ELECTIONS *2021* WOMEN CANDIDATES'
COVERAGE ON TV AND ONLINE MEDIA

ANALYSIS OF MONITORING RESULTS

2021
Yerevan

CONTENT

ABBREVIATIONS LIST

1.	**Rise**	RISE PARTY
2.	**RP**	REPUBLIC PARTY
3.	**CCP**	CIVIL CONTRACT PARTY
4.	**Fair Armenia**	FAIR ARMENIA PARTY
5.	**CD**	CITIZEN'S DECISION SOCIAL-DEMOCRATIC PARTY
6.	**NDPole**	NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC POLE PARTY
7.	**BHK**	PROSPEROUS ARMENIA PARTY
8.	**ArmAlliance**	ARMENIA ALLIANCE
9.	**PUD**	I HAVE HONOR ALLIANCE
10.	**LHK**	BRIGHT ARMENIA PARTY
11.	**NAP**	NATIONAL AGENDA PARTY
12.	**ANC**	ARMENIAN NATIONAL CONGRESS
13.	**Awakening**	AWAKENING NATIONAL CHRISTIAN PARTY
14.	**HAP**	HOMELAND OF ARMENIANS PARTY
15.	**United homeland**	UNITED HOMELAND PARTY
16.	**DPA**	DEMOCRATIC PARTY OF ARMENIA
17.	**5165 movement**	5165 NATIONAL CONSERVATIVE MOVEMENT PARTY
18.	**SBA**	SHIRINYAN|-BABAJANYAN ALLIANCE OF DEMOCRATS
19.	**FHA**	FREE HOMELAND ALLIANCE
20.	**UN**	UNITED NATIONS ORGANIZATION
21.	**NA**	NATIONAL ASSEMBLY
22.	**LSG**	LOCAL SELF-GOVERNANCE

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Relevance and Topicality of the Issue

Women and men's equal and fair participation in electoral processes is the foundation of democracy. In Armenia, women's participation in elections has significantly increased thanks to the gender quota introduction. Thus, since 2003, women's representation in the RA National Assembly has increased from 5% to 34% and that increase is secured by the gender quota set in the RA Electoral Code, which, over the period of 2002-2021, increased about six times – from 5% to 30%.

The requirement[1] for at least 30 percent representation of underrepresented sex in party electoral lists was secured in the RA Electoral Code in 2016, however, it was first enacted during the 2021 snap elections, when more than 36.57% women[2] were nominated and 34.6% of those women received parliamentary mandates instead of 24%[3] of the preceding 2018 elections.

A significant expansion of women's representation also took place as a result of the LSG elections of 2021, most of which were conducted based on the proportional electoral system and, hence, proceeded with the application of the gender quota[4].

The recorded positive trends in terms of increase in women's representation in parliament and local self-governance system raise a number of important questions. In particular, does an increase in the number of women candidates thanks to the quota introduction lead to the increase in women's visibility in mass media during elections? Also, does the expansion of women candidates' participation imply broader coverage of women's and gender issues during elections?

This research conducted within the framework of the project "Women in Media – Elections 2021" allows revealing answers to these questions through monitoring mass media publications about elections from a gender perspective.

The UN too ascribes great importance to monitoring pre-election coverage from a gender perspective considering it a tool conducive to gender equality and women's empowerment[5].

The study of the literature related to the topic allows concluding that the monitoring activities of the coverage of issues of the pre-election campaigns carried out in Armenia up to date have hardly touched upon the gender component. This gap by itself is a basis for monitoring pre-election coverage by mass media from a gender perspective with a view to revealing peculiarities of coverage of women candidates.

Monitoring of the NA and local government pre-election publications carried out within the framework of this research is valuable because its results enable to identify the trends and issues manifest in media within the context of the expansion of women's political participation, to assess the media's gender sensitivity from that perspective and to develop recommendations for enhancing it, which, taking into account mass media's impact on the shaping of the public opinion, is one of the goals set in the Gender Policy Implementation Strategy of Armenia for 2019-2023[6].

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[1] Article 83.4, RA Electoral Code https://www.arlis.am/DocumentView.aspx?DocID=109081

[2] Statistics: Women and Men's Participation in the Snap Parliamentary Elections of June 20, 2021. CEC, 2021https://res.elections.am/images/doc/Statistics2021.pdf

[3] Women's representation in the newly elected parliament is 33.6% http://womennet.am/women-in-parliament-2021/

[4] Articles 130.2, 141.6, and 141.8, RA Electoral Code
https://www.arlis.am/DocumentView.aspx?DocID=109081

[5] Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, Women, and the Media.
https://archive.unescwa.org/sites/www.unescwa.org/files/u1281/bdpfa__e.pdf

[6] http://www.irtek.am/views/act.aspx?aid=151906

RESEARCH GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Research Goal

➢ To reveal issues and peculiarities of the coverage of participation of women candidates in the snap parliamentary and local government elections of 2021.

➢ To assess the coverage of women's and gender issues during the election campaign.

Research Objectives

The research objectives included the following questions necessary for the collection of quantitative and qualitative data:

➢ What is the distribution of women and men candidates as featured in the coverage, including frequency and volume of coverage and allotted airtime?

➢ What is women candidates' coverage in mass media like as compared to their representation in electoral lists of political forces?

➢ What are the differences in the tone and context of materials about women and men candidates or materials with their participation?

➢ To what extent do the researched materials include gender stereotypes, sexism, hate speech, and propaganda of violence? To what extent do they target women?

➢ To what extent do the media or reporters covering electoral processes show stereotypic or biased attitudes to women candidates?

➢ To what extent do the mass media contribute to positive public perception of women's political leadership?

➢ What was the role of coverage authors, presenters, and interviewers in neutralizing or reinforcing gender stereotypes?

➢ To what extent did the mass media cover the issue of women's participation in elections?

➢ To what extent did the election campaign reporting cover women and gender issues as compared to other programmatic and non-programmatic topics?

To meet the research objectives to the extent possible and enrich them with qualitative evaluations, in addition to monitoring tools, focus group discussions were held through the engagement of reporters covering parliamentary and local government elections. Focus group discussions allowed to enrich the monitoring results with cause-and-effect evaluations and to reveal reporter and mass media positions on gender aspects of the elections.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The methodology of the research has been developed by drawing from and localizing the manual on *Election Coverage from a Gender Perspective*[7] (2011) for media monitoring authored by the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA).

The research methodology is based on the combination of toolkits for media monitoring and focus-group discussions, which has allowed to more effectively carry out collection, evaluation, and content analysis of quantitative and qualitative data.

Monitoring Unit

Each **TV** and **online material** were selected as the main unit of research:

a separate report of the news program,

separate information presented by the host,

a thematically and structurally separate section of the program, which addressed different topics/issues,

program announcements were considered part of the material they related to,

the text of the host preceding the TV report was considered as part of that report.

Thus, **news and news-analytical programs** were divided into plots, each of which was considered a separate material, and **socio-political/debate programs** were considered in the following way:

- If the program was devoted to one separate topic, it was considered as one separate material,

- If the program consisted of thematic sections, each of these sections was considered a separate material.

Sample of Monitored Media

To observe the NA pre-election coverage trends, the monitoring sample included **four broadcast and four online mass media outlets of nationwide coverage:**

- Pan-national terrestrial TV channels: Armenian Public TV First Channel (H1), *Armenia*, *Yerkir Media*, and *Shant* TVs;

Online media: 1in.am, News.am, Aravot.am and Azatutyun.am.

The selection of media was made taking into account the following criteria:

- Popularity,
- High viewing ratings,
- Wide audience,
- Genre diversity.

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[7] https://www.idea.int/sites/default/files/publications/election-coverage-from-a-gender-perspective.pdf

Monitored TV Channels	Description
Public TV Company CJSC (First Channel)	A public TV channel financed from the state budget, which has been broadcasting since 1956. Currently, it is also accessible in other countries through satellite broadcasting. It shows news, educational, sports, humorous, music projects, entertainment, and political talk shows. 595,496 followers of the Facebook Page (as of 08.10.21)
Shant TV Company	An Armenian private TV channel, which began broadcasting in 1994. Currently, it is also accessible in other countries through satellite broadcasting, as well as through IPTV and online. It shows news, educational, sports, humorous, music projects, entertainment, and political talk shows. 289,564 followers of the Facebook Page (as of 08.10.21)
Armenia TV Company	An Armenian private TV channel, which first aired in 1999. Currently, it is also accessible in other countries through satellite broadcasting, as well as through IPTV and online. It broadcasts shows, sketches, and soap operas. 340,053 followers of the Facebook Page (as of 08.10.21)
Yerkir Media TV Company	A private TV channel was founded in July of 2003. Since 2008, the TV company has been streaming its programs online. Since 2010, it has offered satellite broadcasting. It cooperates with a number of organizations and TV companies in the Diaspora. It broadcasts political talk shows, interviews, and military–patriotic programs. 220,177 followers of the Facebook Page (as of 08.10.21)
Monitored Websites	**Description**
Aravot.am: the online version of the *Aravot* daily	The online version of the *Aravot* daily has been issued since 2011 on a daily basis. It stands out among the online media by its professional Code of Ethics, which is voluntarily followed by reporters working with *Aravot*. 272,350 followers of the Facebook Page (as of 08.10.21)
News.am	News periodical, which provides daily updates in four languages. The main language is Armenian. It was founded in 2009. 798,456 followers of the Facebook Page (as of 08.10.21)
1in.am	A bilingual news periodical, which provides daily updates. The main language is Armenian. It was founded in 2004. 692,154 followers of the Facebook Page (as of 08.10.21)
Azatutyun.am	The headquarters of the Armenian service of the *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty* is located in Prague and it is an international media outlet with the largest network of correspondents in Armenia The Armenian service of *Radio Liberty* also has correspondents in Russia, France, Great Britain, and Israel. 1,190,919 followers of the Facebook Page (as of 08.10.21)

All the selected online media are updated 24/7 and, thanks to this level of activity, they cover more fully events and discourses happening in the different layers of society, which in its turn influences the shaping of public opinion.

All the selected TV channels broadcast nationwide, have satellite broadcasting, and are mainly in the leading position in the rating list.

Both the periodicals and the TV channels have a wide and stable audience of readers and viewers.

The media sample selected in the previous research[8] has also been taken into account when determining this sample selection to create opportunities for comparison of results in terms of revealing patterns and trends in the coverage of gender issues.

The monitoring sample of **LSG pre-election campaign coverage** primarily included those media outlets, which were observed while studying the NA pre-election coverage. At the same time, taking into account that elections of local self-governance bodies in Armenia were held in three stages: October 17, November 14, December 5, and covered different marzes or different enlarged communities of the same marz, the sample has been substituted with a number of regional broadcasters.

Two of the four selected regional broadcasters, Tsayg TV (Shirak) and Zangezur TV (Syunik), received a regional broadcasting license (license) from the Commission on Television and Radio of Armenia (CTR). The other two, "Lori" TV (Lori) and "ALT" TV (Armavir), although not licensed, are authorized by the CTR to provide audiovisual media services (see CTR annual program 2020)[9]. This means that these TV stations can provide audio-visual media services without a license, through a network operator, a cable broadcaster, and later a private multiplex operator.

Therefore, to identify the coverage trends of the LSG pre-election campaign, **the monitoring sample included:**

- **For elections held during the first two stages - October 17 and November 14:** six broadcasting TV channels, including three with nationwide coverage and three with regional coverage, and three with online media.

They included:
   - **Pan-national terrestrial TV channels:** Armenian Public TV First Channel (H1), *Yerkir Media*, and *Shant* TVs;
   - **Regionally broadcast** Zangezur TV (Siunik Marz), Lori TV (Lori Marz) and Tsayg TV (Shirak Marz);
   - **Online media:** 1in.am, News.am, Aravot.am, Azatutyun.am and.

- **For elections held on December 5 during the third stage:**
   - **One pan-national terrestrial TV channel:** Armenian Public TV First Channel (H1)
   - **Regionally broadcast media:** Tsayg TV (Shirak Marz), Lori TV (Lori Marz), and ALTTV (Armavir Marz).

[8] Discrimination and Violence on TV and Online Media: How Gender Sensitive the Armenian Media Is. OxYGen, 2019, 2021 https://oxygen.org.am/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Media-Monitoring-Report_Final.pdf
[9] CTR Annual program 2020 http://tvradio.am/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/2020_.pdf

Monitoring Period and Subject

As a monitoring subject served materials prepared by mass media.

Monitoring **during the RA NA snap elections of June 20, 2021,** included all those materials published during the pre-election campaign period of twelve days, **June 7-18 of 2021**, which made a reference to parties/ alliances and candidates that participated in the elections.

Surveys were the main edition of the news program, news-analytical programs, and socio-political/debate programs broadcast in the evening primetime (19.00-00.00) by the monitored TV channels.

No monitoring was conducted of the advertising video clips provided by political forces in the pre-election campaign period, as well as of the programming blocks and running lines of commercial/social advertising.

In the case of online news, researched were all archived materials, socio-political/debate programs except for commercial/political/social advertising and announcements.

As an exception, for the purpose of comparing them with mass media coverage, observed were

- wrap-up video clips prepared by 25 political forces and broadcast by Public TV on the last day of the pre-election campaign,
- five hundred video recordings of pre-election meetings posted on online media for a week.

Monitoring **during the LSG elections held on October 17, November 14, and December 5 of 2021** covered seven days preceding each stage of the elections before the Elections silence.

Principles of Data Collection, Classification, and Evaluation

During the quantitative observation of online publications and TV broadcasts, the researchers studied, on a daily basis, the materials and broadcasts published and made by the sampled sources before the Elections silence during **12 and 7 days** preceding respectively the NA and LSG elections and entered any unit (variable) related to the topic into the datasheet developed beforehand.

In particular, as a result of analysis of a material related to the monitored topic, they analyzed and entered into the datasheet the following variables:

- **Date** – the date of the monitored published/broadcast material.

- **Media name** – the name of the monitored media.

- **Source/s** – those who talk or provide information.

- **Actor/s** – those about whom the source talks or those to whom the material is devoted.

- **Speaker/s** – those who's direct or indirect speech was cited

Sources, Speakers, and Actors

Candidate	**All MP candidates registered in CEC lists**
Executive Power	**The Republic's Prime Minister, Deputy Prime Minister, and Ministers:** When members of the executive power were candidates and made statements as such, they were included under the category "candidate."
Legislative Power	**Incumbent MPs:** when members of the legislative power were candidates and made statements as such, they were included under the category "candidate."
Local Authorities	**Incumbent community heads and members of municipal councils,** who were candidates and made statements as such, were included under the category "candidate."
Political Force	**Leaders and representatives of political forces:** political activists, who do not have leadership or official functions in this or that party/alliance but made announcements on behalf of the given political force, were included under the category "other."
Central Election Commission	**Members or speakers of state institutions** responsible for the organization of and/or oversight over the elections
Church	**Church representatives and speakers**
Media	Media also "talked" through information provided in analytical articles and descriptive stories, reports, and editorials prepared by reporters and political analysts or in other ways.
NGO/CSO	**Representatives of NGOs, civic organizations, and business**
Other	**All other persons**, who made statements or were referenced in publications are not included in this list.

Source – As a source of information viewed was the entity that spoke and/or provided information, the entity that expressed an opinion or made a statement about some issue or political actor. Viewed as sources were also media outlets or political actors **(in those cases, when candidates, party speakers, authorities, representatives of organizations, and others expressed an opinion or made a statement about themselves).** Not only persons but also institutions and structures were viewed as a source. In those cases, when the source was a candidate, the datasheet also included the latter's sex: "f" for female and "m" for male. When the source did not allude to any person or institution and spoke about itself, it was viewed as the main actor of the given material.

The media outlet was viewed **as a source** in those cases when the media outlet reported about some event, analyzed, or expressed an opinion about some issue without referencing any specific person.

As an actor – or the main actor of a publication viewed was the person about whom the source spoke. When the actor was a candidate, the datasheet also included the latter's sex ("f" for women and "m" for men) and the political grouping to which he/she belonged.

Speaker – a candidate whose direct or indirect speech was cited.

Topics - All publications/ broadcasts related to the electoral process were classified according to topics, which were divided into two main categories:

1) Programmatic topics - Any position or opinion regarding public policies, be it currently implemented or a programmatic provision proposed by political forces for the future, was considered a programmatic topic. Any criticism of governmental policies was viewed as a programmatic topic, even if no direct or specific alternative proposal was made.

2) Non-programmatic or ongoing topics - In contrast to the above mentioned, as non-programmatic topics viewed were those topics, which did not directly or indirectly relate to public policies and were more associated with the existing situation, with the incidents related to the campaign or electoral process proper. For example, discussions about how the electoral processes were proceeding, polling results, disputes between political figures, pre-election rallies, and other topics were considered non-programmatic. The table below presents examples of programmatic and non-programmatic topics. They include the minimum threshold of topics, which was covered by monitoring. Addressing **gender equality** was a priority within the monitoring objectives.

Programmatic topics	Non-programmatic topics
1. Gender equality 2. Sexual and reproductive rights 3. Combating violence against women 4. Women's political participation 5. Other gender issues 6. Economy, employment, investments, and infrastructures 7. Economic, social, and cultural rights of women 8. Education 9. Healthcare 10. Security (defense and internal order) 11. Multiculturalism 12. Development and environment 13. Social policies and struggle against poverty 14. Other	1. General accusations 2. Self-withdrawals/revocations 3. Opinions about candidates 4. Opinions about the current government 5. Opinions about political parties 6. Electoral surveys 7. Survey analysis 8. Meetings/ disputes during the campaign 9. Electoral regulations 10. Organization of elections and training

The category of *gender equality* included those references to public policies or legislative proposals, which were aimed at the attainment of equality between sexes and expansion of women's economic, social, political, and cultural rights, development of their capacities and knowledge to change and improve the quality of their life.

Within the framework of this monitoring, the category of *gender equality* was in its turn divided into five subcategories to conduct a more detailed analysis.

Sexual and reproductive rights	Refers to the state policy on contraception, HIV/AIDs, maternal mortality, and abortion, as well as to strategies aimed at sexual education of the vulnerable population (teenagers, children, and women residing in rural areas).
Combating violence against women	Refers to prevention and care policies aimed at the elimination of violence and sexual violence against women.

Women's political participation	Refers to policies targeting women's political participation and their engagement in decision-making, both in elected positions and public administration bodies, as well as in the internal processes of political parties.
Other gender issues	All those topics are not included in the above-noted categories.

A genre of publication – a format selected for publication of material: a piece of news, interview, piece of reporting, chronicles, analysis, editorial.

Space/duration – in the case of a text format, the distribution of the material's space in percentage; in the case of videos or TV materials, in seconds, according to the relationship between a source(s), actor(s), and topic(s).

The total space of the material included title, introduction, full text, photos, infographics, tables, and other supporting details accompanying the material.

For example, if there were several people in the photo, the image was assigned to each of them and added to their share in the text.

Nature - This is the tonality or shade, which was expressed in the source speech when referencing the actor or topic/issue. This variable allowed us to evaluate and differentiate whether the coverage of the actor and/or topic was positive, negative, or neutral.

Thus, three distinctive digits were used to characterize gender or stereotypic references:

1. *1 (positive)*
2. *–1 (negative)*
3. *0 (neutral)*

In the same material, the same source's reference (distinctive digit) to the same actor or topic was recorded only once regardless of the fact as to how many times it was repeated in the material. If the same source referenced different actors and/or topics in the material, each of them was recorded (again only once) in a separate column.

Stereotypic nature – During monitoring special attention was paid to the format for publication of news-analytical materials, questions voiced during interviews, language usage, choice of images, and photos since they all are the factors that have their weight in the conveyed messages and cause differential coverage of women and men.

Thus, those materials were considered stereotypic where:

1. Women candidates were portrayed as victims or sexual objects;
2. Women candidates were represented in their home roles (mother, wife, or housewife) or when their personal life was disproportionately emphasized;
3. Major attention was paid to women candidates' clothes or physical features, diminishing the importance of their actions or positions during the campaign.

Photo – The main graphic images accompanying the material were observed to assess the visual representation of women and men.

Focus group discussions

Two focus group discussions (FGD) were held:
1. with 7 journalists that had been covering Parliamentary elections
2. with 8 regional journalists that had been covering LSG elections

The objectives were as follows:

– to complement and enrich the findings of monitoring with qualitative and cause-effect justifications

– reveal journalists' and media attitudes and opinions on gender aspects of coverage of elections.

A sampling of focus groups and content of discussions

– The main and mandatory principle for the selection of FGD participants was at least several years of experience covering political processes and, especially, elections, which would enable the journalist to interpret and assess trends in the coverage of women political figures.

– Participants for FGDs related to the coverage of the parliamentary elections were selected from media with nationwide coverage, and in the case of FGDs related to the coverage of the local government elections, it was found expedient to engage the participation of journalists from regionally broadcast media.

– The engagement of representatives of the sampled media in FGDs was meant to help clarify and check the monitoring findings and receive cause and effect explanations for them from journalists.

– The selection of FGD participants was not limited only to the media outlets representing the monitoring sample, which provided an opportunity to compare the differences in the opinions of journalists from the monitored and other media outlets, as well as to generalize the research conclusions.

– Engaged in FGDs were journalists of different sexes. However, women journalists made up the prevailing majority, which reflects the actual gender composition of those involved in journalism.

– FGD questionnaires were compiled based on and in consonance with the research objectives, which allowed specifying the monitoring conclusions.

PART 1. COVERAGE OF WOMEN CANDIDATES IN THE JUNE 20, 2021. SNAP PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS: MONITORING RESULTS

1.1. WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SNAP ELECTIONS TO THE RA NATIONAL ASSEMBLY: NOMINATIONS AND MANDATES RECEIVED

In the June 20, 2021 snap parliamentary elections, participating were 21 parties and four alliances with 2498 candidates, out of which 925 were women (37%). The political force candidate lists only two were headed by women. On June 27, 2021, the RA Central Election Commission published the final results of the voting in the RA NA elections with national electoral lists. According to these results, two alliances and one party out of 25 political forces running in the elections made it to the Parliament. The 107 parliamentary mandates were distributed in the following way:

- *Civil Contract* Party – 71 mandates with 24 for women and 47 for men candidates
- *Hayastan* (Armenia) Alliance – 29 mandates with 10 for men and 19 for men candidates
- *I Have Honor* Alliance - seven mandates with two for women and five for men candidates

Party/Alliance	Number (%) of Mandates	Number (%) of Women MPs	Number (%) of Men MPs
Civil Contract Party	71 (66.4%)	24 (33.8%)	47 (66.2%)
Hayastan (Armenia) Alliance	29 (27.1%)	10 (34.5%)	19 (65.5%)
I Have Honor Alliance	7 (6.5%)	2 (28.6%)	5 (71.4%)
Total	**107 (100%)**	**36 (33.6%)**	**71 (66.4%)**

According to the CEC published lists, the candidates' lists submitted by the political forces beforehand had the following distribution:

Party/Alliance	Number of Candidates	Number (%) of Women Candidates	Number (%) of Men Candidates
Civil Contract Party	159	53 (33.3%)	106 (66.7%)
Hayastan (Armenia) Alliance	156	48 (30.8%)	108 (69.2%)
I Have Honor Alliance	229	80 (34.9%)	149 (65.1%)
Total	**544**	**181 (33.3%)**	**363 (66.7%)**

1.2. TV COVERAGE OF WOMEN CANDIDATES: ANALYSIS OF MONITORING RESULTS

On all four nationwide TV channels researched in the period preceding the RA NA snap elections, observed were the main editions of news programs, all informational and analytical programs, and socio-political and debate programs aired in the evening from 7 p.m. till midnight for twelve days, June 7-18.

Noted below are the programs observed on the total of 240 hours of airtime of the sampled TV channels:

First Channel	• The main edition of the "News" program • "Armenia Elects" • "Public Discussion" • "Interview with Astghik Sargsyan" • "Interview with Petros Ghazaryan"
Yerkir Media	• The main edition of the news program "The Country Today" • "The Country's Question" • "The Country's Guestroom" • "At the Crossroads of Interests" • "National Agenda"
Armenia	• The main edition of the news program "Zhama" ("Hour") * * **Notice:** During the period of monitoring the parliamentary election campaign, the Armenia TV channel broadcast only the news program "Zhama," no socio-political or debate programs were aired and, hence, they could not be observed.
Shant	• The main edition of the news program "Horizon" • "Perspective" (Herankar)

The coverage of the elections within the framework of the noted programs made up more than **65 hours**, i.e. **27.4% of the total airtime observed**.

Women Candidates as Speakers

During the monitoring of the noted programs, **women candidates covered as speakers**, i.e. when their direct or indirect speech was cited within the context of the elections and election campaign on all the TV channels taken together **made up 10%**, which means that out of every ten speakers only one was a woman. It should be mentioned that women candidates **made up 37% of all the candidates in the electoral lists** and **about 34% of the mandates were given to the women** involved in the political forces that had made it to the parliament. Therefore, **their representation in TV programs should have been at least close to these showings.**

Frequency of TV coverage of NA candidates as speakers (%)

208 (10%)

- Women
- Men

1875 (90%)
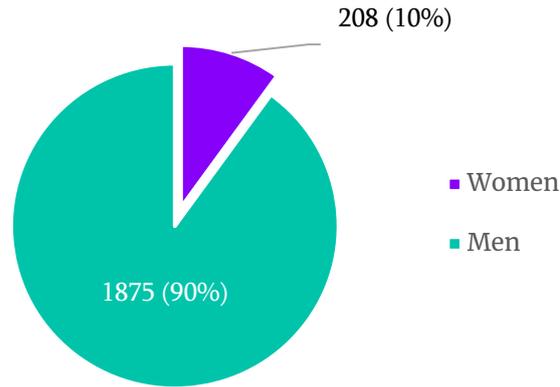
Women candidates as speakers most frequently appeared on **Shant** TV and public **First Channel**, making up respectively **12.1%** and **11%,** then on **Yerkir Media** and **Armenia**, making up respectively **5.9%** and **5.1%** (see **Chart 2**).

Frequency of coverage of NA candidates as speakers – per TV channels (%)

Shant	First Channel	Yerkir Media	Armenia
Men, 87.9%	Men, 89.0%	Men, 94.1%	Men, 94.9%
Women, 12.1%	Women, 11.0%	Women, 5.9%	Women, 5.1%
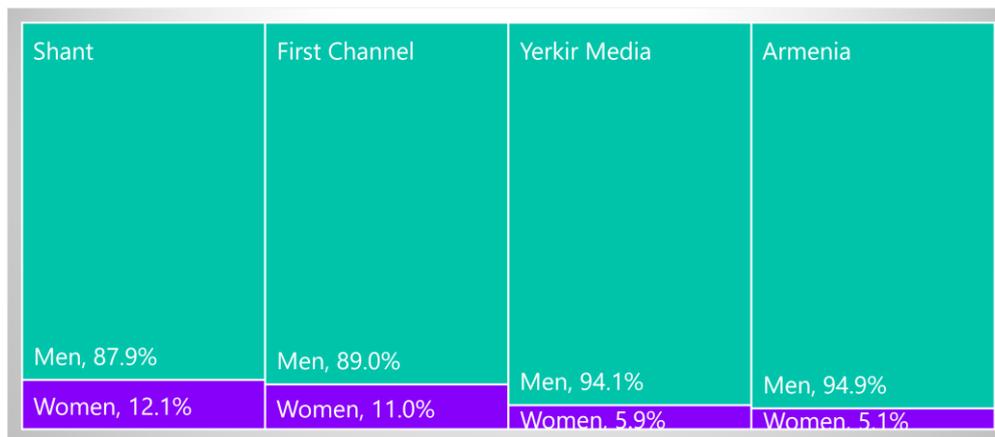
According to the journalists that participated in the focus group discussions, these percentages of the coverage of women candidates were determined by several factors:

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"In these elections, women were covered poorly: we had a post-war situation and the main news stream was dominated by military, expert analyses, which are more associated with men candidates."

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"These elections had a masculine tint since the discourses on whether the authorities should stay or step down and the Artsakh issue were dominant, and these issues have a masculine face..."

Focus Group Discussion with journalists

<u>The Airtime Allotted to Women Candidates</u>

The airtime allotted to Women candidates as speakers overall made up 9%. This means that on the observed TV channels women candidates had an opportunity to express their positions for about five hours (17 823 seconds), whereas men candidates during more than 55 hours (180 775 seconds).

Airtime allotted to NA candidates on TV channels (%)
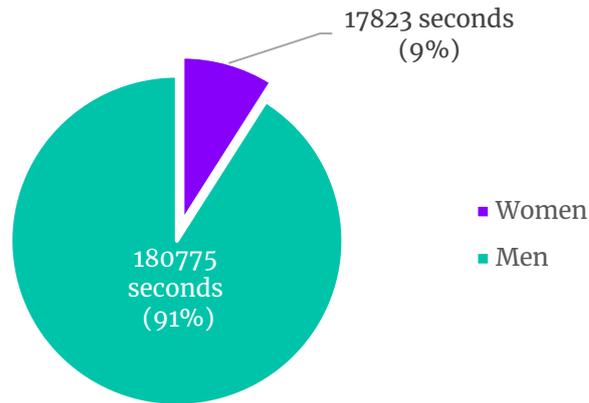
In terms of the airtime allotted to women candidates on separate TV channels, **Shant TV with 9.5%** conceded its place to the public **First Channel**, which allotted **10.3%** of the airtime to women candidates within the framework of the relevant topic. **Yerkir Media** and **Armenia** TVs followed them with respectively **7.4%** and **2.5%.**

Airtime allotted to NA candidates – per TV channels (%)

First Channel	Shant	Yerkir Media	Armenia
Men, 89.7%	Men, 90.5%	Men, 92.6%	Men, 97.5%
Women, 10.3%	Women, 9.5%	Women, 7.4%	
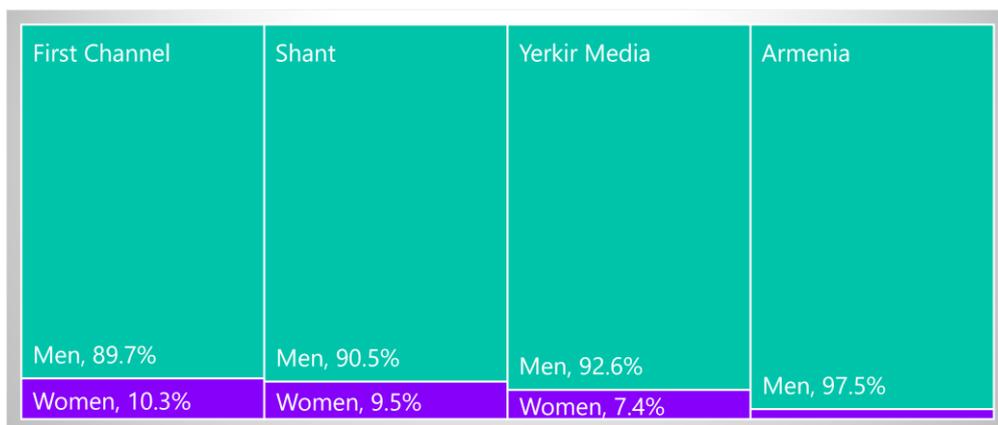
Women Candidates Representation on TV according to Party Affiliation

The analysis of the collected data demonstrated that women involved in 17 political forces out of the total 25 running in the elections more or less presented their positions and viewpoints on TV.

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"…There were many cases when women refused to be interviewed or referred the interview request to men political figures…"

***

"…Political forces communicate their important messages to the media with a man face. Perceptions of reliability and value are associated with men…"

Focus group discussion with journalists

</div>

By the way, women candidates most frequently appearing on TV as speakers represented *5165 National Conservative Movement*, *United Homeland*, and *Homeland of Armenians* parties. The first two of the parties were headed by women, and in the case of the third one, the women candidate came second in the party candidate list. All the three parties were leading in terms of the proportion of the nominated women candidates.[10]

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[10] https://ampop.am/women-candidates-in-parliamentary-elections-2021/

Number of NA women candidates by political party affiliation

Chart 5

(Abbreviations list – on page 4)

Party	Number
5165 movement	38
DPA	35
United Homeland	22
HAP	22
Awakening	17
ANC	15
NAP	11
LHK	8
PUD	7
ArmAlliance	7
BHK	6
NDPole	6
CD	5
Fair Armenia	4
CCP	3
RP	2
Rise Party	1
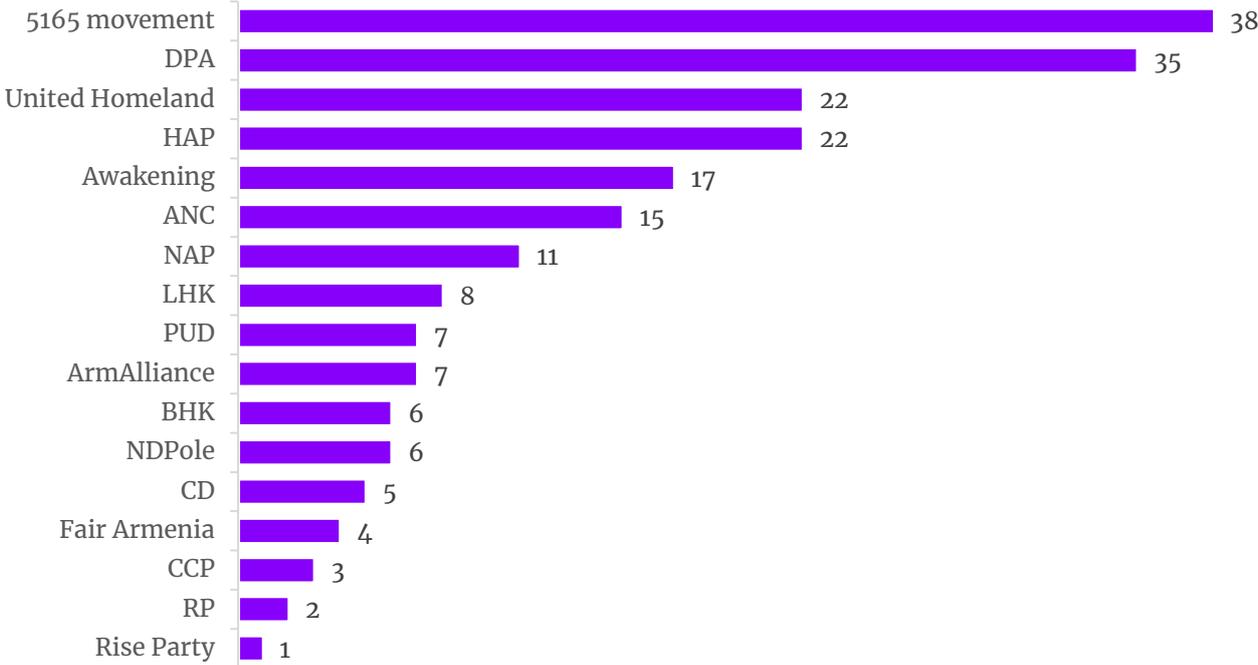
Representation of NA women candidates per political party affiliation and TV channels (%)

Chart 6

Legend: ■ First channel ■ Yerkir media ■ Armenia ■ Shant

Party	First channel	Yerkir media	Armenia	Shant
5165 movement	28		3	7
DPA	28			7
HAP	15		1	6
United Homeland	11	9		2
Awakening	14			3
ANC	12		1	2
NAP	11			
LHK	6			2
ArmAlliance	2	4	1	
PUD	1	5		1
NDPole	5			1
BHK	1		2	3
CD	4			1
Fair Armenia	4			
CCP	1			2
Rise Party	2			
RP	1			
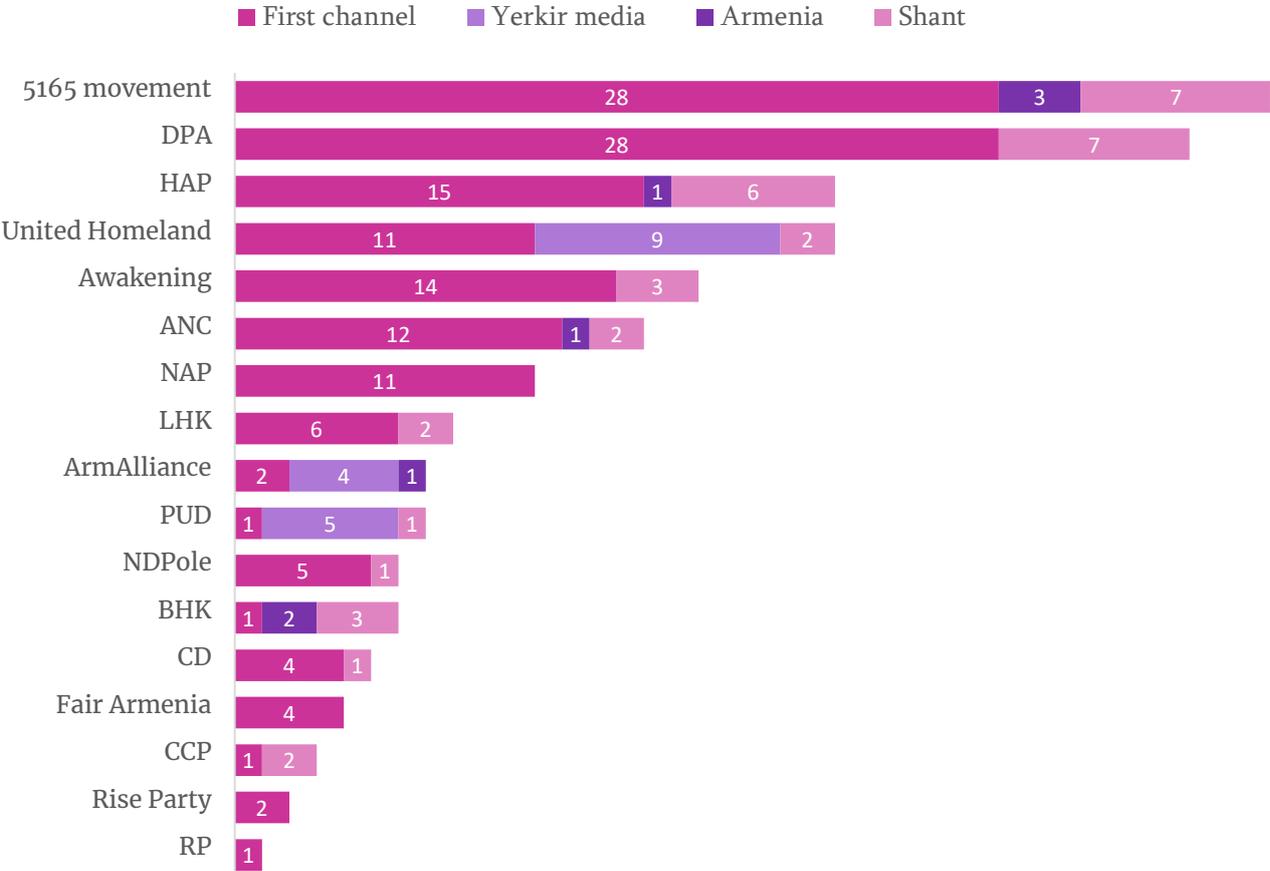
It becomes clear from the charts that the representation of women candidates according to party affiliation was especially diverse on Public TV **First Channel** and **Shant TV**. The most frequently represented three parties coincided in the case of the noted two TV channels. Meanwhile, **Yerkir Media** and **Armenia** TVs, limited themselves to a few political forces when introducing women candidates.

<u>Formats for Women Candidates' Appearance on TV</u>

The picture is comprehensively depicted by the charts noted below, which reflect the extent and program formats for the appearance of women as speakers on the TV.

The appearance of NA women candidates on TV per program formats (%)

Chart 7
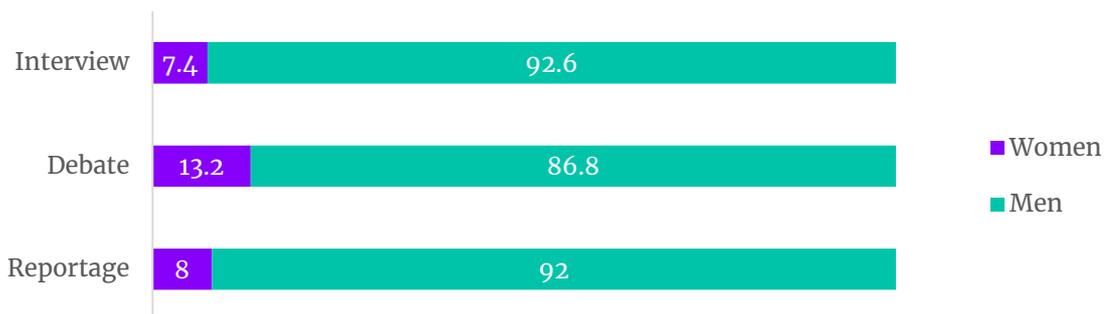
Thus, despite their underrepresentation, women candidates most frequently participated in TV debates and interviews. The chart below identifies the TV channels that afforded them that opportunity.

Representation of NA women candidates on TV per program format and TV channels (%)

Chart 8
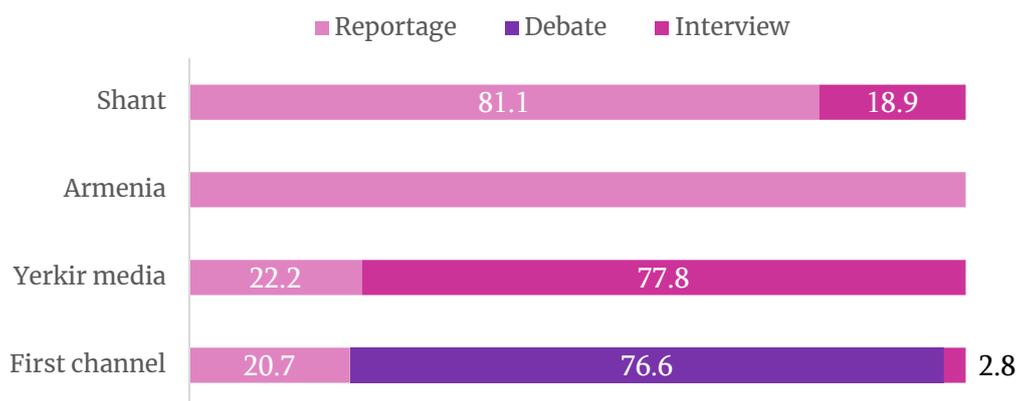
According to the observed data, only **First Channel** broadcasted **debate programs** with the participation of women MP candidates. Women candidates were most frequently featured in a debate format by this broadcaster. On **Yerkir Media** TV, women most frequently appeared in the formats of interviews, then reporting, and **on Shant TV**, they appeared first in the reporting format and second in the format of interviews. **Armenia TV** featured them exclusively in the

format of reporting. This can be explained by the fact that here only news programs were aired during the entire period of monitoring.

Women Candidates as Actors

Frequency on TV coverages of NA candidates as main actors (%)

Chart 9

125
(7.8%)

1468
(92.2%)
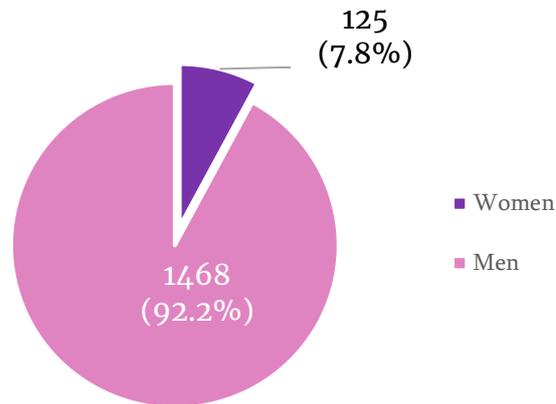
- Women
- Men

An analysis of the observed data shows that **women candidates as main actors of the materials**, persons to whom the material was devoted or the source spoke or provided information about, **were covered less than women candidates in the role of speakers**. Their representation on all four TV channels together made up only **7.8%.**

Frequency of NA candidates as main actors on TV coverages – per channels (%)

Chart 10

First Channel	Yerkir Media	Armenia	Shant
Men, 90.7%	Men, 96.0%	Men, 97.4%	Men, 98.1%
Women, 9.3%			
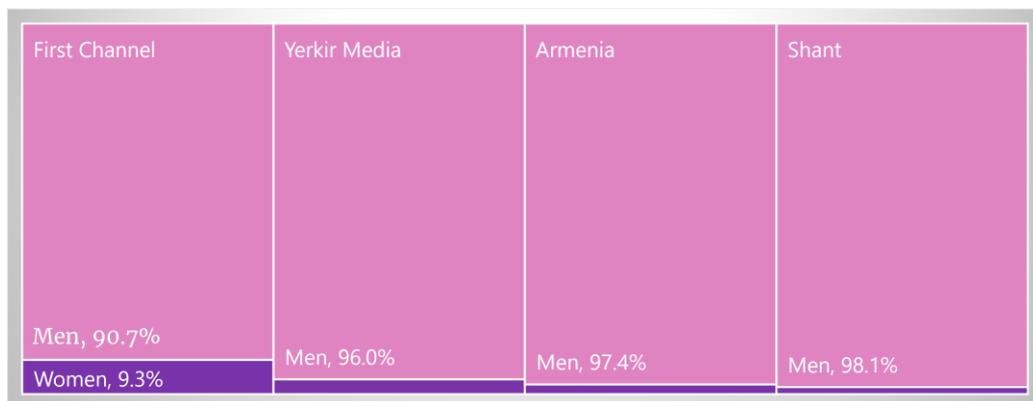
Women candidates were most frequently covered in this category by public **First Channel (9.3%)** followed by **Yerkir Media (6.2%)**, **Armenia (2.6%),** and **Shant TV channel**, which broadcasted information about women candidates most rarely **(1.9%)**.

Women and Men Candidates' Coverage Tone and Context

One of the objectives set within the framework of this monitoring was the differences of tone and context observed in the materials on women and men candidates or those with their participation.

***

"As far as women are concerned, too much attention is paid to their sex. If a woman talks, it is emphasized that the speaker is a woman. Rival media, on both sides, often target women. Perhaps there is an opinion that women are more vulnerable, they can be more easily unsettled."

***

"...Women are more vulnerable; due to polarization, they are targeted more. Men are less targeted than women for the same expression and that has led to a dangerous tendency with women becoming more passive. They avoid giving interviews. That is also the fault of the media bullying to which women are subjected on social media platforms..."

Focus group discussion with journalists

The analysis of the observed data revealed that **the nature of TV references about women candidates** was **mostly neutral** and **positive** during parliamentary elections campaigns, respectively **44%** and **40%. References of negative nature**, which were only observed on Public TV, perhaps because there were incomparably more materials about women candidates on Public TV than on the other three TV channels, **made up 16%.**

Meanwhile, **dominant** in the context of broadcasts on **men candidates** were **positive references (45.4%),** and **neutral** and **negative** references made up respectively **29.7%** and **24.9%.**

The charts presented below show the nature of coverage on candidates/with their participation according to TV channels **(Charts 11-13)**.

Nature of TV references about NA women and men candidates or with their participation on TV (%)

Chart 11

- Positive: Men 45.4, Women 40
- Negative: Men 24.9, Women 16
- Neutral: Men 29.7, Women 44

■ Men
■ Women
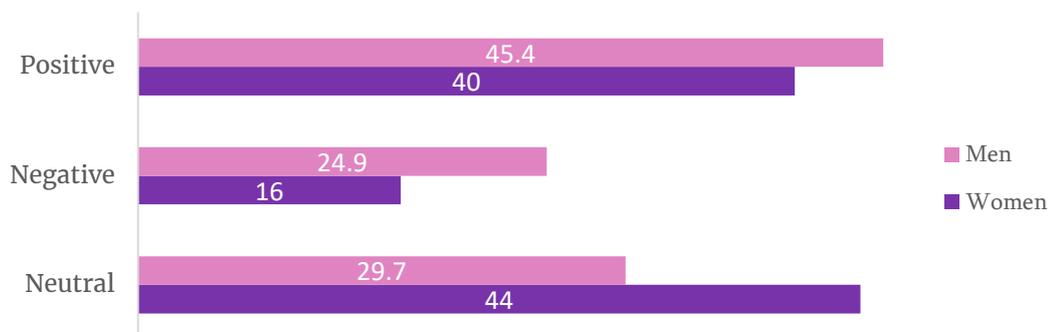
The chart presented above makes clear that during the election campaign, women were targeted less than men, which can be explained by their underrepresentation and shadowed status.

TV references on NA women candidates – per nature/tone and channel

Chart 12

Channel	Positive	Negative	Neutral
First Channel	41 (37%)	20 (18%)	51
Yerkir Media	5		4
Armenia	3		
Shant	1		

Legend: Positive, Negative, Neutral
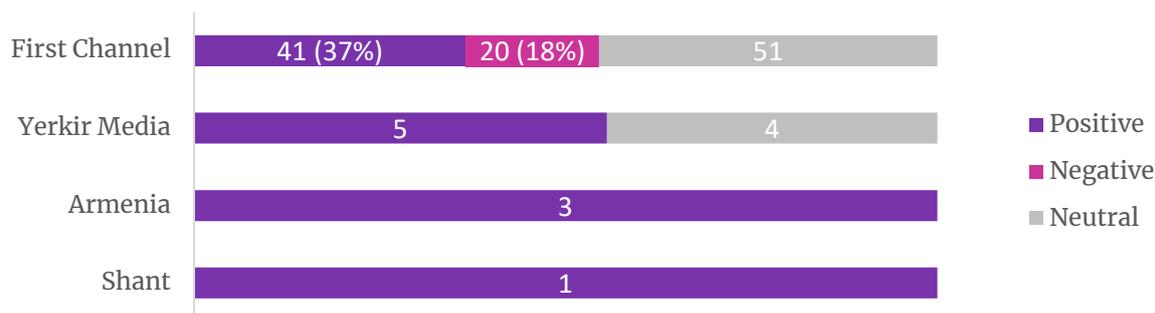
TV references on NA men candidates – per nature/tone and channel

Chart 13

Channel	Positive	Negative	Neutral
First channel	486	236	364
Yerkir media	88	89	38
Armenia	57	40	17
Shant	35	1	17

Legend: Positive, Negative, Neutral
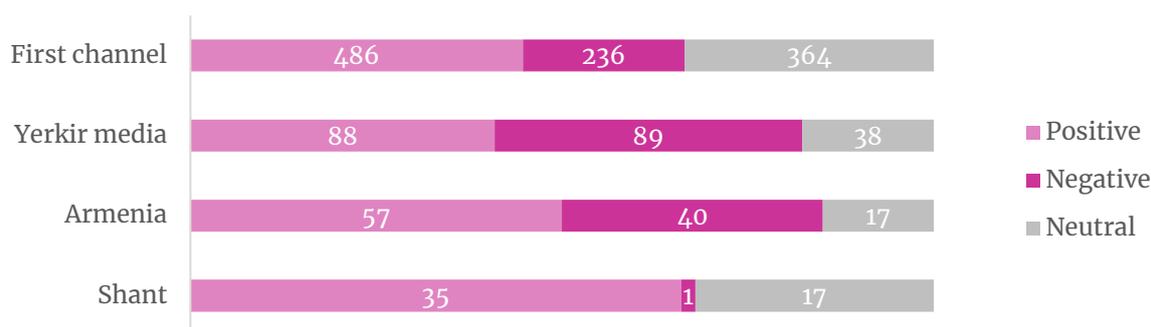
Some TV references with a negative tone contained manifestations of sexism. They were observed as occurring in the context of debate programs aired on Public TV through such gender stereotypes as:

- I call on you to maintain a very feminine, affable format for the program.
- Weapons are dignity for men.
- To be honest, I concede to a woman.

Both men and women candidates voiced such stereotypic expressions.

Topics Touched Upon by Women Candidates in the Pre-election Campaign Coverage

Another objective set within the framework of this monitoring was to clarify the extent to which pre-election campaign coverage and candidates touched upon issues of gender equality and women along with other programmatic and non-programmatic topics.

***
"… During these elections I did notice at all that issues related to women were viewed as an opportunity to influence the elections…"
***
"…Perhaps the time was such that other problems were being resolved. Women themselves did not voice women's issues; perhaps that depends on the agenda of a political force and women, inside the party, cannot withstand or push forward their agenda…"

Focus group discussion with journalists

Both in the opinion of the journalist participants in the focus group discussions and according to the monitoring results, within the framework of the TV coverage of the NA elections, women and men candidates **most frequently touched upon non-programmatic topics (48%),** i.e. the most frequently voiced mutual accusations, expressed opinions about government members and rival political forces, and touched upon meetings and organization and process of the elections, etc. In the case of women speakers, non-programmatic topics made up 50.5%, and in the case of men speakers, 47.9%.

As for **the different programmatic topics, references of candidates overall made up 52%,** with women and men touching upon them respectively 49.5% and 52.1% of the time. In the case of programmatic topics, candidates **most often** spoke about **security, 30%,** then the **economy, 10%** (See **Chart 14**).

Topics on TV referenced by candidates and the share of gender topics (%)

Chart 14
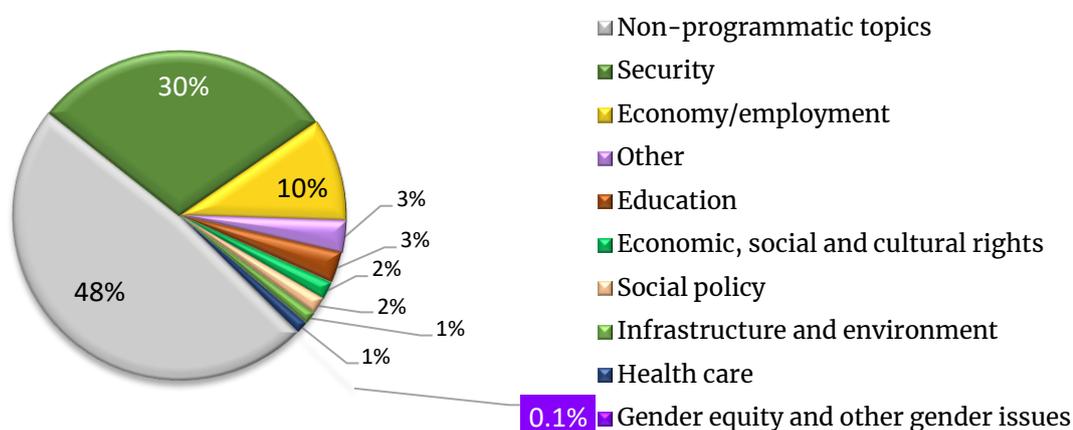
According to the chart, during the parliamentary election campaign, **candidates very rarely spoke on TV about gender equality and/or women's issues,** just **0.1%** of the time.

What was the proportional distribution of the programmatic topics and to what extent were gender topics/issues covered in this context? Who touched upon these topics more frequently, women or men candidates? The charts (See **Charts 15-17**) presented below provide answers to these questions.

Share of gender topics among programmatic topics referenced by candidates on TV (%)

Chart 15
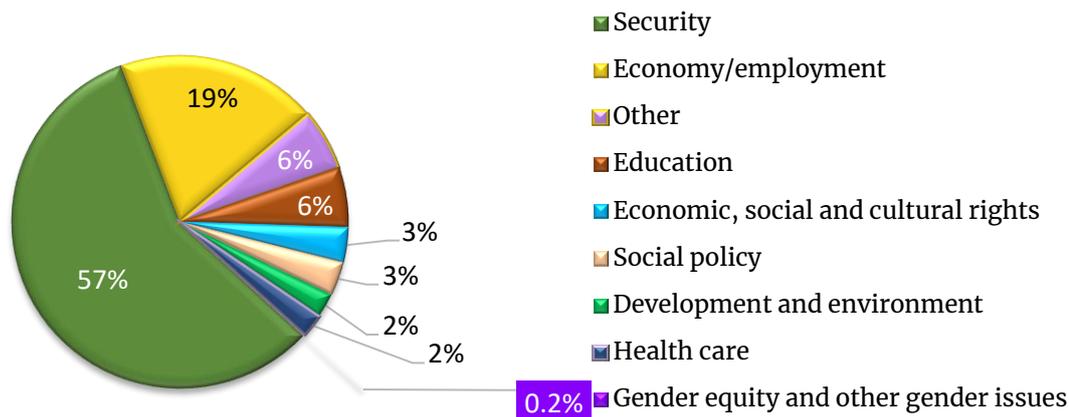
The fact that **security** as a programmatic topic was the most frequently covered one, making up **57%**, is quite explicable, taking into account the post-war situation in the country and resulting consequences and developments. **Gender topics**, which are generally rarely covered, **were even more overshadowed: their share in the coverage made up just 0.2%.**

It is interesting that by the percentage ratio, **women touched upon security issues more often than men**. This is conditioned by the fact that in post-crisis situations women usually take up "non-traditional" roles to overcome the crisis.

Topics touched upon by NA women candidates (%)

Chart 16
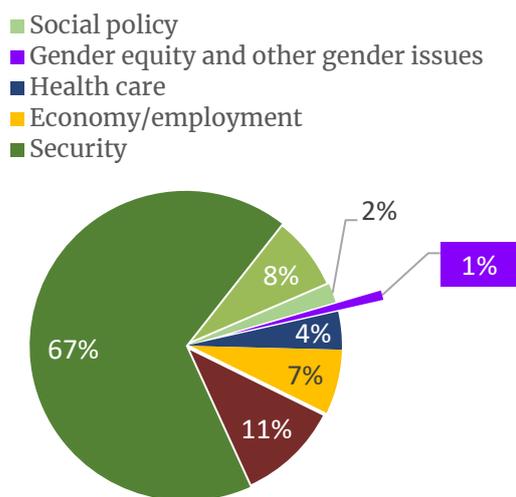
Topics touched upon by NA men candidates (%)

Chart 17
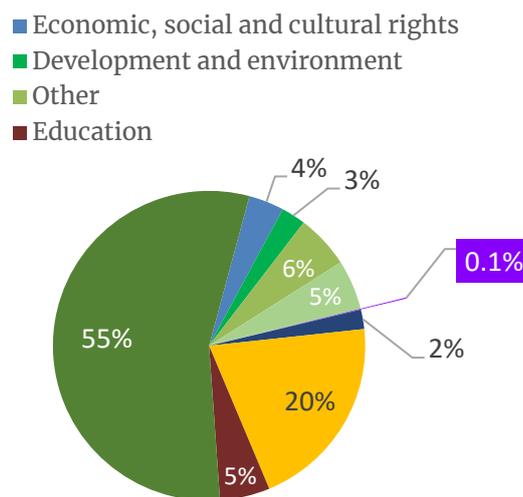
As far as other topics are concerned, the traditional division tendency was maintained. For example, men spoke more about the economy, and women spoke more about healthcare and education.

1.3. COVERAGE OF WOMEN CANDIDATES ON ONLINE NEWS OUTLETS: ANALYSIS OF MONITORING RESULTS

**In case of the observed all four online news outlets,** on **June 7-18**, overall for twelve days, researched were all archived materials and debate programs related to the topic of the elections, except for commercial/political/social advertisements and announcements. Overall, 6315 materials were considered, out of which 1854 materials referred to the topic of elections. Including:

Aravot.am	726 materials
Azatutyun.am	106 materials
News.am	838 materials
1in.am	188 materials
Total	1858 materials

Thus, the coverage of the elections within the mentioned media made up 29.4% of the total observed publications.

<u>Coverage of Women Candidates as Speakers on Online News Outlets</u>

During the monitoring of the noted media within the context of the elections and election campaign, **women candidates covered as speakers** with their direct or indirect speech cited **made up 7.7%,** i.e. on online news outlets, **only one out of every twelve speakers was a woman. This figure is more than two percent lower than that observed on television, where women candidates as speakers made up 10%.**

Coverage of women candidates as speakers on online news outlets (%)

Chart 18

170 (7.7%)

2044 (92.3%)
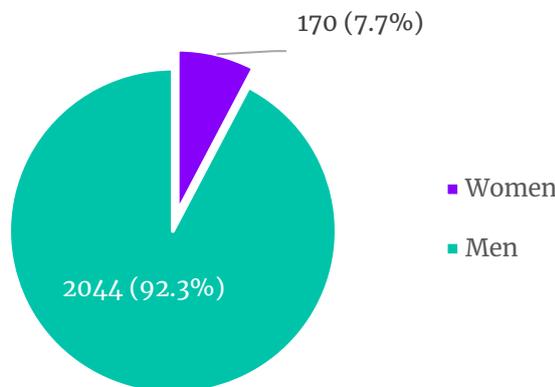
- Women
- Men

Online news outlets most frequently referenced women candidates as a source or speaker **in the coverage by Azatutyun.am** and **Aravot.am,** respectively **11.6%** and **7.2%,** followed by **News.am** and **1in.am materials,** respectively **6.7%** and **4.9%** (See **Chart 19**).

Frequency of references of Parliamentary candidates as speakers – per online news outlets (%)

News.am	1in.am	Aravot.am	Azatutyun.am
			Men, 88.4%
Men, 93.3%	Men, 95.1%	Men, 92.8%	Women, 11.6%
Women, 6.7%		Women, 7.2%	
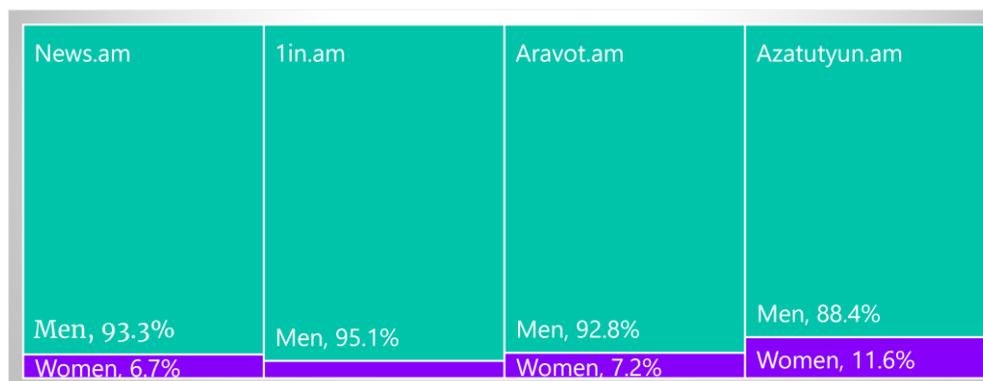
In the videos of the online news outlets, **the time allotted to women candidates** with the noted frequency overall made up **4.8%**. This means that in the videos and/or programs aired by the online media, women candidates had the opportunity to express their positions for one hour seven minutes (4042 seconds), and men candidates for more than 22 hours (80 152 seconds).

Time allotted to Parliamentary candidates in the video material of online news outlets (%)

4042 seconds...

■ Women
■ Men

80152 seconds (95.2%)
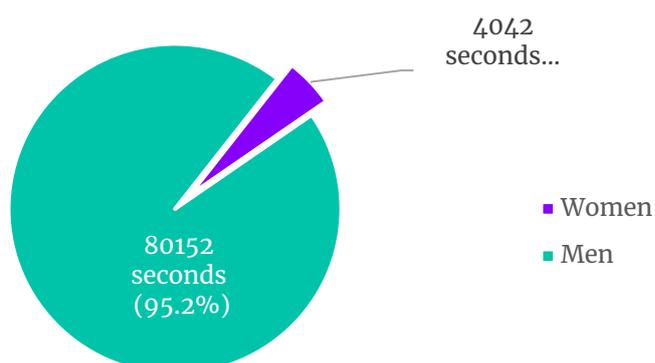
During the election campaign, **the news outlet that most of all covered women candidates' speech through videos was Aravot.am, 7.3%**. It was followed by **1in.am with 2.5%,** then by **Azatutyun.am** and **News.am**, respectively with **1.9%** and **0.8%.**

The analysis of the collected data allows us to conclude that three of the online news outlets, **1in.am, Azatutyan.am and News.am**, had primarily "a man face" in terms of voicing the speech of women candidates in the published videos (See **Chart 21**).

Time allotted to Parliamentary candidates
in the video material - per online news outlets (%)

Chart 21

News.am	1in.am	Aravot.am	Azatutyun.am
Men, 99.2%	Men, 97.5%	Men, 92.7% / Women, 7.3%	Men, 98.1%
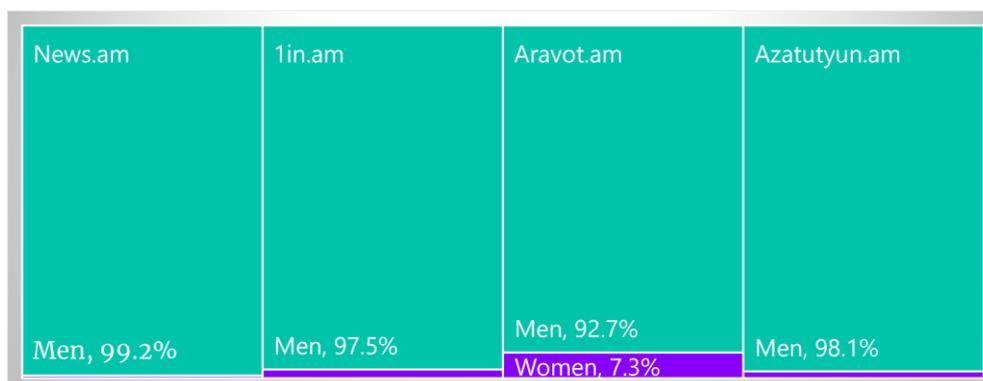
Both on TV and websites, primarily women involved in the same 17 out of the total 25 political forces running in the elections had the opportunity to present their positions and viewpoints, however, to a different extent.

If television gave priority to the relatively new forces, the websites most frequently presented as speakers women representatives of the already known political forces: *Civil Contract* (CCP), *Bright Armenia* (LHK), *Armenian National Congress* (ANC) **parties and** *Hayastan* **and** *I Have Honor* **alliances**.

The number of NA women candidates on online media – per party affiliation
(Abbreviations list – on page 4)

Chart 22

CCP — 26
LHK — 23
5165 movement — 21
ArmAlliance — 18
ANC — 12
PUD — 8
DPA — 8
BHK — 6
SBA — 3
United homeland — 3
RP — 3
Fair Armenia — 3
FHA — 3
HAP — 2
NAP — 1
NDPole — 1
Rise party — 1
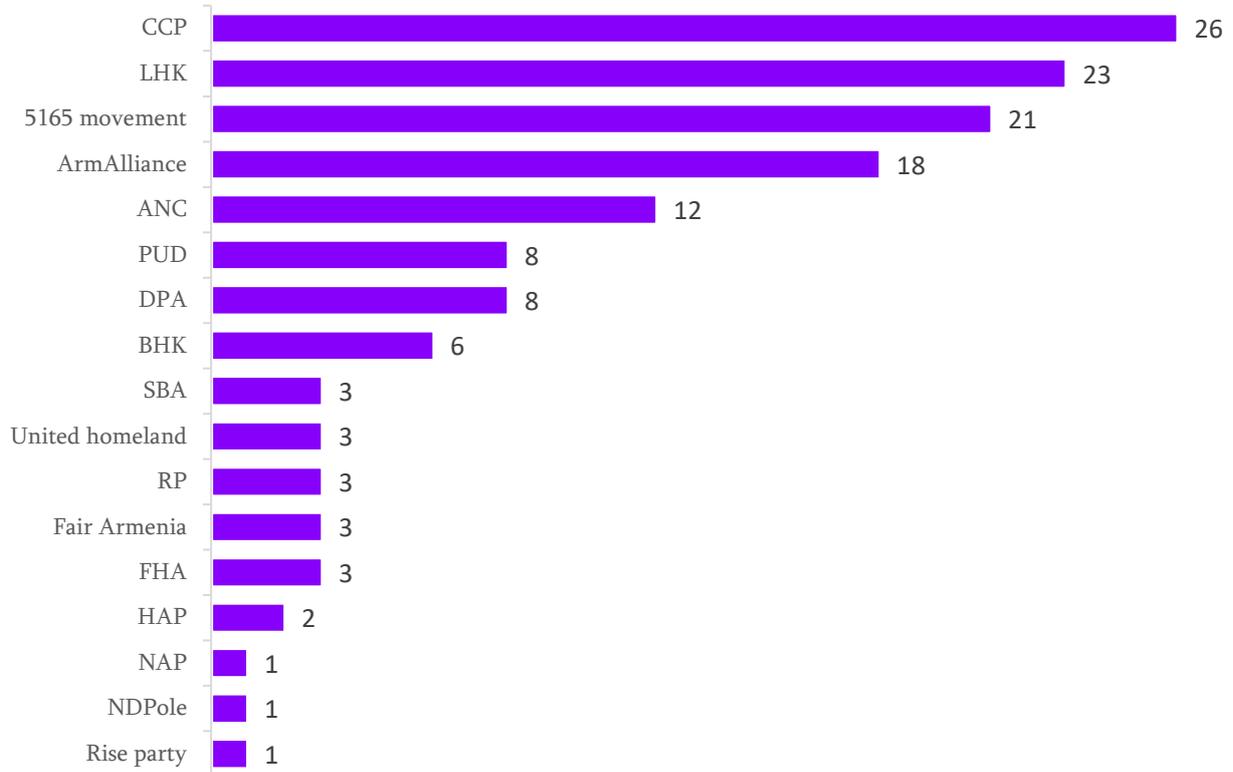
Representation of NA women candidates – per party affiliation and online media outlets

(Abbreviations list – on page 4)

Chart 23

Legend: Aravot.am | Azatutyun.am | 1in.am | News.am

CCP: 8 | 3 | 15
LHK: 9 | 7 | 7
5165 movement: 11 | 3 | 7
ArmAlliance: 7 | 1 | 10
ANC: 10 | 2
DPA: 7 | 1
PUD: 3 | 5
BHK: 1 | 2 | 2 | 1
United homeland: 3
RP: 3
FHA: 2 | 1
Fair Armenia: 3
SBA: 2 | 1
HAP: 2
NAP: 1
NDPole: 1
Rise party: 1
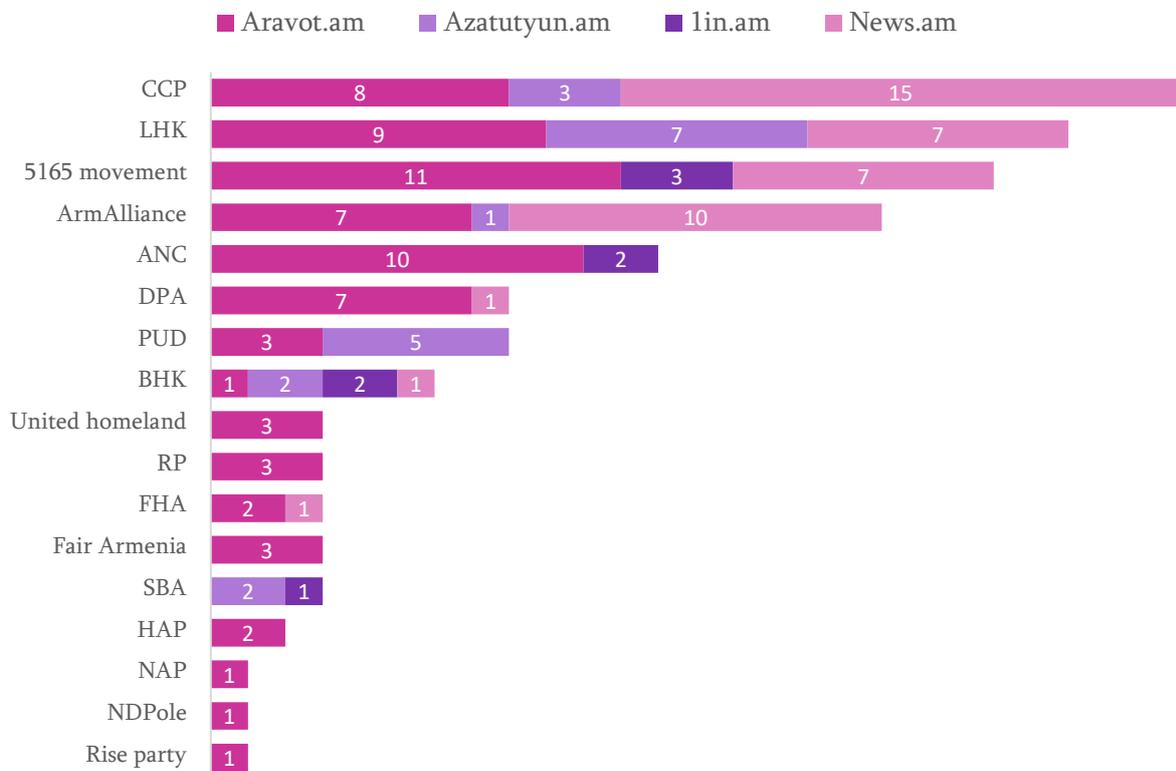
In contrast to the observed other online news outlets, representation of women candidates according to party affiliation **on Aravot.am** was incomparably diverse.

**The online news outlets, as compared to TV channels**, most frequently featured women candidates involved in the political forces already known in politics and aspiring to win, yet newly created and active.

Coverage Formats of Women Candidates on Online News Outlets

The picture is more complete as presented by the charts below, which reflect what extent and in what genres women as speakers took part in the websites.

Representation of NA women candidates on online news outlets - per genre (%)

Chart 24
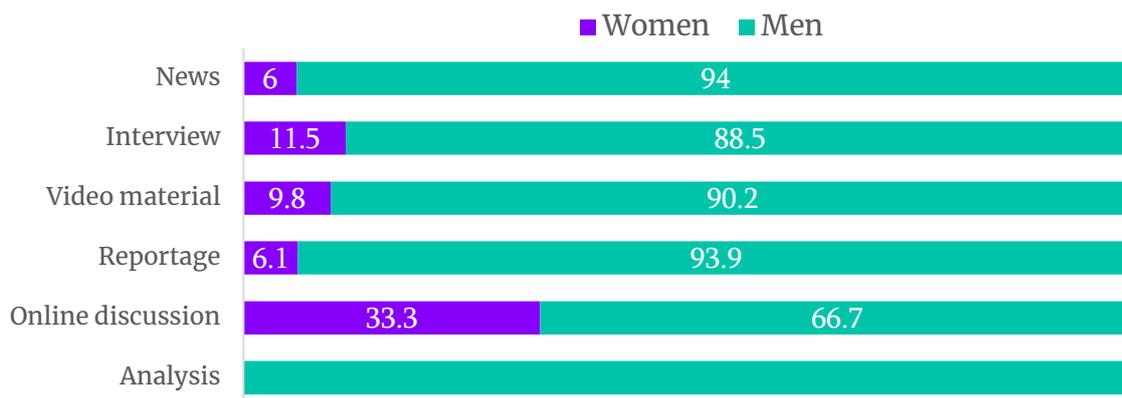
Despite the underrepresentation of women candidates also on online media, they were comparatively often covered in the format of online discussions and interviews. Women candidates were covered through the format of news pieces and reporting only 6% of the time, i.e the news stream mostly featured men. It is noteworthy that posts authored by women candidates were observed among social network posts often published in the form of news. Nevertheless, completely absent were analytical materials with the involvement of women candidates or as authored by them.

> ***
> *"Women speak to the media very little... Very often this divide between them and the media is created by women themselves. With time, society develops an impression that women cannot express a smart thoughts. So, actually, the entire burden of important political statements is left to men..."*
> **Focus group discussion with journalists**

The chart presented below makes clear what the preferences of the online news outlets were for this or that format when presenting women candidates.

Representation of NA women candidates on online news outlets – per genre and news outlets (%)

Chart 25

News ■ **Interview** ■ **Reportage** ■ **Video material** ■ **Online discussion**

	News	Interview	Reportage	Video material	Online discussion
Total	63.6	18.9	9.8	7	0.7
Aravot.am	75.3	17.8		6.8	
Azatutyun.am	25	70		5	
1in.am	62.5	25		12.5	
News.am	73.8	16.7		9.5	
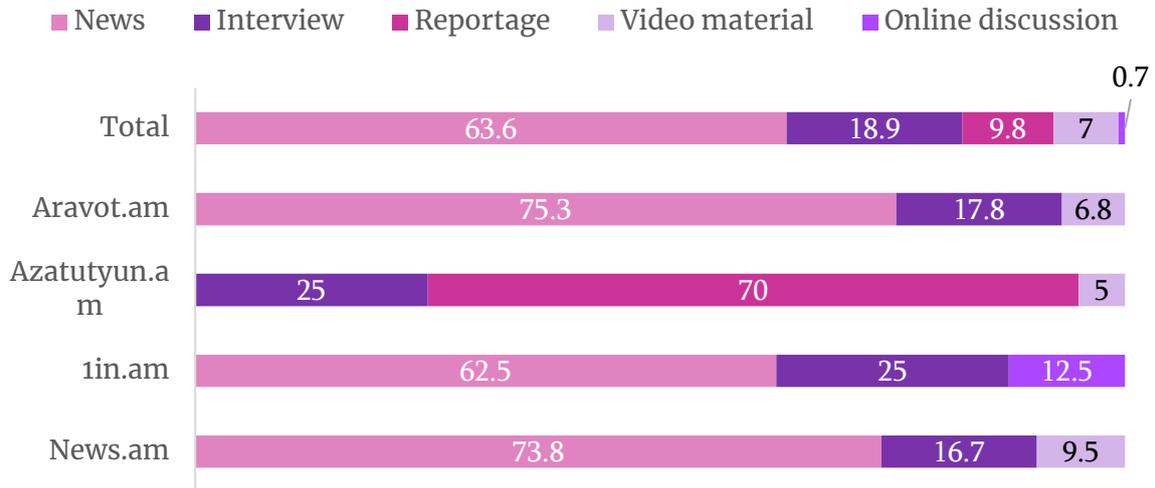
Coverage of Candidates on News Websites as Actors

On the researched news websites, observed was also the following correlation of representation of women and men as actors:

Online coverage of NA women candidates as actors (%)

Chart 26

100 (4.2%)

2271 (95.8%)
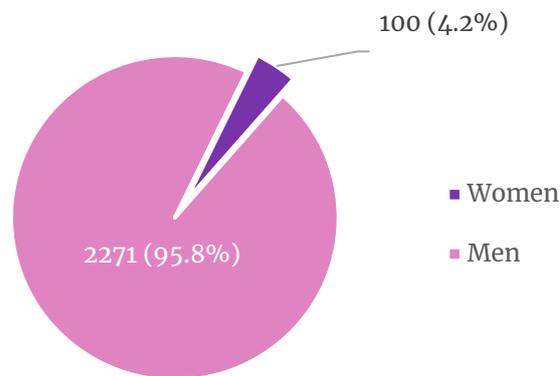
■ Women
■ Men

Women candidates as actors of online publications, i.e. as those to whom the material was devoted or about whom a source provided information, were covered less than those who appeared as speakers. Their representation on all the four media outlets taken together made up just **4.2%.** This figure is lower than **coverage of women candidates as actors on TV**, where **the representation of the latter was about two times higher making up 7.8%.**

Frequency of coverage of NA candidates as actors − per online news outlets (%)

Chart 27

News.am	1in.am	Aravot.am	Azatutyun.am
Men, 96.4%	Men, 94.4%	Men, 95.5%	Men, 95.9%
	Women, 5.6%		
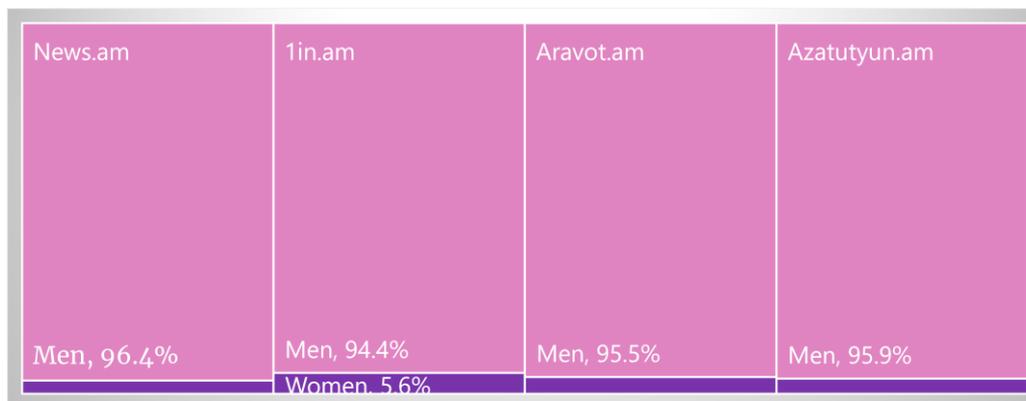
The above chart shows that women candidates as newsmakers were more frequently covered by **1in.am website (5.6%),** which was followed by **Aravot.am (4.5%), Azatutyun.am (4.1%)** and **News.am website** with the rarest coverage of women candidates **(3.6%).**

What is the reason for the fact that media outlets feature primarily men when presenting speakers, and especially actors (newsmakers)? Is it not the case that it has something to do with the strategy adopted by the editorial offices of the media outlets?

The meeting held with journalist participants in the focus group discussions makes it clear that the editorial offices usually do not have a policy aimed at maintaining the gender balance and ensuring a diversity of voices and viewpoints; everything is left to the expression of goodwill.

***

"The issue of a gender balance is very acute and it creates a lot of problems...The editor is very sensitive and he/she tells that the greatest part of the society is left out of the news stream, his/her opinion is not heeded. But women, including also expert women, that come to speak are few. Perhaps they are not that ambitious to simultaneously speak about several issues, as can be seen in the case of men. Very often women avoid giving interviews: she is doing work and does not want to speak before the public."

***

"It is much more positive when diverse voices are sounded...However, my interest is also to have my interviews viewed as much as possible, and if I invite women, who are not viewed much, and women will hardly give very sharp interviews, at least women running in these elections were like that, or they refused to give interviews..."

***

"...I always try to find interesting women and advise my colleagues to do the same. The editor's office also encourages."

***

"...We ascribe importance to what is said and it does not matter, if it is said by a woman or a man, we will cover it..."

Focus group discussion with journalists

Results of Observation of Women Candidates' Photos

Observation of photos in the coverage of women candidates demonstrated that the latter as speakers were more frequently covered through a text (See **Chart 18**) than a photo (See **Chart 28**). This means that although a women candidate's speech was cited in the material, she was not portrayed in the main picture.

Sex distribution of photo representation of NA candidates

as a speaker
Chart 28

■ Women speakers   ■ Men speakers

43
(5.1%)

801
(94.9%)

as an actor
Chart 29

■ Women actors   ■ Men actors

12
(4.5%)

252 (95.5%)
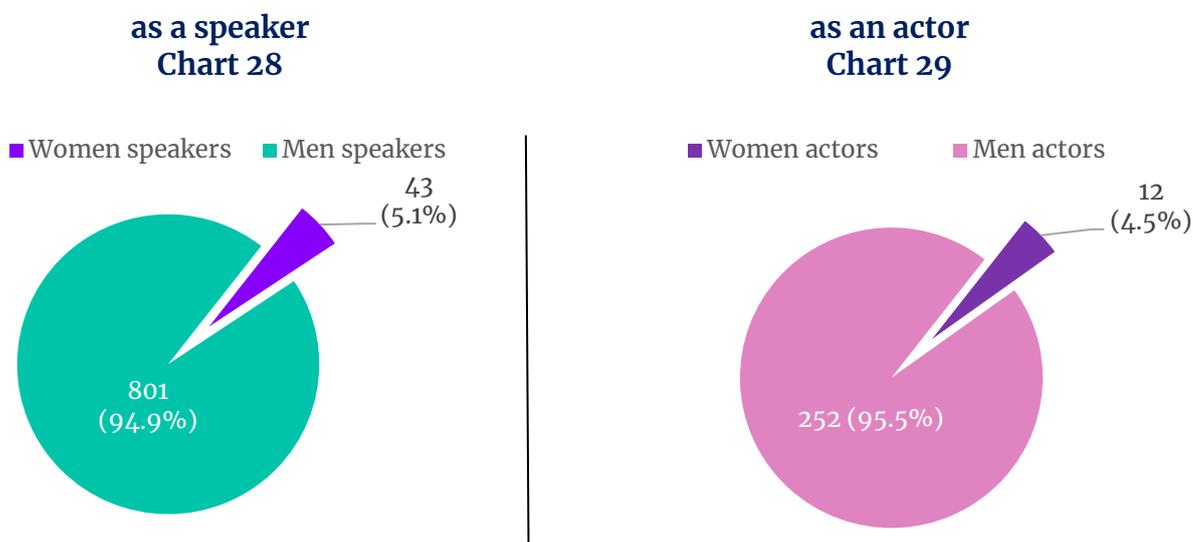
In terms of percentages, photos of women speakers were most frequently shown on **Aravot.am website**, then almost equally on **News.am** and **Azatutyuan.am** websites, and they were least shown on **1in.am**.

Photo representation of NA candidates by sex and online media outlet (%)

Chart 30

■ Female speaker   ■ Male speaker   ■ Female actor   ■ Male actor

	Female speaker	Male speaker	Female actor	Male actor
News.am	2.6	72	0.9	24.5
1in.am	1.7	72	1.7	24.6
Azatutyun.am	2.5	78.5		19
Aravot.am	5.8	71.6	1.2	21.4
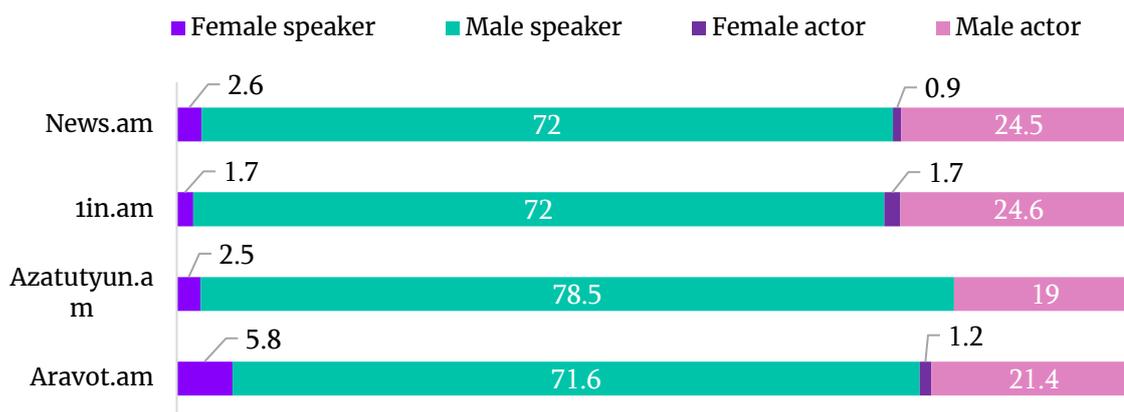
**Nature/Tone of the Coverage of Candidates on Online News Outlets**

The analysis of the data on the tone of materials about candidates or with their participation obtained within the framework of this research demonstrated that **more than half of the references about women candidates** on news websites during the parliamentary election campaign of 2021 **were neutral making up 54.5%, and third of them had a positive tone making up 33%. Materials of negative nature were the fewest and made up 12.5%.** However, the negative tone was not sex-based.

The below-noted charts present the nature of materials about candidates/with their participation on news websites (See **Charts 31-33**).

Nature of materials about candidates/with their participation on news websites (%)

Chart 31
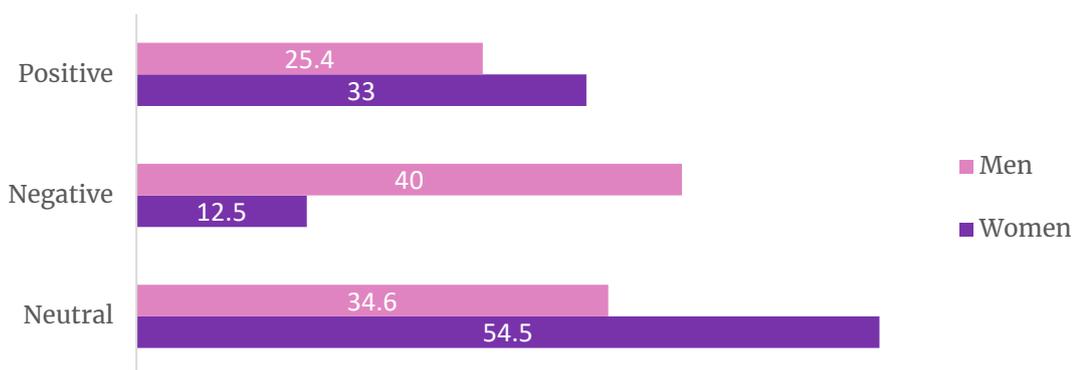
	Men	Women
Positive	25.4	33
Negative	40	12.5
Neutral	34.6	54.5

Number of references about NA women candidates – per tone and websites

Chart 32

	Positive	Negative	Neutral
1in.am	7		6
Azatutyun.am	3	2	3
News.am	6	4	21
Aravot.am	13	5	18

Number of references about NA women candidates – per tone and websites

Chart 33

	Positive	Negative	Neutral
1in.am	84	38	116
Azatutyun.am	102	91	85
News.am	202	395	275
Aravot.am	210	416	336
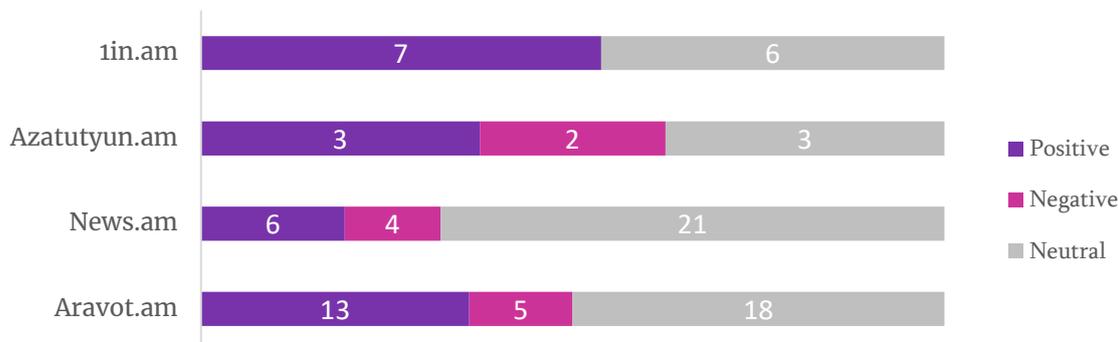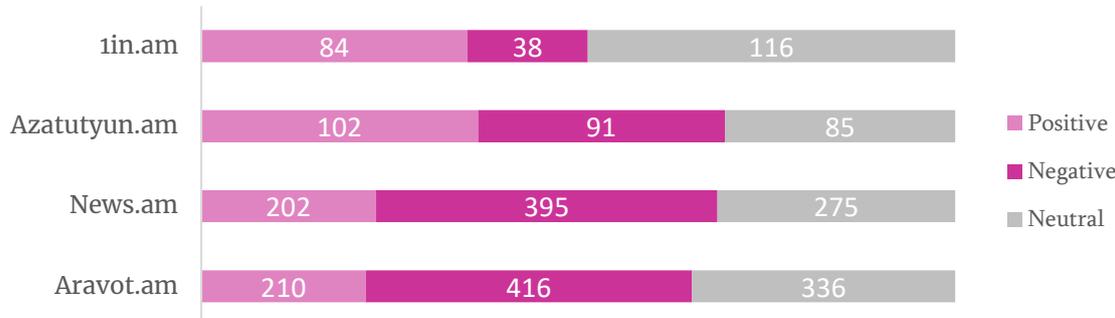
The gender stereotypes and humiliating coverage of women observed in the campaign coverage by online news outlets were not aimed at women candidates, however, were equally voiced by both men and women candidates:

- *[…] Nikol tries to fill the Republic Square by force with administrative resources and women screaming like sirens with oligarch money.*
- *"You cannot even put your house in order, you cannot even tell your wife when to lie down and when to stand, how can you lay the mayor of Syunik on the asphalt?"*
- *There are people, whose party consists of themselves, their mistresses, and wives.*
- *It is very easy to answer the tough questions of women journalists, hidden here and there.*
- *You can laugh at a group of housewives, at certain quasi-revolutionary words said about the scientific elite in the presence of underage children in their arms.*

The journalists participating in the focus group discussions also asserted that there were no gender stereotypes, sexism, hate speech, or propaganda of violence observed in the coverage about women candidates:

> ***
>
> *"…All the theses during the elections, both past and present, predatory and … were in this discourse and women were not paid much attention to since they were not present at the level of that decision-making or were not perceived so by the society. If the decisions were not made alone, women too participated in them. So, is it justified to exclude women from the accusations? I believe not."*
>
> ***
>
> *"…The media did not pay special attention to women and directed the attention of society toward men political figures. Unfortunately, bright characters like Naira Zohrabyan, Arpine Hovhanissyan, Mane Tandilyan were absent, and women remained in the shadow."*
>
> ***Focus group discussions with journalists***

In fact, according to both observed data and a discussion with journalists, "tolerance" manifested towards women candidates in the coverage of the 2021 elections was due to the passivity and overshadowed status of women candidates determined by both objective and subjective factors.

Topics in the Coverage of Candidates

Taking into account external and internal political challenges in the country, **prevailing on the news websites, like on TV, and in candidates' statements were non-programmatic topics[11] related to the process of the elections, making up 74% of the discourse unfolded during the entire election campaign**. On online media, women and men candidates touched upon non-programmatic topics respectively 78.7% and 72.6% of the time. The programmatic topics made up respectively 21.3% and 27.4%.

### Topics touched upon by NA candidates on websites and the share of gender topics (%)

---

[11] The division of topics into programmatic and non-programmatic ones is presented in the methodology section of this research.

Chart 34

Non-programmatic
Security
Economy/employment
Other
Social policy
Development and environment
Economic, social and cultural rights
Healthcare
Education
Gender equity and other gender issues

74%   13%   7%   3%   2%   1%   0.2%
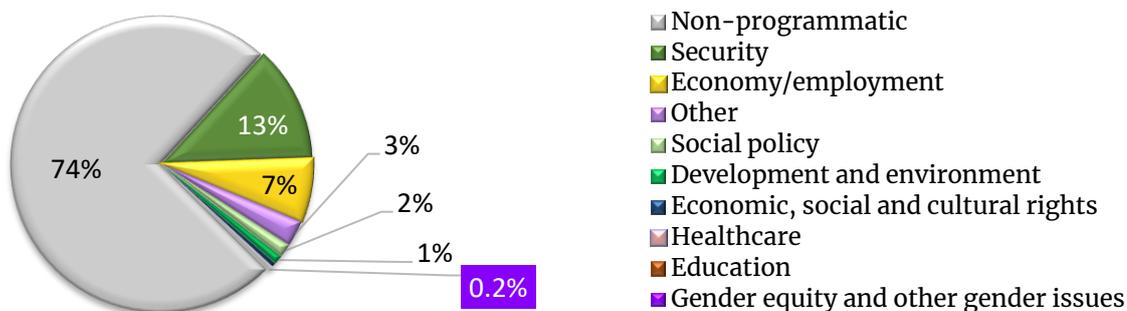
The programmatic topics covered by online news outlets, like in the case of TV, **hardly included topics related to gender equality or women**. The observed three materials were about creating workplaces for women, making them more competitive, and engaging them in the army as equals, **making up just 0.2% of all the publications on programmatic and non-programmatic topics or 0.6% of only programmatic topics.**

Share of gender topics among programmatic topics touched upon by NA candidates in online media (%)

Chart 35

Security
Economy/employment
Other
Social policy
Development and environment
Economic, social and cultural rights
Healthcare
Education
Gender equity and other gender issues

27%   11%   6%   4%   49%   0.6%
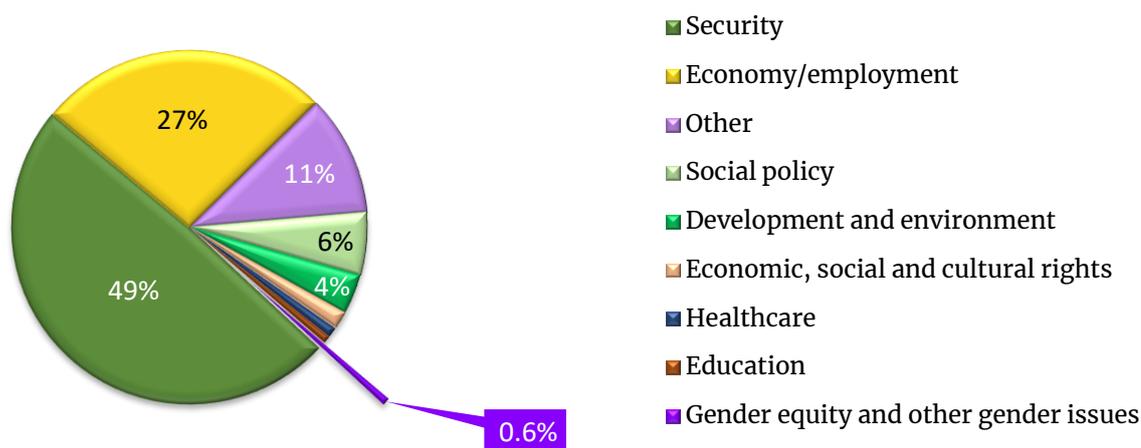
However, it should be mentioned that among other programmatic topics, this is not the only topic with low coverage. Left without attention were also such important areas as healthcare, education, and social policy, which are usually touched upon by candidates to make the best possible appearance to the electorate. Once again, the reason for this is security problems emerging in the country, which are the most frequently covered issues both on TV and on websites. **The share of security was almost half of the coverage of all programmatic topics, 49%.**

In the election campaign coverage, **the second most frequently covered topic** after security was **that of economy/employment**.

It is noteworthy that the share of the security topic in women's statements was larger than in those of men. In this respect, the topic of security can be viewed among issues of the biggest concern to women. The same thing was observed in the coverage of TV channels. The "traditional" division was maintained with respect to economic and other topics. Men spoke about the economy more than women.

Topics touched upon by NA women candidates (%)
Chart 36

■ Security
■ Other
■ Economic, social and cultural rights
■ Development and environment

Topics touched upon by NA men candidates (%)
Chart 37

■ Economy/employment
■ Social policy
■ Healthcare
■ Education
■ Gender equity and other gender issues
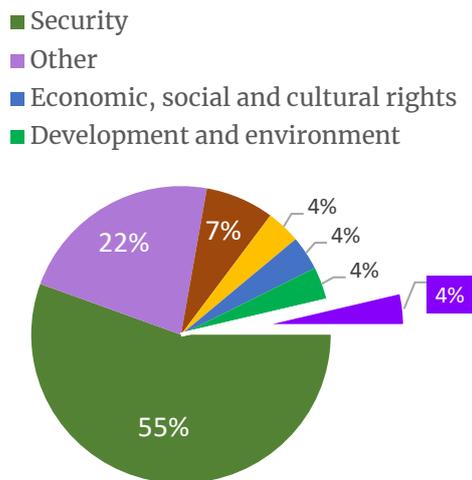
Chart 36:
- 22%
- 7%
- 4%
- 4%
- 4%
- 55%

Chart 37:
- 22%
- 5%
- 3%
- 2%
- 1%
- 0.9%
- 0.4%
- 18%
- 48%
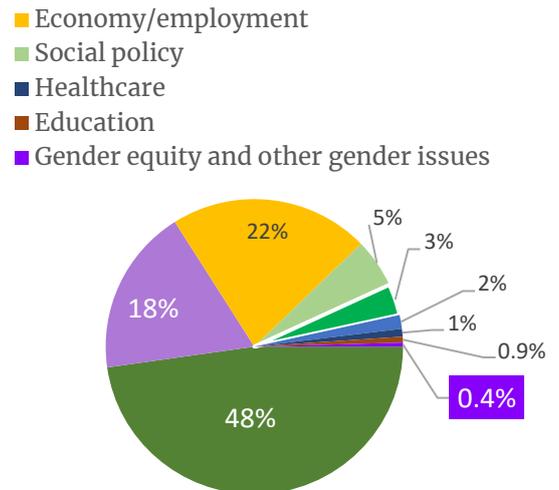
According to the charts, in terms of percentages, **women candidates touched upon women's issues more** than men, the figure being **4%**. **In absolute terms, this is just one material**. **In the case of men candidates**, this figure makes up **0.4%,** which in absolute numbers makes up **just two materials**.

CONCLUSIONS ON RESULTS OF MONITORING OF THE COVERAGE OF WOMEN CANDIDATES IN PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS

- With a view to assessing the extent of the coverage of women candidates during the RA National Assembly snap elections of 2021 and revealing its peculiarities, within

the framework of this research, during the period of the pre-election campaign, June 7-18 (overall twelve days), 65 hours of TV airtime[12] and 1854 materials[13] on online media related to the topic of elections were monitored on four pan-national broadcast and four online media outlets[14].

- An analysis of the monitoring results allows concluding that both women candidates and topics related to gender equality and women were underrepresented in the coverage of the NA election campaign.

- In the observed mass media, the visibility of women candidates as speakers made up 9% with 7.7% on online media and 10% on TV. This means that on news websites, one of each twelve speakers was a woman, and in TV programs, only one out of each 10 speakers was a woman.

- The airtime allotted to women candidates as speakers overall made up 9% on TV, i.e. on the observed TV channels, women candidates had an opportunity to express their positions for about five hours, whereas men candidates during more than 55 hours. The time allotted to women candidates in online media videos overall made up 4.8%, i.e. in videos and/or programs aired on online media, women candidates had one hour seven minutes to express their positions, whereas men candidates had more than 22 hours.

- The results of the monitoring show that the visibility of women candidates in the media coverage was incomparably lower than almost 37% representation of women in party electoral lists for the NA elections and about 34% of the mandates received by women as a result of the elections. Hence, one can state that the recorded expansion of participation of women candidates thanks to the gender quota stipulated by the RA Electoral Code was not accompanied by an increase in their visibility in mass media.

- The visibility indicators of the women candidates for this monitoring do not correspond to the positive tendencies registered in the media monitoring results[15] on the gender sensitivity of the media in 2019, according to which the visibility of women in both TV and online media was about 19%.

- The low visibility of women candidates in the pre-election campaign period can be explained by a number of circumstances, including the reason that in order not to be targeted in the intense political context, women candidates often avoided making public appearances turning down invitations to take part in this or that program, as it is attested by the focus group discussions with journalists.

- At the same time, low was the visibility of women not only as speakers but also as actors. Women candidates as main actors of the materials, persons to whom the

---

[12] Overall, during the noted period, observed were 240 hours of airtime of the sampled TV channels, of which the coverage related to the elections made up 65 hours or 27.4%.

[13] Overall, 6315 publications of sample news sites were observed during the mentioned period, out of which 1854 materials or 29.4% referred to the elections.

[14] The research sample included the pan-national terrestrial TV channels of Armenian Public TV Company First Channel (H1), *Armenia*, *Yerkir Media*, and *Shant* TVs and 1in.am, News.am, Aravot.am and Azatutyun.am online media.

[15] "Discrimination and violence on TV and on news websites. How gender sensitive is the Armenian media?" Research (in Armenian), https://oxygen.org.am/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Media-Monitoring-Report_Final.pdf

material was devoted or the source spoke or provided information about, were covered less than women candidates in the role of speakers. Their representation on all observed TV channels together made up only 7.8% and on online media only 4.2%. So, one can state that journalists did not show many initiatives to introduce women candidates to the public.

- The monitoring results demonstrate that despite their low representation on TV, women candidates most often appeared in the formats of TV debates and interviews. In particular, women candidates were quite actively engaged in the debate programs broadcast by the Armenian Public TV First Channel. At least two of these debates were organized exclusively with women's participation without men candidates, which limits the opportunity to introduce differences in women's and men's approaches to different issues. Joint and equal participation of women and men candidates in debates could have ensured more effective debates and could have been a guarantee for gender equality.

- In the case of online media, women candidates were relatively often covered in the format of online discussions and interviews. Women candidates were covered through the format of news pieces and reporting only 6% of the time, i.e the news stream mostly featured men. It is noteworthy that posts authored by women candidates were observed among social network posts often published in the form of news. Nevertheless, completely absent were analytical materials with the involvement of women candidates or as authored by them.

- Both TV and news websites monitoring demonstrated that women candidates of only 17 political forces out of the 25 running in the elections were covered, having the opportunity to present their positions and viewpoints. Moreover, if TV primarily covered relatively newly created forces, the websites more often featured as speakers already known forces: women representatives of *Civil Contract* (CC), *Bright Armenia* (BAP), *Armenian National Congress* (ANC) parties, and *Hayastan* (Armenia) and *I Have Honor* (Pativ unem) alliances.

- Comparison of the coverage of women candidates with their participation in the pre-election campaigns within the framework of the research allows concluding that neither journalists in their materials nor political forces within the framework of their pre-election campaign paid proper attention and devoted time to women candidates.

- Thus, the observation, within the framework of this research, of the wrap-up video clips of the last day of the pre-election campaign[16] by political forces broadcast by Armenian Public TV (First Channel) demonstrated that women candidates were absent from video clips of the twelve out of the total 25 political forces running in the elections. In the case of video clips of eight forces, involved 43 women candidates did not speak and ten women candidates featured in video clips of only seven forces spoke conveying to the electorate the messages of their political forces. Overall, women candidates that appeared in video clips as speakers made up 19%, whereas men 81%. The overall time allotted for the speech of women candidates made up only seven minutes or 5.2%.

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[16] As a rule, video clips of the last day of the pre-election campaign are summarizing by their nature.

- The same picture was recorded within the framework of this research as a result of the observation of video recordings of pre-election meetings posted by online media for one week. In 471 out of the observed total 500 video recordings, women candidates did not speak. Women candidates appeared as speakers only in 5.8% of the observed pre-election meetings. Time allotted to statements by women candidates made up 1.5 hours or just 11.1% against more than 30 hours or 88.9% for men candidates.

- The visibility of women candidates in the main photos of online media was lower (5.1%) than their representation as speakers (7.7%) in publications. This means that women as speakers were more often featured in the text rather than through a photo, and even in those cases, when the material cited a woman candidate, the latter was not portrayed in the main photo.

- Observation of the nature/tone of TV coverage of women candidates demonstrated that it was primarily neutral (44%) or positive (40%) by nature. Negative coverage made up 16%. On online media, references to women candidates containing negative tone were fewer, 12.5% and the significant portion of the coverage was neutral. For men candidates, both TV and online coverage was dominated by positive and negative materials, which can be viewed as an indicator of the fact that the latter played a key role during the election campaign.

- Within the context of the election campaign, no hate speech and violence were observed in the coverage of women candidates. However, though limited, there were sexism manifestations. Observed were also gender stereotypes and comments diminishing the role of women in political processes voiced by both men and women candidates.

- Prevailing in the coverage by news websites and in candidates' statements were non-programmatic topics[17] related to the process of the elections, making up 74% of the discourse unfolded during the entire election campaign. Women candidates touched upon non-programmatic topics more often than men candidates, respectively 78.7% and 72.6%. In the case of women speakers, the non-programmatic topics on TV made up 50.5%, and in the case of men speakers 47.9%.

- The programmatic topics touched upon by women and men candidates made up respectively 49.5% and 52.1%, and on online news outlets, the programmatic topics made up respectively 21.3% and 27.4%.

- The programmatic topics covered within the framework of the pre-election campaign hardly included topics related to gender equality and women, both in candidates' statements and in questions and issues raised by media. TV coverage of gender equality and women's issues made up only 0.2%, and online media coverage 0.6%. Among other programmatic topics, this is not the only topic with low coverage. Little attention was paid also to such important areas as healthcare, education, and social policy, which are usually touched upon by candidates to make the best possible appearance to the electorate. The most frequently touched upon the topic in candidates' statements and coverage was security, which, among all programmatic topics, made up 56% on TV and 49% on websites. The second most

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[17] The division into programmatic and non-programmatic topics is presented in the section on methodology.

frequently covered topic was economy/employment, which is quite explicable given the post-war situation in the country and resulting consequences and developments.

- It is noteworthy that women raised issues related to security more often than men. This can be explained by the circumstance that in situations of crisis women usually take up "non-traditional" roles to overcome the consequences of the crisis. In this respect, the topic of security can be viewed among issues of the biggest concern to women. The same thing was observed in the coverage of TV channels. The "traditional" division was maintained with respect to economic and other topics. For example, men spoke more about the economy, and women spoke more about healthcare and education.

PART 2. COVERAGE OF WOMEN CANDIDATES IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS OF 2021: MONITORING RESULTS

2.1. WOMEN REPRESENTATION IN LSG ELECTORAL LISTS AND COMMUNITY COUNCILS

In 50 communities of Armenia LSG elections took place on October 17, November 14, and December 5, 2021. More than fifty political forces participated in the elections, with 5350 candidates in total, out of which 1799 women (33.6%). In the LSG elections of October run in a proportional system, out of 17 political forces, only one of the lists of candidates was led by a woman. In the December elections, out of 44 political forces, 3 electoral lists of enrolled candidates had a woman on the first line. As to the November elections, none of the 4 political forces was led by a woman. With regard to the elections run in a majoritarian system, there were no women candidates among those for the position of community head.[18]

Only after the elections of December 5 two women got elected as community heads.

According to the final results of RA LSG elections, women representation in newly elected councils became as follows:

- 36.2% after October 17 elections

- 33% after November 14 elections

- 31% after December 5 elections.

In many communities, a notable increase was registered – 0-30%, which became possible due to the obligatory 30/70 proportionality gender quota for candidates enrolled in the electoral lists of political parties as was outlined in the RA Electoral Code and which was applied for the first time in 2021 in LSG elections in communities with population number over 4000.

2.2. TV COVERAGE OF LSG ELECTIONS: ANALYSIS OF THE MONITORING DATA

The monitoring results demonstrate that the coverage of the LSG pre-election campaign by nationwide TV channels and online media was much more passive than the pre-election coverage of the NA elections. If during the NA pre-election period the coverage related to the parliamentary elections made up 65 hours or 27.4% out of the total 240 hours observed on the sampled TV channels, during the LSG elections campaign the coverage of local government elections made up just four hours or 1.6% of the total 245 hours observed.

The same reluctance was observed on online media. In the case of parliamentary elections, out of 6315 only 1854 publications or 29.4% of all published articles on online media during this duration were related to the parliamentary elections and only 108 published materials about the LSG elections out of 6040 published articles in the monitoring period.

At the same time, the observed four regionally broadcast media outlets covered the LSG elections for about five hours, which made up 24.8% of the total airtime observed.

Among monitored TV channels, the public **First Channel** with nationwide broadcast has been relatively active, particularly in pre-electoral programs of December 5 elections, while **Tsayg** of Shirak and **Lori** of Lori were as such among regional broadcast TV channels.

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[18]https://womennet.am/%D5%AB%D5%B6%D6%86%D5%B8%D5%A3%D6%80%D5%A1%D6%86%D5%AB%D5%AF%D5%A1/

Among nationwide broadcast TV channels, **Shant TV** limited its broadcasts on this topic to advertisements calling on the electors to participate in the elections, which, based on the methodology of this research, were not included in the list of the materials to be monitored. **Yerkir Media** TV channel covered the candidates nominated for the local government elections only as actors (newsmakers) and no women or men candidates as speakers. **Zangezur** TV in Syunik marz was passive in covering the LSG campaign.

As for the coverage of the local elections with the participation of nominated women candidates, the data obtained through the monitoring and focus group discussions with regional journalists demonstrate that women candidates running in the local government elections were more overlooked than participants in the parliamentary elections.

***
« *…Women participation in the electoral process, especially in marzes, is mostly considered as a requirement obligated by the law. Therefore, I think that women's role in LSG is not taken seriously, they are not considered as decision-makers*»
Focus Group Discussion with journalists

<u>TV coverage of women candidates as speakers and actors</u>

According to the LSG campaign monitoring data, both as speakers and as actors, women candidates appeared on TV only 4 times. The same matching is observed in the case of men candidates.

Frequency of TV coverage of LSG candidates as speakers and as actors (%)

Chart 38

■ Women speakers ■ Men speakers

4 (1.5%)

260…

Chart 39

■ Women actors ■ Men actors

4 (1.5%)

261 (98.5%)
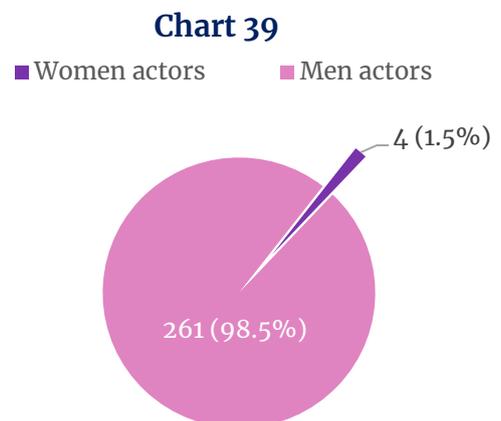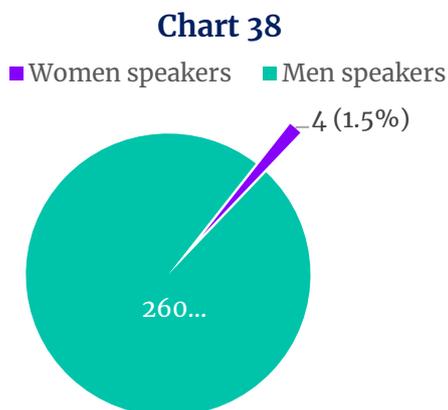
Reflected in per cents, these figures are 5-fold smaller than the same ones of women candidates' representation during NA elections.

Women, as LSG candidates, appeared exclusively on the **Lori TV** channel. The other TV channels, very passive in covering the LSG campaign, were extremely passive in including women candidates in their programs, i.e. they had had exclusively "man face". (See Chart **40**)

Meanwhile, in the focus group discussions with regional journalists, opinion about the participation of women candidates in pre-election campaigns was positive, differing from

marz to marz though. For example, according to a journalist, women candidates' participation in the campaign was especially notable in Gyumri. Nevertheless, based on the monitoring results, this fact was not reflected on the **Tsayg** regional TV. This means, that regional media did not pay proper attention to women candidates even though the latter were active in electoral campaigns.

***

"In Gyumri, we have strong women, with good rhetorical skills, who run active pre-electoral campaigns. Most of the speakers were women – irrespective of the political party they are affiliated with, especially those among the first 10 numbers of the list. Their voice was better heard in LSGs than in NA"

Focus Group Discussion with journalists

Frequency of LSG candidates' coverage as speakers – per TV channels
Chart 40
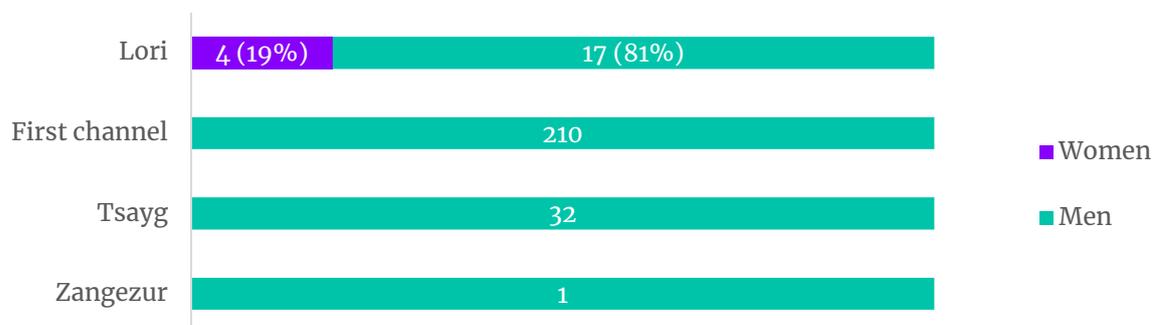
Only on **Lori** TV, women that appeared as speakers throughout 18 minutes, represented **Bright Armenia** and **Country to Live** parties.

The airtime allotted to LSG candidates on TV channels
(seconds, %)

Chart 41

1106 sec.
(4%)

24422 sec.
(96%)
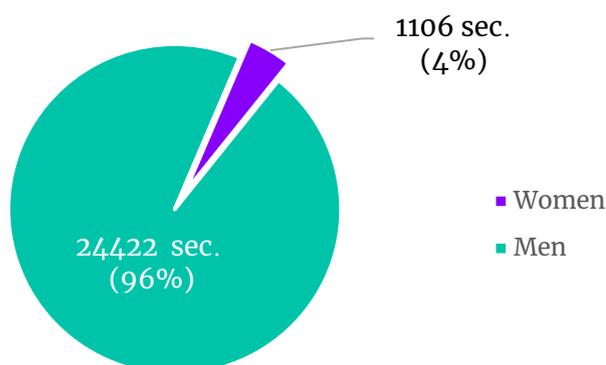
■ Women
■ Men

According to the monitoring data, women candidates did appear in video materials branded as **Lori** TV. The topics they voiced are categorized as non-programmatic, as far as they related to the projects already implemented by the current council or related to electoral processes.

In fact, in the pre-election campaign, women candidates never participated in the interviews and/or broadcasted debates. This statement is supported by information provided by regional journalists during focus group discussions.

***
"In our marz, three LSG elections took place this year under the proportional electoral system, and there were not any debates with the participation of women. There was only one debate, and it took place with the first numbers of political forces.
***
«In the case of NA we had debates, we tried to maintain women-men proportion among speakers. As to LSG elections, there were no debates, there was no competition".

Focus Group Discussion with journalists

Programmatic and non-programmatic topics touched upon on TV

We can state, that non-programmatic topics prevailed (making 44%) in the ones voiced by candidates on TV broadcasts throughout both NA and LSG pre-election campaigns.

Yet, in contrast to programmatic topics touched upon on TV in NA elections where a big share was for security discussions, in the case of LSG elections the latter was among those least discussed – 1.4% only. Instead, marz economy and infrastructures, community development and environment, as well as social issues, were the most voiced topics.

Topics touched upon on TV by LSG candidates (%)

Chart 42

Legend:
- Non-programmatic
- Economy/infrastructure
- Development and environment
- Social policy
- Other
- Security
- Education]
- Economic, social and cultural rights

Values shown: 15.6%, 11.0%, 8.2%, 1.4%, 1.1%, 0.7%, 44.0%, 18.1%
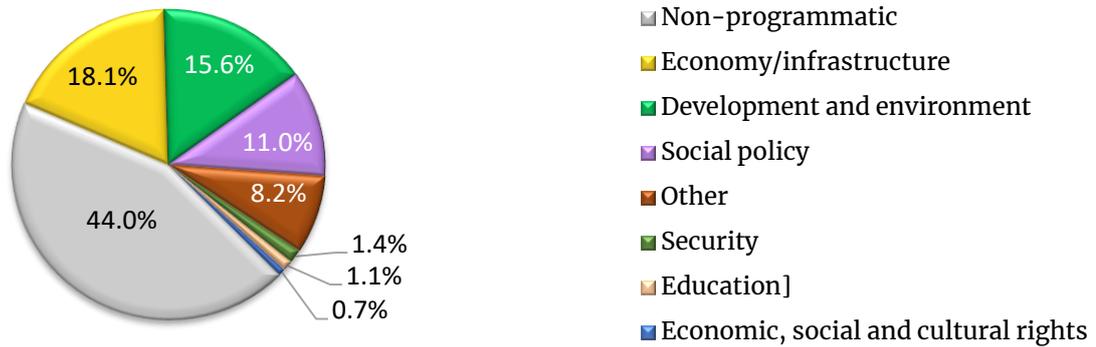
During TV monitoring, completely missing from the agenda of LSG elections was voicing gender equality and women issues.

2.3. ANALYSIS OF MONITORING OF ONLINE MEDIA FOR LSG ELECTIONS

In those four online media outlets included in the monitoring throughout October 9-15 and November 6-12, 14 days in total, all the archived public-political material and debate programs were reviewed, except for commercial/political/social advertisements and announcements. Hence, out of 6040 observed materials, only 108 materials on local elections were found, out of which:

Aravot.am	24 materials
Azatutyun.am	6 materials
News.am	42 materials
1in.am	36 materials
TOTAL	108 materials

Thus, the coverage of the LSG elections in the mentioned media made up 1.9% of the total observed articles.

### Women candidates in online media as speakers

In the abovementioned media, during monitoring in the context of the LSG campaign, coverage of women candidates as speakers, whose direct or indirect speech was referred, made 6.3%.

Frequency of LSG candidates' coverage in online media outlets as speakers (%)

Chart 43

- 4 (6.3%)
- 59 (93.7%)
- Women
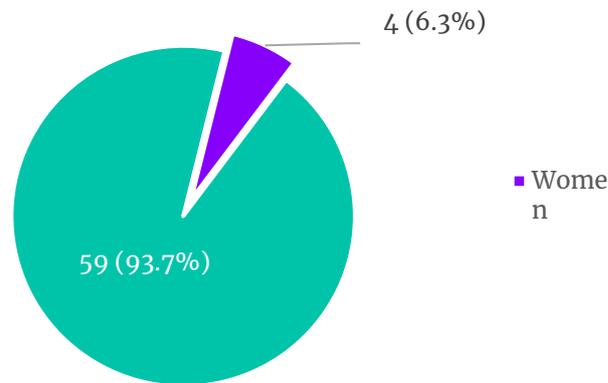
Women candidates for LSGs, as speakers or sources of information, were referred only in **1in.am** and **Aravot.am** online channels, while the other monitored online channels – **News.am** and **Azatutiun.am** made no referrals at all. (See Chart 44).

Frequency of coverage of LSG candidates as speakers – per online media outlets

Chart 44

Outlet	Women	Men
Azatutyun.am		
Aravot.am	5.3%	94.7%
News.am		
1in.am	12%	88%
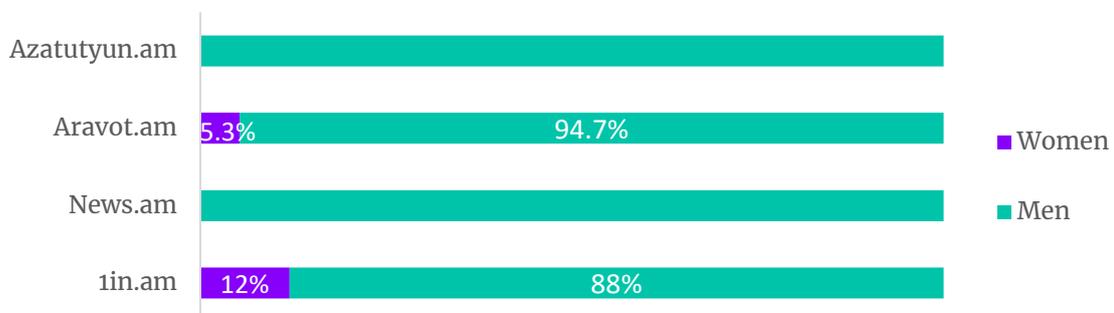
In **Aravot.am**, a woman candidate was presented in a piece of news genre, in **1in.am** – in an interview genre, all totaling 24 minutes (1498 seconds), thus making 15% of the online time allocated for LSG candidates. Instead, men candidates' voice was heard for 2 hours 21 minutes (8516 seconds), making 85%.

Women candidates that appeared/published in the online channels represented **Country of Living** and **Civil Contract** parties. In the case of the latter, the candidate heading the list, during the interview, shared her own experience of sexism:

"When I entered politics, I had interesting impressions and experiences, related to male qualities of many men. I think it does not honor a man to offend a woman as a person, to humiliate her in an attempt to gain any dividends."

During focus group discussions, regional journalists also mentioned that there was pressure towards women candidates. For example, in the course of the campaign in Goris, a

woman candidate was attacked on social media via discussions of her personal life and offensive attitude.

This comes to reaffirm the fact, that women politicians are targeted specifically for being women.

In focus group discussions with regional journalists, opinions were expressed that the fear of being targeted "works" in the case of those women candidates that are not ready and well prepared, hence refrain from participating in interviews or debates to escape being targeted.

***

"The women that are among the first 10 numbers of the electoral lists and are better prepared, do not refuse, do not avoid being represented publicly via TV. Yet, we have women that are there just formally, and as the years-long practice shows, many of them later go on self-withdrawal".

***

"They refuse from preparing materials about them, taking their photos, even from appearing on the electoral banners. It's they that step back because they are afraid of being targeted. It happened, when she said 'do not write my name, do not take my photos, this has happened to me."

Focus Group Discussion with journalists

Coverage of women candidates as actors

As actors – women candidates were comparatively better covered by online media.

Number of cases about LSG candidates as actors on online media (%)

Chart 45

9 (7.2%)

116 (92.8%)
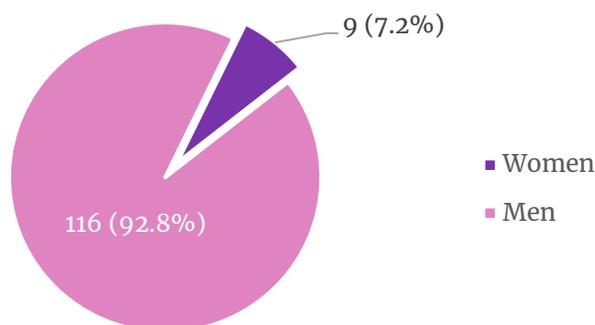
■ Women
■ Men

The appearance of women candidates nominated for LSG elections, as actors of online publications of all 4 news outlets totaled **7.2%,** which is a bit more than that of representation of them as speakers.

Frequency of coverage referencing LSG candidates as actors – per online news outlets (%)

Chart 46

News.am	1in.am	Aravot.am	Azatutyun.am
Men, 95.5%	Men, 92.3% Women, 7.7%	Men, 86.2% Women, 13.8%	Men, 100.0%
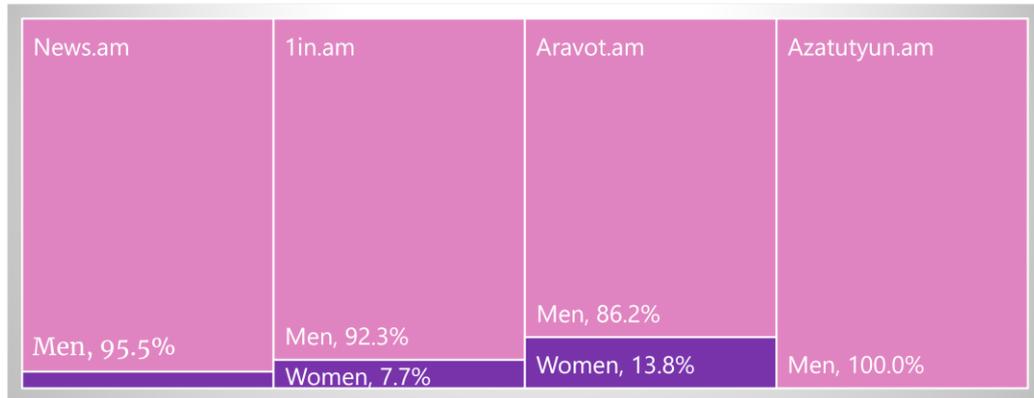
The above chart demonstrates that women candidates as newsmakers more often appeared on **Aravot.am - 13.8%**, then on **1in.am (7.7%), and News.am (4.5%):** No references to nominated LSG women candidates were observed on **Azatutyun.am**.

Regarding the tone of coverage of local government candidates in the online publications, it should be noted that the coverage of both women and men candidates was mostly neutral. The positive feedback from the men candidates outweighed the negative ones. The references to women LSG candidates in online publications were equally positive and negative (see Chart 47).

Coverage referencing LSG candidates
The nature of the references on news outlets (%)

Chart 47

Positive — Men 24.8, Women 12.5
Negative — Men 2.6, Women 12.5
Netral — Men 72.6, Women 75

■ Men
■ Women
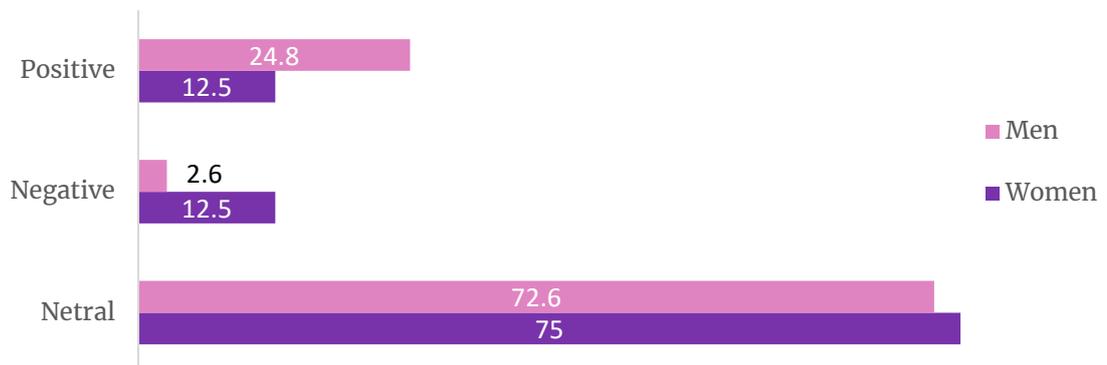
Coverage referencing LSG candidates
The nature of the references as per news outlets (%)

Chart 48

Outlet	Positive	Negative	Neutral
1in.am		1	
News.am			3
Aravot.am	1		3

- ■ Positive
- ■ Negative
- ■ Neutral
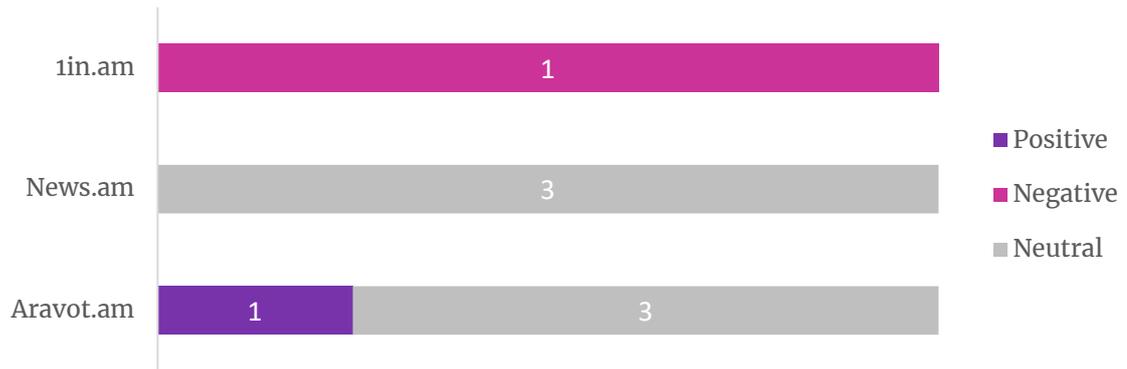
Azatutyun.am is missing in Chart 48, as no references to women candidates were made in these media outlets in the context of LSG elections.

Coverage referencing LSG candidates

As per the news outlets and the nature of the references (%)

Chart 49

Outlet	Positive	Negative	Neutral
1in.am	7	3	15
Azatutyun.am	3		1
News.am	14		49
Aravot.am	5		20

- ■ Positive
- ■ Negative
- ■ Neutral
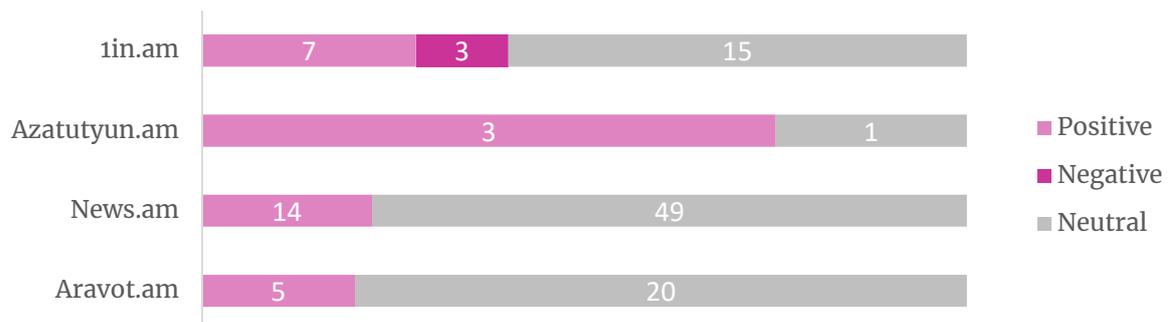
Women candidates in main photos of publications

Monitoring of photos demonstrated that it is not always the case that photos of women candidates accompany materials published about them in online news outlets.

Distribution of LSG candidates' photos by sex

As speakers
Chart 50

- Women speakers
- Men speakers

1 (4.2%)

23
(95.8%)

As actors
Chart 51

- Women actors
- Men actors

2 (6.7%)

28 (93.3%)
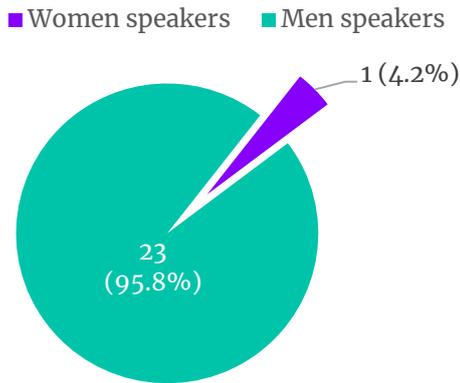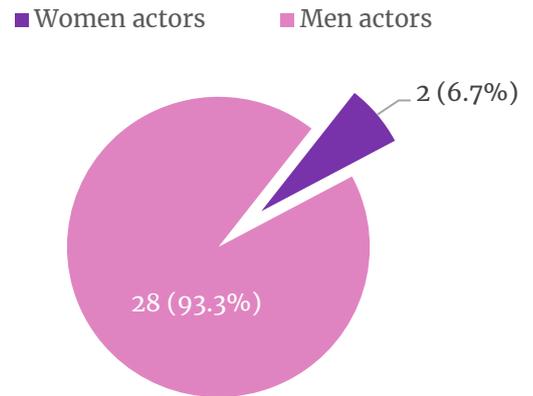
As a main photo of one of the publications of **Aravot.am, a woman candidate of the Country of the Living** party appeared both as a speaker and actor. Another publication presented **a photo of a woman candidate of Armenian National Congress** as an actor of the material. These numbers make almost the same percentage as the photos of women candidates of Parliamentary elections. **No photos of candidates have been observed in other news outlets**.

Topics raised in online news outlets coverage

In comparison with TV channels, in online news outlets that more actively (in percentage proportions) covered women candidates, the latter appeared as speakers of community issues, voicing the problems related to community development, infrastructures, and social aspects. Men candidates addressed the same problems.

Topics voiced in online news outlets by LSG candidates (%)

Chart 52

15.9%

4.3%

4.3%

4.3%

2.9%

1.4%

65.2%

1.4%

- Non-programmatic topics
- Development and environment
- Social policy
- Other
- Security
- Economy/infrastructures
- Education
- Other gender issues
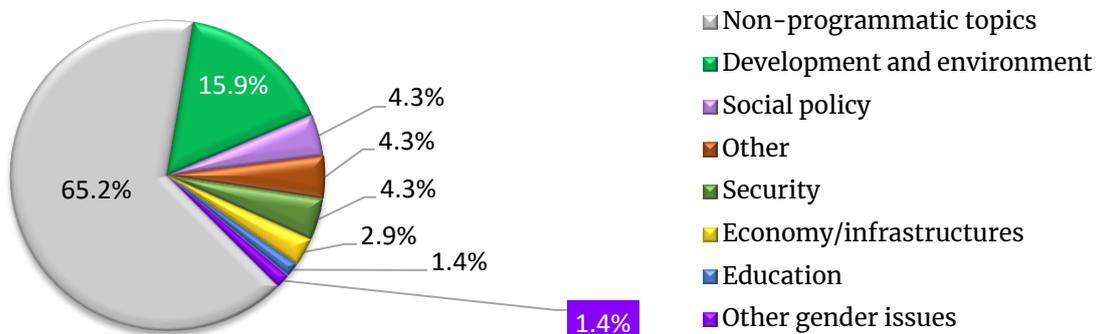
However, according to the monitoring data, in online media coverage with LSG candidates, as well as in Parliamentary elections, non-programmatic topics were discussed. (See Chart 52). As to programmatic topics, community development and the surrounding environment were the leading ones.

Gender equality and women's issues have rarely been discussed. It is worthy to note that during the focus group discussions, regional journalists stated that when women attempted to talk about women's rights, they were immediately targeted by the public and accused of "creating an image of a new Armenian woman".

CONCLUSIONS ON RESULTS OF MONITORING OF THE COVERAGE OF WOMEN CANDIDATES IN LSG ELECTIONS

- With a view to revealing trends in coverage of women candidates during the LSG pre-election campaign, the monitoring sample included six broadcasting TV channels with three of them nationwide and three with a regional reach, and three online media outlets[19] for elections held on October 17 and November 14. For elections held on December 5, monitored was one nationwide terrestrial TV channel and three regionally broadcast TV channels.[20]

- The monitoring results demonstrate that the coverage of the LSG pre-election campaign by nationwide TV channels and online media was much more passive than the pre-election coverage of the NA elections. If during the NA pre-election period the coverage related to the parliamentary elections made up 65 hours or 27.4% out of the total 240 hours observed on the sampled TV channels, during the LSG election campaign the coverage of local government elections made up just four hours or 1.6% of the total 245 hours observed.

- The same reluctance was observed on online media. In this case, there were 1854 publications (29.4% of the total observed) related to the parliamentary elections and only 108 published materials (1.9% of the total observed) about the LSG elections.

- At the same time, the observed four regionally broadcast media outlets covered the LSG elections for about five hours, which made up 24.8% of the total airtime[21] observed.

- As for the coverage of the local elections with the participation of nominated women candidates, the data obtained through the monitoring and focus group discussions with regional journalists demonstrate that women candidates running in the local government elections were more overlooked than participants in the parliamentary elections.

- In covering the local government elections, active were Tsayg TV of Shirak Marz and Lori TV of Lori Marz. Zangezur TV channel broadcast in Syunik Marz was passive in the pre-election coverage of the local government elections. ALT TV channel of Armavir Marz did not cover the local government elections at all, which has been due to a lack of resources by the media representatives during the focus group discussion.

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[19] The sample of the media monitored during the LSG elections held on October 17 and November 14 **included pan-national terrestrial TV channels** Armenian Public TV First Channel (H1), Yerkir Media, Shant TVs, **regionally broadcasting** Zangezur TV (Siunik Marz), Lori TV (Lori Marz), Tsayg TV (Shirak Marz) channels, and **online media** lin.am, News.am, Aravot.am, Azatutyun.am.

[20] The sample of the media monitored during LSG elections held on December 5 included one **nationwide terrestrial TV channel** – Armenian Public TV First Channel (H1), and **three regionally broadcast media outlets**: Tsayg TV (Shirak Marz), Lori TV (Lori Marz) and ALTTV (Armavir Marz).

[21] A total of 21 airtime were observed on regional TV channels.

- From the perspective of the coverage of women candidates, striking was only Lori TV, where women made up 19% as speakers. Women were overlooked in the coverage of other regional media. According to the journalists participating in the focus group discussions, the prevailing majority of the actively campaigning candidates in Gyumri were women, however, according to the monitoring results, the regional TV did not cover the women candidates.

- Among nationwide broadcast TV channels, Armenian Public TV First Channel was the most active in covering the local government elections and candidates, especially in the programs aired in the lead-up to the elections held on December 5. Shant TV limited its broadcasts on this topic to one-two advertisement calling on the electors to participate in the elections, which, based on the methodology of this research, were not included in the list of the materials to be monitored. Yerkir Media TV channel covered the candidates nominated for the local government elections only as actors (newsmakers) and no women or men candidates as speakers.

- In general, the visibility of women candidates as speakers made up just 6.3% in the observed online and broadcasting media compared to their about 4% representation in the electoral lists of the political forces.

- In the opinion of the journalists participating in the focus group discussions, women candidates and, in particular, those in rural communities did not make appearances on TV because of their lack of knowledge and preparedness. Another cited reason for the underrepresentation of women candidates was community consolidation, because of which knowledgeable women enjoying authority in their communities and with a potential to be covered by media were simply not nominated for the consolidation elections due to lack of recognition in the nearby communities and, being left out of the electoral processes, were not covered by media.

- The focus group discussions show that journalists are not inclined to admit their fault for the poor coverage of women candidates. However, the monitoring results demonstrate that even well-prepared women candidates, who were exemplary in their speech, knowledgeability, awareness of community problems, and their Internet posts and active campaigning were hardly covered by regional and national media.

- Although no hate speech and violence or sexism manifestations were noticed with respect to women candidates in the media coverage of the local government elections, according to the regional journalists participating in the focus group discussions, there were pressures on and verbal attacks against women candidates. For example, during the elections in Goris, an offensive discussion unfolded about the personal life of a woman candidate on social media. Yet another woman candidate shared her experience of manifestations of sexism against her when giving an interview.

- The coverage of candidates hardly included topics related to gender equality and women. Their share on online media made up only 1.4% and on TV 0%. As attested by regional journalists, when talking about women's rights, women candidates are immediately targeted and are confronted with the accusations of allegedly purporting "to create an image of a new Armenian woman."

- According to the monitoring results, the same way as in the NA elections, the online coverage with the participation of LSG candidates was more often concerned with non-programmatic topics. As far as the programmatic topics are concerned, in

contrast to the NA elections, where greater attention was paid to security issues, the leading topics during the local government elections were those related to community development and environment, regional economy and infrastructures, and social issues, which dominated in the statements of both women and men candidates.

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Thus, the results of the monitoring of the coverage of the parliamentary and local elections from a gender perspective and focus group discussions prove that the significant increase in women's participation in both parliamentary and local government elections thanks to the introduction of the gender quota has not led to an increase in their visibility in mass media.

This circumstance affirms the necessity of continuous work with mass media, including the need for periodic monitoring in order to ensure gender sensitivity of the media, to promote the presentation of a balanced non-stereotypic image of women to the public, and to secure gender-sensitive approaches during elections.

However, at the same time, taking into account the concerns and problems voiced by journalists in their work with women, much needs to be done in terms of strengthening women political figures and developing their skills of interaction with media.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The gender-sensitive analysis of the monitoring of parliamentary and local elections' media coverages, as well as the causal analysis of focus-group discussion outcomes with the journalists covering the elections, conducted within the framework of the project "Women in Media: Elections 2021", revealed a number of pivotal problems, in particular:

- The visibility of women candidates in media is much lower than the actual participation of women in electoral processes, and this fact is the consequence of a lack of gender sensitivity in the work of media and journalists.
- The discourse on gender equality and women's issues is completely missing from the election coverages or the agenda of political forces as a whole.
- The political forces involved in the elections are not concerned with ensuring wide public visibility of women enrolled in their electoral lists.
- The reluctance of women candidates to proactively participate in parts of the process of election campaigns could indicate the lack of political training, awareness, or media interaction skills.
- The problem of the low visibility of women in mass media results from the issues in the implementation of state gender policy.
- The problem of the low visibility of women in the media pinpoints the challenge of this issue by the NGOs dealing with women issues, as well as the low level of cooperation they have with the media.

General principles for proposed steps

In view of the scope of problems identified, the recommendations that derive from this study addressed the development of gender-sensitive approaches by mass media in the process of election coverage, need to be viewed from the perspective of the general demand on ensuring gender sensitivity of mass media and presenting women's balanced, non-stereotyped image as a whole, but also should take into consideration and include the necessary efforts made by other civil society institutions in that regard and the measures identified in the frame of state gender policy. In addition to the country's international commitments, best international practices, and the reports by international election observation missions on the subject matter. This leads to the thought that consistent work with the media should be carried out throughout the entire period of elections, and in the light of this approach, the recommendations of gender monitoring conducted by Armenian media on other topics can also be of great value.

With regard to the inclusion of gender approaches in the contextual agenda of elections, that vision constitutes a part of the requirement for the inclusiveness and plurality of the electoral processes and also implies taking joint steps with the participation of election stakeholders.

Thus, the recommendations of the media on comprehensive election coverage should be addressed not only to journalists, media outlets, and journalistic organizations participating in elections but also to other institutions and agencies responsible for and involved in the elections, including state agencies, non-governmental organizations dealing with women issues, political parties, and women politicians.

Accordingly, recommendations could cover a wide range of actions, instruments, and mechanisms. Among them, we can distinguish the three most critical ones to be used as a common ground for ensuring collaboration between election stakeholders.

✔ **Conducting regular monitoring of gender sensitivity of media outlets during elections and beyond,** wider dissemination and discussion of the monitoring findings, with the involvement of all stakeholders.

✔ **Diverse capacity development and training initiatives**, aimed at promoting social responsibility among journalists and media on raising gender awareness and women's political involvement, as well as the development of gender-sensitive journalism skills on one side, and are addressed to political parties and aimed at developing skills among women politicians for communicating with media, on another side.

✔ **The introduction of the requirement to discriminate against gender equality and gender sensitivity in the electoral process, including the rules of mass media and other participants, including journalistic ethics, the exclusion of sexual** expression, and gender sensitivity.

<u>**Addressees of the recommendations**</u>

Mass media, journalists, journalistic organizations, and self-regulatory bodies

- During the coverage of elections, to be guided by the rules of professional ethics, exclude gender-biased discriminatory attitude, reproduction, and dissemination of sexism and hate speech, abstain from demeaning assessments and labeling of women's political involvement.

- Collaborate with the Media Ethics Observatory on including the principles of gender equality in general rules of journalistic ethics, based on the principles of the Global Charter of Ethics for Journalists devised by the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ).

- Include the compliance with gender balance and gender equality principles of media coverage in media assessment criteria applied during the monitoring of elections

- In collaboration with journalistic associations and unions, to elaborate code of conduct for the media in the electoral processes, or code of ethics for election coverage and to embed gender equality provisions and inclusive electoral coverage principles therein.

- Include gender-sensitive approaches in editorial policies and regulations.

- Collaborate with other civil society institutions on the coverage of issues that contribute to or impede broadening women's political engagement, creating relevant collaboration formats permanently.

- Take into consideration the recommendations and gaps identified as a result of media monitoring from a gender perspective.

- Draw public attention to the problem of women's engagement in elections, be proactive in presenting women's opinions to the public.

- Promote broader women's political engagement, presenting the non-stereotypical image of women politicians, and safeguard the principle of balanced coverage of women and men in the electoral process.

- Develop the culture of organizing mixed-gender pre-election debates for national and local elections, while ensuring equal participation, to the extent possible, of men and women candidates in the scope of debates.

- Involve women candidates and women politicians in a variety of programs and formats, emphasizing the election program-related issues during the interactions with them.

- During the periods between the elections, continue to focus on the balance of coverage of women and men politicians and to promote the development of positive and non-stereotypical perception of women's political engagement in public perception.

- Ensure and promote active involvement of journalists in gender-related education training courses and educational programs designed for media.

Non-governmental organizations

- Conduct regular monitoring of the gender sensitivity of the media coverage during the elections and beyond the elections period, disseminate the monitoring results, and undertake discussions thereon with all stakeholders.

- Raise the awareness of the journalists and mass media on the gender issues and, particularly, the role of women in enhancing their political participation and social responsibility through the organization of particular trainings and sessions.

- Develop self-assessment tools for journalists and their respective media to check gender sensitivity and implement special education programs based thereon in the field of comprehensive election coverage.

- Develop a guide for journalists dedicated to the skills of gender sensitivity coverage to be applied in the electoral processes and other events, as well as the issues of including the principles of gender equality in the activities of the media.

- Contribute to the inclusion of gender issues in the electoral processes' agenda, as well as the raising of these issues by women politicians similar to the successful experience of developing and presenting the "Women's agenda" and ensuring the continuity of that experience.

- Contribute to the inclusion of gender-sensitive approaches in the election programs of political parties.

- Contribute to the improvement of voters' civic education and perception of gender equality in electoral processes by including the gender component in the voter education programs.

- Include the component of communication skills development with the mass media in NGO-organized political school leadership development programs aimed at the improvement of women's leadership.

- Include the gender component in the activities of local observation missions to identify the disparities in the coverage of men and women candidates, the space and time allocated to them during the campaign, and, among all other points of the agenda, the coverage of gender equality issues by applying the special methodology developed by the observers from the OSCE and other international organizations.

Women politicians and parties

- Raise the awareness of the party's public relations officers and spokespersons on gender issues.

- Include public speaking, image-making, political technologies, and communication skills with the media in the training courses for women politicians.

- Work with women candidates to respond positively to the media invitations and collaborate with the media.

- Pay attention to keeping a balance of the public visibility of women and men candidates in the election campaign materials and videos, undertake steps to increase the visibility of women candidates during the campaign.

- Collaborate with the organizations and media dealing with women's rights to address the gender issues in the elections and to formulate a "women's agenda", as well as to cover these issues.

- Help with the struggle to fight against the issues of gender-based insults, hate speech, and sexism during the elections by cooperating with the media and women's organizations dealing with such issues.

Government institutions, State electoral commission

- Provide journalists with gender-disaggregated data and information during the elections.

- Ensure the continuity of the successful experience of the State electoral commission, i.e., the publications of the summary analysis of the data on women's participation in elections at all levels.

- Include the gender component in the activities of the bodies responsible for organizing the elections to identify the inequalities between the men and women candidates in the coverage of the election campaign in terms of the space and time allotted.

- Help to fight to exclude the expressions of hate speech, discrimination, and sexism during the elections.

- Ensure the gender education of the journalists within the frames of professional education, including the gender component in all training programs of journalists.

- Support and encourage the media to show a gender-sensitive approach in their work.

- Include gender-sensitive approaches in legislative activities on the activity of media outlets in collaboration with the National Assembly and relevant NGOs.

- Include legislative proposals on gender sensitivity in the media on equal rights for women and men, discussing them in advance and agreeing upon them with journalists and journalists' associations.

- Show consistency in the implementation of the goals outlined in the Strategy for the Implementation of Gender Policy in the Republic of Armenia for 2019-2023, including the issues of ensuring gender sensitivity in the mass media[22].

- Submit reports of the Government of the Republic of Armenia on ensuring gender sensitivity of the media to the National Assembly of the Republic of Armenia, as well as to the public on the actions undertaken in the mentioned direction within the framework of international obligations[23].

- Contribute to the improvement of gender sensitivity of the laws on the election, organization of electoral processes, and political parties.

- Include the gender component in the monitoring activities of the Commission on Television and Radio of Armenia (CTR), embedding this requirement in the description of the functions assigned to the Commission.

- Introduce gender representation principles in the process of formation of the bodies that regulate the media.

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[22] « … 7) increasing the gender sensitivity of the mass media, including the gender component in the process of professional education and trainings, the strategy for the implementation of gender policy in the Republic of Armenia for 2019-2023 and action plan http://www.irtek.am/views/act.aspx?aid=151906

[23] Particularly, the Beijing Platform for Action, "Women and the Mass Media" field, the UN Convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women and other documents.