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EUROPEAN UNION FOR ARMENIA



oxyGen

# SNAP PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS – 2018: Peculiarities of Women’s Electoral Behavior RESEARCH REPORT

Yerevan, 2019



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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<b>ARF</b>	Armenian Revolutionary Federation	<b>NPP</b>	<i>National Progress Party</i>
<b>BAP</b>	<i>Bright Armenia Party</i>	<b>ODIHR</b>	OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights
<b>CCP</b>	<i>Civic Contract Party</i>	<b>OSCE</b>	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
<b>CDP</b>	<i>Citizen's Decision Social-Democratic Party</i>	<b>PAP</b>	<i>Prosperous Armenia Party</i>
<b>CEC</b>	Central Electoral Commission	<b>PEC</b>	Precinct Electoral Commission
<b>CPRP</b>	<i>Christian-Popular Renaissance Party</i>	<b>RA</b>	Republic of Armenia
<b>CS</b>	Civil Society	<b>RLP</b>	<i>Rule of Law Party</i>
<b>EC</b>	Electoral Code	<b>RPA</b>	Republican Party of Armenia
<b>IEOM</b>	International Election Observation Mission	<b>STsP</b>	<i>Sasna Tsrer Pan-Armenian Party</i>
<b>NA</b>	National Assembly	<b>TEC</b>	Territorial Electoral Commission
<b>NGO</b>	Non-governmental Organization		



## • INTRODUCTION

Studies of political behavior in the whole world demonstrate that even the manner in which people approach a democratic process has gender peculiarities. At the same time, countries significantly differ in gender peculiarities of electoral behavior and the degree of participation.

This study, being conducted before, during and after completion of the 2018 snap parliamentary elections in Armenia, reveals peculiarities of women's electoral behavior characteristic of this country, political situation and period, as well as the dynamics of women's electoral behavior since 2018.

The subject matter of the study includes:

- Women voters' activism and electoral preferences,
- Women's participation in organization of elections,
- Female candidates in electoral processes, as well as
- Peculiarities of female candidates' advocacy campaigns.



## • RESEARCH GOAL

The study of peculiarities of women's electoral behavior in the 2018 snap parliamentary elections pursues three main objectives, in particular:

I

To study peculiarities of women's electoral behavior in the 2018 snap parliamentary elections

II

To study factors impacting women's electoral behavior in the 2018 snap parliamentary elections

III

To develop recommendations for ensuring gender equality and overcoming the revealed problems



# METHODOLOGY

- **Methods and tools of information collection**

Four methods have been applied to collect information on the research objectives:

## Analysis of Documents

- The RA Electoral Code
- Documents related to organization of electoral processes
- Statistical data
- Programs and lists of political parties and alliances
- Relevant international and national/domestic documents
- Earlier research relevant for the issue

## Focus Group Discussions

- With representatives of civil society organizations
- Women voters
- Observers
- Experts
- Female members of electoral commissions
- Female candidates and MPs
- Journalists

## In-depth and Expert Interviews

- Overall, 16 individual in-depth interviews were conducted:
- 10 with elected women MPs
  - 6 with experts

## Gender Analysis of Research by the EU *Elections 4 All* Program Partners and Other Research

- Research on *Women and Pre-election Processes: Participation in Rallies* conducted by the *Independent Observer* organization
- Research on *Media Consumption and Information Preferences in Armenia -2019* by *Region Research Center*
- Two pre-election surveys conducted by the *Gallup* organization

The tools used in the study are as follows:

*A checklist of gender analysis and mainstreaming*, as well as the requirements of relevant international documents served as a tool for **analysis of documents and research.**

A semi-standardized thematic questionnaire series served as a tool for gathering data through **focus group discussions.** The questionnaires were designed for discussions with civil society representatives, women voters, observers, experts, female members of electoral commissions, women candidates and MPs, as well as with journalists.

A free-style situational questionnaire served as a tool for collecting data through **in-depth and expert interviews.**



- **CHAPTER 1. *ELECTORAL BEHAVIOR***

- The concept of electoral behavior
- International and local experience of studying peculiarities of women's electoral behavior
- Legislative prerequisites for women's electoral activism: international approaches and the RA national legislation



- **The concept of electoral behavior**

**Electoral behavior** is one of the most important forms of political participation and is a criterion of democracy development in society. In political science, electoral behavior assumes actions (or inaction) of all actors in political processes, which they manifest in upholding or changing the political system as a result of elections. In a narrow sense, electoral behavior is viewed as voting behavior, including voters' motivation and mechanisms and reasons for the formation of their electoral preferences.

Gender and Political Behavior

<http://oxfordre.com/politics/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780190228637.001.0001/acrefore-9780190228637-e->

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In any case, peculiarities of citizens' electoral behavior are dependent on the political culture of a given society, the level of development of parties, applied electoral system, influence of socio-economic and cultural factors, religious affiliation, as well as the age and gender of participants in electoral processes. The subject matter of this research is women's electoral behavior, which they manifest during the exercise of their active and passive electoral right, including their participation in organization and observation of elections. That is to say, electoral behavior has been viewed not only in terms of women's attitude towards the electoral process, but also in terms of their involvement in this process, including as women candidates, observers, members of electoral commissions and in other statuses.

**Women and elections: guide to promoting the participation of women in elections**

<https://www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/wps/publication/WomenAndElections.pdf>



- **International and local experience of studying peculiarities of women’s electoral behavior**

It was the suffragettes who first voiced *the difference between male and female electoral behavior* at the beginning of the past century putting forth the thesis on female electorate’s united preferences and voting, which, however, was not confirmed in practice. Instead, later, thanks to the public opinion surveys conducted in the US and Western Europe in the 60s and 70s of the past century, the idea of difference or “gender gap” between female and male electoral behavior found its confirmation. Since the revealed differences in attitudes of female and male voters towards parties and political figures could play a decisive role in terms of election results, social scientists began to seriously study this issue trying to find out what is decisive for female electorate: ideological considerations or personal affection for a politician, party affiliation or the candidate’s political platform, or, perhaps, his/her position on social issues.

To seek answers to these questions, special methodologies were developed and, as a result, certain regularities were discovered. Although “gender gap” relates to any difference between women and men in terms of their political behavior, most of the research was aimed at disclosing “gender gap” especially in voters’ preferences. It came to light that women’s views and preferences were more conservative than those of men (Lipset, 1960), married women often share the political positions of their husbands. This was explained by women’s attitude towards religion, which reinforced their ties to conservative and religion-oriented parties. In addition, due to under-representation in the labor market, women rarely joined trade unions, which were traditionally associated with left-leaning parties.



The analysis of gender differences of elections in **Western Europe** has demonstrated (1974-2000, 12 countries) that if in the 1970s women showed a propensity to conservative parties, in the new millennium they largely prefer leftist parties. The driving force for this change is women's greater participation in the workforce and women's civic activism.

#### **Gender and Political Behavior**

<http://oxfordre.com/politics/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780190228637.001.0001/acrefore-9780190228637-e-71>

**In the USA, gender gap** in electoral preferences is displayed in the greater propensity of women voters to Democratic Party. Moreover, this gap is widening each year. Overall, the women's position fits into the formulation of political science Professor Carol Nechemias, who states in her *Women and Election* that men are interested in the budget deficit, and women in its consequences; men like weapons, and women like laws against weapons and free medical assistance programs, and goes on to question as to why men are allowed to vote at all.

**Carol Nechemias, " Women and Election"**

The data of **World Values Surveys (WVS)** conducted in different post-industrial, post-Soviet, and developing societies in three waves at the beginning of the 1990s and mid-90s confirmed that as a consequence of structural and cultural changes, as well as changes in attitude towards religion women's preferences have changed in favor of leftist parties, although in post-Soviet societies this change was not very manifest. Research conducted later (Abendschön & Steinmetz, 2014) confirmed these regularities: in Western countries women show propensities to leftist forces and rarely vote for radical right forces (Givens, 2004), and in the post-Soviet countries women are more supportive of the right and there are more women among those voting on a non-political basis.

**The Developmental Theory of the Gender Gap: Women's and Men's Voting Behavior in Global Perspective International Political Science Review (2000), Vol 21, No. 4, 441–463**

<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/0192512100214007>



Research carried out in developed democratic countries attests to the fact that women's activism in elections is historically low, as well as their involvement in organization of elections and electoral activities. Their participation in parties is low approximately by 32.8% (Coffe & Bolzendahl, 2010). In all Latin American countries, women's participation in elections and protest actions is much lower than that of men (Desposato & Norrander, 2009).

Research conducted in Russia from among post-Soviet countries shows that women are quite actively engaged in the processes of organization of elections as members of commissions, proxies, observers, etc.

***It should be noted that no research on women voters' preferences and their electoral incentives has been carried out in Armenia. Sociological research conducted in pre-election and post-election periods and surveys traditionally carried out during elections can give some idea about the differences between women's and men's preferences. However, experience shows that they rarely publish sex disaggregated data. Pre-election research commissioned by parties is also not published. However, the fact that parties do not differentiate between women and men voters in any way during their work with their electorate allows to conclude that they disregard these differences. At the same time, a number of research works on women's political participation have been carried out in Armenia, including during elections. This research allowed to study women candidates' behavior in elections, as well as reasons for women's under-representation in elected bodies.***



## Legislative prerequisites for women's electoral activism: international approaches and the RA Electoral Code solutions

The legislative field which de jure guarantees women's full participation in the Republic of Armenia's political life and, in particular, in electoral processes, includes:

The RA Constitution

The RA Electoral Code

International documents on gender equality ratified by the RA and the State's obligations within their scope

The RA legislation, including the RA Law *on Ensuring Equal Rights and Equal Opportunities for Women and Men*

The RA Government's conceptual framework on gender policies and the strategic program (2011-2015) following it



## a) UN Documents

### **Convention on the Political Rights of Women (1954)**

Armenia ratified it in 2007 reinforcing the State's obligation to ensure women's and men's equality in exercise of their active and passive electoral right.

### **UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (1979)**

Armenia ratified it in 1993.

- Article 7 stipulates that participant States “shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the political and public life of the country and, in particular, shall ensure to women, on equal terms with men, the right ...b) to participate in the formulation of government policy and the implementation thereof and to hold public office and perform all public functions at all levels of government.”
- Article 4 envisions temporary special measures with the aim of overcoming gender imbalance.
- Article 5 raises, for the first time, the issue of changing behavioral and cultural patterns impeding women's advancement and underlying discriminatory practices.

The Convention is one of those unique documents that contain effective control mechanisms

### **Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women**

Final Observations (2016) on the fifth and sixth periodic reports submitted by Armenia: The Member State was tasked with undertaking measures to promote women's full and equal participation in elected and appointed bodies, including the National Assembly, ministerial positions, marz-level and local self-government bodies, the judicial system and diplomatic service.

- General Recommendation No. 25 (2004) on temporary special measures
- General Recommendation No. 23 (1997) on women in political and public life

**Beijing Declaration (1995) ,  
Beijing Platform for Action (1995)**

- Specific and coordinated measures were outlined in the area of “women’s participation in power structures and decision-making” to expand women’s political participation opportunities.
- The Platform for Action also mentioned the notion of “the critical mass” which characterizes the minimal opportunity of women to influence decision-making and assumes at least 30% women’s representation, especially in Parliament.
- “...Governments and other actors should promote an active and visible policy of mainstreaming a gender perspective in all policies and programmes so that before decisions are taken, an analysis is made of the effects on women and men, respectively.”

**Millennium Development Goals (MDG, 2000)  
and afterwards**

SDG Goal 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls

**Sustainable Development Goals (SDG,2015)**

- 5.5. Ensure women’s full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic, and public life

Women’s and men’s 50/50 participatory formula in all areas of public, economic, and political life by 2030 was endorsed

in the March 5th, 2015 Political Declaration adopted by Heads of the UN Member States on the occasion of summarizing Beijing + 20 process and at the meeting of Global Leaders at the UN on September 27, 2015 and was incorporated into Sustainable Development Goals 2030 Agenda.



## b) European Documents

### Council of Europe Gender Equality Strategy 2018-2023

1. To prevent and combat manifestations of gender stereotypes and sexism
2. To combat and prevent violence against women and domestic violence
3. To provide for an equal access to justice for women and men
4. To achieve a balanced participation of women and men in political and public decision-making
5. To defend the rights of migrants, refugees, and asylum-seeking women and girls
6. To ensure integration of a gender component in all policies and measures

### Recommendations of the Council of Europe Committee of Ministers

#### “Declaration on Equality between Women and Men as a Fundamental Criterion of Democracy” (1997)

- **Rec (1998) 14** on Gender Mainstreaming
- 
- **Rec (2003) 3** on Balanced Participation of Women and Men in Political and Public Decision-Making

In 2003, the Council of Europe Committee of Ministers defined the so called “optimal threshold” of the 40-60 proportion of women’s and men’s representation in power structures.

In 2006, in Strasbourg, at the sixth ministerial conference, the RA Minister of Labor and Social Affairs voted for a binding resolution on ensuring this threshold by 2020.



## PACE Resolutions

**Res 1676 (2004)** on Women's Participation in Elections

**Res 1489 (2006)** on Mechanisms to Ensure Women's Participation in Decision-Making

**Res 1706 (2010)** on Increasing Women's Representation in Politics through the Electoral System; it proposes that CE Member States "in countries with a proportional representation list system, consider introducing a legal quota which provides not only for a high proportion of female candidates (ideally at least 40%), but also for a strict rank-order rule (for example, a "zipper" system of alternating male and female candidates)."

**Res 1898 (2012)** on Political Parties and Women's Political Representation; it emphasizes the responsibility of parties to promote women's representation in political bodies and their political growth and advancement.

**Res 1897 (2012)** on Ensuring Greater Democracy in Elections

**Res 2111 (2016)** on Assessing the Impact of Measures to Improve Women's Political Representation; it proposes to make a transition from quotas to the principle of equality, it also proposes to take certain steps to ensure gender equality in the processes of organization, administration and observation of elections.

As well as:

Resolutions on *Promoting the Most Favorable Gender Equality Laws in Europe* [Res 1780 (2010)], on *A Minimum of 30% Representatives of the Under-Represented Sex in Assembly National Delegations* [Res 1781 (2010)], on *Promoting Diversity and Equality in Politics* [Res 2222 (2018)], on *Advancing Women's Rights Worldwide* [Res 1860 (2012)] and recommendations on *Combating Sexist Stereotypes in the Media* [Rec 1931 (2010)] and on *The Image of Women in the Media* [Rec 1555 (2002)], and Report | Doc. 14845 | of 20 March 2019 on *The Role and Responsibilities of Political Leaders in Combating*

The **2004 OSCE Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality** views gender equality as a pivotal prerequisite for stable democracy, economic development, and security.

**OSCE Council of Ministers Decision No. 7/09:**

“Encourage all political actors to promote equal participation of women and men in political parties, with a view to achieving better gender-balanced representation in elected public offices at all levels of decision-making.”

**OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Mission** reports always include indicators and assessments on women’s participation:

“Awareness should be raised by and among all electoral stakeholders about the importance of equal participation of women and men in public and political life, with a particular emphasis on the role of women within political parties. Consideration should be given to enhancing special measures to promote women candidates. This could include placing candidates from the under-represented gender in every second position on national candidate lists.”

**Handbook for Monitoring Women's Participation in Elections**

<https://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/13938>

## c) National Legislation

### The RA Constitution

**Article 28.** General Equality before the Law

All are equal before the law.

**Article 29. Prohibition of Discrimination**

Discrimination on the grounds of sex, race, skin color, ethnic or social origin, genetic characteristics, language, religion, world outlook, political or other views, belonging to an ethnic minority, property status, birth, disability, age or other circumstances of personal or social nature is prohibited.

**Article 30. Equality of Women and Men**

Women and men are legally equal.

Noteworthy is one of the objectives incorporated in Article 86:

**Article 86. The Main Objectives of the State Policies**

The main objectives of the state policies in the economic, social, and cultural areas are:

4) Promotion of de facto equality between women and men.

### The RA Law on Ensuring Equal Rights and Equal Opportunities for Women and Men (2013)

The law regulates the issue of ensuring equal rights and equal opportunities for women and men in the areas of politics, public administration, work and employment, entrepreneurship, health care, education, etc.

The law incorporates, to the maximum extent, the requirements of the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).



## The RA Electoral Code

Provisions guaranteeing women's participation:

- **Points 83.4 & 83.10** stipulate that the proportion of sexes in party lists shall be at least 30/70 (the proportion is also valid for territorial lists).
- **Provision 100.3** guarantees that “if, as a result of giving up a mandate, the number of representatives of any sex in a given faction decreases and results in less than 25 per cent, the mandate shall be given to the successive candidate of the under-represented sex.”
- **Provisions 130.2 , 141.6 & 141.8** extend the above-mentioned to apply to Yerevan, Gyumri, and Vanadzor municipal councilors' elections held through the proportional electoral system.

At the same time, according to the transitional and final provisions, in particular, **Points 14, 15, & 16 of Article 144**, the above noted provisions will go into effect only in 2021, and prior to that, the provision ensuring the 25/75 proportion in electoral lists will apply.

**Provisions 42.2, 43.2 & 43.8** regulate the composition of Central Electoral and Territorial Electoral Commissions in terms of the sex of their members:

“The number of representatives of each sex in Central Electoral Commission shall be no less than two.”

“The number of representatives of each sex in Territorial Electoral Commission shall be no less than two.”

- **CHAPTER 2. WOMEN VOTERS' ACTIVISM AND ELECTORAL PREFERENCES**

- Gender differences in voters' participation
- Political preferences of women voters
- Voters' preferences according to candidates' sex
- Informational preferences of women voters
- Preferences for information sources
- Factors impeding women's electoral behavior: "family voting"
- Issues of voters with disabilities

**In this study, gender peculiarities of voters' electoral behavior have been viewed from the perspective of women's and men's participation in elections, their preferences of political forces, the scope of issues (agenda) put forth by candidates during campaigns, difference in information sources, incentives for participation in voting, and opportunities for free will expression.**

A big wave of civic activism arisen within the context of “the velvet revolution” influenced also voters' behavior. The emerging trust in positive changes led to youth's more motivated participation in elections. As usually happens during similar movements, civic disobedience actions, street struggle, participation in demonstrations and marches brought about a new wave of inspiration among women and, especially, young girls, as well.



- **Gender differences in voters' participation**

During focus group discussions, members of precinct commissions stated that there was inspiration in the last elections and the level of activism was higher.

*“They were not bound to come. People would come inspired together with their families, they would come and even say that ‘we have not been brought, but we have come so that our votes are not lost.’”*

**Focus Group Discussion with Electoral Commissions**

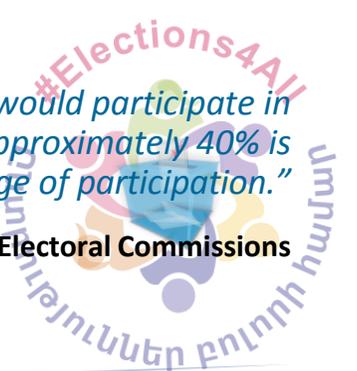
At the same time, according to the CEC data, the number of voters' participation in the 2018 snap elections was not high, constituting just 48.6%. No studies were carried out on this low indicator of participation in the republic, and viewpoints explaining the reasons for this situation remained at the level of assumptions, primarily pointing to the problem of imperfection of voter lists. According to the reports of domestic election observation missions, there are numerous drawbacks in the voter lists, which come to question the accuracy and objectivity of the lists. Noted as a main reason is a large number of citizens who were absent from the republic, but whose names were included in the voter lists.

**Summary Report of the Observation Mission of the December 9, 2018 RA National Assembly Snap Elections**

**Electronic Monitoring of Electoral Numbers of the 2018 Snap Parliamentary Elections**

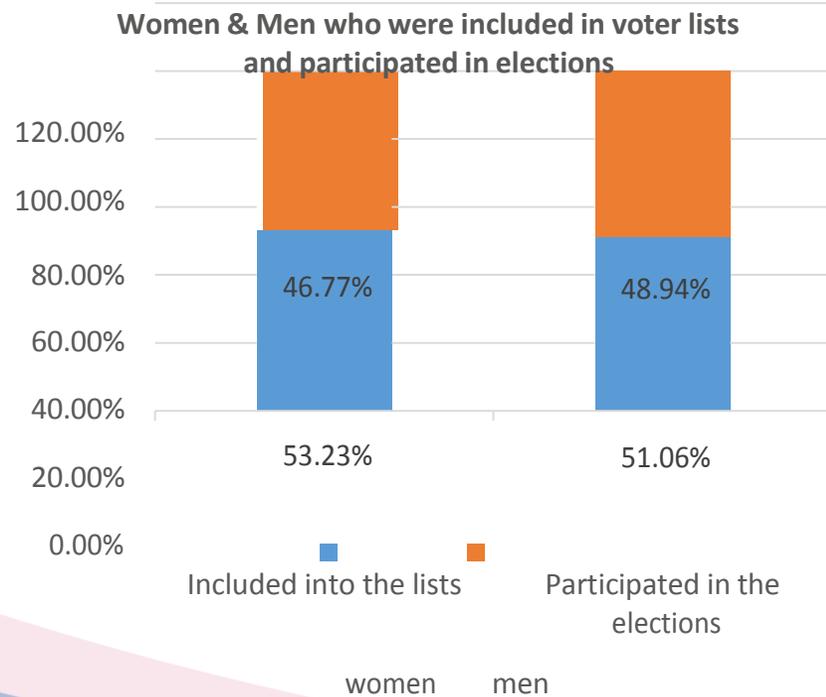
*“To check the lists in our district I went to homes one by one, asked the families who were absent, who were present, who would participate in the elections. Many said that members of their families were in America or Russia, and that they would not come. Approximately 40% is absent, but their names are in the lists. Now come and try to count the percentage of participation.”*

**Focus Group Discussions with Electoral Commissions**



Contrary to expectations, women’s participation in these elections was lower than that of men. Taking into consideration the fact that women make up 52.6% of the RA permanent population, as well as the fact that the percentage of men’s migration is higher than that of women, it is expected that the indicator of women’s participation in elections is going to be higher than that of men. However, according to the data on the 2018 RA NA snap elections provided by CEC, although 46.77% of the constituents included in the voter lists are men and 53.23% are women, according to the data of voter registration technical devices, only 51.06% of those who voted were women and 48.94% were men.

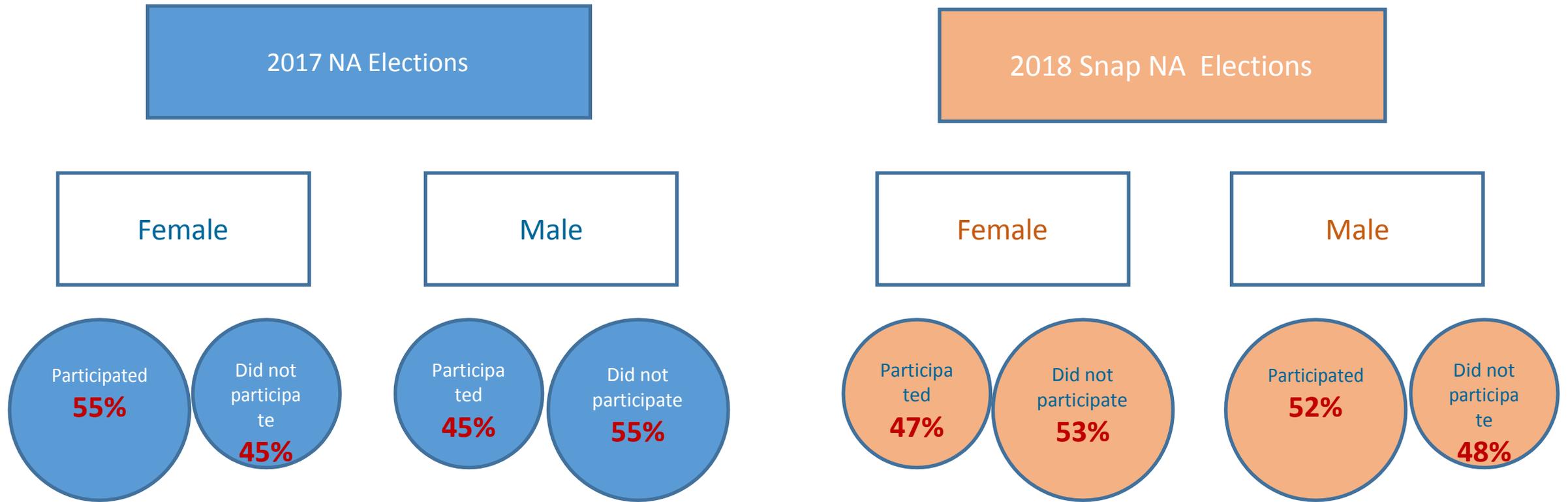
### Demographic Digest of Armenia, 2018



This change in the ratio of women and men in the general number of constituents and those who participated in the elections attests to the fact that the indicator of women voters’ turnout was lower than that of men: only 47% of women constituents participated in the voting, and 51.5% of men, i.e. the difference was 4.5 points. The picture was different in the preceding 2017 elections when 45.2% of the voters that participated in the elections were men and 54.75% women, and the indicator of women voters’ turnout was higher than that of men by 3.8 points

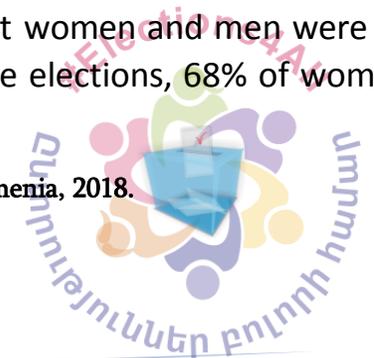


Data demonstrates that there is a difference in participation of women and men in the 2017 NA elections and the 2018 snap NA elections.

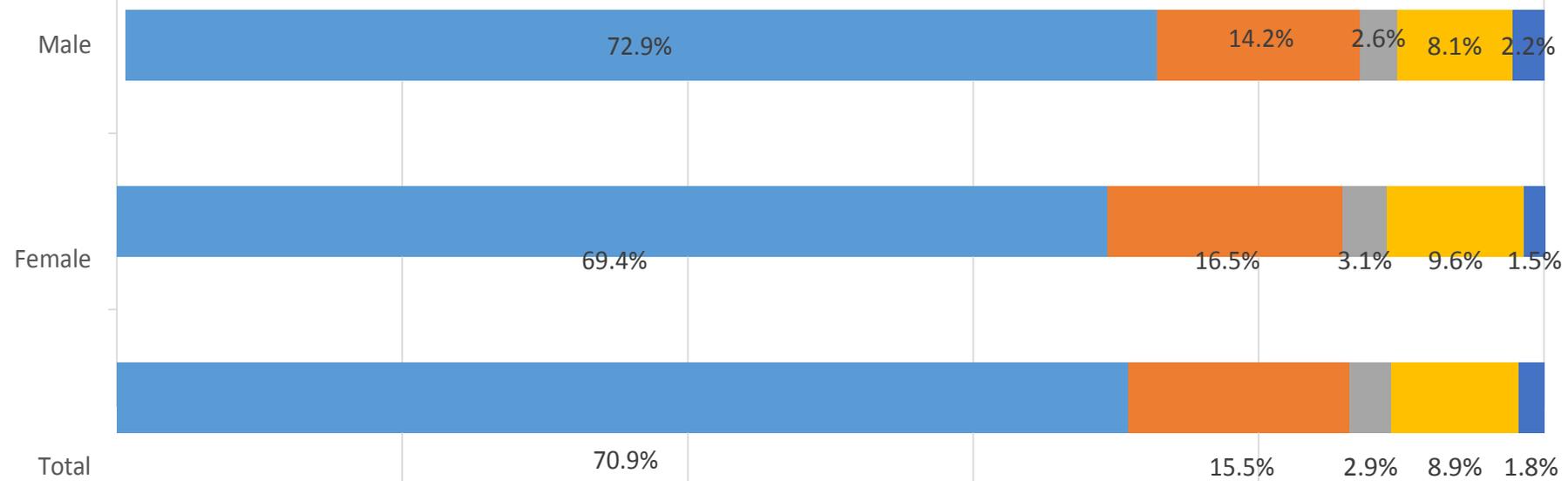


As to why women voters were more passive in 2018 is possible to clearly find out only through sociological surveys; a qualitative analysis toolkit is not sufficient to fully answer this question. It is noteworthy that research carried out in the pre-election period indicated that women and men were almost equally interested in the elections. Eighty-six percent of women and 87% of men noted that they would participate in the elections, 68% of women and 66% of men said that they had followed the election campaigns of parties/party alliances.

Election Express 2018 Wave 2, Final Station Election Express 2018 / Parliamentary Express, Start Station MPG LLC, GALLUP International Association in Armenia, 2018.



According to the data provided by *MPG LLC, GALLUP International Association in Armenia, /2018 /*to the question **“Are you going to participate in the parliamentary elections to be held on December 9?”** the following responses were provided:



■ Will participate for sure
 ■ Probably will participate
 ■ Probably will NOT participate
 ■ Will NOT participate for sure
 ■ Difficult to say

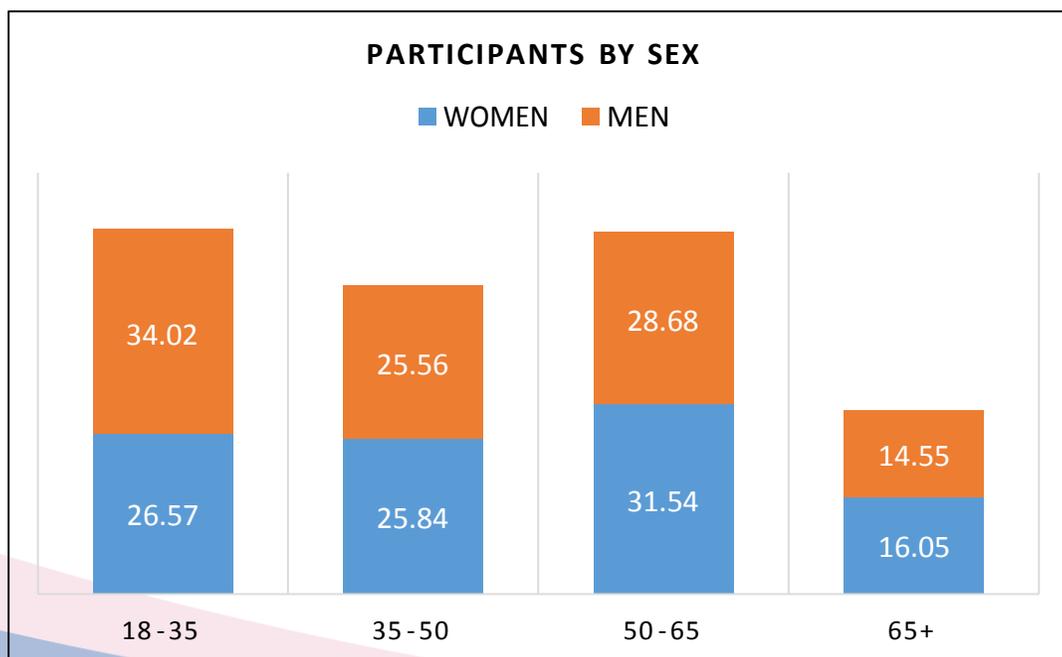


According to observations made by members of Precinct Electoral Commissions, in these elections, as always, young men were active, but the 2018 elections differed by the fact that this time many older women participated in elections.

*“Many older women were coming. It happened that one woman was brought by her neighbor, she was blind. She said, I should vote so that young people are well, I am going to vote for the young.”*

**Focus Group Discussion with Electoral Commissions**

Examining the data provided by CEC in terms of age distribution of women and men who participated in the 2018 voting, one can be convinced that, in case of men, most active were male representatives in the youngest age group of 18-35 (difference of 7.5 points), and, in case of women, most active were female representatives in the age group over 50 (difference of 2.9 points). This distribution in general corresponds to the distribution of sex and age data in the population, according to which, women dominate in all age groups with the exception of the age groups of under 24. To make any conclusions about the behavior of young or older voters by drawing comparisons with the preceding 2017 elections is not possible due to the absence of data for that year.

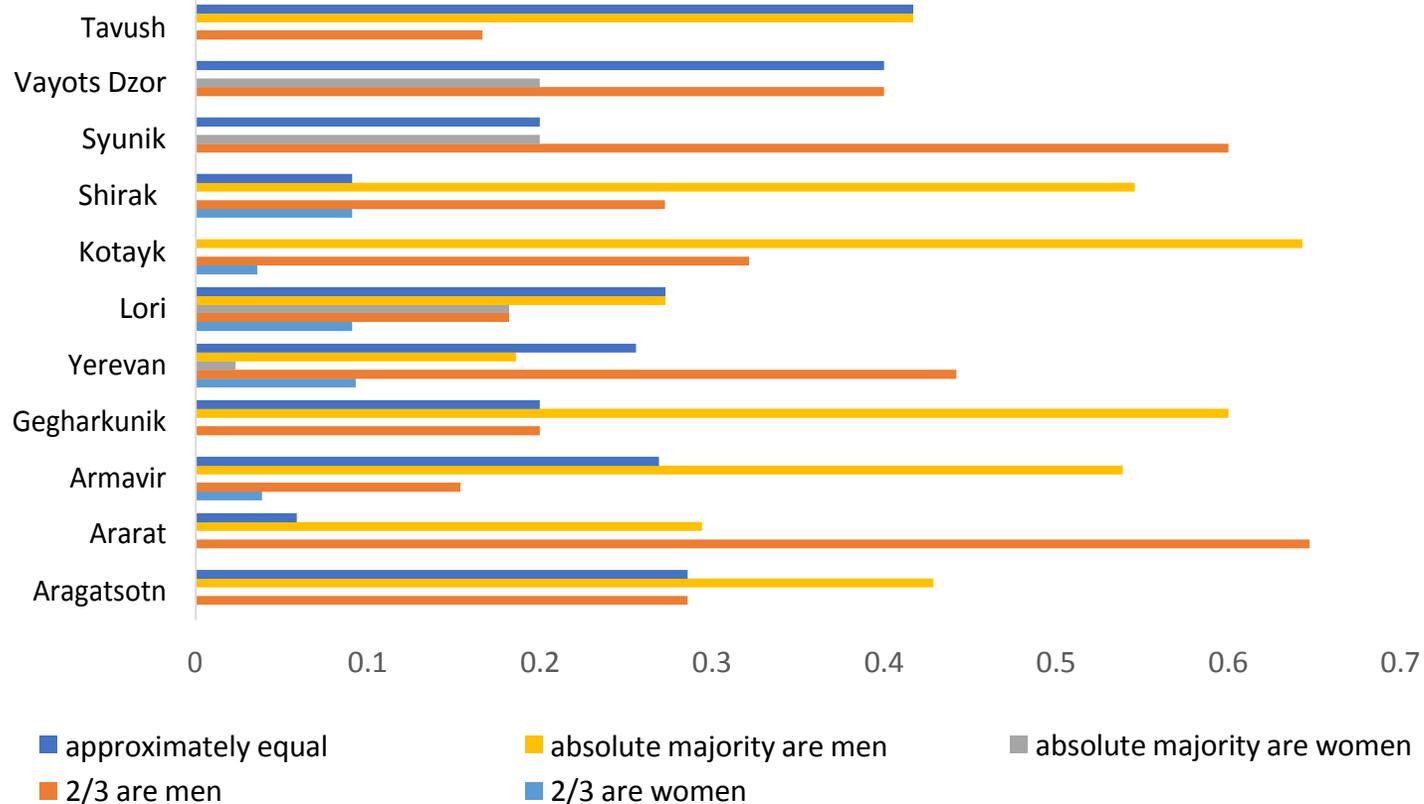


**Demographic Digest of Armenia, the RA Statistical Committee, 2018**

Comparing the activism of female and male voters in Yerevan and the marzes (provinces), one can see that in Yerevan, 54.74% of women and 45.26% of men participated in the voting, and in the marzes, 50.32% of women and 49.68% of men, i.e. the activism of female voters in the marzes was lower.



## MEETING PARTICIPANTS BY SEX AND LOCATION



The situation in different marzes was primarily the same. However, in case of some marzes there were essential differences, women were especially active in meetings with candidates in Lori and Vayots Dzor.

Post-election research conducted by *Region* Center also confirms that women sated their interest in the election campaign more through reading information placed on Internet or through TV coverage than through participation in meetings organized during the election campaign.

**“Media Consumption and Information Preferences in Armenia-2019”, *Region* Center**

Low activism of women constituents in the marzes is also confirmed by the data of observation missions, according to which, during the election campaign in their meetings with candidates men were more active than women. The prevailing majority of participants in 186 rallies observed by ODIHR EOM were men: women constituted about 15 per cent in rallies organized in the marzes, and 30 per cent in Yerevan. According to the observations of the *Independent Observer* non-governmental alliance, during the pre-election campaign men dominated among constituents participating in meetings with candidates (men constituted absolute majority in 72% of observed rallies, women in 8% of rallies, and women and men were observed to be equally represented in 20% of rallies.).

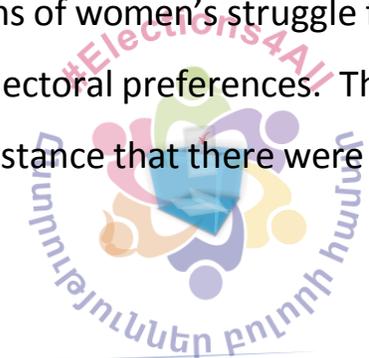
**The Republic of Armenia National Assembly Snap Elections/December 9, 2018/, Report, *Independent Observer* Non-governmental Alliance, Vanadzor, 2019**

- **Political preferences of women voters**

Differences in women's and men's electoral behavior come to light at the level of electoral preferences, expressing the entirety of their socio-political values and perceptions of the authorities, candidates, and parties. All research carried out in Western Europe and the US in this direction reveal the differences between women's and men's clearly stated preferences (gender gap in voting behavior), which in separate cases and, especially, in case of presidential elections can reach significant numbers that essentially influence elections.

In Armenia, and in particular, in case of parliamentary elections, these differences are hardly visible, which is attested by the results of pre-election sociological surveys and exit polls conducted in the republic over the past ten years. The formation of voter preferences with respect to political parties is impeded by a great number of parties in the political field (the RA state register includes 66 parties), a great number of parties usually participating in elections (10-20 contestants), and absence of clarity in their political platforms.

It is often difficult to guess whether political forces active in the political field are right-leaning, left-leaning, or centrist from their programs and behavior. As regards women's consolidated positions, which in many countries are shaped by specific issues of concern to women (issue voting), for example, in the US by the issue of prohibition of abortion or by ideological considerations of women's rights protection in the presence of traditions of strong women's movement, there are no such prerequisites and traditions of women's struggle for their rights in Armenia. Hence, women in Armenia do not form a united, consolidated group, which has clear-cut electoral preferences. The disclosure of gender peculiarities in behavior of voters in the 2018 snap elections was also hampered by the circumstance that there were fewer public opinion surveys than usual and also no exit polls.

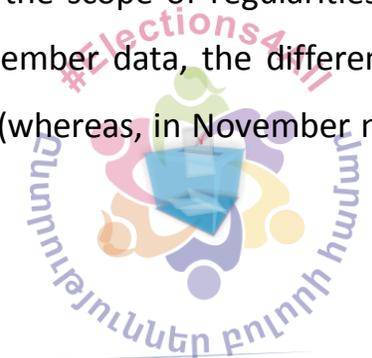


Sociological surveys on public moods conducted in the pre-election period demonstrate that the difference between female and male respondents giving their preferences to this or that force was very small and according to the data of the survey carried out in November, it fluctuated within the limits of 0.2-3.4% for different forces. Women dominated by 1.9 and 3.6 points among those who refused to answer the question and undecided voters. According to the data of the survey conducted in December, the difference between preferences of female and male respondents decreased still further. Of interest is the dynamics among voters with propensity to *My Step* Alliance considered to be favorite in the elections. First, their number was incomparably bigger than that of other political forces. Second, if the difference between preferences of women and men was just 0.8 points in November, respectively 68.6% and 67.8%, it reached 4.3 points in December on account of women, constituting respectively 71.4% and 67.1%.

**Election Express 2018 / Parliamentary Express, Start Station  
MPG LLC, GALLUP International Association in Armenia, 2018.**

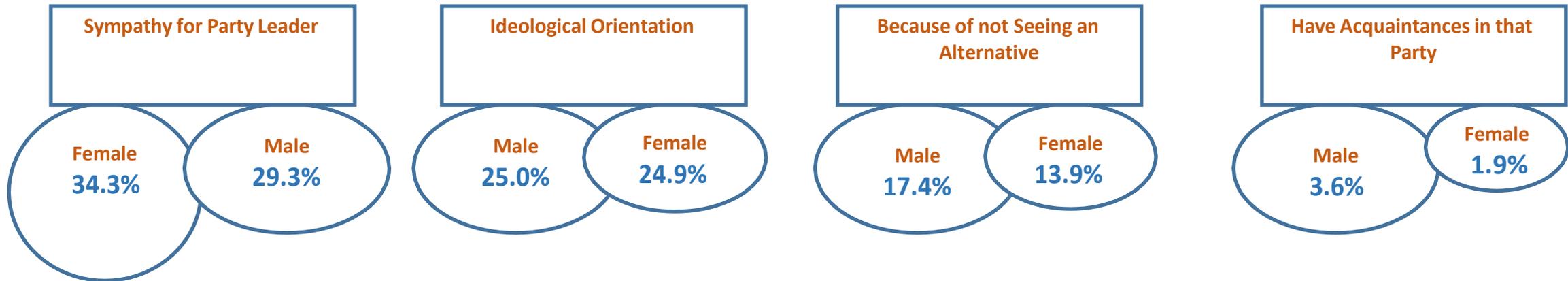
In case of other parties, difference between women's and men's approaches could have greater impact, taking into consideration that only 0.5% of the respondents were ready to vote for those parties. Moreover, men had higher propensity to right-leaning parties than women (in case of *Prosperous Armenia*, 5.2% of women and 8.6% of men; in case of RPA, respectively 0.9% and 2.3%, in case of *Bright Armenia*, respectively 0.9% and 1.6%, and *Sasna Tsrer*, respectively 0.2% and 1.8%). Leftist parties were supported more by women than men. Thus, 1.3% of women and 0.7% of men were willing to vote for ARF, and respectively 1.2% and 0.5% were ready to vote for *Christian-Popular Renaissance Party*.

Overall, though with a slight difference, the regularity recorded in other countries applied: women had more propensity to left-leaning parties. In this respect, noteworthy is the increase in the number of women with propensity to *Sasna Tsrer* Party, though, within the scope of regularities revealed at international level, political forces acting from extreme positions do not win women's sympathy. According to the December data, the difference between women and men with respect to ARF and *Sasna Tsrer* decreased, constituting respectively 1.1% and 1.3% in case of ARF (whereas, in November more women than men were willing to vote for ARF) and 1.3% and 1.5% in case of *Sasna Tsrer*.



	Period of Research 17.11.2018-21.11.2018			Period of Research 01.12.2018-04.12.2018		
	Female %	Male %	Difference between Women's and Men's Votes	Female %	Male %	Difference between Women's and Men's Votes
Ready to vote for						
<b>My Step Alliance</b>	68.6	67.8	0.8	71.4	67.1	4.3
<i>Prosperous Armenia Party</i>	5.2	8.6	-3.4	4.6	7.0	-2.4
<b>RPA</b>	0.9	2.3	-1.4	0.7	2	-1.3
<i>Bright Armenia Party</i>	0.9	1.6	-0.7	3.5	4.1	-0.6
<b>ARF</b>	1.3	0.7	0.6	1.1	1.3	-0.2
<i>Sasna Tsrer Party</i>	0.2	1.8	-1.6	1.3	1.5	-0.2
<i>We Alliance</i>	0.4	0.2	0.2	1.1	0.4	0.7
<i>Christian-Popular Renaissance Party</i>	1.2	0.5	0.7	0.0	0.0	0
<i>Citizen's Decision Party</i>	0.2	0.2	0	0.2	0.4	-0.2
<i>Rule of Law Party</i>	0.2	0.0	0.2	0.7	0.0	0.7
<i>National Progress Party</i>	0.0	0.0	0	0.2	0.0	0.2
Difficult to answer	7.6	5.7	1.9	7.3	6.5	0.8
Refuse to answer	14.3	10.7	3.6	8.0	9.6	-1.6

In December, the same ratio by the parties was maintained. However, the number of women ready to vote for *My Step* Alliance increased from 68.6% to 71.4%, the number of men stood at 67.1%. The rating of *Bright Armenia* increased and 3.5% of women and 4.1% of men were ready to vote for it. With respect to ARF and *Sasna Tsrer*, women's and men's attitudes drew nearer, constituting respectively 1.1% and 1.3% in case of ARF (whereas, in November women were more ready to vote for the party than men) and 1.3% and 1.5% for *Sasna Tsrer*. It should be noted that according to the surveys, and, especially, exit polls of the preceding, 2017, year, the difference between preferences of female and male voters were much more insignificant, and were totally absent with respect to some parties.



From the perspective of electoral behavior, extremely important are those incentives which underlie voter orientation. Thus, the differences between some women's and men's responses to the question as to *why you are going to vote for the noted party* reach 4-5 per cent. As regards other incentives, such as trust in the party, being familiar with the pre-election program, following advice of acquaintances, there was almost no difference between women's and men's responses, about 0.1%. At the same time, women and men ascribe equal importance to elections.

**“Media Consumption and Information Preferences in Armenia-2019,” Region Research Center**



- **Electoral preferences: attitude towards women candidates**

Voters' positions on female and male candidates, as well as voters' perceptions of candidates' motivation to become MPs also make up part of electoral behavior. Within this context, often voiced is the thesis that “women do not elect women,” which, though proved within the framework of sociological surveys, is not perceived unequivocally by many. In the 2018 snap elections, voters' attitude to female candidates was overshadowed by the attitude to the personality of Nikol Pashinyan, Leader of *My Step Alliance*. Even those women from *My Step Alliance* who had garnered significant number of votes through territorial lists admitted that the personality of their leader had played a decisive role in the formation of voter preferences.

The quantitative data of the above noted research and qualitative data revealed during focus group discussions allow to state that women voters are predisposed to female political figures in a friendly way and the qualified majority wishes to see women as deputies. In focus group discussions, almost all women voters draw a divide between the past and present elections. It is interesting that they note that it is accepted by force of political tradition that the candidate should be a man. However, recently a large number of young women and girls have appeared in the political realm and they purport to become deputies and female voters welcome that.

They regard as one of the positive aspects of the last elections that  
***“there are many female candidates on posters,”***  
the image of female deputies is visualized.



In essence, three models of electoral preference are noticeable among female voters:

Women have nothing to do with politics and, therefore, they should not be elected

*DISCRIMINATORY MODEL*

12.7%

“Women should be elected since there are few women in the NA, and that leads to a situation when women do not participate in decision-making important for the country.”

*SENSITIVE MODEL*

“The sex of the deputy is not important, professionalism is important.”

*NEUTRAL MODEL*

82.3%

Many voters have come to realize that women's entry into politics leads to a change of the political agenda and inclusion of women's issues in the agenda.

*"...depending on sex, different issues are raised in the Parliament...there are issues that women raise more often and there are issues that men raise. That is to say, the presence of both in the Parliament is very important so that all kinds of issues are voiced and discussed there."*

**Focus Group Discussions with Voters**

*"...there are internal sanitation issues, there are issues related to pregnant women, there are issues related to non-pregnant women, issues related to older women, issues related to women with disabilities. And that is why it is mandatory that female candidates be there, it is important because men cannot raise these issues."*

**Focus Group Discussions with Voters**

*"...Simply there are some issues that require women's participation, there are issues specifically related to women, and men cannot raise these issues, they cannot even think that women might have issues and there are certain issues related to women, and women should be there to make their decisions during decision-making so that it is more rightful and there is equality."*

**Focus Group Discussions with Female Candidates**



Voters have different opinions about **women's motivation** to become MPs. Grouping these opinions yields the following picture:

*...Politics has become an area of self-expression for women.*

*...They want to bring about positive changes in the life of society...*

*...They have a need for acute sensations, want to boost the adrenaline.*

*...Seeing the problems that women have in their household routine, they also go to the NA to give some solutions to these problems, to ease the burden.*

The conviction that “... women are necessary in the NA leads to female voters’ desire that women’s and men’s proportion be 50/50, however, they are against its imposition so that the quality does not suffer.” At the same time, they see quota as a helpful tool:

*“If in the beginning 50/50 is mandatory and people come to the opinion that there is a demand for female deputies and one can be a female deputy...in this case, women will gain confidence, will start working on themselves to become confident that they can be a deputy in the future...”*

*Without considering quota to be a very effective means, I, nevertheless, believe that it promotes women’s engagement in politics since “...it is a men’s territory and we have squeezed in there and want to snatch a piece from there...;” “...as regards quota, in the initial stage, until the stereotypes disappear from society, it is unequivocally necessary to ensure equality through quota, and try to reach at least 30 or 40... public opinion too is beginning to slowly shift, it is true that it is an artificial phenomenon, but it can influence the situation and our children will grow seeing that there are women in the Parliament, in the future when my daughter grows up she will say ‘but why I cannot be there’...and in this way gradually the stereotype will be broken in the entire society...”*

**Focus Group Discussions with Female Voters**



- **Informational preferences of women voters**

There is a clear-cut difference between women's and men's interest in politics, which has been confirmed by pre-election and post-election surveys, which demonstrate a difference of up to 10% between women's and men's positions on this issue.

- At the pre-election stage, 52% of women and 63% of men were interested in politics.
- During the elections, 34% of women were very much interested in political news, 63% to some extent (in case of men, the same indicator was respectively 45% and 52%), and 3% (of both men and women) were not interested at all.

A clear-cut difference between women's and men's informational preferences can be seen in their responses to the question about the nature of information of interest to them, the difference being 10-20%. Thus, 44% of women and 58% of men were interested in political news, respectively 46% and 37% in social news, 39% and 46% in economic news, 56% and 71% in news about the Army, 51% and 70% in news on the Karabagh conflict, and 35% and 28% in entertaining news.

**Election Express 2018 Wave 2, Final Station**

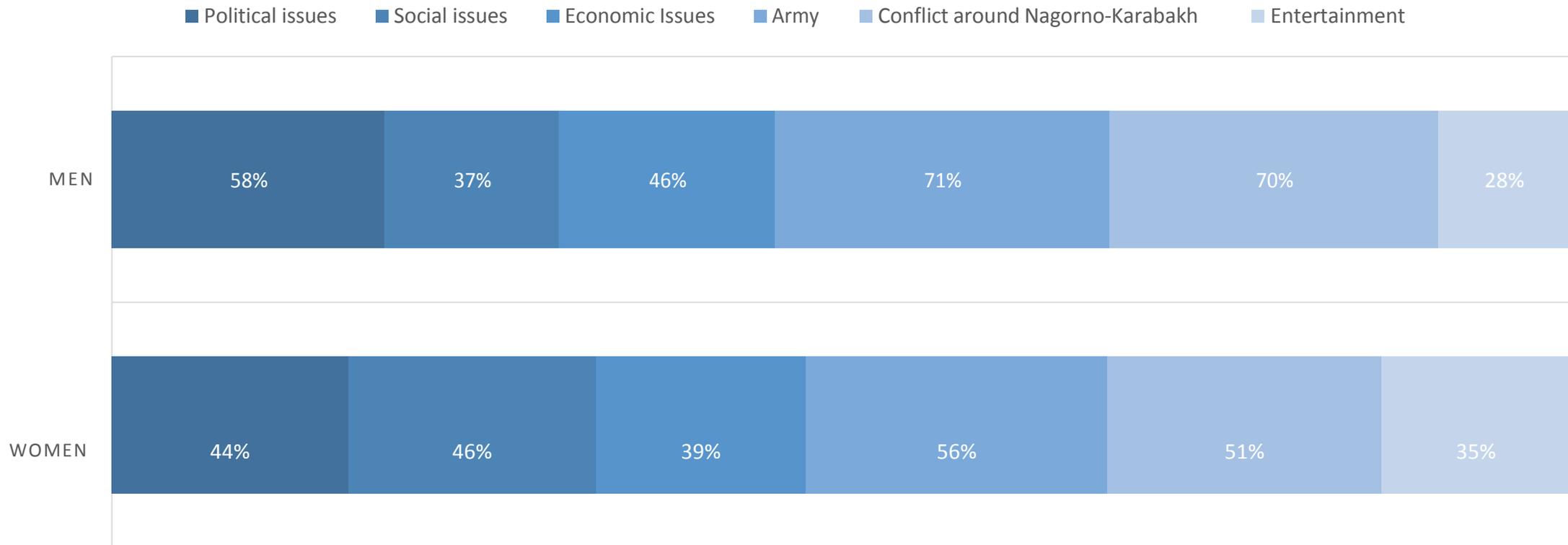
**Election Express 2018 / Parliamentary Express, Start Station**

**MPG LLC, GALLUP International Association in Armenia, 2018.**

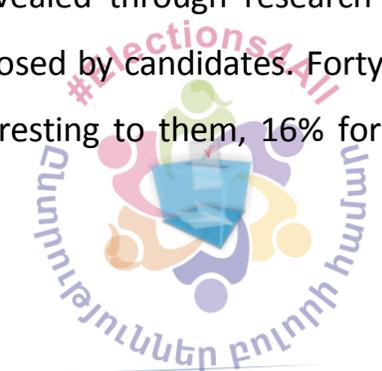
**"Media Consumption and Information Preferences in Armenia-2019," Region Research Center**



## THE NATURE OF INFORMATION OF INTEREST TO WOMEN AND MEN



Thus, the differences between women's and men's informational preferences fit within the scope of regularities revealed through research in different countries, i.e. women are more interested in information on social life, and, therefore, in solutions to the problems proposed by candidates. Forty per cent of women showed interest in election campaigns of different forces to be informed about that, 22% because it was interesting to them, 16% for orientation purposes. **Top voting issues for men and women Pew Research center, 2016**



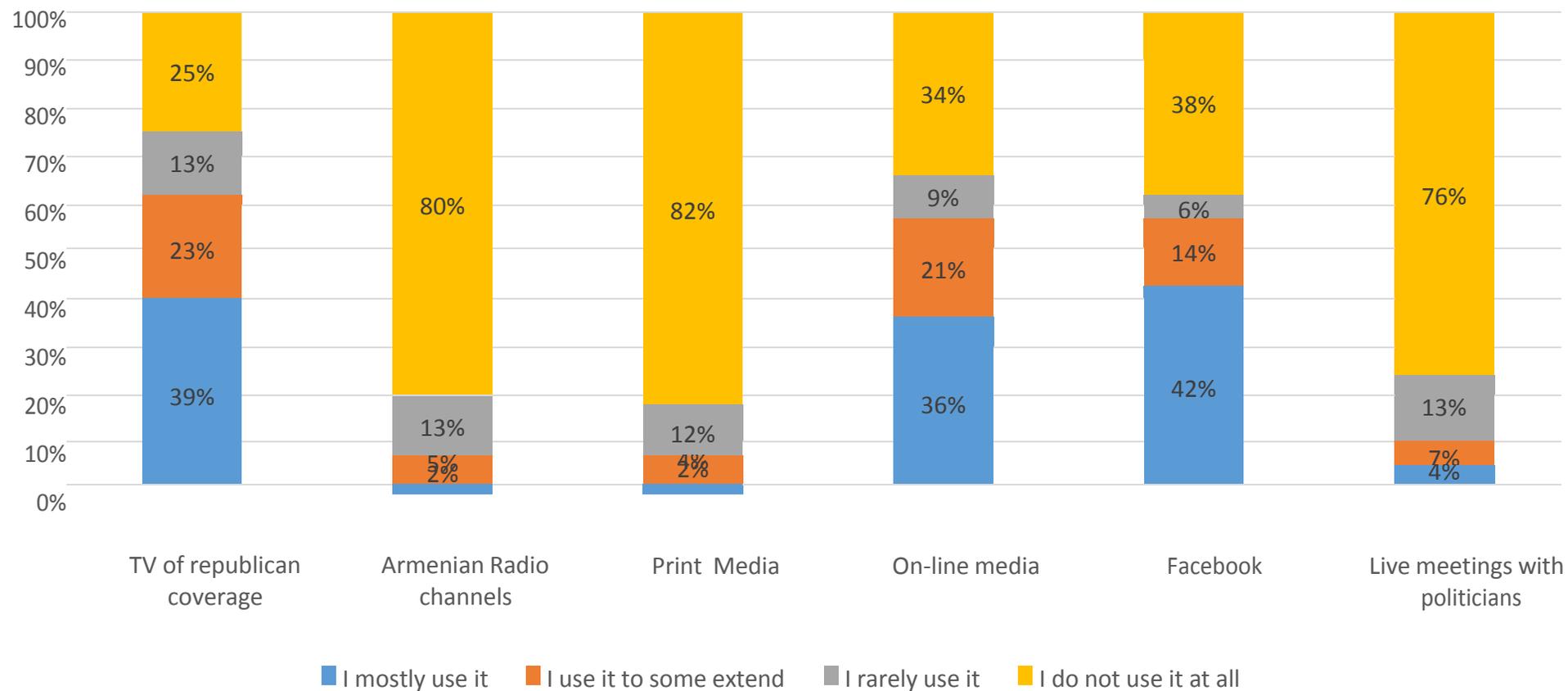
- **Preferences for information sources**

Over the recent years, the spread of new information technologies has drastically changed voter information sources. If a decade ago television dominated, now it has given in to social networks, although it continues to be dominant among the traditional media, as compared to radio and printed newspapers. According to the data of the research work on *Media Consumption and Information Preferences in Armenia-2019* carried out by *Region Research Center*, Facebook and electronic sites are the main informational source for both women and men, though there are certain differences in this matter between women and men too.

Estimated according to the data provided by *Region Research Center*, “*Media Consumption and Information Preferences in Armenia-2019*”



## How often women make use of the following sources to follow the campaign of political forces and political figures



To get information on political forces:

- Forty-two per cent of women and 48% of men use **Facebook** the most, 14% of women and men to some extent, and 38% of women and 22% of men do not use it at all.
- Thirty-nine per cent of women and 44% of men use **republican TV channels** the most, 23% of women and 25% of men to some extent, and 25% of women and 18% of men do not use them at all.
- Thirty-six per cent of women and 37% of men use **online media** the most, 21% of women and 24% of men to some extent, and 34% of women and 30% of men do not use them at all.
- Twenty per cent of women and 32% of men receive information from **radio channels**.
- Women make very little use of **printed media**, including also printed newspapers.
- Both men and women hardly consider **direct contact with politicians and political forces** as an information source, though 42% of men and 22% of women (two times less) have made use of this source to some extent.

**Thus, gender differences in usage of information sources do not exceed 5-6 points. Social networks are a preferred source for almost half of female and male voters; at the same time, men clearly dominate in the usage of this source. In terms of use of other sources, the differences between women and men are less, with the exception of the radio (in this case, the gap reaches 12 points). Women dominate in non-usage of any information source, which is expected given that the position of no interest in politics is more spread among the surveyed women.**

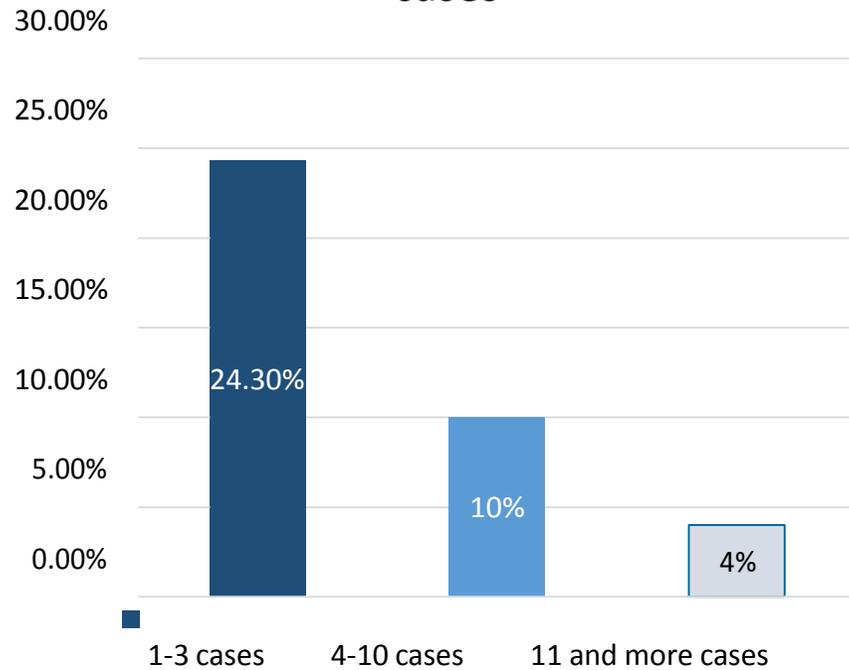


- **Factors impeding women’s electoral behavior: “family voting”**

Limitations of voter electoral behavior depend on the cultural and historical context and the level of development of the political culture of a given society. If the voter participates in election driven by high civic consciousness, voluntarily, we talk about conscious choice. There is also participation in elections for mercenary purposes, i.e. when the voter has some mercenary motivation for participation in elections and election of a specific political force. Up until recently, election bribes used in Armenia’s elections directly transformed the free electoral behavior of citizens. The forced participation model through the administrative resource was also used. These models concern both women and men. However, in case of female voters there is another model too determined by the gender culture of a given society. It is family voting, because of which women in a number of Council of Europe countries are deprived of the opportunity to freely exercise their right to vote. (PACE 1676 (2004) According to the assessments of observation missions, the confidentiality of the vote was mostly respected, though some cases were noted when voters themselves disclosed their voting or voted by families.



## Percent of Polling stations, that registered family voting cases



This phenomenon, which is quite spread in Armenia, took place during all elections, and the recent elections were no exception. This is confirmed by both electoral commissions and local observers:

*“The husband says, number 10 from My Step is a friend of our friend, a word was put in for him, so we should go and vote for whom the husband told.”*

*“In the marzes, it is more pronounced, I can say about elections in Etchmiadzin where I was in a mobile group, I could see how they would come to elect by 4-5 people; there was this father of a family, he had made the decision*

*enter the voting booth with his daughter-in-law or wife.”*

In many cases, neither commission members, nor observers, nor proxies regard this as an impermissible act, thinking that it is one family, he is the husband, and therefore, has the right, thus contributing to violation of women’s freedoms.

This also concerns women from ethnic minority communities, for example, in Armenia, these are communities of Yezidis and Molokans, on whom there is no research.

**Focus Group Discussions with Observers**



- **Issues of voters with disabilities**

Women and men with disabilities have to confront additional difficulties during elections.

*“Throughout the day, the IEOM observers noted that a significant number of polling stations (71 per cent out of 975 polling stations observed) were inaccessible to voters requiring mobility assistance, which may have led to difficulties for some of them to vote.”*

**Final Report, National Assembly Early Elections of December 9, 2018, ODIHR Election Observation Mission, Warsaw, 2019**

The peculiarities of electoral behavior of women with disabilities are determined by the fact as to what extent elections are inclusive, i.e. to what extent the accessibility of polling stations is ensured, what the relevant legislative regulations are, what the attitude of family members is towards their desire to participate in elections, whether advocacy materials are accessible to people with visual and hearing impairments and many other issues, including the stereotypic attitude by society. Each one of these circumstances can be a serious obstacle to exercising their right to vote. Especially acute are these problems for rural women.

*“There was no sign language translation during the election campaign, and for this very reason I did not understand anything. During elections my parents directed me as to whom to vote for.” /A Woman with Hearing Problems, city of Yerevan/*

*“Elections are of no interest to me at all, and I have never participated in them as I do not understand pre-election advocacy and do not trust anyone.” /A Female Urban Resident with Hearing Problems/*

See the details in *Political Participation of Women with Disabilities: Obstacles and Recommendations*, Gyumri, 2018

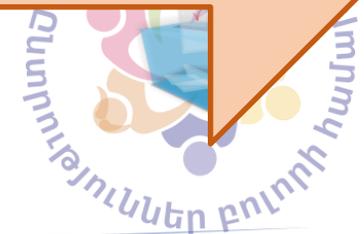


## • CHAPTER 3. WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN ORGANIZATION AND CONDUCT OF ELECTIONS

From the perspective of women's electoral behavior, of importance is also women's involvement in the administration for organization and conduct of elections:

- electoral commissions,
- and other bodies, which directly follow the organization and lawful conduct of elections, i.e. observers and proxies.

Women's participation in the process of organization and conduct of elections is important from a number of perspectives:



## Women in Electoral Commissions

According to Article 36 of the RA Electoral Code, a **three-tier** system of electoral commissions is formed for organization and conduct of elections:

- Central Electoral Commission,
- Territorial Electoral Commissions, and
- Precinct Electoral Commissions.

Since electoral commissions should ensure the exercise and protection of citizens' right to vote, they are endowed with wide powers. The law defines that in execution of their powers, they are independent, and any interference with their activities is prohibited. Important aspects of activities of electoral commissions are legality, collegiality, and publicity. The RA legislation stipulates that members of the CEC and territorial electoral commissions cannot be members of any party.

*In international practice, the importance of women's involvement in all decision-making levels of electoral commissions is highly emphasized not only from the perspective of ensuring gender balance, but also for the reason that these bodies take into account women's needs during organization of elections ( time interval for elections, determination of places of polling stations, provision of their security, etc.)*

During the period of the RA NA snap elections of December 2018, the Central Electoral Commission's membership was as follows:

- Three of its seven members were women, constituting **43%** of the general number of members.
- Chairperson and Secretary were men, and
- Deputy Chairperson was a woman.
- **Seventy per cent** of the CEC Heads of Staff were women.
- Quite high qualifications are required of the CEC members in terms of educational, scientific, and professional experience (Point 3, Article 42).

Territorial Electoral Commission consists of seven members.

The legislation also regulates the gender composition of Territorial Electoral Commissions, noting that ***"The number of representatives of each sex in the composition of Territorial Electoral Commission shall be no less than two."***

Chairpersons, Deputy Chairpersons, and Secretaries of Territorial Electoral Commissions are elected by the commissions from their ranks. :

The composition of Territorial Electoral Commissions includes **35%** of women (92 out of 265 members), however, among Chairpersons women make up **5%**, Deputy Chairpersons **16%**, and Secretaries **29%**.

Precinct Electoral Commission comprises seven members.

**Fifty-five per cent** of the membership of Precinct Electoral Commissions are women.

"Women made up 35 per cent of all PEC members; however, they were rarely holding leadership positions.

On election day, 61 per cent of PEC members at polling stations observed by the IEOM were women, and 49 per cent of visited PECs were chaired by women."

According to our approximate estimates, women make up **52%** of Chairpersons of PECs.

The Republic of Armenia National Assembly Snap Elections of December 9, 2018, ODIHR Election Observation Mission, Final Report, page 13 Articles 36, 42, 43, 44 of the RA Electoral Code <https://www.arlis.am/documentView.aspx?docid=105967>

**In the opinion of participants in Focus Group Discussions,** women are usually more involved in Precinct Electoral Commissions. They noted that there had usually been many men in the position of Commission Chairperson, however, women dominated among Secretaries. They explained it by the fact that **70% of Chairpersons nominated by the Republican Party of Armenia were men, and later this position was held by people that already had the experience.** However, during the recent elections the situation changed and the number of women chairpersons of the commissions increased. The focus group participants noted that **often women working in the area of education were appointed to this position since the commission chairpersons should be able to be literate in their work and know the law very well; in addition, women working in schools and kindergartens knew precinct residents.** The focus group participants explained the fact that there were many women in the composition of the commissions by the nature of the work, which requires long-time sedentary work, something, which men often cannot stand.

*“Because men are a little lazy (they go out, smoke, constantly drink coffee), and women are more responsible.”*

**Speaking about the peculiarities of the recent elections,** the focus group participants noted that this time, due to people’s activism, it was difficult to get on commission: there was a competition because of a great number of those who wished.

*“... during the recent elections, it was very difficult to get on commission because there was a competition.”*

For this reason, many of those with experience found themselves in reserve. A tendency to involve younger people in the process was noticeable.

*Focus Group Discussions with Commission Members*

Many noted that **women members of the commissions performed their work more responsibly.** In many cases, they performed even more than required. For example, a focus group participant said that prior to all elections she had checked whether her precinct citizens were present in the country and found out that there were numerous people in the list which would not participate in elections due to their absence from the country. She was doing that to prevent possible “ballot stuffing.”

*“To check the lists in my precinct, when I received the lists beforehand, I visited homes one by one, asked the families who was absent, who was present, and who would come to elections. As an example, they know that they are in America and will not come to vote. 40% are absent and they are in the same lists. Now try to count the percentage.”*

*Focus Group Discussions with Commission Members*

### **Training of Members of Electoral Commissions**

According to Part 3 of Article 41 of the Electoral Code, only persons who have qualification certificate can be involved in TECs. To receive the required qualification, citizens can participate in training courses organized by the CEC. After formation of TECs, the Central Electoral Commission administers training courses for commission members.

Judging from the *Questionnaire for Professional Training on Conduct of Elections* placed on the CEC web site, gender **component is not included:**

Six thousand seven persons who had participated in the training courses prior to the recent elections were given certificates. The Central Electoral Commission's report notes that about 16, 500 TEC members have participated in twelve-day training courses; the participation rate was 83 per cent, which was a manifestation of unprecedented activism.

Nevertheless, the focus group participants noted that

***"...women usually participate in training more actively and produce better results than men."***

There are also results based on pass or no pass system and test tasks.

***"I should say that it is true that men are more impatient, though by little percentage: in these training courses, you have to sit, listen and then answer the questions. Very often they either write very quickly in a hit or miss fashion, as they say, and submit their work, or even leave their work half-finished and go out. At this stage, they dropped out."***

*Communication on the Activities of the Central Electoral Commission, page 3  
Focus Group Discussions with Commission Members*

### **Female Party Proxies and Authorized Representatives**

To defend their interests, parties and candidates participating in elections can have proxies. Parties present for registration certified proxies in the number equaling three times the number of the formed polling stations.

The electoral commission which has done the registration gives proxy certificates in the number equaling three times the number of the formed polling stations to the candidate and the authorized representative of the party participating in elections.

Parties participating in elections can appoint up to three authorized representatives to the electoral commission which has registered the party's candidate list.

It is known that on voting day, 27, 311 proxies observed the election process, however, it was not possible to find out the percentage of women in this number due to the absence of the data.

Point 2, Article 33, the RA Electoral Code

<https://www.arlis.am/documentView.aspx?docid=105967>

Point 1, Article 35, the RA Electoral Code

<https://www.arlis.am/documentView.aspx?docid=105967>

Communication on the Activities of the Central Electoral Commission, page 17

<https://res.elections.am/images/doc/release09.12.18.pdf>

## Women on Election Observation Mission

- Observation mission during elections is extremely important from the perspective of ensuring their transparency, increasing society's trust, and providing alternative information. It is to some extent a restraining factor for electoral violations :

Election observation mission can be

Short-term, only on Election Day

Long-term, during the entire electoral process

According to the RA legislation, the right to election observation mission can be exercised by:

- 1) International organizations and those foreign non-governmental organizations, whose charter objectives include issues of democracy and human rights protection.
- 2) Those non-governmental organizations of the Republic of Armenia, whose charter objectives include issues of democracy and human rights protection. Organizations wishing to conduct an election observation mission can do so after being accredited by the Central Electoral Commission.

- It is desirable that observers include also organizations dealing with protection of women's rights since it is them that can observe how women and men participate in elections, how free women are in their choices and whether their right to choose is obstructed.
- It is important that women and men be equally represented among observers.

2018 RA National Assembly Snap Elections

**22 local NGOs,  
17813 observers,**  
received the observer status

**Only four** out of these organizations **are dealing with women's rights protection**

According to the report by the *Independent Observer* Non-governmental Alliance, election observation traditionally engages more women than men.

**Sixty-five per cent of the program team were women, 35% men.**

Eighty-five applicants became long-term observers, and 737 short-term.



**A great number of women and girls participated in the RA National Assembly elections of December 2018.** In the past, part of them had participated in elections *as observers or proxies of different parties*. The experience of each one of them is unique. Part of them were in the opposition and part of them were loyal or pro-government. However, one circumstance united the observers: they were not indifferent. Many became observers being civic activists to prevent or record those violations that usually occurred during elections.

*“...the main principle of my civic image is to remain in the opposition and to remain a critic, that is my civic image since I am a representative of civil society. For now it is so.”*

Many confirmed their desire to help bring about fair elections by the fact that they viewed being an observer as a mission and were ready to do the work for free.

*«...I do not regard election observation as a paid work. It is a mission for me and that's it, i.e. I can do that as a volunteer and not expect anything in return because it gives much more to my and my state's future than the money that we, for example, receive as a compensation.»*

There were also those who became observers out of interest wishing to see what was actually happening during elections. Long-term election observation was of greater interest than short-term one since, as confessed by the focus group participants, in case of long-term observation they had the opportunity to observe the entire election campaign process and not only the election day.



The greater part of the observers emphasized that the recent elections were more organized, and those who noticed violations connected them with the inexperience of chairpersons, although there were also those who criticized the entire electoral system.

*“I do not view it as an election, it was more like non-election, when you elect neither a party, nor an idea, instead you elect an individual, and you see whether that individual has a rating or not in a certain district, but it is unclear whether that person is going to become a minister in the end, or a deputy, you do not know what you elect for, that was the main pressure.”*

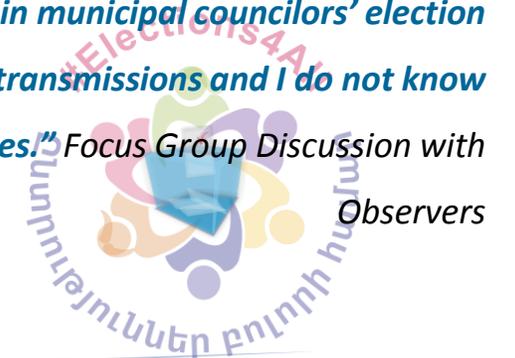
One of the distinctive features of the recent elections was the fact that volunteer observers from the Diaspora had arrived too driven by the desire to help the process of democratization under the conditions of the country’s civic uprising.

A civic activist, who left Armenia for France in 2011, confesses that there was only one goal for participation as an observer in the elections:

*“to make a small contribution by action at this important stage for development of the country, to make one small contribution, to assist, I do not know, I think that our presence was helpful at least for the given polling station, for the commission.”*

The girl confesses that during the preceding elections she was a proxy and that she has perceived all elections as a struggle, and

*“during the catastrophic elections of 2008, I refused to play any role personally under that regime ... because I was terribly scared of violence and God knows of what, but during this period, I followed the process from afar with nostalgia, with regret, to participate in municipal councilors’ election myself, I followed, perhaps same way as all other followers, through all social networks and also through those live transmissions and I do not know what else and said that, thanks God, in our country too elections are beginning to resemble those of civilized countries.”*



## • **CHAPTER 4. FEMALE CANDIDATES IN ELECTORAL PROCESSES**

- Women's participation in elections through national and territorial lists
- National lists: 32% of candidates were women
- Territorial lists: women made up 33% of candidates
- Principles of compilation of candidate lists
- Impact of gender quota on nomination of women
- The quota effectiveness
- Women's incentives/motivation to become a deputy (MP)
- The most wide-spread scenarios of women's entry into the Parliament
- Age and professional characteristics of women candidates
- Age composition of women candidates
- Employment areas of women candidates



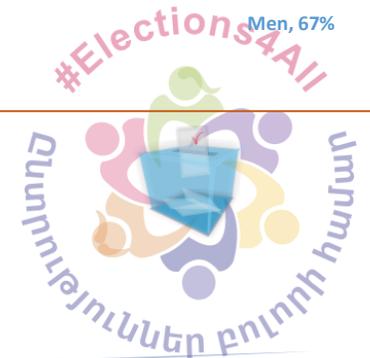
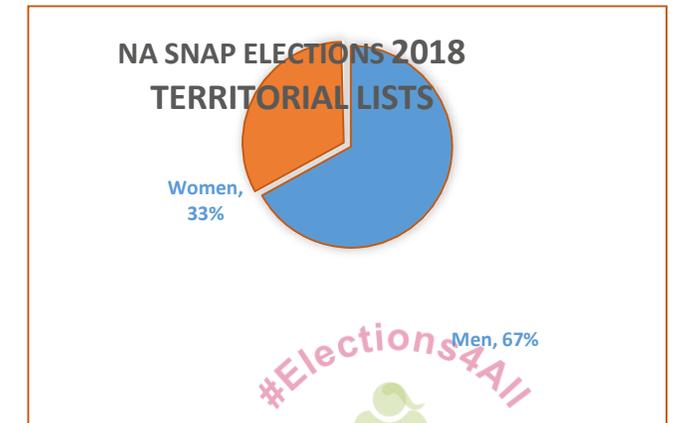
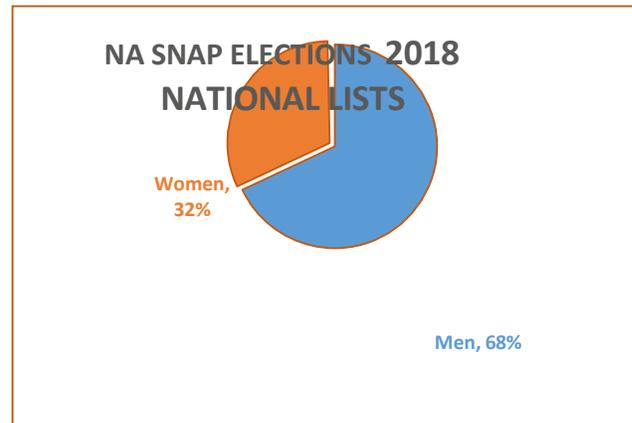
**Women’s electoral behavior in their status of candidates is characterized by indicators describing their quantitative and qualitative participation and is largely determined by the peculiarities of the current electoral system, availability of women support mechanisms in elections and their effectiveness, as well as by the level of intra-party democracy.**

In the snap parliamentary elections held on December 9, 2018, out of 1 444 candidates included in the national lists of 11 political forces, nine parties and two alliances, 464 were women. Out of 1 287 candidates participating through territorial lists 429 were women.

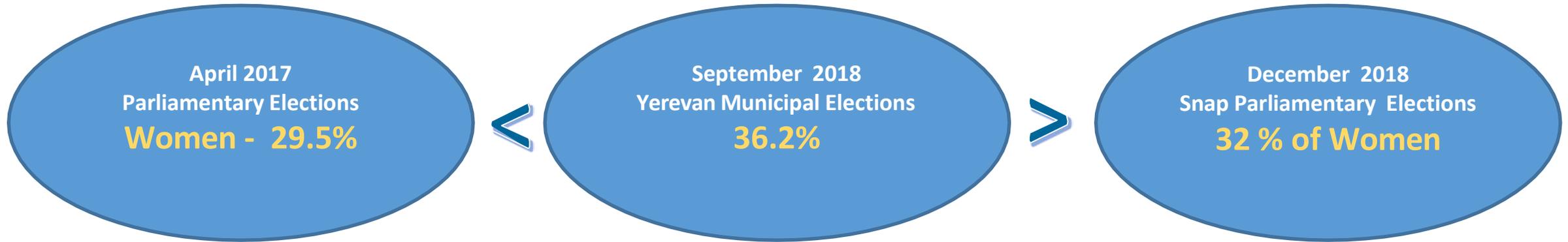
Certain guarantees for participation of women candidates in elections have been provided for by current legislative regulations, according to which “in any integer group of four (1-4, 1-8, 1-12, etc.) in party candidate lists

***The number of representatives of each sex shall not exceed 75 per cent.”***

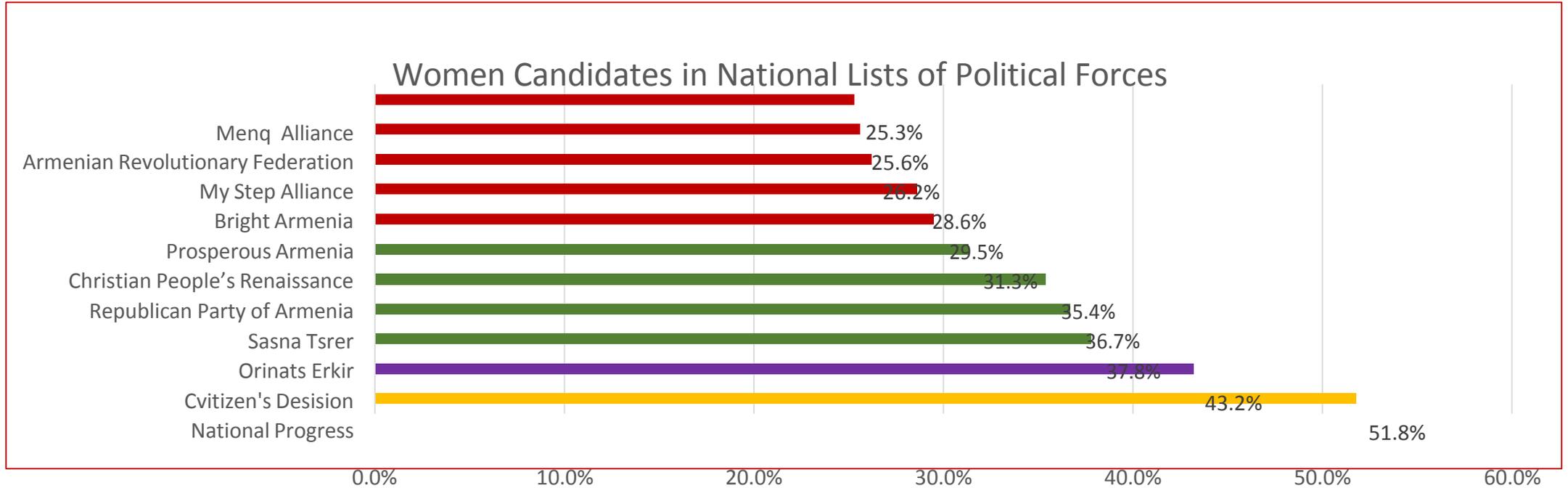
As a result of the elections, half of the mandates were distributed based on the votes garnered through national or “closed” lists, and the second half through territorial or “open” lists.



- **Women's participation in elections according to national and territorial lists**



Half of the political forces running in the parliamentary elections had more than 30% female candidates.



- Observing the gender behavior of the political forces striving for the majority of votes, one can state that it is in conformity with the known law **“the closer to the authorities, the fewer women,”**

Yelk Alliance/My Step Alliance

2017 – 32%



2018 – 26.3%

Republican Party of Armenia

2017 – 25.4%



2018 – 35.4%

*“Although in the lead-up to the snap parliamentary elections were broadly discussed changes to the Electoral Code, which considerably improved opportunities for women’s participation, the elections were held in line with the old legislation, and even the revolutionary force represented by My Step Alliance which advocated for these very changes and which initiated a discussion on the issue of women’s 40-50% participation, included approximately 26% of women in its pre-election lists, as required by the old law in force.”*

*From an in-depth interview with Zara Hovhannissyan, Human Rights Activist*

All the parties with the exception of the *National Progress Party* have noted in their conversations with observers that they had difficulties recruiting experienced women candidates to meet the 25% quota requirement.

“While gender quota assumes more efforts be undertaken by political parties to encourage and facilitate women political participation, regrettably many contestants only formally included women in the candidate lists.”

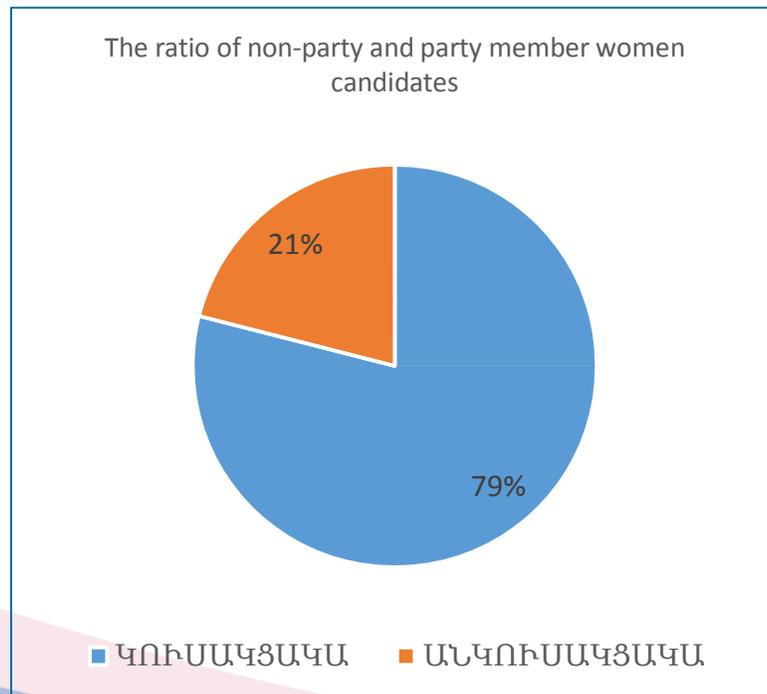
*Republic of Armenia, Early Parliamentary Elections, 9 December 2018  
ODIHR Election Observation Mission Final Report*

**Focus Group Discussions** held within the framework of this study and an analysis of the candidate lists demonstrate that parties had difficulties with engaging women candidates especially in the marzes (provinces.).

*“Being a liberal political force, Bright Armenia had problems with engaging women from marzes because we literally could not find women to engage in the political processes and later in the lists. The reason for this is that there is fear among women. It comes from families, culture, and stereotypes...”*

**Focus Group Discussion with Women Candidates**

To overcome the difficulties with meeting the quota requirement, the parties tried to involve non-party women.



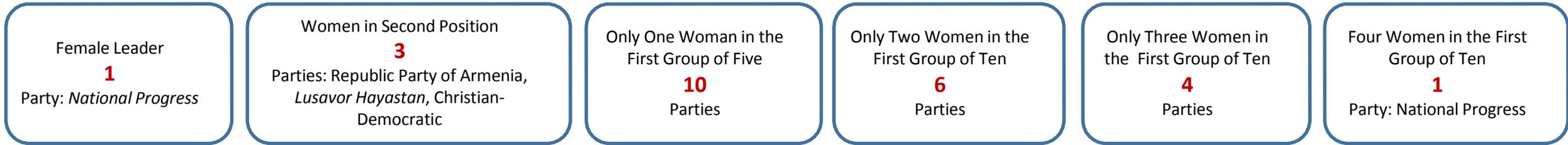
- Very often, these women are **more recognizable in and have contributed more to society** than the rank and file of a party.
- It is noteworthy that **the number of non-partisan women has considerably increased as compared to 2012, when it stood at 9%.**
- This can partly be explained by the fact that **the considerable part of parties running in the elections were newly-formed and could have cadre problems when compiling their candidate lists, especially given that the number of non-partisan male candidates was also high (19%).**



Review of the candidate lists also demonstrates that the majority of parties in both 2017 and snap 2018 elections were guided by the principle of every fourth as defined by law in relation to women's representation in the candidate lists and had serious problems with featuring women candidates in the front-runner positions of 1-4, explaining it by the above noted "lack of experience among women," which is also manifested in underrepresentation of women candidates in the party leadership positions. In particular,

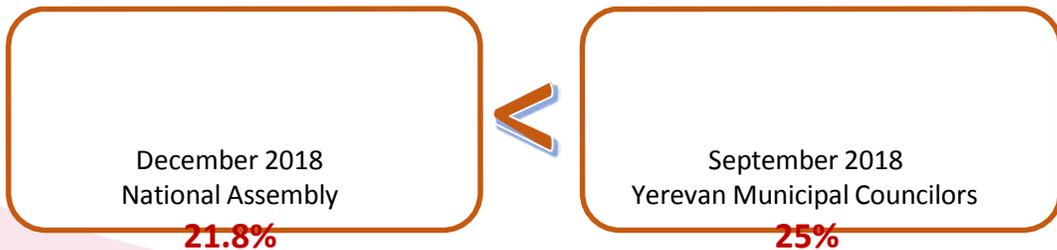


**National Assembly (NA) Snap Elections  
2018**



- On average, women made up 25% in the first groups of ten in the lists of political forces which participated in the elections, which is a setback compared with Yerevan municipal elections

**Women in the First Group of Five**



**Women in the First Group of Ten**



Looking at the representation of women candidates in the candidate lists of eleven contestant political forces from the perspective of gender quota improvement, one can state that **concerns related to the women's potential are in reality extremely exaggerated.** The majority of the political forces have showed a good will in terms of women's engagement and have, on average, featured 32% of female candidates, which cannot be explained by the above noted thesis of "formal involvement of women" since it is more than the 25% quota defined by the current Electoral Code and the 30% proposed in the draft amendments to the Electoral Code which failed to pass on the eve of elections. In essence, the 30% threshold can be considered to be a passed stage for the parties starting from the preceding 2017 elections, when the political forces had on average featured about 30% of female candidates in their candidate lists and this is an important argument for women NGOs, which propose that the quota defining the proportion between sexes in candidate lists be at least increased to 40%.

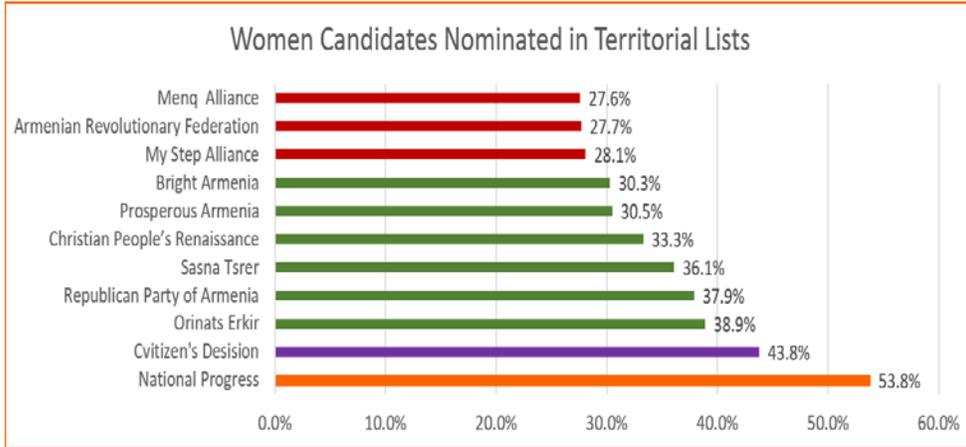
Within this context, the constantly voiced **problem of women's lack of experience in reality relates also to men** since it is not the case that all male candidates included in the candidate lists are ready and prepared for legislative work.

*In reality, this problem reflects drawbacks in the party cadre policy and gender quota, as is very well demonstrated by international experience, can act as a trigger compelling parties to get concerned about their own cadre in terms of preparedness of both women and men.*



- **Territorial Lists**

In the 2018 National Assembly elections, overall, 1 287 candidates, **out of which 429 or 33% were women**, were nominated through the so called **rating lists** (preferential voting). This is some progress compared to the preceding 2017 parliamentary elections when the number of women in territorial lists stood at 30.8%.

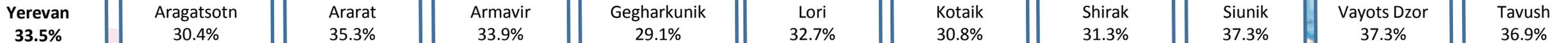


Comparing the territorial lists presented by some parties in the 2017 and 2018 parliamentary elections, we can state that RPA has showed 10.9 per cent increase in women candidates, *Rule of Law*, which in the preceding elections participated under the name of *Armenian Renaissance*, has showed 9 per cent increase, *Prosperous Armenia*, which participated as *Tsarukyan Alliance* in the preceding elections, has provided for 2.5 per cent increase in terms of women's representation, and Armenian Revolutionary Federation (ARF) 3.3 per cent increase.

As regards *My Step* and *We* Alliances, they participated in the preceding elections in a different format: *Civic Contract*, which is a member of *My Step*, and *Bright Armenia Hayastan*, and *Hanrapetuin* participated as *Yelk Alliance*, and the *Free Democrats* Party making up part of *We Alliance* participated separately. For this very reason, a comparison is not correct, although we should note that in 2017 *Yelk* featured 33% of female candidates in territorial lists, and *Free Democrats* 36.4%.

The largest number of women candidates (37%) were featured in Electoral District #12 (Siunik, Vayots Dzor) and #13 (Tavush) out of the republic's 13 electoral districts. The smallest number of women candidates (29-30%) were included in the lists of Electoral Districts #8 (Gegharkunik) and #7 (Aragatsotn). In Yerevan districts, women candidates on average constituted 34%.

### Nomination of Women Candidates in Electoral Districts



The experience of all parliamentary elections held in Armenia demonstrates that **the process of compilation of lists** has never been described as democratic and transparent. The political parties viewed this process as an intra-party matter and did not voice the principles that guided them. The lack of transparency in this process actually manifested a bigger problem – lack of intra-party democracy.

*“The details of the process of compilation of the lists inside parties became evident for society only in those cases when they were accompanied by public scandals or there was an information leakage. A similar situation came about during the parliamentary elections held in 2012 when at the same time a number of women from different political forces voiced about an unfair treatment during the compilation of party lists. Their statements directly demonstrated that the process of party lists compilation was neither democratic, nor transparent. This was an occasion that compelled the parties to present some explanations to the public about the principles guiding the compilation of the lists.”*

*An in-depth interview with expert T. Hovnatanyan*

**The introduction of a new system of election in 2017**, namely of open and closed lists, removed the problem of the principles for compilation of the lists to the background, bringing to the fore the problem of non-competitiveness of female candidates under territorial or so called rating system of election.

**In the lead-up to the 2018 snap elections**, the process of compilation of lists was shorter than usual. The majority of parties, especially newly-created political forces, experienced problems with lack of cadre, which the parties, as demonstrated by the focus group discussions held within the scope of this study, tried to address in different ways, including through application of such principles which would allow to ensure also the effectiveness of gender quota.

During the 2018 snap elections, in the public spotlight was especially the process of formation of the candidate list of *My Step Alliance* (the main core of which is *Civic Contract Party*). According to some members of the *Civic Contract Party*, the party has published four principles based on which the lists were compiled:

Being a political figure,

The ability to express a political position and text,

Diversity of professions, which will ensure future work in NA commissions of different areas,

Having gone a long way with *Civic Contract*.



The party leadership has conducted interviews with citizens who have expressed a desire **to join this revolutionary team**. Applied was also a method of proposals to get involved in the list. The proposals were made by party leaders and most active members. In this respect, especially active were women involved in the party leadership, who, in essence, were paving the way to politics for other women by proposing to include them in the candidate list.



*“I am non-partisan and it was an important principle for me to remain non-partisan. I have received the proposal to get involved in the candidate list from three members of the party board at the same time: Zaruhi Batoyan, Ararat Mirzoyan, and Lena Nazaryan. All three of them had written to me with one day difference and Zara’s and Lena’s proposal was very important for me since it was indicative of the atmosphere within the party when women try to really support and engage other women.”*

**Civic Contract member, from a focus group with women candidates**

Getting involved in the lists, many also became party members. That is to say, the lists, especially for young parties, are **a method of recruitment into the party**, though there are also non-partisans in the candidate lists.

*“...Of course, there are non-partisans in our Alliance, but if any citizen wants to run in elections, they have that opportunity. This is simply an issue of parliamentarism and, in general, of engagement with a political team so that you could bring to life, together with like-minded people, those goals and ideas that you have and get support for that. I believe that we are moving along this way.”*

**Civic Contract member, from a focus group with women candidates**

*“I am new in politics as for the preceding ten and more years I have been very active in different civic movements, but after the revolution, being a member of the political team I started to work in the Government. And it became somewhat complicated for me to be a member of the team without official membership in the party since you have to share the responsibility under all circumstances... For this reason, I decided to become a party member. Almost at the same time I received the proposal to get enrolled in the candidate list.”*

**Civic Contract member, from a focus group with women candidates**

After publication of the lists, critical opinions were voiced in the press, in particular, about “political thought being left out of the Alliance list” and that the lists had been compiled based on the principle of loyalty to the Alliance leader.

*“...The principles of formation of the Parliament have been at the least questionable, if not outright objectionable to me. As a rule, the proportional and rating lists of My Step, and later also of other parties, included few people who displayed a certain political mindset, had some political knowledge and perceptions. In this respect, women and men were selected by the same principle with only one difference that women could be more relied upon since, as a rule, women are more loyal to those they devote themselves to and more combative in defense of the authorities, something, which we are witnessing after the formation of the Parliament. I do not think this to be a positive development in a sense that you need to analyze the situation a little bit more profoundly before starting to support or criticize the steps undertaken by the authorities...”*

**From an in-depth interview with Narine Mkrtychyan, Head of National Press Club**



**According to observations made by some experts, over the recent 30 years, Armenia, in its political practice, has been guided by the principle “close to the leader, or not”, and women are not an exception in this sense, they find their way into candidate lists thanks to connections they have with the party leader and the quota requirement plays a secondary role in this matter.**

*“In many cases, women and girls have been enrolled in the pre-election list of this or that party not because of their professional qualities or participation in the joint struggle, but because in this structure they enjoyed better relations with the party leader.”*

**From an in-depth interview with political technologist Armen Badalyan**

**However, participants in the focus group discussions do not share this point of view, highlighting much more democratic mechanisms for formation of candidate lists and emphasizing the role of the quota supporting women in this matter.**

### ***Intra-party “primaries”***

According to members of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation, the process of compilation of the lists in the party is “very democratic.” It involves development of criteria, according to which marz (province) structures carry out rating assessment among possible candidates; as a result, the list of the selected candidates is sent to the Supreme Body.

*“The local groups sent, in advance, their candidates to the marz structure. At least 25 per cent of the candidates should be women. Each marz-level convention decides on the candidate selection procedure itself. For example, we developed candidate selection criteria and assigned a certain score to each criterion, compiled a list of candidates, after which we all gave scores to the candidates in the list according to the criteria. So, we actually conducted a rating assessment, included those who received the highest scores in our marz list and sent it to the Supreme Body.”*

The idea of the rating assessment applied by some ARF structures is similar to the primaries carried out by the party in the lead-up to the presidential elections of 2013, which was the first and probably the last such practice in the Armenian political reality.

### **From an in-depth interview with ARF member Armine Kiureghyan Self-nomination and selection according to criteria**

According to members of *Bright Armenia* Party, when compiling the lists, they are guided by criteria, which include the intensity of involvement in party work, participation in party building and assistance to the party (financial, work contribution, etc.). Each candidate is self-nominated, then his/her candidacy is discussed by the Governing Board, which takes into consideration the above noted activism and decides to what extent a given candidate deserves to be nominated and in which position of the list.

*“In terms of work contribution, we ascribe importance to what extent the person is willing to get involved in work since we sometimes have meetings during working hours, and people have homes, families and may, naturally, not be ready for that. We all realize that the party is expanding, growing, and developing, and, therefore, the work should be more extensive in order to succeed.”*

It should be noted that meeting the work contribution principle requires additional efforts on the part of women since time and financial resource constraints are one of the main obstacles due to which women burdened with family duties are non-competitive as compared to men.

**Member of *Bright Armenia* Party, focus group discussion**

***“The Council of Supporters is also entitled to its say”***

Free Democrats have compiled their list taking into account the work contribution of a given person, his/her political experience and position in the party hierarchy.

*“The party has a council of supporters since, as we know, many members of civil society and people engaged in political activism are not inclined to become partisan, they are kind of afraid of that, but support the ideas of a given party... This council includes many young people, and a representative of the Council of Supporters, which includes many young people, takes part in the expanded session of the Party Board, which makes decisions on the lists, with the right to a consultative voice, but not to voting.”*

The lists of the *Free Democrats* Party compiled based on the noted approach were then selectively every other one compared with those of the *Hanrapetutiu* Party, a member of *We Alliance*, based on the principle of equality. Taking into consideration the fact that during the preceding 2017 elections, women included in the list of the *Free Democrats* Party made up 38%, and during 2018 elections *We Alliance* featured 25.3% of women in its list, one can assume that the decrease in the number of women candidates happened as a result of the above noted comparison of the lists of the two parties.

**Member of the *Free Democrats* Party, focus group discussion**

***Self-nomination and secret ballot***

According to members of the newly-created *Citizen’s Decision* Party, they applied the principle of self-nomination, after which internal selection was made by secret ballot. In the event of garnering equal number of votes, the final decision was made by the executive body, again by secret ballot.

*“The list of aspirants was big, up to 58 persons, and a secret ballot was cast. During the entire day from 9 am to 8 pm all members voted for the candidate... Two hundred voted for 58 and those garnering the most votes were included in the prominent positions in the list. Female and male candidates were almost equally enrolled.”*

It should be noted that women made up 43% of the candidates in the lists of the *Citizen’s Decision* Party and two factors were decisive in this matter. First, the main resource of the party were socially active women and men. Second, the newly-created party had little chance to be elected to the Parliament and under the circumstance, competitiveness between female and male candidates was low. Nevertheless, even under these circumstances, according to focus group participants, men appeared in the frontline positions and, thus, quota played its role.

**Member of the *Citizen’s Decision* Party, focus group discussion**

***The role of the party leader in compilation of lists***

The above noted principles underlying the compilation of lists are in some mismatch with the opinion of experts, according to whom, the parties of Armenia are primarily operating by the authoritarian principle. This is based on the fact that electorate recognizes and perceives parties only by their leaders, which is attested by sociological surveys on electorate preferences conducted in different years. Therefore, in the majority of parties the opinion of the first person in compilation of candidate lists was the most decisive. For this very reason, the process related to compilation of candidate lists is largely closed to the public.

***“Today parties are authoritarian systems, one person or a group of persons make decisions and the rest simply submit; during elections, lists are compiled according to their discretion.”***

**Expert Stepan Danielyan**

<https://hetq.am/hy/article/89445>

Within the framework of this study, the level of intra-party democracy was viewed from the perspective of impeding women's electoral activism and inclusion of women candidates in candidate lists.

Focus group discussions conducted during the study have demonstrated that irrespective of principles for compilation of lists inside the parties, the quota stipulated by legislation provides obvious guarantees for engagement of certain women candidates and their inclusion in at least every fourth position.

In addition, many parties are trying to overcome authoritarian practices by replacing them with more democratic principles. To what extent they succeed in achieving that can be a subject for a separate study, however, for Armenia which adopted parliamentary system of governance through its 2015 constitutional reforms it is extremely important that parties develop as democratic structures.

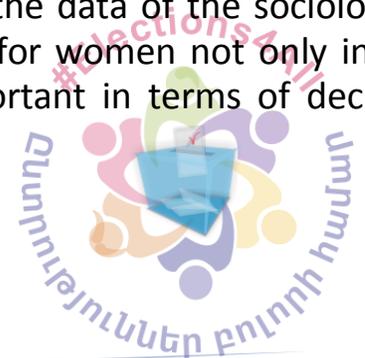
For this very purpose, experts emphasize the necessity of amendments to the Law on Parties among priority reforms carried out in the post-revolutionary period.

### **Impact of gender quota on nomination of women**

The quota principle found its way into the RA Electoral Code after 1999, and from this perspective posing a question whether “for or against quotas” is considered a passed stage. Nevertheless, similar treatment of the issue is to some extent still present in public perceptions and political field, although it is being gradually replaced by discussions on the quota proportion and effectiveness.

According to research conducted over the past ten years, the attitude of the greater part of society to quotas is positive. Moreover, in terms of women's representation in the Parliament and attitude towards the quota, parties are much more conservative than ordinary citizens who are ready to see more women in the Parliament than are nominated by parties in their lists.

At least 57% of respondents demonstrates a positive attitude to the idea of setting quotas at different levels of political and public administration and, moreover, considers 30-40% as an optimal size of gender quota in legislature. According to the data of the sociological survey on *Men and Gender Equality in Armenia* conducted in 2016, two-thirds of respondents support quotas for women not only in the country's governance and local self-government system, but also for business sector positions which are important in terms of decision making. Gender peculiarities of women's socio-political participation.



The experience of the quota application demonstrates that women candidates confess, although not in public, that its presence has played a decisive role for their inclusion in the lists. During their public speeches, the greater part of women candidates prefer to indicate only that they received a proposal from the party, and they do not know to what extent this proposal was determined by the quota.

***“It is difficult to say whether the quota helped me or not. I simply got a proposal, got acquainted with the principles of the political force, which were close to my perceptions, and accepted the proposal.”***

***Arpi Karapetyan, Bright Armenia***

The other part of women candidates, noting that the quota has not played a role in their case and they were included in the list thanks to their high personal qualities, admit that for other women it is necessary:

***“The quota did not help me since for a long time I had been active in social area. However, not all women have the same strength, persistence and courage. In an environment where men make up the majority and men’s rules apply, it is very difficult for women...”***

***Zara Batoyan, My Step Alliance***

Nevertheless, almost all admit, one way or another, that the increase in the number of women in the National Assembly has been made possible by the quota, and under the circumstances of the Armenian political culture, traditions and extremely stereotypic society, it will not be possible, without quota, to ensure women’s advancement not only in legislature, but also in the executive power, and that became obvious with the first appointments to the executive power bodies.

***“If we were able to increase women’s participation in the National Assembly through quotas at the time when it was impossible to imagine it, now we should think about the fact that we have a problem of setting certain quotas also in the executive body. It is a completely different environment. I believe that we should explore whether there is a practice of setting quotas in the executive body in other countries of the world. But I am confident that it is necessary because if there is no demand, no equal election takes place and at least at the top level men always appear. This is actually a legislative issue, and in the future when the new National Assembly starts discussing the Electoral Code, I am sure that the current 30% threshold will be increased.”***

***Gayane Abrahamyan, My Step Alliance***



The necessity of quota is justified by the existing gender stereotypes, political traditions, and psychological barriers. Even under conditions of an unprecedented growth of women's civic activism, the quota has played a positive role for enrollment of women in the lists. Participants in the focus group discussions have noted that discriminatory treatment of women is still present and quota should be applied also for elections to local self-government bodies:

*“During the compilation of the lists, even the secret ballot resulted in a situation when men appeared in frontline positions. Today, men and women are not ready to see women and girls on the frontline. These stereotypes have not been broken yet and I am firmly for quotas and even their increase, including their application during elections to local self-government bodies.”*

When talking about the impact of quotas, it is stressed that it is a necessary, though temporary means:

*“We should aspire to equal representation of women and men in the National Assembly. The quota is a necessary, albeit temporary measure along this way. Parallel to that, we should apply such measures which will ensure women's representation without quotas. The best way for this is as a minimum such development of their agenda by some female and male political figures which will help women's empowerment and self-empowerment.”*

**Maria Karapetyan, My Step Alliance**

*“The quota system is helping women to occupy their place in the political field, enabling them to show the importance of women's representation in political processes by their own example. In the future when the electorate starts to pay more attention to personal and professional merits of candidates, rather than to their gender, quotas will lose their significance and will not be necessary anymore.”*

**Anush Beghloyan, My Step Alliance**

*“Quotas are extremely important in a transitional period, to break the wall. However, this stage should pass and not stagnate with women always connecting their advancement only with quotas. By constantly adding quotas, we come to confront a situation when women become passive expecting that they will be included in pre-election lists as objects of “positive discrimination.” Women should earn their way into the lists by their work. And if you wish to make constant use of “the special support measures” provided by men to you, it is difficult to talk about equality because by that you are expecting a favor from men.”*

**Arpine Hovhannisyan, Republican Party of Armenia**

*“I believe that quotas will still be maintained, so far it is the only way, but our problem is not only with the authorities, but with society as well: to change its standards, to increase the level of political processes in society. If this changes, we can say that the issue of quotas and discrimination will gradually be removed to the background.”*

**Narine Mkrtychyan,  
National Press Club**

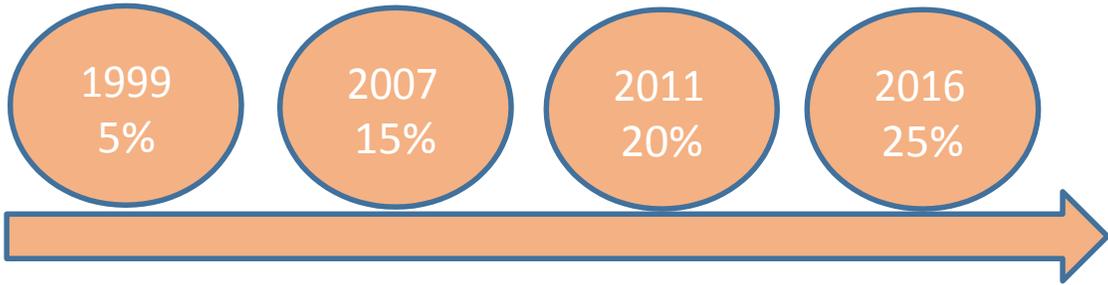
Among the negative aspects of quota application is noted the circumstance that by guaranteeing women's inclusion in candidate lists, it can somewhat reduce women's motivation to grow, be active and competitive.

*“Quotas are always a temporary, problematic and interim solution. It is problematic in a sense that it is a surgical intervention in the male-dominant culture and always a question is posed as to why we cannot be elected through a natural way. Perhaps, we do not deserve it. On the other hand, quotas can also be subjected to feministic criticism by arguing as to why it should be less than 50% given that we make up half of that society. It would be helpful if all female political figures devote a part of their agenda to paving the way for other women so that they could appear in governing bodies and by that contribute to cancellation of the quota in the next elections.”*

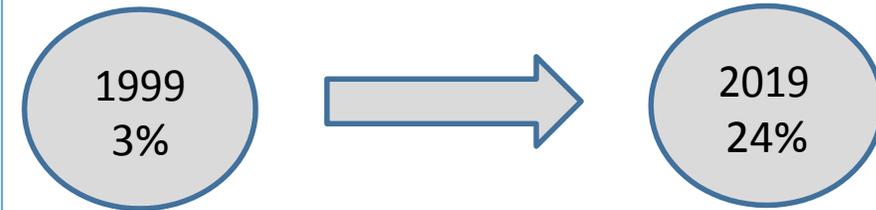
- **Quota effectiveness**

The mechanism for support of women’s political participation in Armenia– quota, was for the first time introduced in the Electoral Code as an imposition of a certain percentage requirement for the under-represented sex in party candidate lists . Introduced in 1999, it also makes certain impact on women’s electoral behavior:

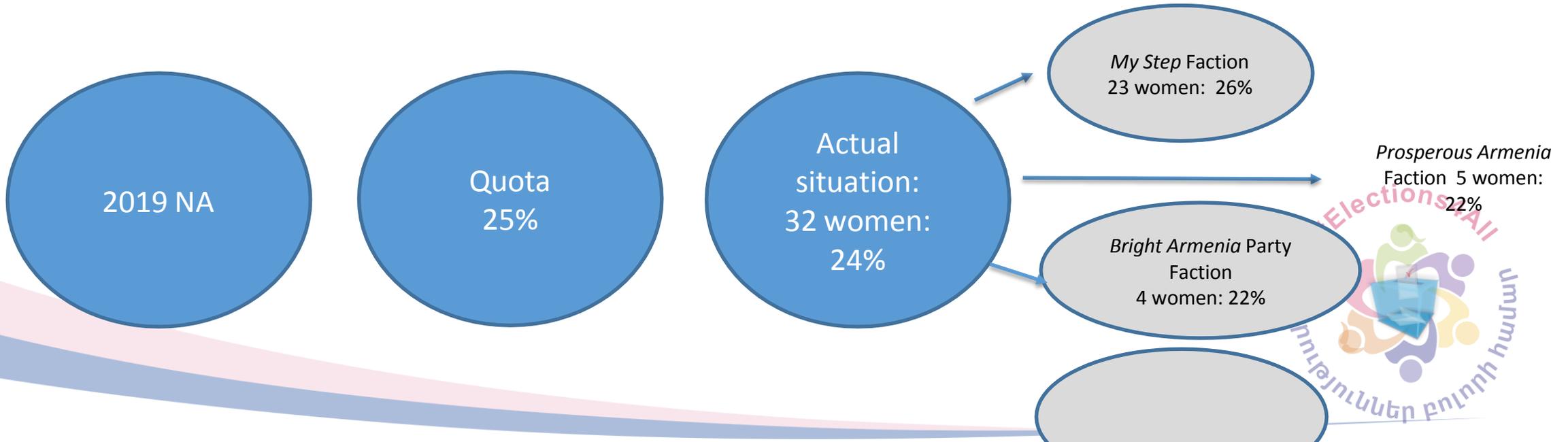
- **Quota increase in the RA Electoral Code**



**Women’s representation in the National Assembly**



In essence, this change is an indicator of the quota effectiveness.



Taking into consideration that the noted political forces had included respectively 26%, 29.8%, and 26.4% of women candidates in their candidate lists, one can state that in these elections quota worked to the possible extent only for *My Step* Faction. At the same time, one should state that even under these circumstances the problem of women's under-representation in the National Assembly has not been solved yet.

Assessing the quota effectiveness, one should take into account the fact that initial expectations were lower than the applicable 25 per cent quota. The reason for this is that according to the current electoral system, half of the mandates is to be distributed based on territorial or "open" lists, and although quota is maintained in their case, the election results are determined by votes cast by electorate in favor of a specific candidate.

*Territorial or] "open lists may work to the advantage of well-known male candidates. Thus, there is an inherent danger that the introduction of open lists may result in the election of fewer women."*

#### **Venice Commission Report on *Impact of Electoral Systems on Women's Representation in Politics***

*The 2017 elections to the National Assembly held for the first time with application of open or "rating" lists demonstrated that these lists were much more disadvantageous for women candidates than even the former majoritarian electoral system. If during the 2012 elections the impact of the 20% quota was neutralized by half as a result of transfers and positions shifts of women candidates for internal party considerations and their self-withdrawals, which, according to experts, "in many cases were incomprehensible for the public," the effectiveness of the 2017 quota was clearly impacted by introduction of territorial lists, due to which women simply were left outside the struggle unfolded between moneyed men. So, as a result of application of the 25% quota, only 18% of women were de facto elected to the Parliament.*

*Back in 2016, during the discussions of the draft of the current Electoral Code, Venice Commission experts noted in their published observations that in the event of application of territorial lists the RA Electoral Code does not, in essence, guarantee that the proportion of sexes noted in party lists will be maintained in the de facto elected National Assembly, which was actually the case recorded by the results of both 2017 and 2018 elections.*

*The only difference is that as a result of the 2017 elections only two women were elected to the Parliament through territorial lists, and as a result of the 2018 elections twelve women were elected to the Parliament through territorial lists, including nine women out of 23 elected from *My Step* Alliance, two out of five women MPs from *Prosperous Armenia* Party, and one out of four women from *Bright Armenia Hayastan* Party.*

*According to the results of the 2017 elections, only three out of 353 women nominated in territorial lists garnered 4-5 thousand votes, 14 women received 1000-2000 votes, and the rest of the women less than one thousand votes. There were only men among candidates who received the highest number of votes.*

**Results of the Study on *Participation for Change*, Caucasus Sociological Research Center, Yerevan 2012**



According to the 2018 election results, although a **larger number of women were able to overcome the obstacles of the rating system**, as previously, there were no women among the leading candidates of the political forces that made it into the Parliament receiving the highest number of votes (25-30 thousand).

There were no women receiving the highest number of votes (16-30 thousand) among the candidates in any of the republic's 13 electoral districts. There were women candidates among the first five candidates who garnered the highest number of votes at the level of electoral districts.

They primarily represented **My Step Alliance** and received 3-11 thousand votes. Among them were:

- **Lena Nazaryan (District #2; 11 300 votes),**
- Hripsime Gregoryan (District #3; 4 019 votes),
- Tatevik Gasparyan (District #5; 9 390 votes),
- Sophia Hovsepyan (District #11; 5 981 votes).

**Prosperous Armenia women candidates who received mandates through territorial lists:**

- Naira Zohrabyan (District #4; 2 110 votes),
- Nora Arustamyan (District #7; 1 994 votes).

**Bright Armenia Party**

- Mane Tandilyan made it into the Parliament with 3 636 votes garnered in District #4 ceding only to the Party Chairman Edmon Marukyan.



**Focus group discussions with participation of women candidates and elected deputies** have demonstrated that in spite of the recorded little progress women are strongly against preservation of territorial lists for a number of reasons:

**1.** In the Armenian reality territorial lists create unequal conditions for competition

**2.** The successes of women in these snap elections are largely conditioned not by societal attitude towards women candidates and dramatic change in their competitiveness, but by the atmosphere of trust in the leader of *My Step Alliance* Nikol Pashinyan

**3.** Advocacy campaigns of candidates nominated through territorial lists require financial resources, which is a serious obstacle for women candidates

**4.** Territorial lists complicate the electoral process; electorate, especially those in remote villages, cannot orient themselves how to vote

**5.** Electoral contest through territorial lists is not ideological by its nature and is largely dependent on “neighborhood authorities,” especially strong are men’s networks



*“The fact that this time many women were elected through the rating system should not inspire us that much to allow us to say that the rating system is needed...”*

*“I can say one thing, that the rating system is an electoral system created for men and the authorities. It is not helpful to women, it is not for women candidates...”*

*“In general, I do not consider the rating electoral system a political process. I believe it is a struggle of “sympathies,” where there are no ideas, no approaches, no principles.”*

*“The rating system is rather complicated in its realization, especially for women. Unequivocally, there are unequal conditions, there is the financial resource factor... Within the same party the principle of men’s friendship and brotherhood has worked again: how many examples can you bring from your neighborhood? It is true about all parties, it worked that way in both Civic Contract and Prosperous Armenia. That is to say, it is an incomprehensible process of subjective approaches where there is no room for women.”*

### **Focus Group Discussions with Women Candidates**

It is not accidental that in their final report **OSCE/ODIHR observers** relate advancement of women candidates not to territorial lists, but to **future enhancement of special measures, noting that “this could include placing candidates from the under-represented gender in every second position on national candidate lists.”**



It should be noted that, pointing to international experience, Venice Commission experts note that “open lists need not hamper women’s representation. To the degree that women organize themselves and actively campaign for voting female candidates.”

**According to assessment of local experts, similar experience is yet absent in Armenia since it is largely related to the coming-to-be and level of development of the women’s movement. /Focus group discussions with experts**

An indirect indicator of the quota effectiveness can also be increase in women’s representation in the National Assembly leadership. Looking at the composition of the leadership of the National Assembly of the seventh convocation, one can state that the increase in the number of women MPs has not led to increase in their number in the National Council and the number of women in the parliamentary leadership positions has hardly changed compared to the previous convocations. :



Thus, only four out of 18 positions of the National Assembly Council are held by women, including one of the three Deputy Speakers, Lena Nazaryan (*My Step*). Only one of the three parliamentary factions is headed by a woman: Lilit Makunts is the head of *My Step* Faction. Only two of the eleven standing committees are headed by women: Mane Tandilyan (*Bright Armenia* Faction) will be heading the NA Standing Committee on Financial-Credit and Budgetary Affairs and Naira Zohrabyan (*Prosperous Armenia* Faction) will be heading the NA Standing Committee on Human Rights Protection and Public Affairs. It should be noted that we have never had a female NA Speaker in the modern history of the RA Parliament, although we have had female Deputy Speakers. Only once a female candidate was nominated for the position of the NA Speaker: in 2011, the *Heritage* Faction nominated MP Larisa Alaverdyan’s candidacy for the position.



- **Women's incentives /motivation to become MPs**

One of the important components of women candidates' electoral behavior is a study of their incentives to become MPs. This study looked at the issue from two perspectives: within the context of incentives formulated by women MP candidates to run for elections and societal expectations related to that.

In Armenia, the main motivational factors underlying the desire to engage in politics and be elected to the Parliament can conventionally be divided into five groups:

**Personal, venal (hedonistic) considerations:** the desire to gain personal benefit, to use power for mercenary purposes, to insure own business, and to improve one's own material conditions

**The (altruistic) desire to be useful to the country and society,** to help solution of the existing problems and to improve the socio-economic and moral-psychological situation

**Self-affirmation:** to win the contest and overcome difficulties, to advance the social status and, related to that, aspiration to gain spiritual satisfaction

**Self-expression:** the desire to apply one's own experience, abilities, professional knowledge and skills

**Party decision**

*"Participation for Change", "Caucasus" Sociological Research Center; the results of the research conducted within the framework of the Oxfam program "Women's Voice and Participation in the 2012 RA NA Elections," Yerevan 2012*

This breakdown, which fits into the classical perceptions of incentives for public activities and political participation, is applicable also for analysis of women's electoral behavior and this was amply demonstrated by the focus group discussions and expert interviews conducted within the scope of this research. It is a different issue though that the 2018 snap elections had their own specific character conditioned by the internal political situation and a dramatic change in the public mood.



Observations of the previous elections attest to the fact that the public always clearly differentiates between women's and men's incentives by contrasting oligarchic, moneyed, self-interested men entering the Parliament with public interest-oriented women who raise social issues. In essence, women's and men's incentives to run as MP candidates were built on binary contrasts: men were attributed pragmatism, pursuit of material interests, aspiration to power, the immunity status, and a roof over one's own business, whereas women were attributed altruism, devotion to ideas, striving for justice, integrity, and objectivity. The difference of the 2018 elections was that perceptions about incentives were built on a contrast of "white and black sides", and as a result, in its perceptions, the public attributed to "the white side", both women and men, traits traditionally considered "feminine": care, preference for public interest, and aspiration to serve society.

Analyzing points of view expressed during focus group discussions with constituency and women candidates, one can state that women candidates' motives to become MPs and public expectations largely coincide, although expectations expressed by constituency are sometimes higher. In both cases, as before, emphasis was placed on certain positive changes related to women's entry into the Parliament: improvement of the atmosphere in the Parliament, more balanced and weighted decisions, justice, and attention to social issues.

*"Why do women wish to become MPs? Because, I believe, women have a major mission given by nature. They come to govern, I will not avoid using this word, because they can manage the family budget from scratch or manage a family and pull them out of crisis, etc. etc. And the state is the same model, i.e. women have a God-given mission and they can ..."*

At the same time, the recent political developments, the change in the political situation, entry of a significant number of actors into the political field from civic sector, drastic generational change in the political field gave rise to new emphases on the issue of incentives for women's election to a representative legislative body.

**Focus Group with NGOs**



- **“The velvet revolution” as a motivational factor for women**

An important emphasis surfaced in women’s motivation, they began to connect their decision to engage in politics with “the velvet revolution,” which opened up new vistas for them. This position is characteristic of especially those women who have entered politics after making some professional advancement or are from civic sector. They have accumulated certain professional and social capital in this or that area, have knowledge, experience and they explain their wish to become MPs by the desire to apply this potential to improvement of the legislative field. At the same time, they stress that if the situation had not changed, they would not have wanted to engage in politics because in the past it was “dirty”, and they did not see what they could do there. However, now the field “is clean” and it is “appropriate for a woman” to be there. That is to say, in contrast to the past, now women are not afraid of “getting soiled,” and, to the contrary, are ready “to cleanse the old filth.” As regards this issue, the opinion of the constituency is largely consonant with that of women.

*“At least up to date, the politics was a very dirty area. All those thieves, liars, swindlers, illiterate, and lawbreakers, all of them were engaged in this area and it was very difficult for women to survive in that environment. However, now, it seems to me, this revolution gave an opportunity for significant opening up of roads and people who believe that they have something to say and have the ability, and have the desire to change something can enter the field.”*

*“This environment, which is shaped by men with their customs, talents, morals, naturally creates considerable difficulties for women, no matter how powerful the woman is... but they have their role in cleansing the environment, making it more civilized, and if they come up to expectations and succeed, they can pave the way for many women in the future.”*

**Focus Group with NGOs**

*“Why do we women want to be elected to the Parliament? I believe that first of all, it is a platform where they can raise issues of concern to women. Secondly, it is an opportunity for women to participate in decision making at the national level. Thirdly, it is an opportunity to break the created stereotype that the NA has a male face since the entry of a larger number of women into the Parliament shows that it is not the case. And finally, women get elected to the Parliament because women and youth played a major role during our revolution and, thus, created a prerequisite that they too represent an able force...”*

**Focus Group with NGOs**

In response to the question as to *why women wish to become MPs*, often the role of women in the recent developments and change of power is emphasized. By the way, there is an opinion that this major contribution to the “velvet revolution” by women not only helped overcome gender stereotypes, but also more than that: it provided an opportunity for women to set their own example of advocating for the idea of equal rights and opportunities from the National Assembly tribune.

Overcoming the stereotypes brought to the fore other issues. According to the electorate, although the brave motivation of young women and girls, participants in the “velvet revolution,” to become MPs attests to the overcoming of gender stereotypes, it is not always reinforced by proper knowledge and experience.



*“If in the past the woman would not dare or would not be allowed to step into the political field, today I feel that the stereotype has been broken, women have been given an opportunity to do that. I can judge from the examples in our marz, I am surprised to see so many young women and girls that have a great desire to become MPs. And when you talk with them, you feel that they cannot even imagine where they are going and what for, but they say, “There are so many men beside us, how do they dare? An opportunity is given, we could not do it in the past, but today we have that chance. Why not try? We too want to work, we like hard work and are active...”*

**Focus Group with NGOs**

The brave stance of the youth to run for MP positions are often incomprehensible to older generation women.

Change in the public mood did not remove the issue of lack of motivation among women. Now, the same way as in the previous elections, the question “women want” or “do not want” is posited. Responses to the following question as to “why they do not want” fit within the scope of the classical scheme on cause and effect relationship: presence of stereotypes, lack of opportunities, resources, and social connections, double load, “rules of the game”, etc.

*“It is a different thing whether the woman wants or does not want to run. Here I see a problem because at least in the light of recent developments I can see that there are many, many women that have a great potential, but they are not engaged in any way.”*

**Focus Group with NGOs**

*“As a journalist covering political topics, I felt obliged to my country and decided to apply my experience accumulated over the years also in legislative work since it is not always possible to achieve real changes by just voicing problems ... I am obliged to invest my knowledge and experience into attainment of this goal and I cannot remain indifferent to the processes that have started because today the country needs support of each one of us.: From an interview with Alina Ordyan, “We” Alliance*

*“Women of our older age, me personally, although I happened to be chairperson of electoral commissions for several times in the 90-95s, have never run in elections. Because I was a scientific worker, but could not imagine writing a law thinking that is a task of a legislative body, everybody should be in their places...” .*

*“My activities have been very broad-based, but I have never thought of being a deputy to the NA. However, perhaps it was wrong, was a kind of stereotype... but there were also rules of the game that I would never follow...”*

Among women candidates’ incentives to engage in politics were most frequently voiced aspirations for family protection, self-expression and self-affirmation, as well as motives based on the party decision or proposal. However, all these motives were topped by the obligation to defend the public interest since without that no candidate can expect to receive votes of the public. In the 2018 elections, the altruistic desire to be useful to the country and society, which was triggered by the velvet revolution was the most wide spread incentive to become an MP. Moreover, this motivation assumed not only an active civic position to introduce changes in the country, but also an obligation. Women believe that if they have the necessary knowledge, they are obliged to engage in politics.

## The most wide-spread scenarios of women's entry into the Parliament

The analysis of the biographical data of women deputies to the RA National Assembly of the seventh convocation allows to specify those scenarios for ensuring women's entry into the Parliament that were most typical of the snap elections held in 2018. We should note though that the scenario breakdown is purely formal since many women MPs have been elected to the Parliament through combination of several scenarios.

### *"Politics as continuation of civic activism"*

In the 2018 elections, this very scenario of "politics as logical continuation of civic activism" was most wide-spread. Irrespective of their professions and educational qualifications, the majority of women MPs from *My Step* Alliance made their entry into the Parliament based on this scenario. Almost all of them had participated in different civic movements of the recent years, primarily youth movements. Hence, primarily women of 25-40 years of age made their entry into politics based on this scenario. The study of their biographical data demonstrates that most of them have the experience of working in different international structures or short-term leadership programs. During pre-election interviews, they too stressed their active civic position, which led to their cooperation with *My Step* Alliance.

*"In reality, in addition to active members of Civic Contract Party, our list included numerous persons who were active exactly at that stage. It includes also many civil society members who in different times during rather a short period had joined the party or remained non-partisan. That is to say, it is not just a party list, but one including people sharing the ideas of the revolution, having struggled for civil rights and freedoms in the RA over the past 10, 15, and more years and having been active in different areas."*

#### **Member of Civic Contract Party, Focus Group Discussion with Women Candidates**

Entry into the Parliament thanks to activism in social area, including human rights protection, can be considered a particular manifestation of this scenario. It is not accidental that the highest number of women MPs have become members of the NA Standing Committee on Human Rights Protection and Public Affairs.

This scenario is also typical of women MPs and candidates of the previous convocations. The parties actively engage already experienced women leaders who have manifested themselves in civic sector or have established themselves as public figures. Such an experience tells in favor of civic sector which gives women opportunities to display their abilities, after which they are noticed by political parties. For example, Srбуhi Gregoryan, a member of *Bright Armenia* Faction, had been founding director of Sisian's Women Resource Center prior to joining the party. Many of *My Step* women MPs have the experience of working at or managing NGOs.

Overall, 11% of women candidates running in the 2018 elections have noted NGO sector as their place of employment. Moreover, the main core of the newly-created party *Citizen's Decision*, which participated in the elections, was made up of the NGO sector representatives.

### ***“Politics as continuation of professional growth”***

This scenario is not new. Most wide-spread are three versions of its realization when professions of journalist, lawyer, and political scientist serve as a prerequisite for entry into politics. In all these cases, entry into politics is logically justified and professional knowledge is a sound prerequisite for working as MP. For lawyers and political scientists, the transition to work at the legislature is very smooth and can be viewed as career growth, and for political journalists, becoming MPs is often considered a change of format for engagement in politics. The experience of the NA recent two-three convocations demonstrates that former journalists are by and large successful in their activities as MPs. Thanks to their professional knowledge, they advantageously differ in their skills of presenting themselves to the public, and they have a good command of PR technologies and have no problem with self-esteem. The same is true about lawyers. Eight out of 32 women MPs in the newly-elected Parliament or one quarter have a profession of lawyer. The greater part of them had been working journalists prior to their entry into the legislature. Three of women MPs are lawyers by profession and three more are political scientists or specialists in international affairs.

Looking at the professional composition of women MPs, one can state that the prevailing majority of them have their background education in humanities (philologist, journalist, lawyer, historian, psychologist, political scientist, etc.), and only four of them have specialized in natural or technical sciences (physicist, specialist in cybernetics, radio engineer, etc.). It is typical that irrespective of their background education, a part of women MPs either have received a second education (for example, at the American University of Armenia) or had a short-term specialization in management while continuing their work in that area in business or the government system. However, taking into consideration their young age, their management experience is mostly short-term. It should also be noted that three out of 32 women elected to the NA have scientific degrees: Lilit

Makunts, Tatevik Hairapetyan, and Lilit Stepanyan.

### ***“Entry into Parliament from executive positions”***

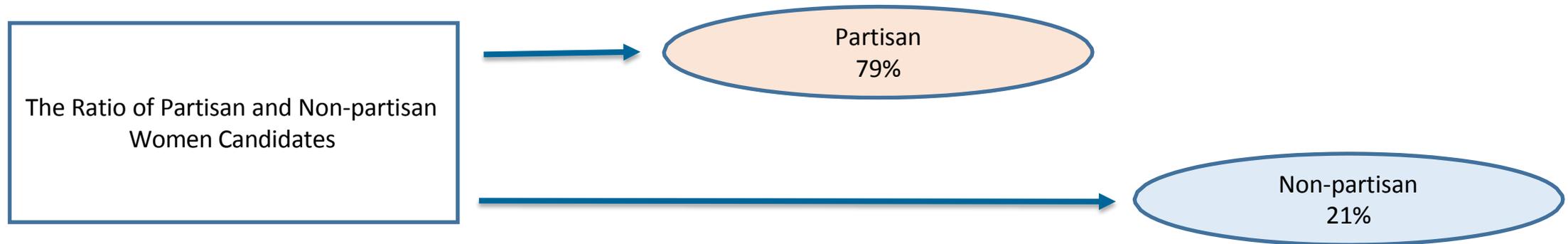
This scenario is especially wide-spread in case of governing parties and very often is realized in the opposite direction: becoming an MP is viewed as a springboard for holding senior positions in the executive. During the 2018 elections, personnel turnover was equally noticeable in two directions. During the previous convocations, the candidate lists of the governing party, Republican Party of Armenia, were replenished by a large number of people who held senior positions in different government bodies. After elections, these people would withdraw their candidacies with most of them retaining their former positions. In 2018, the same principle applied in replenishment of the candidate lists of *My Step Alliance*, though this time the number of officials included in the list was comparatively less and not all of them returned to serve in the executive. A part of the candidates, including, for example, former Minister of Culture Lilit Makunts, Assistant to the Prime Minister Arpine Davian, Acting Deputy Governor of Shirak Marz Sophia Hovsepyan, Chairperson of the Tourism Committee Hripsime Gregoryan, and others, chose to take up MP mandates. In essence, their entry into politics took place earlier when they took up executive positions after “the velvet revolution.” However, taking into consideration their short-term tenure, the actual development of their political career is tied up to their election as MPs. Entry into the Parliament from local self-government system can be viewed as a specific manifestation of this scenario. In particular, a number of women MPs from *My Step* and *Bright Armenia* Factions were earlier, in September of 2018, elected as councilors in Yerevan City Hall.

### ***“Entry into Parliament from party work”***

Being a party member or holding an official post is the shortest way into the Parliament. The majority of 32 women MPs in the newly-elected Parliament are party members, and only seven are non-partisan. In particular, many of the women members of the *Prosperous Armenia* Faction have made their entry into the Parliament after working in party structures. The same is the case with *Bright Armenia* Party, the Deputy Chairperson of which is MP Mane Tandilyan and the party co-founders are Ani Simonyan and Anna Kostanyan. Overall, six per cent of women candidates running in the 2018 elections have noted party as their place of employment.

*“Electoral processes in Armenia, I would say 80% of the electoral processes is carried out by women. That is to say, work in the election headquarters is primarily performed by women, work in commissions is performed by women, volunteers, and those who distribute booklets are all young women and girls.”*

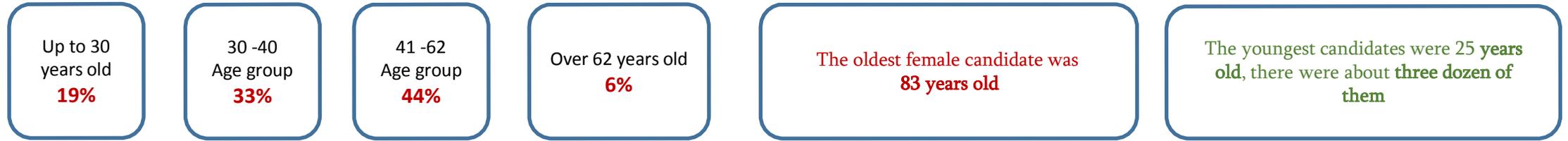
**Focus Group Discussion with Women Candidates**



**Summing up, one can note that the scenarios for women’s entry into politics are more diverse than the above mentioned. However, the most widespread are hardly changing from election to election. In this respect, the 2018 elections are an exception. During these elections, the emerged scenarios were different from those of the previous convocations, which is conditioned, firstly, by the change in the political situation and, secondly, by generation change. For example, in the Parliament of the seventh convocation almost absent are women that have made a party career, women engaged in politics to defend business interests, women with recognition in the area of culture, few are representatives of the educational field, although those working in this area constituted the largest group of candidates in the candidate lists.**



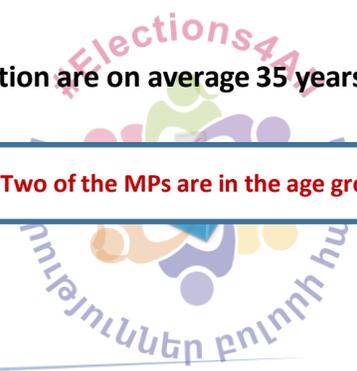
- **Age and professional characteristics of women candidates**



The analysis of the candidates’ age data demonstrates that in the 2018 elections the 31-40 age group is the most representative both in case of women and in case of men (33%), in contrast to all previous elections when the 30-40 age group constituted 23% (in 2017), 20% (in 2012), 19.4% (in 2007), and the majority of the candidates were over 40 years old. In essence, one can conclude that generation change gradually unfolding in the political field earlier manifested itself more drastically during the last elections on account of young women and men who grew up during independence and were engaged in civic activism and who also were the driving force of the “velvet revolution.” Hence, it is logical that candidate lists were compiled with their inclusion. As demonstrated by observations of the previous elections, earlier, parties mainly used the resource of women’s political leadership that developed either on the wave of independence, or during the Soviet period, and most active were women over 40, who had the experience of working in the executive, legislative and local government structures. In addition, children of women over 40 are mature, family life is adjusted, which is, according to the assessment of women themselves, an important factor thanks to which, they have the opportunity to realize their potential both in professional activity field and politics.

The least represented age group in the labor market and in politics has always been the reproductive age group of up to 30-year-old women, when children are very young and the young family has to confront numerous difficulties, which remove to the background not only young women’s political career, but very often also the professional one. This is attested by statistics, conducted research, and not only in Armenia. However, over the recent years, the situation has begun to manifestly change and more and more women have started to engage in political activism at young age, having small children. This is largely conditioned by improvement in household conditions and well-paid jobs, which allow women to reduce the physical and time overload connected with the care of children and to engage in professional development and advancement or political activities. Such a behavior is typical of especially those young women who have received good education, often also abroad, pursue professional advancement and have a clear-cut political position. The entry of such women into politics was particularly noticeable during the recent parliamentary elections when significant changes became apparent even among the least represented candidates of up to 30 years of age. If in the past this age group of young women constituted 7% (in 2007), 9% (in 2012), and 11% (in 2017) in the candidate lists and was always smaller than that of men, during these elections women of up to 30 years of age made up 19% in the lists, whereas men 17%.

**The rejuvenation of the candidates’ age composition brought about the decrease in the average age of MPs; the MPs of the seventh convocation are on average 35 years old.**



The prevailing majority of women MPs of all convocations had children. Moreover, they always included mothers with many children.

**Only half of the 32 National Assembly women MPs have children:**

- Nine of them have one child,
- Five two children,
- Two three children.

Irrespective of the fact whether women engaging in politics have children or not, are married or not, they all ascribe importance to the role their families played in supporting them in their decision to get enrolled in candidate lists. This is attested both by focus group discussions and interviews with candidates. The support of the family or relatives can be expressed in different ways, often simple encouragement is sufficient, which undoubtedly gives strength to the woman and boosts the woman's self-esteem.

*"I am married, have two sons, they are still very young, and my husband who encourages me at each step, both in professional activities and, in general, in all my undertakings, is my advisor and standby. He played a major role in my decision to run. Learning about my desire, he encouraged me by saying that having been involved in the area for many years, I have clear understanding of the issues and their solutions, and I can make my contribution to this matter. This appreciation was very inspiring for me and it helped me to move more bravely towards my goal."*

**Anush Sargsyan, "Be brave, trust your own capacities"**

*"I am of those happy ones that have never felt gender discrimination in the family, my husband, and my parents received my decision to run very well. I confess that there was a moment when I was not sure whether to go for it or not, however, my husband said, "Do go for it since it is the next step that you should take. And if there are many people like you, something will change in this country." My husband is, first of all, my close friend and we all heed and accept the advice of close friends."*

**Arpi Karapetyan, "The role of an observer has never been close to me"**



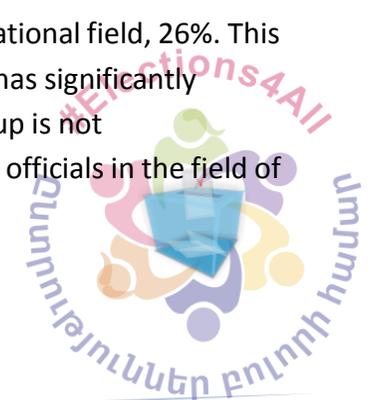
- **Employment areas of women candidates**

Every fourth candidate in the party lists for the 2018 elections has noted that he/she is **unemployed**.

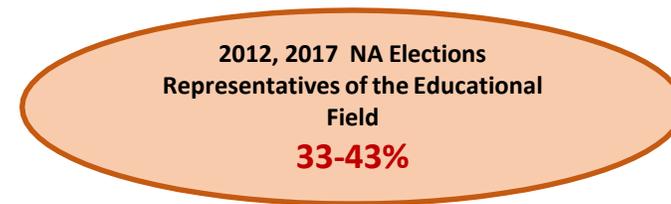
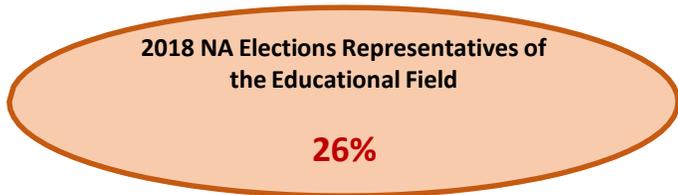


**There are unemployed candidates in the lists of all political forces.** Of course, the reasons for being temporarily or permanently left out of the labor market vary. However, the number of unemployed candidates is the lowest in the lists of governing parties and is higher in the lists of opposition and newly-created parties. The noted circumstance has a logical explanation. It is considered that power levers are a guarantee for finding a job. In these elections, the noted regularity was observed to some extent: the number of unemployed candidates in the list of *My Step* Alliance is comparatively not low, 10%. Focus group discussions show that the fact of unemployment is negatively perceived by the constituency which questions the real motivation of the candidate to run. In case of female candidates, the fact of unemployment is an additional factor reducing their competitiveness.

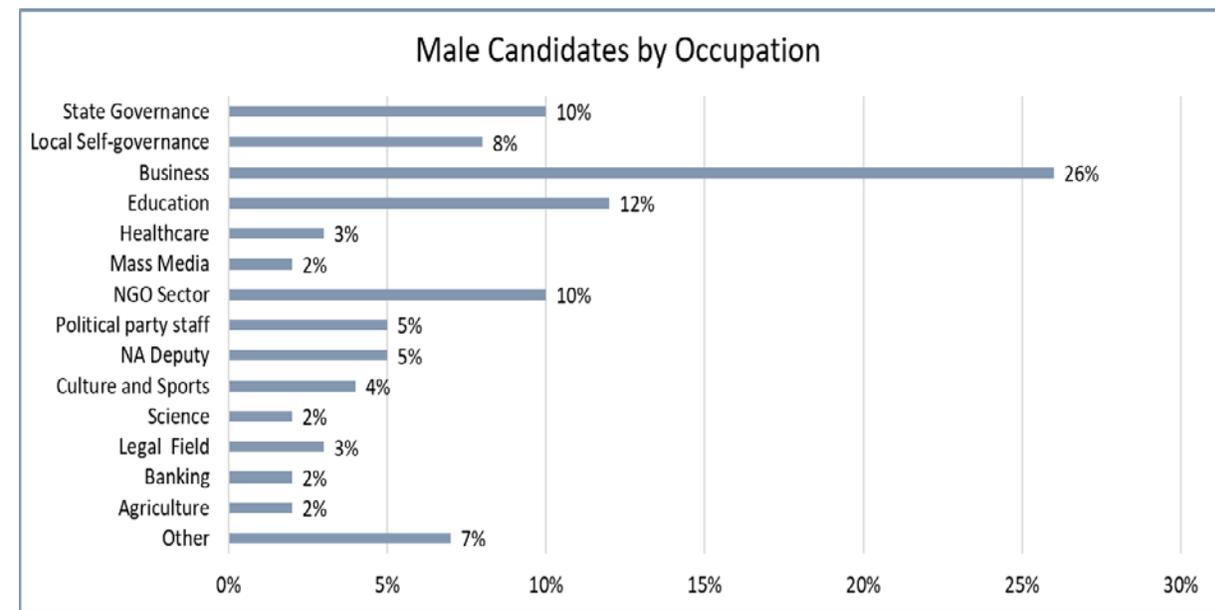
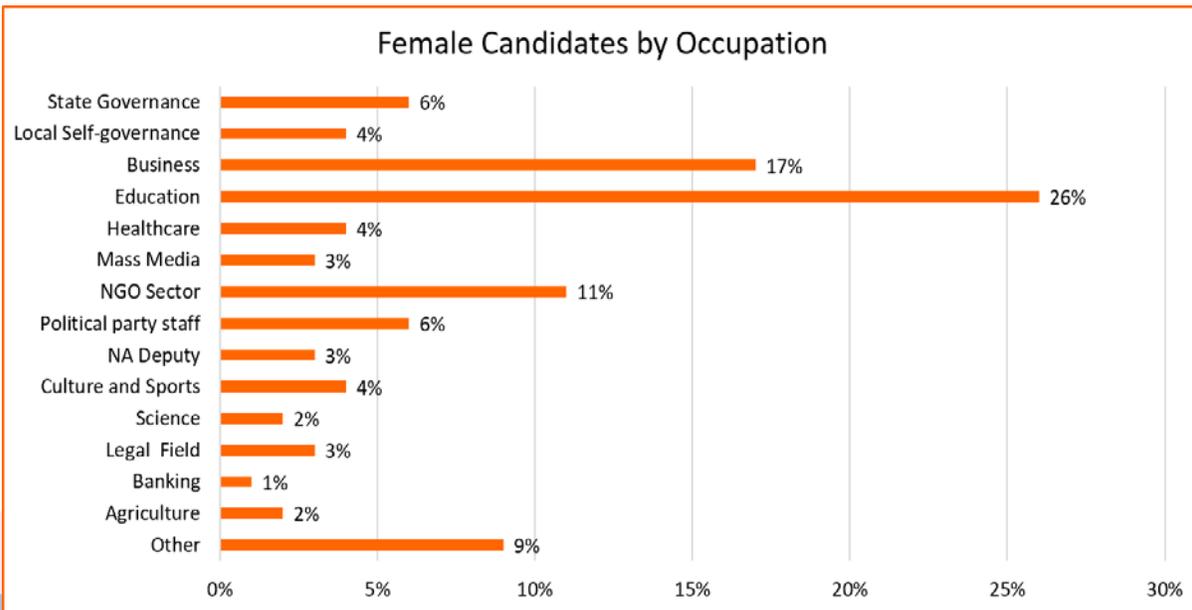
The analysis of women candidates' employment data demonstrates that the most representative group among them are employees of the educational field, 26%. This resource has always been used by parties, although as compared to the previous elections the number of candidates from the educational area has significantly decreased. For comparison, in the 2012 and 2017 elections representatives of the educational sphere constituted 33%-43% in the lists. The group is not homogeneous, among them are heads of educational institutions: school, college, and university heads, lecturers and teachers, and government officials in the field of education.



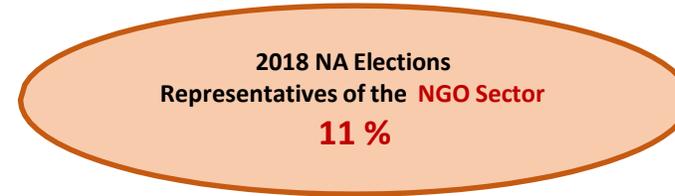
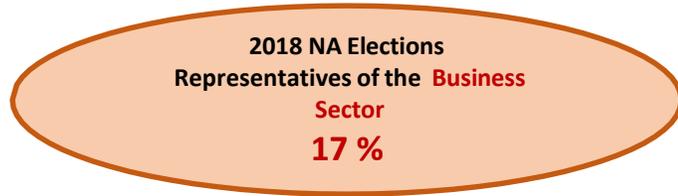
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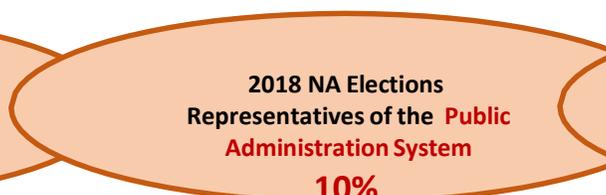
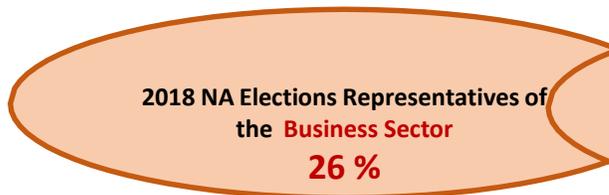
The group is not homogeneous, among them are heads of educational institutions: school, college, and university heads, lecturers and teachers, and government officials in the field of education.



The second main area of women candidates' employment is the private sector, business, where 17% of women candidates are employed. Forty per cent of them hold leadership positions in enterprises: individual entrepreneurs, enterprise founders, owners, the rest are managers or employees. In any case, it is not about big business. In addition, the number of women candidates employed in the business area is three times lower than that of men candidates. The third area in terms of employment is the NGO sector, which has been noted as a place of employment by 11% of women candidates.



The business sector is in the first place as an employment area for male candidates (26%), it is followed by the educational area (12%), and the public administration system (10%) and the NGO sector (10%) come third. It is characteristic that the number of women candidates from the public administration system is three times lower than that of men. Overall, the distribution of candidates' employment areas reflects gender segregation by professions and positions that exists in the labor market. The only exception is the fact that the number of employed male candidates from the educational field considered to be women's employment area is not insignificant. The second characteristic in terms of employment is the fact that this time almost missing from the lists are representatives of large business, who were represented in the candidate lists and the Parliament of the previous convocations.



*Comparing the professional distribution of women candidates in the candidate lists during the parliamentary elections held over the past ten years, one can state that the list of those areas from where women have more often made their entry into politics has hardly changed, although with each new election the number of women enrolled in the candidate lists from the NGO sector and business area has been increasing.*



- **CHAPTER 5. PECULIARITIES OF FEMALE CANDIDATES' CAMPAIGNS**

- Women candidates' visibility during campaigns
- Change in women candidates' rhetoric
- *Women's Agenda* in elections
- Women's issues in party pre-election programs
- Use of new campaigning methods

- Campaign peculiarities in electoral districts

**Women candidates' electoral behavior is best described through their campaigns, whose peculiarities have been studied within the framework of this research based on analysis of the information received from a number of sources, including focus group discussions, interviews with women candidates and experts, as well as reports by election observation missions who followed the process of the snap parliamentary elections, a number of media monitoring reports, and the results of the research on *The 2018 Snap Parliamentary Elections and on Online Platforms of Post-Election Political Armenia* and of the survey on *Media Consumption and Information Preferences in***

**Armenia-2019** carried out by **Region Research Center.**

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Within the scope of the research on ***The 2018 Snap Parliamentary Elections and on Online Platforms of Post-Election Political Armenia***, observations were made of the peculiarities of the pre-election competition and voting day discourse in six highly-rated online media outlets and 32 Facebook platforms.

*The research was carried out with funding support of the EU Delegation to Armenia, <https://bit.ly/2WQsJcA>*

***Media Consumption and Information Preferences in Armenia-2019***

One thousand one hundred fifty citizens from the entire territory of the country: Yerevan and ten marzes, 19 towns and 34 villages, took part in the survey.

<http://www.regioncenter.info/sites/default/files/OP%20Media%20Consumption%202019%20-%20ARM.pdf>



- **Women candidates' visibility during campaigns**

The period for pre-election campaigning for the 2018 December snap elections was much shorter than usual, it was launched on November 26 and lasted until December 7. It is obvious that in such a short period of time better recognized and established political forces and candidates were in a more advantageous situation.

Taking into consideration that the number of recognizable female political figures in Armenia's political field is very limited, women were, overall, among candidates who were in unfavorable conditions.

In spite of that, as demonstrated by focus group discussions, women candidates' visibility in these elections was higher than in the preceding, 2017, elections. It is explained by the change in the political situation, within the context of which certain changes were noticeable in public perceptions of women's civic and political participation. The statements made by the authorities about the important role of women in the "velvet revolution" contributed to this development, and, although this rhetoric was not reinforced by a balanced composition of the Government, women perceived these words as a chance for real changes, which created prerequisites for their not only more active, but also more public participation in the parliamentary elections.

"These elections differed from the preceding elections by the fact that, first, women's involvement was higher and ,second, if in the past women candidates were treated a little bit differently, this time this problem seemed to have been overcome, women were not treated in a hostile manner with WOW, It is a woman."

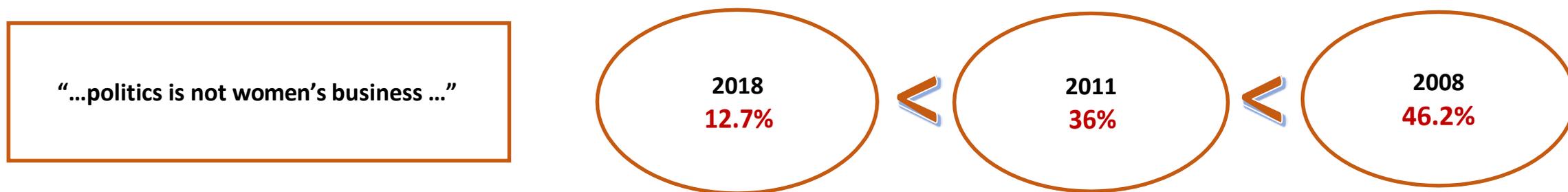
"Discriminatory attitudes towards women were considerably less during these elections, non-existent. Especially active were women of My Step Alliance."

"Overall, the difference as such is more connected with changes in the public approaches, i.e. women have begun to be more active; over the recent years, they have been more active in voicing their rights, and, whether you wish it or not, the stereotypes are being broken."



Sociological surveys of public opinion also confirm the changes in the stereotypic approaches to women’s political participation.

In particular, according to the results of the survey on *Media Consumption and Information Preferences in Armenia-2019*, **82.3% of the respondents have noted that whether candidates are women or men is of no significance to them** since other qualities are of primary importance. At the same time, **12.7% of the respondents believe that politics is not women’s business**, and half of those who share this opinion are women. It should be noted that, over the recent decade, the number of those who have a negative attitude to women’s involvement in politics has considerably decreased.



However, although, over the recent years, positive shifts have been noticed in the public opinion of Armenia on women’s political participation, in-depth interviews show that the statement that “the stereotypes have already been broken” is too early, and the stereotypic approaches continue to remain one of the main obstacles to women’s political participation.

Study of the Causes of Women’s Under-Representation at Decision-Making Levels, National Institute of Labor and Social Research, Yerevan, 2008

Gender Peculiarities of Socio-Political Participation in Armenia, UNFPA, *Caucasus* Center for Sociological Studies, Yerevan, 2011



*“Society is convinced that responsible positions should be entrusted to men since they are more reliable in solving the country’s security and economic issues... Although there is a positive shift in this respect, such psychology still holds. If we look at the recent elections, many women were not elected through the rating system of election. A great number of men won.”*

**Vigen Hakobyan, Political Technologist**

*“After all, we are not Europe, we are the Orient and, naturally, if we face a choice between women and men, preference is given to men... The revolution cannot influence this problem because it is about a change in mentality, which is a long-term issue.”*

**Armen Badalyan, Political Technologist**

*“I should say that the main lack of trust in women comes from women themselves, women themselves do not trust women. I think that if you even ask them why, they will not be able to explain it. There is an intuitive lack of trust or they believe that men can do that work better.”*

**Focus Group Discussions with Candidates**

Speaking about the indicators of coverage of women candidates in mass media (television, radio, online media), one can state that in the 2012 parliamentary elections their coverage did not exceed 5%, in the preceding, 2017, elections it did not exceed 9%, and in these elections this indicator was not separated during media monitoring activities, although considering their results, one can state that there were almost no women among the most mentioned political figures in mass media since, according to observer assessments, it is men that primarily campaigned for political forces contesting in these elections.

**OSCE/ODIHR Report, 2017**

**During these elections, at least three media monitoring initiatives did not separate the issue of women’s coverage in their results, observing only the coverage volumes of and references to political forces and their most active representatives.**

*“Parties rarely featured women candidates as central figures in their campaigns. Women candidates only occasionally campaigned on their own and rarely appeared as speakers in campaign rallies observed.”*

**OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Mission, Final Report**

## Change in women candidates' rhetoric

The new political situation left its impact on women candidates' rhetoric too. Even superficial observation of their public speeches and interviews allows to conclude that in these elections, women, while presenting their motivation, almost refused to make their former cautious evaluations, emphasizing their willingness and ability to serve the society and related responsibility. And they expressed all of this in a much more confident way than ever before. This difference was especially manifest in speeches of women with experience.

***"I am ready and want to be your voice in Armenia's Parliament. I am ready and able to raise each one of your problems and concerns, each one of your just demands and try to find quick and effective solutions to them. By electing me, you will feel that finally you have your deputy."***

**From Naira Zohrabyan's Pre-Election Speech, PAP**

Younger and first-time candidates in elections also stood out by their more confident rhetoric, trying to compensate by that their lack of experience in politics. The most frequently mentioned word in their speeches and interviews was "change", and that was not accidental. Speaking about expected external changes, women, subconsciously, were actually advancing the thesis on major internal changes as well, proving by their very example that women are ready to tear themselves off "the sticky floor" and feel that they are not only an equal participant in these very changes, but also their architect.

***"You are engaged in a double struggle: a struggle for a change of power in Armenia and for equal rights in their public space. Well done, Sisters!"***

**From Maria Karapetyan's Speech, My Step Alliance Deputy**

This thesis was already voiced during the days of the power change and found its logical continuation in speeches of especially those women candidates, who had the experience of public activities before that.

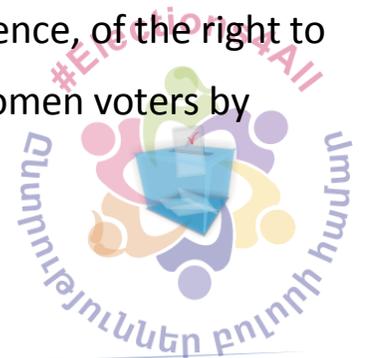


- **Women's Agenda in elections**

At the same time, topics related to women/gender equality were hardly voiced during campaigns, notwithstanding those cases when candidates commented on a question on this topic initiated by a journalist. This topic was missing from party programs, it was also ignored in female candidates' campaigning, although a number of women's organizations had presented the analytical brief on *Women's Agenda for Development* in the lead-up to the elections, as well as had made an appeal to contestant political forces to include these issues in their agendas.

Though not paid worthy attention to in the pre-election period, *Women's Agenda*, nevertheless, became the basis for cooperation in the post-election period, triggering the signing of a memorandum of understanding between the National Assembly and representatives of the NGOs dealing with women's issues to combine efforts towards ensuring actual equality between women's and men's rights and opportunities.

The fact that women candidates disregard issues related to women in their campaigns, deprives them, in essence, of the right to voice the argument that "women do not elect women" since when the candidate does not try to win over women voters by speaking of issues of concern to them, she cannot expect to receive the votes of women.



In the pre-election period, only seven out of 5, 129 publications of six online media observed by *Region* Center broached the topic of women/gender equality, and during the official campaign, according to the rating data on the tackled topics, twelve out of 492 publications of the same observed media raised this issue. In particular, there was a positive coverage of women's participation in "the velvet revolution" and the logical continuation of that activism, women's involvement in decision-making levels, legal equality of sexes, women's representation at the National Assembly and having a female speaker, quota increase, overcoming domestic violence and stereotypes, expansion of women's economic rights, and of rural women. At the same time, these issues were among the least mentioned last four topics out of 30 topics tackled during the campaign.

During the pre-election debates, issues related to *Women's Agenda* were tackled only during the debates with participation of women candidates from different political forces convened by the *OxYGen* Foundation.

<http://www.oxygen.org.am/images/content/publications/Womens-agenda-for-development.pdf>

<http://womennet.am/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/MoU.pdf>

*The 2018 Snap Elections and on Online Platforms of Post-Election Political Armenia, Region Center*

<https://bit.ly/2WQsJcA>

<http://womennet.am/women-agenda-debats>



- **Women's issues in party pre-election programs**

The issue of female voters is also a women's agenda issue: an issue of women's expectations, needs, and political expression of their demands. Was this agenda part of the programs of political parties and party alliances?

Of course, certain women's and men's expectations can be the same, but there are also specific, gender-specific needs and expectations: for example, the issue of women's involvement in decision-making, the presence of gender segregation in the area of economy with a gender pay gap as its consequence, gender discrimination in the workplace, etc.

The existence of women's agenda does not assume displaying a paternalistic approach when, for example, state care of mother and child is promised because, in this case, the woman is viewed only as a mother, and not as a citizen, specialist, and political and social activist. And what a mother needs is a paid maternity leave and allowance provided for the care of the child. However, that is not enough for a specialist who has become a mother, she needs flexible work hours, the institution of nannies, a broad and reliable network of pre-school institutions (including for nursery age children) and childcare centers, adaptation programs for integration in the labor market after return from the maternity leave, etc.



Eleven parties and party alliances participated in the 2018 snap parliamentary elections. Let us try to evaluate their programs from the perspective of female voters' expectations and needs.

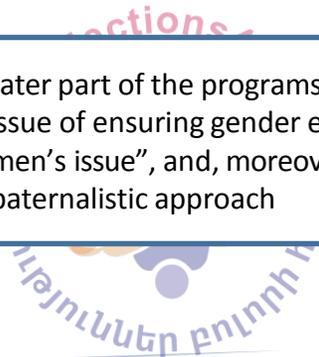
##	Party/Alliance	Yes	No
1	<i>My Step Alliance</i>	X	
2	<i>National Progress Party</i>		X Birthrate
3	<i>Prosperous Armenia Party</i>		X Families with many
4	<i>Bright Armenia Party</i>	X	
5	Republican Party of Armenia		X
6	<i>Christian-Popular Renaissance Party of Armenia</i>		X
7	Armenian Revolutionary Federation		X
8	<i>We Alliance</i>		X
9	<i>Sasna Tsrer Party</i>		X Birthrate
10	<i>Citizen's Decision Socio-Democratic Party</i>	X	
11	<i>Rule of Law Party</i>		X Family assistance

Thus, the analysis of the pre-election programs of the parties and alliances participating in the snap parliamentary elections demonstrates that:

Parties still lack an in-depth understanding of the gender equality issue

Figuratively speaking, women are continued to be viewed, in the words of one of the Armenian enlighteners, M. Nalbandyan, as a **“maternity plant,”** and not as citizens and different specialists

The greater part of the programs refer not to the issue of ensuring gender equality, but to “women’s issue”, and, moreover, do it with a paternalistic approach



- **Use of new campaigning methods**

One of the peculiarities of the 2018 election campaign was conduct of **television debates** of different formats. The pinnacle of the campaign was the three-hour-long “great debate” with participation of leaders of all contesting political forces, which was broadcast live by Public TV Company. Only one woman was participating in the debate. Nevertheless, in contrast to the preceding elections, women more actively took part in the debates conducted within the framework of the political television programs with the highest rating, presenting positions of their political forces on different issues. This was an important progress in terms of raising women’s visibility in the elections since, according to surveys, debate-format events are the most demanded by the constituency: 40% of the surveyed prefer especially this format of campaigning. Participants in the focus group discussions found it especially important that a television debate had been held between the main contesting political forces, *My Step* Alliance and RPA, with debaters being women candidates from these forces, Lena Nazaryan and Arpine Hovhannisyan. According to their evaluations, this fact is very important from the perspective of overcoming the stereotypes since never before during national elections in Armenia had the main contestants in the election campaign debated at the level of women speakers.

Another important peculiarity of these elections was the fact that political forces **actively campaigned also in the Facebook domain**, using both their official pages and personal pages of their candidates.

During official campaigning in social networks, **live streaming** of political forces made up a substantial part of the campaigning. There was one woman among the most frequent users of live streaming in the first group of three. Nikol Pashinyan, Leader of *My Step* Alliance, was in the first place with live streaming on his web page reaching 71%, he was followed by Arthur Baghdasaryan (*Rule of Law* Party), whose live streaming on his web page constituted 48%, and third came Anzhela Khachatryan (*We* Alliance) with 42% of live streaming.



- **Women candidates as targets of hate speech**

As demonstrated by research carried out over the past decade, in addition to stereotypes, the circumstances most obstructive to women during elections included factors related to imperfection of electoral processes, including use of electoral bribes, brutality and aggressiveness of the political struggle, use of impermissible intimidation technologies, and participation of criminal elements in the political struggle.

In the 2018 elections, formerly widely used electoral bribes were almost missing, participation of criminal elements was not noted; however, instead, an aggressive attitude to dissent was manifest, which revealed itself through wide use of hate speech. Underlying the spread of hate speech was the thesis about the struggle between “white and black” that was first put forward during Yerevan municipal elections and continued to also affect the snap parliamentary elections. According to assessments of domestic and international election observation missions, the greater part of hate speech episodes during the NA elections were recorded in confrontation and counteraction between *My Step* Alliance and RPA, especially through personal insults and threats expressed in messages on social networks by their supporters. Women candidates too became the targets of hate speech. *“Some women candidates were a target of disparaging rhetoric because of their gender. Although several candidates, both men and women, positioned high on party lists told the ODIHR EOM that they face harsh and derogatory language online, women candidates often received gender-based negative comments.”*

The same evaluations were voiced by the participants in focus group discussions conducted within the scope of this research, noting ***that, above all, hate speech was a disturbing factor during women candidates' campaigns in the 2018 snap elections.***

After that, noted were factors which were present in all preceding elections, including scarcity of resources, existence of stereotypes, and low recognizability of women. In addition, there was shortage of time during these elections.

According to observers, extremely short period allotted to campaigning also affected its content. Party pre-election programs and their discussion remained in the shadow giving in to more primitive forms of anti-propaganda, during which personalized insults, including of sexist nature, were voiced.

***According to observations of focus group participants, most well-known female candidates from two political forces: Lena Nazaryan from My Step Alliance and her main opponent from RPA Arpine Hovhannisyanyan, as well as Margaret Yesayan, Shushan Petrossyan, and others, were receiving threats and insults of sexist nature in social networks. They all were actively campaigning and appeared on TV comparatively frequently.***

*“If a given woman was nominated by the Republican Party, there was harsher treatment of her, and there was softer attitude to women from My Step Alliance.”*

*“There was an intense hostility towards other parties, towards women candidates of the Republican Party, Arpine and others. It was an infamy.”*

*“Maybe, it was because of a party and not for being a woman or man, but, in any case, women are more vulnerable because if you tell a woman that she is immoral, it is enough. If any man is told that he is immoral, a philanderer, it will not affect his rating. But if it is a woman...it becomes a stigma...”*

Both female and male social network users were participating in discrediting candidates on social networks, although one should also take into account the fact that, in many cases, this activism was displayed not by real people, but by fakes and each political force had its army of fakes. This technology was used for the first time in Armenia's national elections and, having produced certain results, is continuing to be used in the internal political struggle in the post-election period as well.

*“I became a subject of discussions long time ago feeling the burden of public stereotypes even at the time when our political force was in power; however, I was ready for that upon my entry into politics. However, now, when adherence to principles, convictions, and credo leads to a flurry of criticism, it is rather hard to withstand. It is especially difficult taking into consideration that the prevailing majority of these criticisms are directed and unfair. It is not just about my personality. It is a painful phenomenon that in Armenian society, where people constantly speak about a unique value system in terms of respectfulness to the woman, there can be men and even women who can curse using the most disgusting vocabulary. Of course, I understand that at this stage there are unprecedentedly many fakes, but there is a person or people behind them, with their own value system or, I should say, with the absence of a normal value system.”*

**Interview with Arpine Hovhannisyan**



Assessing the impact of hate speech on voters, one can state that it was big enough taking into consideration the new realities of Armenia's media consumption, according to which, 58.9% of the population regards Internet as the primary source of information, and 35.7% the television, and, in terms of daily viewing, first come social networks with 72.6% and television with 62.5%.

### ***Sociological Survey on Media Consumption and Information Preferences in Armenia***

It is noteworthy that Naira Zohrabyan (PAP), who had been the biggest target of hate speech on social networks during Yerevan municipal elections, was paid less attention to during the parliamentary elections. Although she campaigned very actively, she concentrated her whole activism on Siunik Marz (Province), where she had been nominated a candidate through the rating system of election, and that very fact considerably decreased her share of hate speech manifestations online. It also influenced the tonality of Naira Zohrabyan's campaigning in contrast to Yerevan municipal elections, when, in response to insults addressed to her she would come up with tough speeches. This time she campaigned in a much calmer way, largely concentrating on her program provisions. Prior to the elections, she had also dramatically changed her image, emphasizing her femininity, which, however, brought about different discussions and sexist evaluations on social networks; nevertheless, it left, overall, a positive impact on the candidate's campaign.



- **Campaigning with few resources**

Noteworthy are also the peculiarities of the campaign of the newly-created *National Progress Party*, first of all, because of the fact that it was the only political force whose list was headed by a woman; in addition, it was the force with the highest number of women involved. Taking into consideration the fact that the party received the least number of votes, it is difficult to positively evaluate its campaign and its influence on overcoming the stereotypes with respect to female political figures. On the other hand, as a newly-created political force, NPP had inputted extremely little time and, judging from its finance reports, almost no resources to ensure its recognizability. According to the CEC data, the contributions to and expenses from the NPP pre-election fund were the lowest among all the political forces.

*“We had only one female candidate heading a party list, and because of her bad PR, I can hardly recall her name; she was not active anywhere, i.e. it was obvious to everyone that she had no chance because the political force was unknown and did not have the time to become known, and the second factor was that she was a woman, and society had higher expectations of her than of men.”*

*National Progress Party received 4, 122 votes or 0.33 per cent*

**Focus Group Discussions with Journalists**

According to the results of several media monitoring groups obtained during the elections, by the number of times it was mentioned in mass media (television, radio, online media), *National Progress Party* was among the ranks of outsiders, it had no more than 1% of references or airtime.

*“In terms of frequency of references, National Progress Party was the least covered force by broadcasters. It was the last by the airtime allotted to it, according to the four of the six researched television channels, and by the frequency of references at News.am, it shared the last place with the Christian-Popular Renaissance Party.”*

**Monitoring of the Coverage of the December 9, 2018 RA National Assembly Snap Elections by Armenian Mass Media, Yerevan Press Club**

*“During the debates, discussions, and interviews, the opportunity to speak live was most often given to RPA representatives, STsP and PAP, and least frequently to NPP.”*

At the same time, according to observers, NPP campaigning included a large share of anti-propaganda against the former parliamentary forces: RPA, PAP, RLP, and ARF.

*“National Progress Party’s number one, Lusine Haroyan, primarily streamed her interviews and a video clip of the party’s campaigning from her personal user account. Haroyan’s messages on her web page are rather aimed at RPA, PAP, RLP, and ARF.”*

**Results of Media Monitoring during the 2018 Snap Parliamentary Elections, Interim Report, Independent Observer Alliance, 2018**

## Campaign peculiarities in electoral districts

Peculiarities of female candidates' campaigns were largely determined by the system of election too. Women candidates nominated in territorial lists or through the so called rating system of election were the most visible and active in their communication with voters. They were compelled to come out of the shadow of the leaders of the political forces trying to campaign on their own and to affirm themselves inside their parties by collecting votes for their parties.

*“I managed to visit more than 50 communities in eleven days. I apologize to all those residents of the communities whom I have not managed to personally meet. I would like it very much to have more time to communicate with much more people. But, no problem, I will visit the other communities after the elections so that they do not say that I have forgotten them.”*

**Interview with the NA Deputy *Taguhi Tovmassyan***

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*“I like contesting based on the rating system of election also because it creates major opportunities for election, diversity, creativity of electoral technologies, and campaign fever. I remember that in our list non-partisan persons were enrolled, including women. And they would tell after elections how impressed they were. That is to say, the rating system of election had given these women the opportunity to try their strength, to express themselves, and to reveal their potential.”*

**Interview with the NA Deputy *Ani Samsonyan***

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However, according to these same women candidates, the rating system of election has also negative aspects to it in the conditions of imperfection of the political culture.

*“The rating system of election undoubtedly has the other side of the coin too, in a negative sense. It also creates unequal competition between those who have money and those who do not, those with authority and those without it, and as a result, the winner is in many cases not the idea or program, but the fact of being “a good fellow” in certain circles.”*



The rating system of election is disadvantageous to women also for the reason that in the provinces, voter preferences are shaped by inertia and are not based on ideas or programs, but on consumer attitudes. In the opinion of focus group participants, in the provinces, of great importance are resources inputted into campaigning and even such a fact as by what car and with how many people candidates come to a meeting with voters.

*"I went to a village, we were talking with villagers when one of them said, "Darling, what can you do?" I responded explaining what we want, what the issues are and how we see their solutions, he then said that two days before male candidates had come and they came with four-five cars, i.e. people have the impression that if you are a woman and have arrived, say, by taxi, and there are only four people with you, then what to expect of you. All this is associated with power, with force and, naturally, you are looked upon as being weak if you have not arrived by a good car."*

#### **Focus Group Discussions with Candidates**

Nevertheless, there were a number of women candidates who managed to garner votes through the rating system being completely unfamiliar to society. This phenomenon was only typical of *My Step* Alliance candidates, who, according to many, were in privileged conditions.

*"In the case of My Step, they knew that they would pass the threshold and the activism and self-confidence of many women candidates was determined by that very factor. That is to say, they did not have to exert special efforts to receive the votes of the public, they knew that it was going to work out all the same because they were from that party."*

*"In any case, people would first choose the party and only after that the candidate from the list they knew the best or, in many cases, the candidate they did not even know, number 4 was important as it was the same as the party's number. That is to say, they did not differentiate between women and men and perceived the Alliance as a whole."*

*"It seems to me that the rating system limits people's choice. On the one hand, if you choose a political force, then you have to select a candidate from their list, and if people wanted, for whatever reasons, to vote for a specific candidate who was not from that force, they could not do that anymore."*

Taking into consideration this circumstance, it is difficult to evaluate the campaigns of all women candidates who made it into the Parliament through the rating system as successful or say that they have succeeded to overcome the difficulties of the rating system of election with ease. This probably could clearly be seen after the next electoral cycle when “the velvet revolution’s” euphoria calms down and candidates are better adapted to the electoral system, although the participants in the focus group discussions are unanimous that territorial lists should be done away with. At the same time, we should remember that the use of only closed lists has negative aspects as well, including more passive behavior of female candidates.

Looking at the campaigns of female candidates nominated only through national candidate lists, one can state that they were primarily invisible to voters since they either remained in the shadow, dealing with election organization issues within their parties (for example, by performing the responsibilities of Press Secretary of their party), or participated in campaigning, but together with their leader in a large group, or, instead of meeting with the constituency, tried to ensure their publicity through appearance in mass media.

Despite the fact that a greater part of voters, 71%, ascribes importance to the need for campaigning to this or that extent, one can state that women’s incompetent campaigns or poor command of campaigning technologies, disregard of campaigning, and limited communication with voters work against women candidates, considerably reducing their recognizability and, as a consequence of that, their chances to be elected.



# CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS



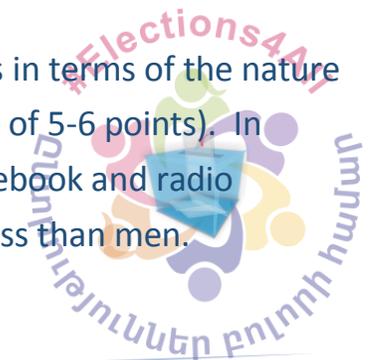
## VOTER PARTICIPATION

- A big wave of civic activism arisen within the context of “the velvet revolution” could not but influence also voters’ behavior. The emerging trust in positive changes led to youth’s more motivated participation in elections, bringing about a new wave of inspiration among women and, especially, young girls, as well. However, contrary to expectations, women’s participation in these elections was lower than that of men: only 47% of female voters and 51.5% of male voters participated in the voting with a difference of 4.5 points. The situation was different in the preceding 2017 elections when the women’s participation indicator was higher by 3.8 points than that of men.
- Research conducted in the pre-election period confirms that women and men were almost equally interested in the elections, ascribed equal importance to the elections, and 86% of women and 87% of men noted that they would participate in the elections.
- The age distribution of women and men voters who participated in the 2018 voting demonstrates that, in case of men, most active were male representatives in the youngest age group of 18-35 (difference of 7.5 points), and, in case of women, most active were female representatives in the age group over 50 (difference of 2.9 points). This distribution in general corresponds to the distribution of sex and age data in the population, according to which, women dominate in all age groups with the exception of the age groups of under 24.
- A comparison of female and male voters’ activism in Yerevan and the marzes (provinces) shows that in the marzes female voters’ activism was lower, which could be the reason for decrease in the general indicator of women’s participation in the elections.



## VOTER PREFERENCES

- In Armenia, the practice of united voting for issues of concern to women (issue voting) is absent. Absent are also the traditions of women's struggle for their rights. Hence, in this situation, women in Armenia do not form a united, consolidated group, which has clear-cut electoral preferences. At the same, there are certain differences between women's and men's electoral preferences.
- Sociological surveys conducted in the pre-election period demonstrate that the difference between the positions of female and male respondents in giving their preferences to this or that force was very small and fluctuated within the limits of 0.2-3.4% for different forces, which could be significant only for the parties which received few votes. Overall, disclosure of any regularities in female and male preferences in terms of the political spectrum (right-leaning, left-leaning, centrist) was extremely difficult for the reason that, in Armenia, voter preferences for parties are usually not based on ideological considerations, and the more so in the 2018 snap elections as the voting was extremely personalized.
- Differences in a number of incentives underlying the voting of female and male voters reached 4-5 per cent. In particular, there were more women among those who voted based on their affection for a party leader.
- There is a clear-cut difference (up to 10 points) between women and men in terms of their interest in politics, as well as in terms of the nature of information of interest to them (within the limits of 10-20 points) and usage of information sources (within the limits of 5-6 points). In particular, women are more interested in social issues than men, and, in terms of information sources, women use Facebook and radio channels less than men. Women seek to fill information gaps through direct contacts with political figures two times less than men.



## FACTORS IMPEDING WOMEN'S ELECTORAL BEHAVIOR

- According to assessments of election observation missions, cases of “family voting” were observed during the voting when women were manifestly directed by their husbands. Members of electoral commissions often do not regard this as an impermissible act, thinking that it is one family, and, therefore, the family father or husband have the right to direct women (daughter-in-law, daughter) in their voting, thus, depriving women of the opportunity to freely exercise their right to vote.
- The peculiarities of electoral behavior of women with disabilities are determined by the fact as to what extent elections are inclusive, i.e. to what extent the accessibility of polling stations is ensured, whether advocacy materials are accessible to people with visual and hearing impairments and many other issues, each one of which can be a serious obstacle to exercising their right to vote.

## WOMEN'S ROLE IN ORGANIZATION AND CONDUCT OF ELECTIONS

- Taking into consideration the relevant indicators of women's involvement in bodies responsible for organization and administration of elections, as well as of their participation in election observation missions, women play a significant role in organization and conduct of elections, which, however, remains invisible and does not affect their status in society.
- Women's participation and role in elections is not visualized and is not appreciated by society and the authorities, first of all, due to the absence of sex disaggregated and systematized official statistics.
- Policies carried out by the CEC cannot be considered gender-sensitive and a gender component is not included in the functions performed by the CEC.



## WOMEN CANDIDATES IN PARTY LISTS

- Generation change gradually unfolding in the political field manifested itself more drastically during the 2018 elections on account of young women and men who grew up during independence and were engaged in civic activism and who also were the driving force of the “velvet revolution.” Hence, it was logical that candidate lists were compiled with their inclusion.
- In the 2018 parliamentary elections, noticeable was considerable increase in the involvement of especially the age group of up to 30-year-old women candidates in party candidate lists (19%), which was always considered to be the least represented age group in the labor market and politics.
- In the 2018 elections, the scenarios of women’s entry into politics differed from those during the preceding convocations, which is conditioned by, first, a change in the political situation and, second, generation change.
- The list of those areas from where women had more often made their entry into politics hardly changed in the 2018 elections, although with each new election the number of women enrolled in the candidate lists from the NGO sector and business area has been increasing.
- The process of compilation of candidate lists continues to remain non-transparent, which is a consequence of the lack of intra-party democracy.



## WOMEN CANDIDATES IN PARTY LISTS

- The majority of the eleven political forces contesting in the elections showed a good will in terms of women's engagement, and, on average, featured 32% of women candidates in the national lists and 33% in territorial ones, which cannot be explained by the wide spread thesis of "formal involvement of women."
- The experience of the past elections demonstrated that even under the conditions of an unprecedented increase in women's civic activism the quota played a positive role in terms of women's involvement in the lists and the necessity of temporary special measures (quota) is still justified by the existing gender stereotypes, political traditions, and psychological barriers.
- Observing the gender behavior of the political forces aspiring to receive the vote of the majority, one can state that it fits within the scope of the known regularity "the closer to the authorities, the fewer women."
- Despite the fact that as a result of the 2018 snap elections, the number of women elected through territorial lists increased (12 women were elected), there is no guarantee that this tendency will be maintained in the next cycle of elections when there is no more euphoria connected with the wave of the revolution. Hence, the preservation of territorial lists is extremely problematic for a number of reasons, including also the fact that their use manifestly reduces the competitiveness of female candidates.
- Topics related to women/gender equality were hardly voiced during campaigns, notwithstanding those cases when candidates commented on a question on this topic initiated by a journalist. This topic was missing from party programs and it was also ignored in female candidates' campaigning.



## BEHAVIOR AND VISIBILITY OF WOMEN CANDIDATES DURING CAMPAIGNS

- In the 2018 elections, same way as during the parliamentary elections held in Armenia over the past decade, the volume of coverage of women candidates did not exceed 10%. Women were almost absent from the ranks of those political figures who were mentioned the most in mass media because the campaigns of the political forces contesting in the elections were carried out mostly by men. Women tried to fill this gap by ensuring their visibility in social networks.
- Women candidates' visibility in the 2018 elections was higher than during the preceding 2017 elections. This can be explained by the change in the political situation, within the context of which, certain changes were noticed in public perceptions of women's political participation and in behavior of female candidates. In particular, according to the sociological surveys conducted at the beginning of 2019, only 12.7% of the respondents believe that politics is not a women's business, whereas a decade ago the proportion of those sharing this opinion made up 46.2%
- Female candidates who were most visible and active in their communication with voters were those nominated in territorial lists or through the so called rating system of election. They were compelled to come out of the shadow of the leaders of their political forces trying to campaign on their own and affirm themselves inside their parties by collecting votes for their parties.
- In contrast to the preceding elections, women more actively participated in the debates held within the framework of the political TV programs of high ratings, presenting positions of their political forces on different issues.



## BEHAVIOR AND VISIBILITY OF WOMEN CANDIDATES DURING CAMPAIGNS

- In the 2018 elections, formerly widely used electoral bribes were almost missing, participation of criminal elements was not noted; however, instead, an aggressive attitude to dissent was manifest, which revealed itself through wide use of hate speech. Women candidates too became the targets of hate speech. They were subjected to sex-based personal insults and threats on social networks.
- The new political situation left its impact on women candidates' rhetoric too. In their public speeches and interviews, women, while presenting their motivation, almost refused to make their former cautious evaluations, emphasizing their willingness and ability to serve the society and related responsibility.



## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR:

### The RA Government

- To ensure the implementation of the Concluding Observations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women regarding the fifth and sixth periodic reports presented by Armenia (2016) on undertaking measures to promote women's full and equal participation in elected and appointed bodies;
- To adopt a strategy and action plan for implementation of the policies on ensuring equal rights and equal opportunities for women and men, taking into consideration:
  - The obligations of the Republic of Armenia within the framework of Resolution No. (2003)3 of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe Member States to ensure no less than 40% threshold for women's representation at the level of political decision-making by 2020,
  - The obligation of the UN Member States, including the Republic of Armenia, within the framework of Sustainable Development Goals, to ensure women's and men's equal (50/50) participation in all areas of life by 2030,
- Measures aimed at involving women in political activities envisioned within the framework of the Eastern Partnership.



## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR

### The RA National Assembly

- To initiate changes to the RA Electoral Code:
  - Proposing to replace the 30/70 quota envisioned by Article 83 by at least 40/60 proportion in party proportional lists;
  - Transitioning to simple proportional system of election, to do away with the use of open territorial lists, ensuring involvement of district candidates in party lists by other means;
  - Improving the mechanism for guaranteeing women's representation envisaged by Article 100 in the de facto elected National Assembly;
  - Extending the application of the above noted provisions ensuring women's representation to elections to local self-government bodies conducted through proportional electoral system in communities with the permanent population over 70 thousand residents;
  - Envisioning provisions to rule out hate speech during election campaigns;
  - Securing the CEC obligation to collect and publish all data related to elections on the basis of the sex disaggregation principle.



## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR

### The RA National Assembly

- To introduce changes to the Law on Parties,
  - Creating prerequisites for full development of intra-party democracy,
  - Taking into consideration PACE Resolution No. (2012) on the responsibility of parties to ensure gender balance in the legislative body and the entire society and to engage women and promote their political growth and advancement;
- To introduce changes to the RA National Assembly Rules of Procedure envisaging disciplinary sanctions for calls for violence, hate speech, and sexist expressions; to secure the same norms in the Rules of Conduct for MPs;
- To ensure the National Assembly's joining and active participation in inter-parliamentary cooperation and those initiatives by parliamentary assemblies which are aimed at gender equality and ruling out of discrimination in parliamentary work;
- To carry out awareness-raising activities to familiarize the political community of Armenia with documents on expanding women's political participation adopted by PACE, OSCE, and other structures of the Council of Europe;
- To expand the cooperation of female MPs and women's NGOs on *Women's Agenda*.



## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR

### Central Electoral Commission

- To collect and publish all data related to elections on the basis of the sex disaggregation principle;
- To incorporate a gender component in the work of all bodies responsible for organization and conduct of elections;
- To develop a CEC gender strategy, which will provide the opportunity to implement the policy of equal opportunities, preventing discrimination based on sex, age, disability, and ethnic affiliation in electoral processes;
- To incorporate a gender component in training programs for members of the CEC and Territorial and Precinct Electoral Commissions to promote gender awareness raising, better perception of voter needs, and to combat such vicious phenomena as, for example, “family voting”;
- To create monitoring and evaluation mechanisms for ensuring gender equality in electoral processes;
- To provide for equal access to polling stations for all, including elderly and disabled women with mobility problems.



## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR

### Parties

- To promote involvement of women in parties, to create mechanisms for women's advancement and their proper representation in party governing bodies;
- To incorporate a gender component in training programs for party members;
- To develop and take measures to include a gender component in the charters, programs and procedures of political parties;
- To implement special training and experience-sharing programs for young political figures ensuring equal participation of women and men;
- To improve the registration of party members by including sex disaggregated data on members and to ensure the availability of this information to society;
- In cooperation with the community of experts, to examine the experience of European political parties in achieving gender equality and the opportunities for its localization;
- To expand the cooperation between women's councils of political parties and women's non-governmental organizations with a view to ensuring women's political advancement;
- To develop intra-party democracy, including taking steps to make the process of compilation of candidate lists more transparent.



## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR

### Civil Society

- To carry out monitoring of women's political participation and the implementation of the RA international obligations;
- To advocate for increase in women's political participation, including also in electoral processes, and their representation at the decision-making level;
- To carry out activities aimed at overcoming societal gender stereotypes on women's political participation;
- To incorporate a gender component in the educational content of the political schools operating in the Republic of Armenia;
- To expand the network of women's political leadership schools, incorporating the knowledge and skills necessary for conduct of election campaigns in their curricula, including legal knowledge, procurement of financial resources, and technologies for work with voters and communication with mass media;
- To cooperate with the Government and the National Assembly for the purpose of preparing and advancing *Women's Agenda*;
- To organize advocacy campaigns in mass media and social media to rule out hate speech and sexism against female political figures.

