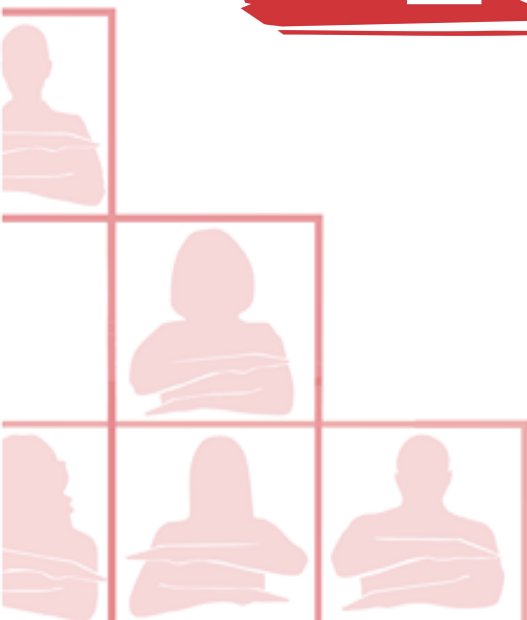




WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN YEREVAN MUNICIPAL COUNCIL ELECTIONS

Analytical Brief

EQUAL



Women's Participation in Yerevan Municipal Council Elections

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This analytical brief is compiled on the basis of the results of monitoring women's participation in Yerevan Municipal Council elections within the framework of the program ***EQUAL**: Promoting Women's Political Participation in Armenia*. The program is implemented by *OxYgen* Foundation in partnership with *ProMedia-Gender* NGO and with funding support from the Government of Sweden.

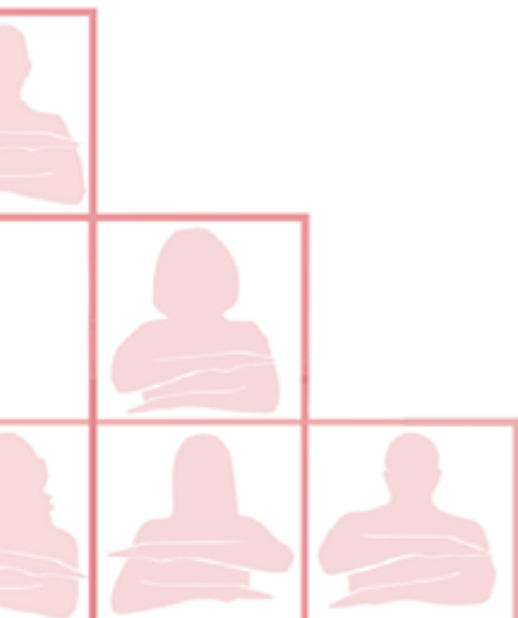
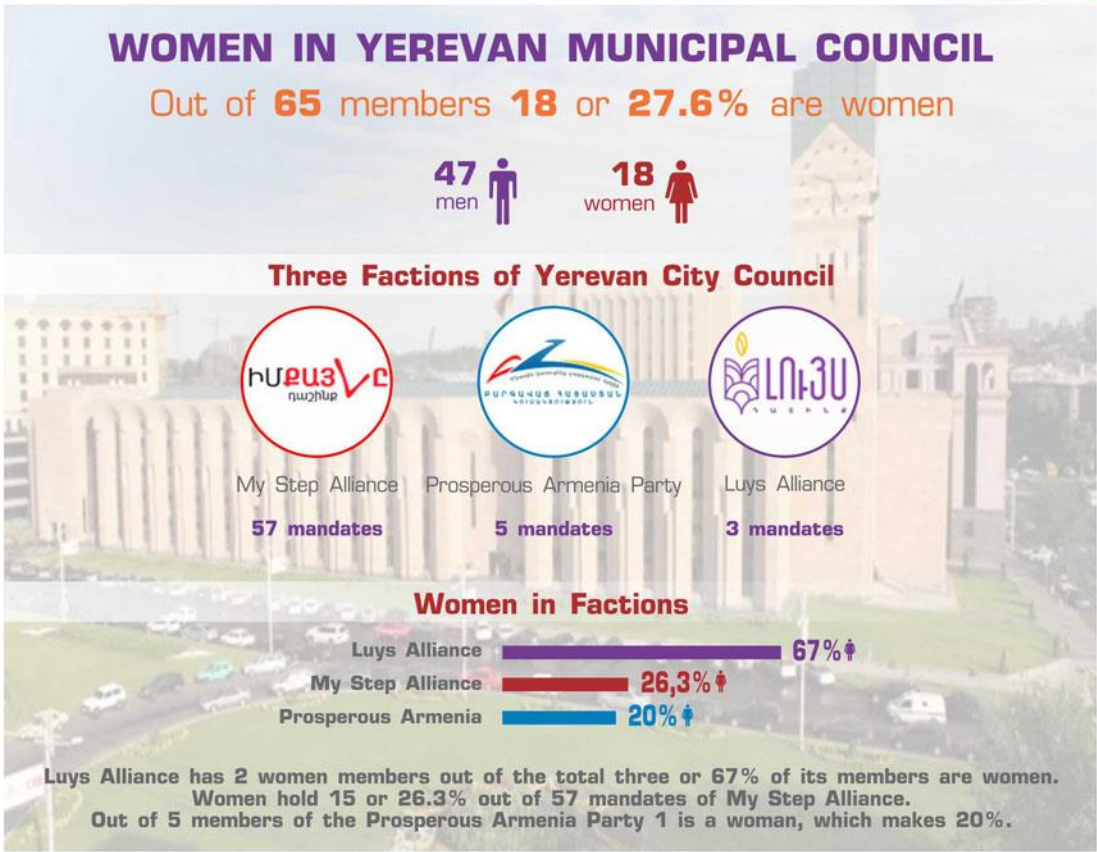


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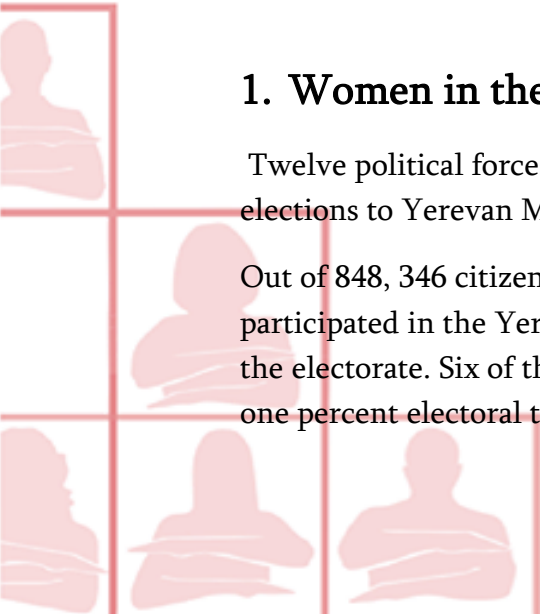


As a result of the September 23rd 2018 snap elections to Yerevan Municipal Council, only 18, or 27.6%, of 65 newly elected Yerevan councilors are women. As compared to the previous elections, women’s representation in the composition of the City Council has remained the same, although the number of women candidates in the political party lists running for Yerevan Municipal Council elections was higher than in the preceding elections and stood at 36.2% on average.

1. Women in the Newly Elected City Council

Twelve political forces – eight parties and four alliances – participated in the snap elections to Yerevan Municipal Council held on September 23, 2018.

Out of 848, 346 citizens with the right to vote in the elections 370, 365 citizens participated in the Yerevan City Council snap elections, which makes 43.65 percent of the electorate. Six of the twelve political forces running in the elections failed to pass one percent electoral threshold, three garnered 1-2 percent of the votes.

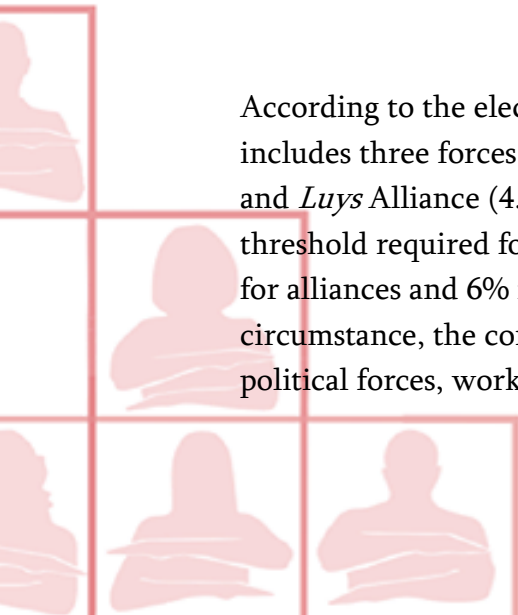


Final Results of the Elections (September 30, 2018)

Party/Alliance		Votes	%	Mandate
1.	<i>My Step Alliance</i>	294 092	81.06 %	57
2.	<i>Prosperous Armenia Party</i>	25 218	6.95 %	5
3.	<i>Luys Alliance</i>	18 114	4.99 %	3
4.	The Armenian Revolutionary Federation	5882	1.62 %	0
5.	<i>Yerkir Tsirani Party</i>	5059	1.39 %	0
6.	<i>Orinats Yerkir Party</i>	3947	1.09 %	0
7.	<i>Yerevanians Alliance</i>	2986	0.82 %	0
8.	<i>Heritage Party</i>	2709	0.75 %	0
9.	<i>Yerevan Society Alliance</i>	2502	0.69 %	0
10.	The <i>Democratic Way Party</i>	799	0.22 %	0
11.	The <i>Reformists Party</i>	792	0.22 %	0
12.	<i>Hayq Party</i>	692	0.19 %	0

Source: CEC website

According to the election results, the composition of the Yerevan City Council includes three forces: *My Step Alliance* (81.06%), *Prosperous Armenia Party* (6.95%), and *Luys Alliance* (4.99 %). Although *Luys Alliance* did not pass the electoral threshold required for elections to Yerevan Municipal Council (the threshold is 8% for alliances and 6% for parties), a legislative provision, according to which, under any circumstance, the composition of a representative body must include at least three political forces, worked in its favor.



According to the law on *Local Self-Governance in the City of Yerevan*, if, as a result of municipal council elections, one of the parties running in the elections garners more than 50% of the seats of municipal council members, the person occupying the first position in the party candidates' list is, by force of law, considered to be elected Mayor. According to this provision, Haik Marutyan, who headed the list of *My Step Alliance*, assumed the responsibilities of Mayor.

Only one of the political forces headed by women, *Prosperous Armenia*, was elected to the Municipal Council. However, Naira Zohrabyan, who headed the electoral list of that party, recused herself and retained her NA deputy mandate. There were two women candidates out of the six who recused themselves immediately following the elections. Besides Naira Zohrabyan, among those who recused themselves was Nazik Avdalyan from the *Prosperous Armenia* party list. Later, after having taken their mandates, one more woman, Srбуhi Ghazaryan from *My Step* faction, recused herself and will continue her work in her capacity as Advisor to the Prime Minister.

As a result of the Yerevan Municipal Council snap elections, *My Step Alliance* received 57 mandates, *Prosperous Armenia* -5, and *Luys Alliance* -3. Only 18 or 27.6% of the mandates are held by women. This picture, however, is not final since, according to preliminary data, recusals are still possible within the context of appointment of new heads of administrative districts.

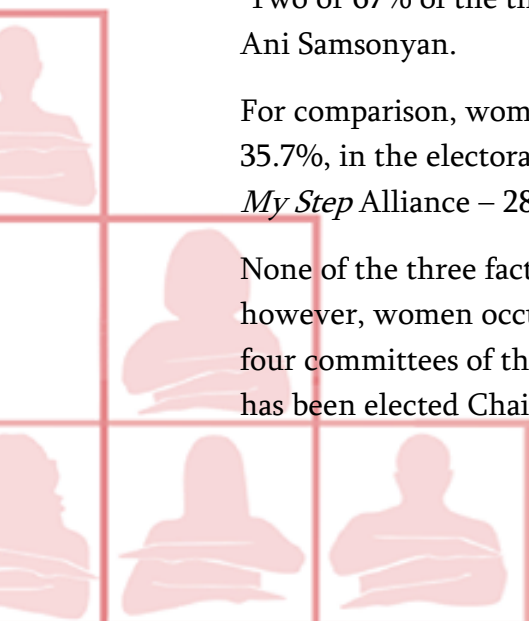
Fifteen or 26.3% of the mandates received by *My Step Alliance* are held by women. Among them are Srбуhi Ghazaryan, Lusine Badalyan, Izabella Abgaryan, Narine Khachaturyan, Gayane Melkomyan, Gayane Abrahamyan, Lilit Pipoyan, Eva Tovmasyan, Gayane Yeghiazaryan, Sona Ghazaryan, Arusyak Julhakyen, Gayane Vardanyan, Ovsanna Hovsepyan, Satenik Mkrtchyan, and Hasmik Khachunts.

One of the five members of the *Prosperous Armenia Party faction* is a woman, which makes up 20%. The Capital City Council deputy mandate is held by Hripsime Arakelyan.

Two or 67% of the three members of *Luys Alliance* are women: Ani Khachatryan and Ani Samsonyan.

For comparison, women candidates in the electoral list of *Luys Alliance* made up 35.7%, in the electoral list of the *Prosperous Armenia Party* – 30.7%, and in the list of *My Step Alliance* – 28.8%.

None of the three factions in the newly elected City Council is headed by women, however, women occupy the positions of Secretaries in the three factions. Two of the four committees of the Municipal Council are headed by women. **Satenik Mkrtchyan** has been elected Chairperson of the Committee on Culture, Education and Social

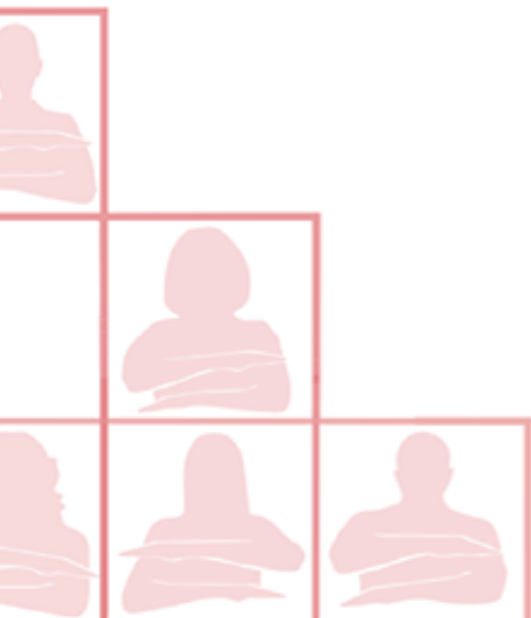


Issues and **Arusyak Julhakyan** has been elected Chairperson of the Legal Affairs Committee.

Of interest is also the age composition of the Yerevan Municipality, which has become younger. Specifically, dominating among women members are young women in the age group of 25-40.

2. Women Candidates in the Electoral Lists of the Parties

Nine hundred eighty-two candidates had been nominated for 65 seats of Yerevan Municipal Council snap elections. Three hundred fifty-six of them or 36.2% were women. For comparison, the three political forces participating in the previous elections included 32% female candidates in their electoral lists.



Mayoral Candidates



Naira Zohrabyan
Prosperous Armenia Party



Anahit Tarkhanyan
Yerevan Society Alliance



Ararat Zurabyan
Yerevanians Alliance



Zaruhi Postanjyan
Yerkir Tsirani Party



Raffi Hovhannisyán
Heritage Party



Manuel Gasparyan
The Democratic Way Party



Hayk Marutyan
My Step Alliance



Artak Zeynalyan
Luis Alliance



Miqael Manukyan
The Armenian
Revolutionary Federation



Gevorg Hovsepyan
Hayq Party



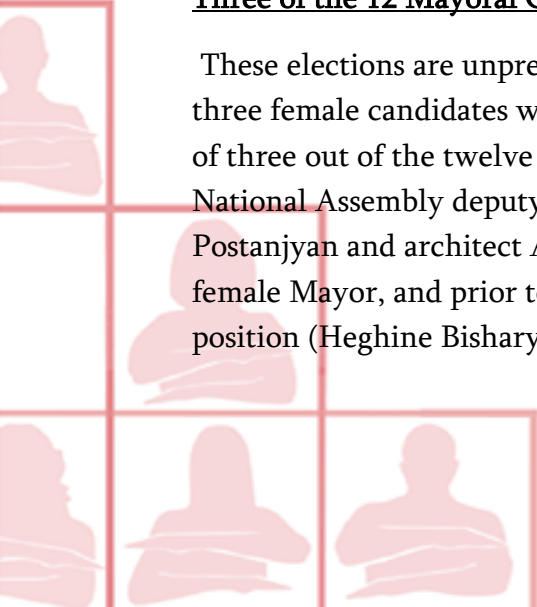
Artak Avetyan
The Reformists Party



Mher Shahgeldyan
Orinats Yerkir Party

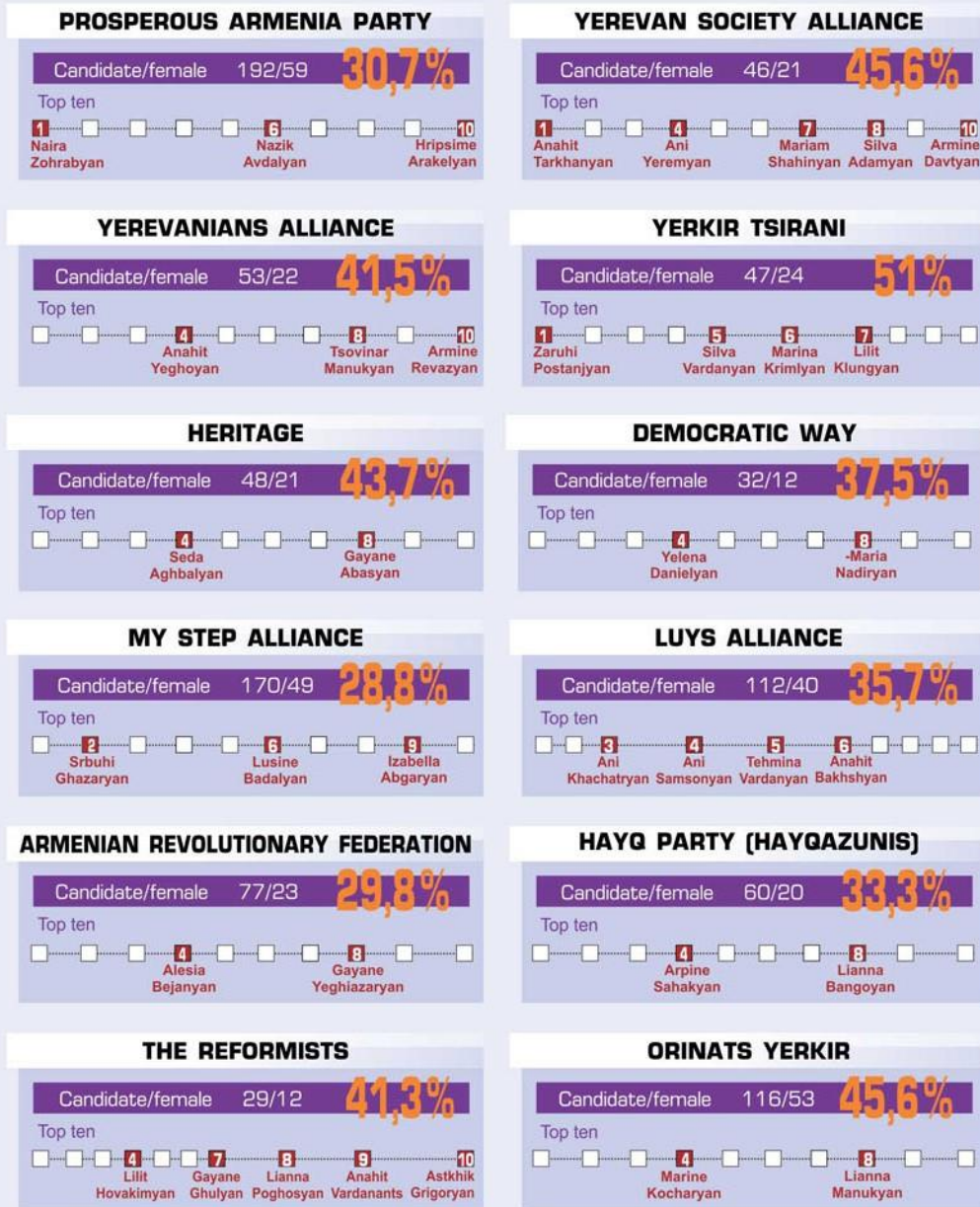
Three of the 12 Mayoral Candidates Were Women

These elections are unprecedented in terms of female contenders since for the first time three female candidates were competing for Yerevan Mayor's position. The electoral lists of three out of the twelve participant political forces were headed by women: the RA National Assembly deputy Naira Zohrabyan, the President of *Yerkir Tsirani* Party Zaruhi Postanjyan and architect Anahit Tarkhanyan. As is well-known, Yerevan has never had female Mayor, and prior to these elections only two women had been nominated for that position (Heghine Bisharyan in 2009 and Zaruhi Postanjyan in 2017).



Women candidates in the electoral lists

36,2%



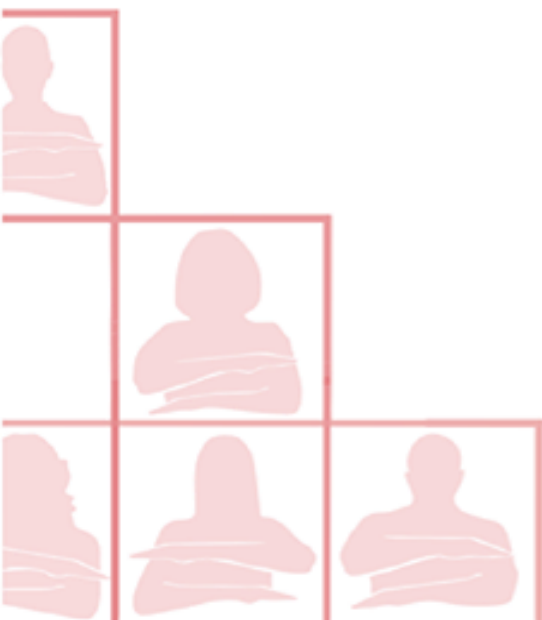
The parties have passed the threshold of the 30/70 proportion of sexes in their electoral lists.

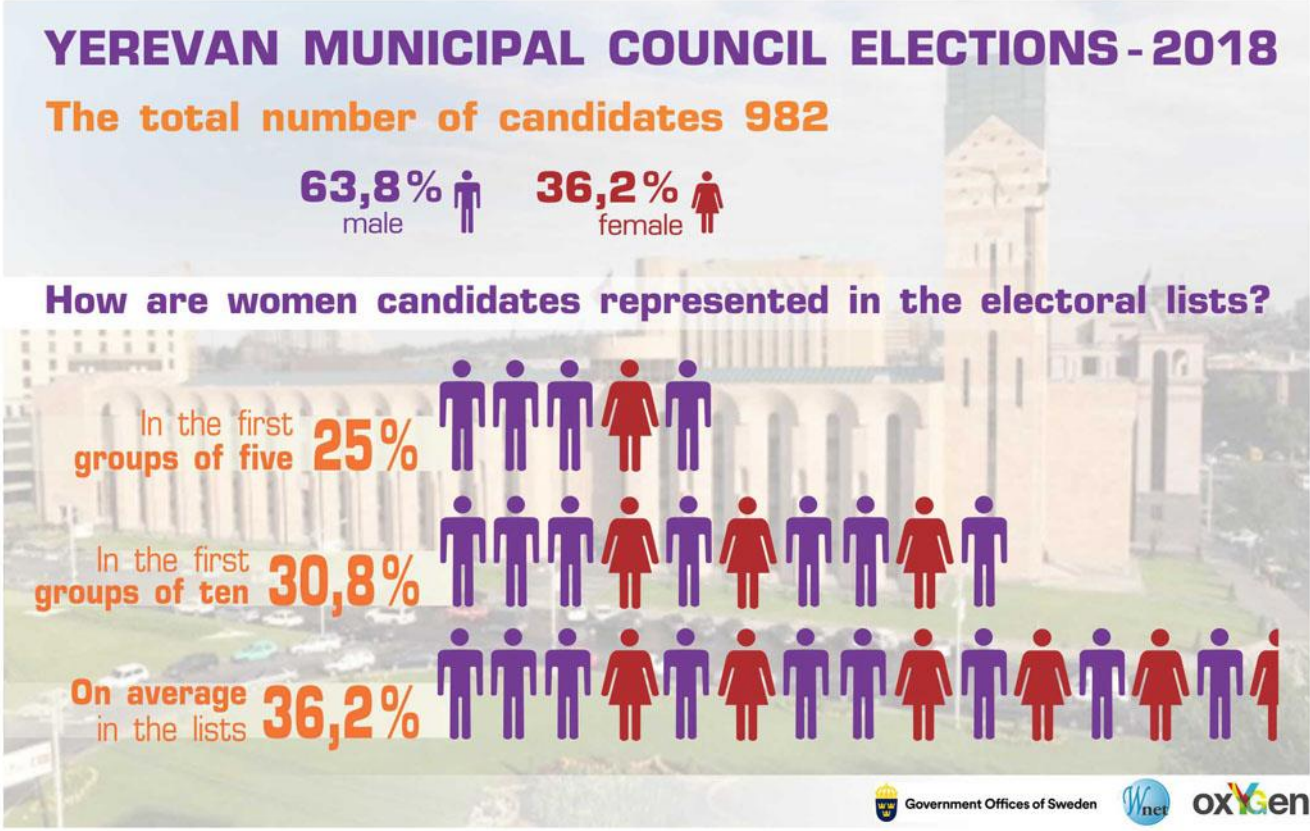
The proportion of the candidates' sexes in the party electoral lists during these snap elections to Yerevan Municipal Council was regulated by Point 14 of Article 144 in the section on Transitional Provisions of the current RA Electoral Code, which stipulates, "Until January 1, 2021 during elections to the National Assembly and municipal elections

to Yerevan, Gyumri and Vanadzor City Councils, the number of representatives of each sex in the first section of the national electoral lists of parties, party alliances and parties involved in the alliances starting from the first position in any integer groups of four (1-4, 1-8, 1-12, and this way continually till the end of the list) shall not exceed 75 percent...”

As of the date of the elections, it was not yet clear what changes were envisaged in the Electoral Code in this respect. During the initial discussions of the conceptual framework for electoral legislation reforms, NGOs dealing with women issues had proposed to the Commission on Reforms of Electoral Legislation adjunct to the Prime Minister to improve the 30/70 proportion by fixing 40/60 or 50/50 proportion of sexes, which is more in line with the recommendations defined in international documents. However, the majority of the political forces had reservations about proposals to secure 40/60 proportion of sexes in their electoral lists justifying their position by problems connected with engagement of women’s potential. The Concept and draft of Electoral Legislation Improvements published in October envisage that during the next elections to the National Assembly, as well as elections to Yerevan, Gyumri, and Vanadzor Municipal Councils, the quota secured by Points 83.4, 83.10, and 130.2 of the current Electoral Code, according to which, the 30/70 proportion of sexes in the party lists shall be effective in the upcoming parliamentary elections.

Observing the representation of female candidates in the electoral lists of the twelve parties running in the snap elections to Yerevan Municipal Council from the perspective of improving the gender quota, one can argue that in reality the concerns related to women’s potential are extremely exaggerated. On average, the political forces had nominated 36.2% of female candidates. This is more than the 25% quota defined by the existing Electoral Code and the 30% quota in the proposed changes, which, in essence, can be considered to be a past stage. This fact is an important argument in favor of improving the quota defining the proportion of sexes. Let us note for comparison that during the previous elections the participant political forces had also nominated more than 30% of women candidates in their lists, i.e. 32%.





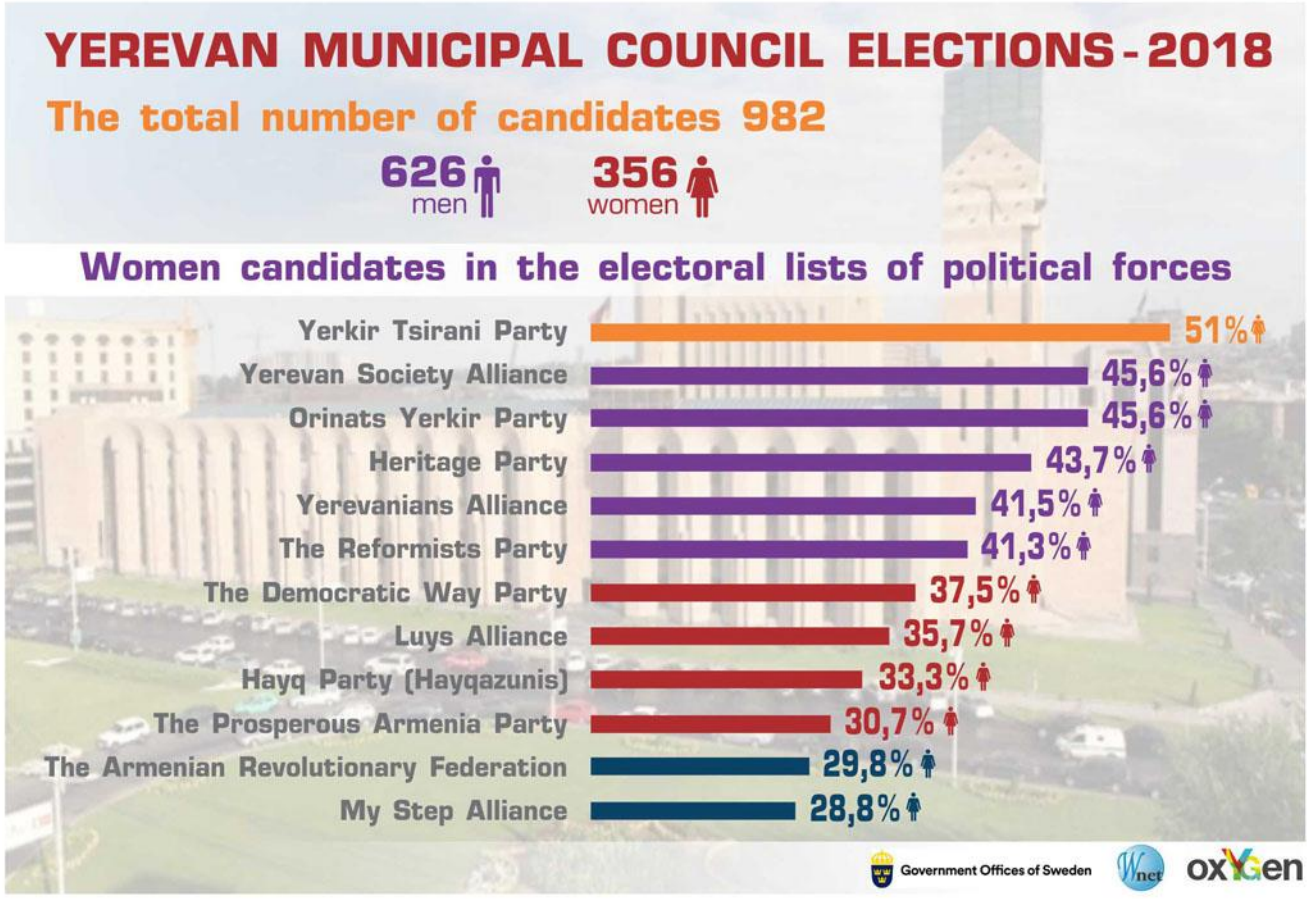
It is a different issue, though, that the political forces participating in the snap elections to Yerevan City Council, manifesting good will and on average nominating 36.2% female candidates in their electoral lists, included 25% female candidates in the first groups of five in the lists, and 30.8% female candidates in the first groups of ten. The first group of five in the electoral list of only one political force out of the twelve participating in the elections, namely of *Luys Alliance*, includes three women, and only two political forces, namely *Yerkir Tsirani* and *Yerevan Society Alliance*, include two women in the first groups of five in their electoral lists. The remaining political forces preferred to stay within the scope envisioned by law and to include one female candidate in the first group of five, primarily in the fourth position, as it is fixed by law. Thus, one can conclude that in reality the parties had problems not with the engagement of women, but with their inclusion in the top positions.

Half of the Political Forces Had Nominated 40-50% of Female Candidates

Half of the twelve political forces participating in the elections had nominated 40-50% of female candidates in their electoral lists. The largest number of women, 51%, was nominated by *Yerkir Tsirani* Party. The least number of women, 28.8%, was included in

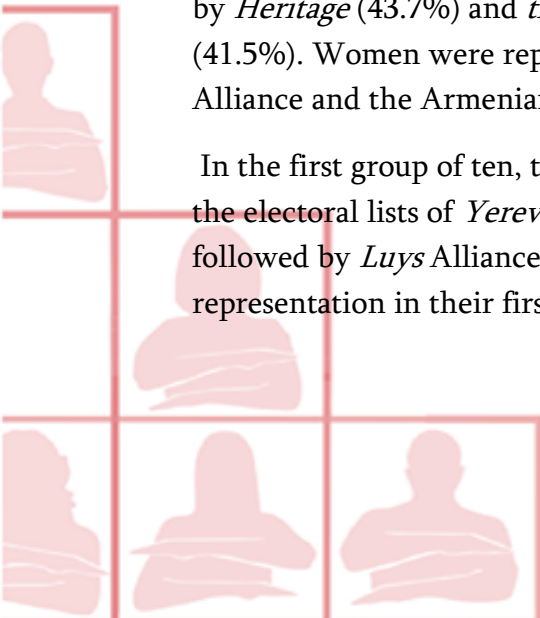


the electoral list of *My Step* Alliance, although at the highest level of power, the necessity of increasing women’s role and participation in decision-making processes was emphasized, and, when discussing changes to the Electoral Code, the Leader of the NA *Yelq* faction Lena Nazaryan proposed to define 60/40 proportion of sexes in electoral lists with the purpose of increasing women’s representation.



Women’s representation exceeds 45% in the electoral lists of *Yerkir Tsirani* (51%) and *Orinats Yerkir* (45.6%) Parties and *Yerevan Society Alliance* (45.6%). These are followed by *Heritage* (43.7%) and *the Reformists* (41.3%) Parties and *Yerevanians Alliance* (41.5%). Women were represented lower than 30% in the electoral lists of *My Step Alliance* and the *Armenian Revolutionary Federation*.

In the first group of ten, the highest number of women candidates, 50%, was included in the electoral lists of *Yerevan Society Alliance* and the *Reformists Party*, they were followed by *Luys Alliance* and *Yerkir Tsirani Party*, which had 40% women’s representation in their first groups of ten.



3. Peculiarities of Female Candidates' Campaigns

The snap elections campaign for Yerevan Municipal Council was officially launched on September 10 and lasted only twelve days till September 21. In such an unprecedented short period the political forces were compelled to conduct their campaigns in quite an intensive manner. Apparently this tight time line determined the fact that some parties presented their pre-election programs rather late.

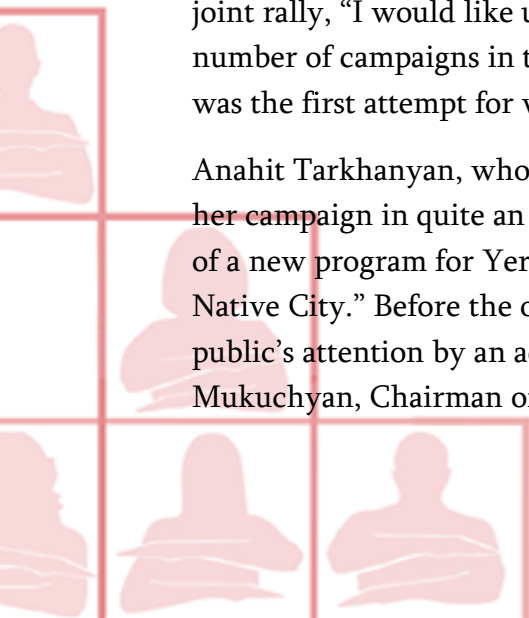
Female mayoral candidates announced their intention to participate in the elections one of the first: Zaruhi Postanjyan back in July, and Naira Zohrabyan and Anahit Tarkhanyan in August, thus signaling the unofficial launch of their political campaigns.

Naira Zohrabyan immediately announced that the concept of a green and smart city would be at the basis of her program. “This is my approach as a woman candidate: we mean a green city, a clean city, a city free of air pollution,” she said. During the campaign Zohrabyan tried to add new touch to traditional meetings in the yards through direct Facebook messages. The campaign started with a visit to the garbage dump in the Silikian district, after which she was taken to hospital due to poisoning resulting from garbage burning.

At the same time, upon her nomination, the so called jealousy and intolerance of some of her party male teammates revealed itself towards her. This was the case despite the fact that her candidacy had been unanimously approved by the Political Council of the *Prosperous Armenia* Party. Naira Zohrabyan refrained from comments and announced that she saw herself in the Mayor's position and, moreover, believes that she had real chances for success. “The capital city must finally have a female Mayor,” she stated.

Before launching the campaign, Naira Zohrabyan, appealing to the women candidates nominated for the position of Mayor, came up with a noteworthy suggestion to hold a joint rally, “I would like us, the three female candidates, to together participate in a number of campaigns in the same location on the same day.” In reality, this suggestion was the first attempt for women's solidarity in Armenia's political field.

Anahit Tarkhanyan, who had been nominated by *Yerevan Society Alliance*, also started her campaign in quite an active way. At the basis of the campaign was the presentation of a new program for Yerevan's development and the slogan was “For the Benefit of the Native City.” Before the official launching of her campaign, she tried to attract the public's attention by an action of a political nature, calling for resignation of Tigran Mukuchyan, Chairman of the Central Electoral Commission.



Zaruhi Postanjyan, who stood out by her activism during the brief activities of the preceding City Council, maintained silence till the official launch of the pre-election campaign. In contradistinction to the previous elections, she conducted quite a calm and balanced campaign presenting the provisions of her program within the context of shortcomings and omissions of the preceding authorities and stressing her former political experience. The campaign was anchored in the slogan “I Am Coming to Serve.”

Overall, during the campaign women candidates were quite active in their interactions with mass media outlets and the public. Moreover, Naira Zohrabyan was considered to be the main opponent to the front-runner force – *My Step Alliance*. Anahit Tarkhanyan and Zaruhi Postanjyan were not perceived in the role of outsiders either. Nevertheless, manifestations of sexism were noted during the campaign. Thus, the known thesis “manly woman” was actively circulated. “A human being, who, being a woman, is more of a man than official men that call themselves men,” thus was introduced Naira Zohrabyan by one of her teammates. That is to say, in her teammate’s perception being a man is a higher value than being a woman. This same logic attributes to men a mission of being strong, principled, and brave. Unfortunately, this thesis went on to be voiced in one of Naira Zohrabyan’s future statements, when she, exasperated by threats and insults of personal nature aimed at her in social networks, turned to her main opponent Haik Marutyan’s supporters stating, “I am saying this: if you are a man, I invite you to a debate. Come without Nikol, come and let us see how you are going to solve Yerevan’s problems.” In response to this, Marutyan’s teammate women remembered that Zohrabyan is a woman and made often speculative comments that “it is not deserving that a woman use such words.” This scenario seems to become classics by its nature in hot political situations.

Let us note that the campaign’s process underwent a dramatic change from the moment when the front-runner force in the elections, *My Step Alliance*, voiced an unaddressed accusation about “black and white” forces, which rendered useless all future efforts of any political force to present its program provisions. Such a dramatic change in the campaign was especially resisted by women candidates, who justifiably felt that that they had nothing to do in the electoral campaign with such a black and white format. And although they tried, through their public statements, to bring the campaign back to discussions of program provisions, it proved unsuccessful.

Specifically, Anahit Tarkhanyan’s attempts to resist the transformation of the electoral campaign led to manifestations of sexism seasoned with ageism (age discrimination) towards her in social networks. Some users made improper and insulting comments about her age under her pre-election campaign clips at the time when no such comments had ever been voiced about male candidates of the same age.

Another example of an apparently differential attitude towards men and women was the series initiated by one of the websites which went under the heading “The Beauties

Participating in the Yerevan Municipal Council Elections”, where the pivot around which the conversations evolved was women’s external appearance rather than their ideas and programs. It is needless to say that it is even impossible to imagine that the same can be done towards male candidates. By the way, after elections too, attempts to introduce women elected municipal councilors as “beauties” continued in journalistic circles.

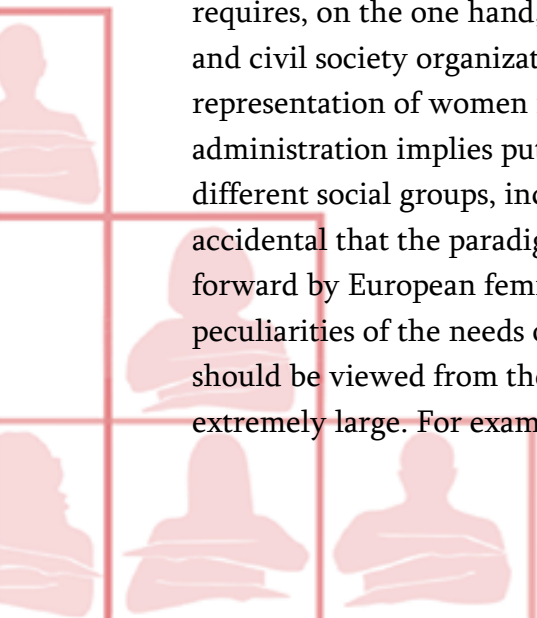
Having observed more than 35 interviews with women candidates in the top ten of the electoral lists of the political forces published on WomenNet.am website during the campaign, one can argue that, irrespective of party membership, they note problems of kindergartens, green zones and comfortability of the city as their priority issues.

4. Principles of Fair Administration of the City in Pre-Election Programs

Reviewing the pre-election programs of the parties running in the 2018 snap elections to Yerevan City Council from the perspective of gender sensitivity, we should state that none of the programs corresponds to the principles of gender mainstreaming, i.e. none of them separates sex specific needs and demands. Moreover, no party had incorporated the issue of ensuring gender sensitivity in its program, and during the political debates opinions were voiced that there are no women’s issues in urban environment and all the problems are the same for the entire population. However, irrespective of this opinion and party positions on gender issues, many programs include provisions that match the concept of fair administration of the city and, therefore, can be viewed as gender sensitive.

The concept of fair administration of the city

According to international approaches, a model of the fair administration of a city requires, on the one hand, establishment of partnership relationships between the state and civil society organizations, citizens’ engagement in administration, as well as proper representation of women in decision making related to the city. On the other hand, fair administration implies putting forth city problems taking into account the needs of different social groups, including those of the largest group, i.e. women. It is not accidental that the paradigm for the fair administration of a city was for the first time put forward by European feminists. In essence, taking into consideration age and gender peculiarities of the needs of the urban population means that the comfortability of a city should be viewed from the perspective of private life, where the role of women is extremely large. For example, taking into account the daily purposes of women’s



movement in the city, their needs are more diverse and consideration of their needs implies the improvement of the comfortability of the urban infrastructures.

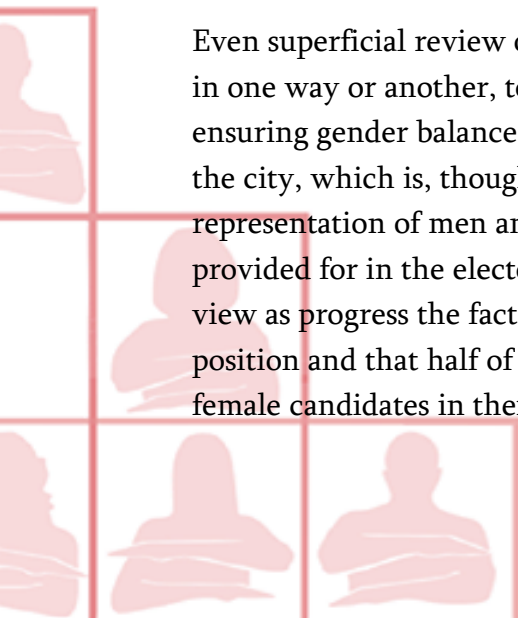
Women also have a more active role in solving a number of problems. For example, a number of problems prioritized by the city authorities such as improvement of the culture of garbage removal, including sorting out of the garbage, are difficult to solve without involvement of women and without expansion of their civic participation. Overall, one can state that programs taking into consideration the principles of fair city administration cannot but be gender sensitive.

The evaluation of the pre-election programs of the parties participating in the Yerevan Municipal Council elections from the perspective of their correspondence to a fair city administration model creates an opportunity to assess these programs from the point of view of women's interests and daily experience and to highlight those provisions the implementation of which is beneficial for women's different social groups.

Specifically, to what extent the vision of Yerevan in the pre-election programs is:

- **Fair**, i.e. Is a goal set to engage civil society in city administration issues, including ensuring gender balance at the level of decision making related to decisions regarding the city?
- **Safe** for everybody, i.e. Is it envisioned that the streets, lanes, highrisers' entrances be well illuminated and cleaned of snow in winter?
- **Healthy**: Is a goal set to increase the green areas in the city, to provide for garbage and harmful emissions removal from the city, and to guarantee efficient and quality medical services?
- **Comfortable**: **Is it envisioned to solve** the infrastructure and transportation problems taking into account the special needs of all social groups?

Even superficial review of the programs demonstrates that almost all the programs tried, in one way or another, to address the above noted problems. An exception is the issue of ensuring gender balance at the level of decision making pertaining to decisions regarding the city, which is, though, not a program provision, but is indirectly solved by equal representation of men and women in the electoral list of a given party, which was only provided for in the electoral list of *Yerkir Tsirani* Party. As regards this issue, one can view as progress the fact that for the first time three women were running for Mayor's position and that half of the parties participating in the elections had included 40-50% of female candidates in their electoral lists.



It is interesting that some programs make a reference to the term “fair administration.” For example, in its program *Luys Alliance* notes that the alliance “*views fair administration as pivotal to its activities, which will be aimed at fair solution to the problems.*” This is about an administration system that is close to the citizen, effective and decentralized, according to the principles of the European Charter on Local Self-Government. In essence, some provisions of the program match the gender sensitive understanding of a fair city, however, their interpretation is strictly one-sided. For example, the safety of the city is viewed only from the perspective of civil defense, which is, of course, important, but does not include women’s viewpoints about the safety of the city.

By the way, the Armenian Revolutionary Federation too had made a reference to a fair city, one of the items in its program is entitled “**For the Sake of Caring and Fair Yerevan,**” which is followed by a number of important issues, however, from gender-neutral positions.

The Issue of the City Comfortability

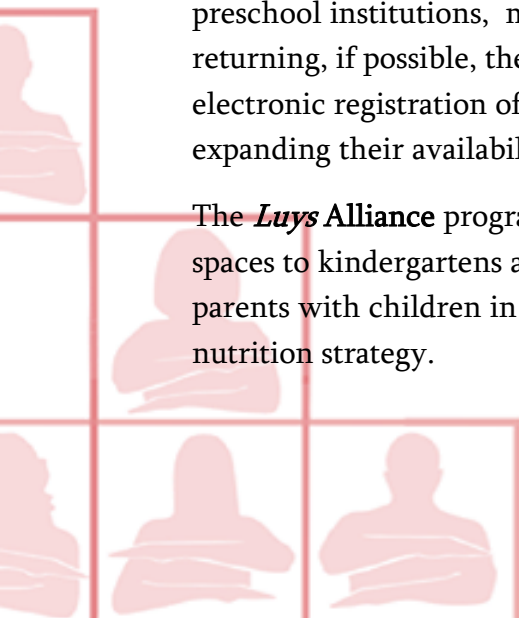
The issue of the city comfortability is worthy of special attention, which means that the city’s infrastructures must be comfortable for both women and men, and help the daily routine of families and households. A city comfortable for women specifically means a city with developed infrastructures, where there will not be problems with enrolment of children in kindergartens, organization of school life, for movement with of baby carriages and by transport and in terms of other numerous issues.

The Issue of Kindergartens in the Pre-Election Programs

A number of the parties participating in the elections have made references to the issue of preschool education in their programs, highlighting a diverse set of problems accumulated in this field. The programs devote much attention to the order of children’s registration for kindergarten enrolment and housing conditions of kindergartens.

In its program *My Step Alliance* envisions improving the housing and yard conditions of preschool institutions, mapping the buildings and territories of preschool institutions, returning, if possible, the leased out buildings to kindergartens, making the process of electronic registration of preschool-age children transparent and accessible online, and expanding their availability and inclusiveness.

The *Luys Alliance* program also envisages gradually returning the leased out kindergarten spaces to kindergartens and making electronic registration for kindergartens accessible to parents with children in the age group of 0-6. It is also envisioned to develop a preschool nutrition strategy.



Yerkir Tsirani Party has addressed the issue in different sections of its extensive program. Thus, the party envisions using budget means to renovate all preschool institutions in the capital city and to build new ones, to eliminate lines for registration of children's enrolment in kindergartens and to ensure the right to preschool education for all children. It is also envisaged to provide kindergartens with appropriate specialists dealing with children with different health problems. Much importance is ascribed to cultural and esthetic education. As regards safety issue, the party believes it to be necessary to carry out monitoring of seismic resistance of all preschool buildings.

Yerevan Society Alliance of Parties envisions organizing registration for enrolment in kindergartens through open published lists, improving the yards of preschool education institutions and providing them with the necessary conditions for inclusive education. An interesting approach is proposed with respect to the food provision issue. The Alliance's program notes that a production of ecologically pure foodstuff will be organized for preschool education institutions, thanks to which the expenses for food will decrease and the quality will be under control.

Orinats Yerkir's program envisions development of free of charge kindergartens and upholding of the prohibition to privatize their buildings.

Heritage Party envisions increasing the number of kindergartens.

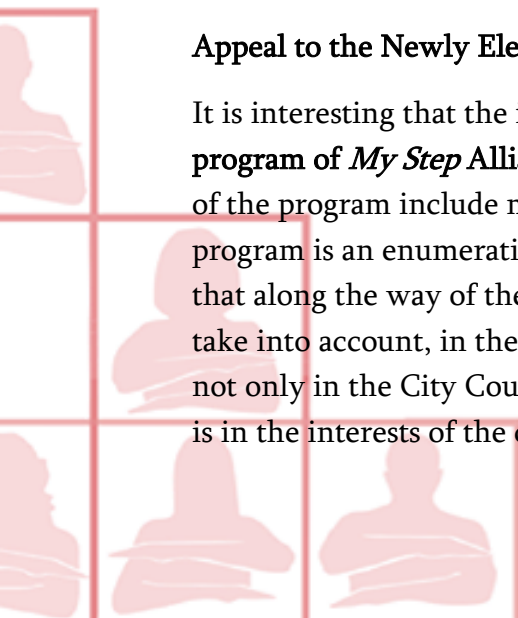
The Armenian Revolutionary Federation also envisages expanding the network of kindergartens (opening preschool institutions adjunct to poorly loaded main schools).

The Prosperous Armenia Party notes that the Yerevanians are displeased with the preschool education institutions, but does not specify how it is going to address the problem.

The other parties have not raised the issue.

Appeal to the Newly Elected Municipal Councilors

It is interesting that the issue of the city comfortability is a guiding and leading one **in the program of My Step Alliance** which garnered the largest number of votes. The priorities of the program include making Yerevan safe, healthy, and comfortable. Overall, the program is an enumeration of measures envisioned for different areas, and it is important that along the way of their realization the newly elected City Councilors and the Mayor take into account, in their city development plans, interesting and useful ideas proposed not only in the City Council, but also in the programs of other political forces, since this is in the interests of the city residents. In addition, it is desirable that the newly elected



City Councilors be able to safeguard gender sensitivity of all city development programs during their activities, and thus, bring to life and realize the principles of the concept of fair administration of the city.

This analytical brief has been prepared by the expert group of ProMedia-Gender NGO within the framework of the program EQUAL: Promoting Women's Political Participation in Armenia, which is implemented by OxYGen Foundation with funding support from the Government of Sweden.

