender mainstreaming; (iii) stimulating discussions and legislative processes in the Parliament to help reduce gender gaps in regulatory areas. In 2019, elected women MPs relaunched the Platform with the support of UNDP, UNICEF, UNFPA, and UN Women, recognizing that without resources and institutional backing, these efforts risk remaining sporadic and isolated. A similar approach followed the 2021 parliamentary elections: on June 17, 2022, in Chișinău, the Platform of Women MPs of the XIth Legislature was officially launched with the involvement and financial support of development partners.

Despite these efforts, the Platform is not included in the Parliament's organizational chart or Internal Rules of the Parliament, remaining a non-institutionalized structure. As a result, each legislature must reinitiate the establishment process, reducing the efficiency and continuity of this activity. This situation generates considerable delays, for example, one year after the new Platform was established, internal documents and a unified legislative agenda still remained unapproved. To strengthen the role of women MPS in promoting gender equality, it is essential to relaunch and institutionalize the Platform by implementing several key actions:

(i) Develop a legislative agenda for the promotion of gender equality and inclusion. A key prerequisite for the effective functioning of the Platform of Women MPs is the creation of a common legislative agenda focused on promoting equality between women and men and advancing inclusion in specific areas (the previous section presents recommendations for outlining this agenda). This is the first step with a defining role both for the functioning of the Platform and for its recognition as a well-structured entity. Once the legislative agenda is established, Platform members should identify and commit to 3–4 top priority subjects in respect of which all efforts will be concentrated in the upcoming period, driving legislative amendments and advocating for gender equality and inclusion in these areas. Establishing and assuming common legislative commitments will foster the internal processes of the Platform and will intensify collaboration between women MPs. International and national experience shows that when women parliamentarians work with a well-defined legislative agenda, results are consistent and impactful.

(ii) Establishment of an expert advisory body from among the civil society organisations (CSO). To ensure effective implementation of the legislative agenda assumed, the Platform may create an advisory group of experts for specific domains. The group will provide specialized support to MPs and their staff through consultations, research, analysis, and technical expertise necessary for drafting, submitting, and promoting legislative initiatives.

(iii) Development of the action plan for assumed legislative agenda implementation. After defining the subjects and the priorities on which the women MPS will focus their efforts, the Platform must prepare a detailed action plan for the implementation period 2021-2022, outlining the stages for the implementation of legislative activities and their consecutivity. Depending on the complexity of the projects, the plan should include elements in respect of: the need of an eventual study on impact assessments and problem context analysis, international practices, establishment of those responsible for the development of draft laws and information notes, the stages of consultation and approval etc. The complexity of the action plan will depend on the nature and level of ambition of the assumed legislative agenda. Once the action plan is finalized, legislative amendments can be promoted through standard procedures.

(iv) Ensure parliamentary control. One of the Platform's key roles should be the exercise of parliamentary control over the activities carried out by other state institutions, as well as monitoring of the implementation of the legislation on gender equality and inclusion. By leveraging parliamentary control tools, such as questions and interpellations, activity of specialized committees, hearing and debates regarding particular reports, messages, records and programs, inquiries and reviews of official information, examining of citizens' petitions, and collaborating with the Ombudsman and other public

authorities, the Platform can drive significant progress in ensuring equal opportunities for women, men, and marginalized groups.

(v) Regulation of the Platform's activity. To ensure effective functioning of the Platform, in addition to assuming certain common legislative commitments it is important that its activity is regulated by clearly defined internal procedures and mechanisms. Decision-making regarding the functioning, management structures, and the manners of approval of internal documents represents an additional opportunity to strengthen collaborative working methods:

- Approving the Platform's internal regulations;
- Establishing the internal structures and appointing its members;
- Establishing a full-time secretariat to support daily operations;
- Organizing the Annual Assembly of the Platform

(vi) **Formalize the Platform as a parliamentary entity**. Given the fact that one of the Platform's main objective is to influence the political agenda, it is essential to institutionalize it as an official parliamentary structure, with a clear role in its relations with the Parliament. To maximize the impact of efforts to implement the agenda and secure official recognition of the importance and effectiveness of the Platform, it is advisable for the Permanent Bureau of the Parliament to adopt a resolution formally establishing the Platform as an official structure within the legislature. Furthermore, to ensure the continuity of activities within the Platform, we recommend, as a long-term measure, to amend the Rules of Procedure of the Parliament to provide explicit provisions on the role of the Platform and its functioning as a working body of the legislative. Such formalization would enable the allocation of a dedicated budget for the secretariat and other essential activities, thereby contributing to the sustainable strengthening of the Platform.

In Sweeden, the Gender Equality Working Group of the Riksdag has evolved from an informal network of female MPs into a permanent, formal body with a broader mandate, its own budget, and administrative support. Since 2005, it has developed and implemented a gender equality program for each legislative term, ensuring continuity of the policy and granting its initiatives strong institutional legitimacy. In the United Kingdom, cross-party parliamentary groups (APPGs) operate as informal bodies that bring together members from both Houses and collaborate closely with the civil society. For example, the secretariat of APPG on Women in Parliament is supported by the Fawcett Society, whereas the APPG on Domestic Violence benefits from a dedicated secretariat by the Women's Aid Federation thus involving the expertise of NGOs in parliamentary activity and legislative processes[16].

- **Mentorship programs and creation of networks**

The visibility of women MPs and the Platform is a key factor in influencing the legislative process. Increasing women's presence in public and media spaces would strengthen the people's trust in their professional abilities and would help fight against gender stereotypes. The more visible and vocal women politicians will be in the public and media spaces, the more young girls will be interested in getting involved in political life. Significant participation of women in Parliament, active promotion of common causes, and building strategic dialogs and partnerships enhance the Platform's credibility and its ability to shape the political agenda. Women MPs should leverage this visibility to advocate for important changes in the foeld of equal opportunities for women and men and the inclusion of marginalized groups across all areas of public and private life through the following actions:

(i) **Organization of regional forums with women councilors and mayors.** This initiative would increase the Platform's visibility at the regional level while engaging local women leaders councilors and mayors in the legislative processes.

(ii) **Regular consultations with civil society, business and development partners.** The Platform may hold *traditional* annual consultations to jointly review progress in implementing the legislative agenda, as well as *thematic* consultations aligned with the parliamentary agenda and pending bills. In addition, thematic

[16] https://www.oscepa.org/en/documents/international-secretariat/reports-and-publications/5129-gender-responsive-governance-toolkit-tool-3-parliamentary-bodies-for-gender-equality-overview-and-recommendations/file#:~:text=Good%20Practice%20In%20the%20UK,30

consultations can be organized to address the specific needs of various social groups, such as the elderly, youth, persons with disabilities, ethnic minorities, LGBT+ individuals, former prisoners, and others.
(iii) **Development of a mentoring program for young women leaders**. With support from development partners, the Platform of women MPs could launch an annual mentoring program for young women from different regions of the country who are interested in parliamentary work and engagement in decision-making roles.
(iv) **Facilitate experience sharing with women MPs from other regions or creation of an international network of women parliamentarians.** The Platform could initiate discussions and collaborations with similar structures from other countries regarding the integration of gender-based initiatives into legislation, mechanisms for promoting gender equality, exchange of experiences and successful practices.
(v) **Organisation of national awareness campaigns on gender issues.** The Platform may initiate awareness campaigns aimed at raising awareness of the general public towards gender inequalities existing in the labor market, educational system, entrepreneurship and in other areas.

- ## Gender audit and action plan in Parliament

A gender audit is essential for transforming Parliament into a gender-sensitive institution, as it identifies both visible and structural barriers that hinder equal participation of women and men. According to OSCE guidelines, parliaments remain spaces where women are underrepresented, and stereotypes and violence against women politicians limit their ability to enter, remain, and access leadership positions[17]. Therefore, a gender audit goes beyond counting seats held by women; it involves a detailed analysis of representation, legislative processes, and control functions to determine whether structures, procedures, and organizational culture support equality. A participatory audit collects both qualitative and quantitative data (through questionnaires, interviews, and local focus groups) on access to resources, distribution of functions, working conditions, existence of anti-harassment policies, compliance with ethical codes, and the gender impact of legislation.

The audit's usefulness is manifested on multiple levels. First, it offers an objective snapshot of the current situation, enabling the identification of gaps and progress compared to the previous audit conducted in 2015. Second, it provides a solid foundation for developing and updating Parliament's internal policies, including codes of conduct addressing sexist language and harassment, procedures for reporting and managing complaints, rules on working hours and facilities for members with caregiving responsibilities, as well as mechanisms for integrating gender analysis into legislative assessments. In this way, the audit transforms equal opportunity commitments into a quality management system reflected in the daily work of the institution. Third, the results of the audit serve as the starting point for creating an Action Plan with measurable objectives, clear deadlines, and monitoring indicators, encouraging all parliamentary factions to actively contribute towards the change[18].

A relevant example is the gender audit conducted in the Belgian Federal Parliament in 2021[19]. Although both chambers of the Belgian parliament were close to gender parity (43% women in the Chamber of Representatives and 45% in the Senate), EIGE's gender sensitivity ranking indicated only average levels, prompting the two female presidents of the chambers to initiate the audit. Developed with support from the Inter-Parliamentary Union, the audit examined representation in leadership positions, legislation, communication, staff management, and parliamentary infrastructure. Using the Red-Amber-Green (RAG) method, it assessed the degree of gender sensitivity and identified problem areas. Key recommendations included appointing a gender equality and diversity officer in both chambers and developing an action plan to improve the situation. The audit also highlighted the need for gender-neutral toilets, inclusive language in official communication, and gender-sensitive staff management measures.

[17] https://www.oscepa.org/en/documents/special-representatives/gender-issues/report-17/4554-participatory-gender-audits-of-parliaments-a-step-by-step-guidance-document/file
[18] https://eige.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/gender-equality-action-plans-for-parliaments.pdf#:~:text=2,re%C2%AD
[19] https://www.agora-parl.org/sites/default/files/agora-documents/stories-of-gender-equality-in-parliaments.pdf#:~:text=%E2%80%A2%20political%20life%20and%20representation%3A,and%20prioritizing%20issues%20of%20concern

In Scotland, the 2023 report "A Parliament for All"[20] recommended establishing an Advisory Group for a Gender-Sensitive Parliament to coordinate the implementation of audit recommendations and monitor progress towards a gender sensitive institution, including by developing policies on MPs' parental leave and the possibility of job-sharing to increase accessibility in Parliament.

The Report of the Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe published in May 2025[21] provides a comprehensive framework for governments and parliaments of member states to transform legislative institutions into inclusive spaces. The document recommends setting parity targets for parliamentary representation, conducting national assessments, and developing strategic plans with concrete measures to achieve these goals. Additionally, it emphasizes the importance of analyzing parliamentary composition from an intersectional perspective, collecting disaggregated data, and using tools developed by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), EIGE, and ODIHR to evaluate the representation of men and women. The document also underscores the value of the networks of women MPs and calls for active support and development of women's caucuses, as well as the development thereof. Furthermore, it advocates raising awareness among the society about sexism and gender-based violence and engaging male politicians as agents of change, working alongside women leaders to transform political culture.

4. MAKING POLITICAL PARTIES ACCOUNTABLE

Political parties play a pivotal role in advancing gender equality, as they are the primary gatekeepers to elective offices and exert significant influence over the institutional and cultural norms of political representation. Through candidate recruitment and selection mechanisms, internal decision-making processes, and internal organizational structures, parties shape real opportunities for participation for both women and men. Moreover, parties help define public discourse and clarify dominant leadership models, with the power either to perpetuate or to challenge gender stereotypes that persist in the society. Therefore, the partys' commitment to gender equality is not merely an issue of internal fairness—it is rather a fundamental condition for building an inclusive democracy and ensuring genuine representativeness in the political sphere.

The role of political parties in promoting gender equality is firmly recognized in numerous international documents adopted over the recent decades by such institutions as the Council of Europe, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE/ODIHR), the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), the United Nations (CEDAW, Beijing+25), and International IDEA. These documents emphasize that political parties serve as the primary link between the electorate and representative institutions, and their practices in recruitment, candidate selection, internal promotion, and policy-making directly shape the degree of women's inclusion in political life.

A key reference document in this regard is the Resolution 1898 (2012) of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, entitled *"Political parties and the political representation of women."* It highlights that, despite legislative progress in many European countries, significant disparities persist in women's representation in parliaments and internal party structures. In this context, the resolution underscores the need for parties to go beyond minimum legislative quotas and adopt voluntary measures that foster deep and lasting cultural change toward gender equality. These measures include explicit equality commitments in party bylaws, mentoring and training programs for women, balanced representation in executive bodies, and ensuring proportionate media visibility for women and men during electoral campaigns. These recommendations reflect an integrated vision that links numerical representation to the transformation of the organisational structure and culture of parties. In the same sense other international guidelines, such as the OSCE/ODIHR Guidelines on Promoting Women's Participation in Political Parties or "A Framework for Developing Gender Policies in Political Parties" (International IDEA, 2012), point out that

[20] https://www.parliament.scot/-/media/files/spcb/gender-sensitive-audit.pdf#:~:text=Recommendation%201%20To%20create%20and,recommendations%20through%20an%20intersectional%20lens

[21] https://rm.coe.int/doc-promoting-inclusive-participation-in-parliamentary-life-draft-repo/1680b5ca6e#:~:text=The%20Assembly%20calls%20on%20the,3

parties have an active responsibility to identify and dismantle structural barriers limiting women's equal participation.

These sources recommend adopting internal gender policies, conducting organizational gender audits and establishing mechanisms to monitor progress. In parallel with the legal framework, numerous examples of good practice demonstrate that parties can voluntarily promote gender balance even without mandatory national regulations. Starting with 1970s and 1980s, parties such as Spanish Socialist Party (PSOE) and German Social Democratic Party (SPD) have introduced internal quotas to ensure significant female representation on electoral lists and in leadership positions, and the fact has generated visible effects at parliamentary and governmental levels. Subsequently, parties in such countries as Bosnia and Herzegovina, Norway, and Iceland adopted similar models, having embeded clear objectives for gender balance in decision-making positions in their bylaws. These examples confirm that political parties can and must be proactive agents of change, influencing not only their internal functioning but also the broader dynamics of political representation at the national level. Based on these international standards and practices with proven effectiveness in other democracies, it is essential that political parties in the Republic of Moldova strengthen internal measures to make political parties more accountable in promoting gender equality, moving beyond mere formal compliance with existing legislative quotas.

- **Approval of voluntary gender quotas internally**

Political parties should include in their bylaws a clear commitment on ensuring equitable representation of women and men across all internal structures – from central and local governing bodies to the selection committees, campaign teams, and official delegations. This commitment could take the form of a voluntary internal quota (e.g., 40% or 50% for each gender), applied uniformly at all levels of party organization. Such a statutory provision would guarantee that gender equality is not limited to the preparation of electoral lists but becomes an integral principle guiding the party's daily operations.

- **Conducting gender audits and audits of action plans**

Conducting regular gender audits within political parties is a crucial step in identifying gaps and barriers in bylaws, procedures, and practices that hinder equal opportunities. This process involves assessing structures, organizational culture, and internal processes (from recruitment and promotion to resource allocation) through a gender perspective, aiming to uncover both direct and indirect forms of discrimination and areas where women or men are underrepresented. The OSCE/ODIHR recommends that parties carry out such self-assessments and, based on the findings, develop internal gender equality action plans with clear objectives and timelines. In parallel, it is essential that parties enhance transparency and fairness in candidate recruitment and selection processes, in order to prevent the informal exclusion of women. In many cases, unwritten rules or opaque selection practices reinforce the status quo and male-dominated networks, discouraging potential female candidates.

- **Approval of anti-discrimination codes of conduct**

An essential tool for fostering an inclusive political environment is the adoption of an internal code of conduct that firmly prohibits and sanctions any form of sexism, harassment, or gender discrimination within party activities. The internal climate of a political party reflects its values and attitudes; if sexist language, misogynistic jokes, or the systematic undervaluation of women's contributions are tolerated, then—even with quotas or support programs—women will continue to face invisible barriers to advancement.

Parties should formalize their commitment to inclusivity through written rules. An anti-sexist code of conduct should explicitly ban discriminatory language and harassing behaviors, while establishing clear sanctions for violations. This document must be communicated to all members and integrated into political ethics training sessions. Women's organizations and integrity committees should play an active role in monitoring compliance and addressing complaints.

- **Requirement to present an electoral program when registering as an electoral competitor**

During the last parliamentary elections, monitoring revealed that some parties failed to publish an electoral program, while others limited themselves to short video clips on social media instead of comprehensive programmatic documents. This lack of transparency undermined the electoral process and restricted ability of citizens and of civil society organizations to critically assess political platforms. Even where programs were published, many consisted of vague, populist statements without concrete measures or clear implementation timelines.

An electoral program is a cornerstone of democratic accountability as an instrument of democratic accountability and a public commitment to voters. The promises and objectives outlined in such programs represent, in essence, the "contract" between electoral competitors and citizens. The individuals that are running for public office, which are positions funded by taxpayers, have a fundamental duty to clearly explain their intended actions once elected in those positions. Thus, presenting an overwhelming electoral program is not a mere bureaucratic formality but rather a strong commitment to the voters, providing them with a benchmark for evaluating the performance of elected officials. A modern, democratic electoral program must also address gender equality and social inclusion as one of its essential components, incorporating concrete measures to promote the participation of women, youth, persons with disabilities, and other marginalized groups in public and economic life. However, monitoring shows that most political platforms neglect this dimension: nearly half of electoral competitors fail to include any clear measures or references to equal opportunities or social inclusion, while one-third limit themselves to generic slogans such as "equal opportunities" or "combating discrimination," without specifying actions or target groups.

In view of the above findings, it is recommended to amend the Electoral Code to include an explicit provision requiring all registered electoral competitors (political parties, electoral blocs, and independent candidates) to submit a written electoral program along with their candidacy registration documents. This program should meet the standards for minimum content, including a dedicated section on gender equality and social inclusion, outlining concrete measures to promote the participation of women, youth, persons with disabilities, and other disadvantaged groups. Moreover, to enhance transparency, each electoral program should be published on the website of the Central Electoral Commission, alongside candidate lists and the asset and interest declarations that were already made public by the electoral authority. Such a legal requirement would ensure that no competitor enters the race without a clear political offer that may be assessed by the voters. Currently, many minor electoral competitors either fail to present a real program or submit symbolic platforms based on slogans and lacking substantive proposals on critical issues such as gender equality, prevention of violence, and inclusion of vulnerable groups.

5. INCREASING WOMEN'S VISIBILITY IN THE MEDIA

Mass media serve as a cornerstone of modern democracy, offering a platform for public debate and providing mechanisms to hold those in power accountable. In a democratic system, the press informs, educates, and entertains the public through news, analysis, commentary, and cultural programming, serving as the primary channel through which citizens learn about the actions of political persons. At the same time, mass -media create the arena in which opinions are exchanged and public agendas are shaped, influencing the way people understand issues and determining which topics become priorities. Given this formative role, editorial independence, pluralism, and adherence to rigorous ethical standards are essential for media to contribute to a healthy public sphere and the proper functioning of democracy.

The underrepresentation of women on television and in debates profoundly affects how the public perceives the authority and legitimacy of opinions expressed in the public space. Research shows that political analysis programs are dominated by men, and in confrontational formats, women speak less and are frequently interrupted. The absence of female voices in discussions on economics, politics, or social issues suggests that expertise belongs exclusively to men and thus reinforce the gender stereotypes. Studies confirm that media play a critical role in reflecting and reproducing social norms and stereotypes;

when women's presence is marginal or confined to "feminine" niches, their perspectives are perceived as irrelevant to major public debates.

- **Ensuring Equitable Gender Representation in Media**

The systematic absence of women and the dominance of men in television programs, talk shows, and analysis segments limit diversity of perspectives and perpetuate stereotypes about who holds authority in the public space.

*Recognizing this challenge, the **BBC launched the 50:50 Project**[22], through which newsrooms rigorously monitored their guests and sources. The results were striking: the share of female contributors rose from under 40% to 50% in just a few months. This example demonstrates that television can actively promote diversity and provide inspiring role models—featuring female leaders and professionals on air, as well as sharing success stories of individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds.*

- **Creating and maintaining an open expert database**

Producers often cite the difficulty of finding female experts as a reason for their absence in media programs. In reality, this challenge reflects predominantly male professional networks and lingering scepticism about women's qualifications. Establishing a public, regularly updated database of experts that would include women from a wide range of fields (such as politics, economics, science, technology, culture) would facilitate access to varied perspectives and counteract the tendency to rely on the same male sources repeatedly.

***KVINFO (Denmark)** – For over two decades, the Danish organization KVINFO maintains a comprehensive database of female experts[23], significantly increasing women's visibility in the national media. Journalists can easily identify specialists across various fields, and editorial teams actively use this resource to diversify panels and include relevant female perspectives.*
***The Brussels Binder (European Union)** – This European initiative provides an extensive list of female experts for events and political debates in Brussels, helping reduce the prevalence of "manels" (all-male panels) in conferences and broadcasts.*

- **Internal training programs to fight against stereotypes and discriminatory language**

Gender stereotypes and revictimizing language remain prevalent in journalistic reporting, shaping public perceptions and discouraging the participation of women from vulnerable groups. Systematic training for editorial staff is essential to transform organizational culture, focusing on recognizing stereotypes, using non-sexist language, and ensuring balanced representation. Such training should be mandatory, recurring, and tailored to the specific roles within the newsroom (reporters, producers, editors).

UNESCO[24] actively promotes professional training on gender equality among journalists by developing curricula and manuals that address both content and methodology. A notable example is the program implemented in Kazakhstan by the UNESCO Chair in Journalism and Communication, in partnership with UN Women. This initiative included a series of seminars aimed at strengthening the capacity of local media to cover gender equality issues effectively. Participants included editors-in-chief, journalists from print, radio, and television, as well as bloggers.

[22] https://www.niemanlab.org/2019/05/the-bbcs-5050-project-shows-equal-gender-representation-in-news-coverage-is-achievable-even-in-traditionally-male-areas/#:~:text=,female%20representation

[23] https://norden.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:1092200/FULLTEXT01.pdf#:~:text=news%20than%20the%20rest%20of,2016a

[24] https://www.un.org/en/academic-impact/media-professionals-and-educators-kazakhstan-trained-gender-issues#:~:text=The%20UNESCO%20Chair%20in%20Journalism,bodies%20in%20covering%20gender%20issues

ABOUT THE CENTER PARTNERSHIP FOR DEVELOPMENT

Established 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 also serves as 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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