



The “Women in Politics, Public Administration, and Civil Society” Project WIP 2.0

PROMOTING WOMEN’S POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IN ARMENIA: POLICY BRIEF

INTRODUCTION

Women’s political participation is characterized by the indicators of their participation in national and local elections and their representation in a country’s governance and decision making processes. Although, thanks to the application of the gender quota, apparent positive results in terms of women’s representation in the National Assembly and local councils have been recorded after the last parliamentary and local self-government elections, nevertheless, women continue to be underrepresented in top governance positions and among marz-level and local self-government leadership of the country. Women’s potential is overlooked in the country’s governance and politics, they have to confront numerous obstacles along the pathway towards full participation and only few women succeed in overcoming them. A balanced representation of sexes in governance is not only a necessary condition for more effective democratic processes, but also a requirement of human rights and social justice. Therefore, state policies targeting provision of equal opportunities for women’s full participation should be based on this rationale and be assessed within the framework of that very rationale.

PART 1. LEGAL BASES FOR WOMEN'S POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

The legal guarantees for provision and expansion of women's political participation are enshrined in the RA Constitution and legislation, as well as are part of the international commitments and obligations of the Republic of Armenia.

The list of national and international documents related to this topic includes:

- **The RA Constitution**, the RA Law on Ensuring Equal Rights and Equal Opportunities for Women and Men, the Conceptual Framework of the RA Gender Policies, the 2019-2023 Strategy and Action Plan for Implementation of the RA Gender Policies, the RA Election Code, the RA Law on Political Parties, and the RA Law on Local Self-Governance.
- **UN documents**, including the UN Convention on the Political Rights of Women (1952), the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (1979), Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995), Agenda 2030: Sustainable Development Goals (2015).
- **Documents of the European structures**, including resolutions of the Council of Europe Committee of Ministers, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE), OSCE, the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe and documents of other structures.

It is important that starting with the Beijing Platform of Action, all international documents have enshrined a vision to ensure expansion of women's political participation and a "critical mass" (at least 30% representation) in representation of women at decision-making levels, which are viewed in unity with the necessity of increasing and enhancing women's leadership.

This logical framework was reaffirmed in the Political Declaration¹ adopted within the Beijing +25 process and in **the Agreed Conclusions adopted at the sixty-fifth session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women**² in 2021. Within the framework of the noted documents, the leaders of the countries of the world took up an obligation to significantly accelerate the growth of women's representation in leadership positions of public administration.

The issue is raised in **the Concluding observations of the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women addressed to Armenia**³ and adopted on October 31, 2022. The Concluding observations propose to expand the application of temporary special measures to overcome women's underrepresentation at all levels and branches of power.

Within the context of the Committee observations, importance is attached to assessing the effectiveness of application of the gender quota stipulated in the RA Election Code.

The applied temporary special measures to promote women's participation in electoral processes was first introduced in the RA Election Code in 2002, within the framework of the implementation of the Concluding observations of the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women made in 1997 and 2002⁴.

According to the effective legislation, women's inclusion in party electoral lists is regulated by the gender quota stipulated in the RA Election Code. The changes introduced in the RA Election Code in

¹ Political declaration on the occasion of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women <https://www2.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/news%20and%20events/stories/2020/csw64-politicaldeclaration.pdf?la=ru&vs=1220>

² CSW65 Agreed Conclusions https://www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/csw/65/csw65_agreed_conclusions_advance_unedited_version_29_march_2021.pdf?la=en&vs=5504

³ Concluding observations of the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women on the seventh periodic report of Armenia regarding the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CEDAW%2fC%2fARM%2fCO%2f7&Lang=en

⁴ Concluding observations A/52/38/REV.1(SUPP) paras. 35-68 [https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=A%2f52%2f38%2fREV.1\(SUPP\)&Lang=en](https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=A%2f52%2f38%2fREV.1(SUPP)&Lang=en); Concluding observations A/57/38(SUPP) paras. 25-69 [https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=A%2f57%2f38\(SUPP\)&Lang=en](https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=A%2f57%2f38(SUPP)&Lang=en)

the lead-up to the 2021 early parliamentary and local self-government elections ensured additional guarantees in terms of participation of female candidates. In particular:

- In 2021, Article 83.4 of the RA Election Code, which provides for at least 30/70 proportion of candidates in electoral lists of political forces, went into effect.
- Changes made on June 18, 2020 marked the transition to the proportional electoral system also in self-government elections. Accordingly, elections to community local councils in communities with more than 4000 voters and multi-settlement communities are conducted according to the proportional electoral system. This means that the gender quota provided in the RA Election Code applies during all these proportional elections.
- In communities with less than 4000 voters, community heads and local council members are elected based on the majoritarian electoral system, in which case the gender quota does not apply.
- The RA Law on Introducing Changes and Additions to the RA Election Code (HO-171-N) adopted in April of 2021 provided for the transition to the simple proportional electoral system (without territorial lists). The give-up of the so-called rating lists, which assumed a tough competition between candidates in precincts, dramatically increased the chances of female candidates to be elected and to ensure at least 30% women's representation in the newly elected body.

Women's participation in the June 20th, 2021 early parliamentary elections and during the local self-government elections following them was regulated by the following provisions of the RA Election Code, which contain guarantees not only for women's participation in party electoral lists, but also for their representation in the elected bodies:

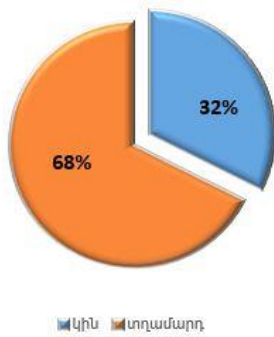
- ✓ **The provision defined by Article 83.4**, which went into effect in 2021 and is concerned with proportional electoral lists:
"In the first part of the national electoral list of a political party, alliance of political parties and each of the political parties included in the alliance, the number of representatives of each sex, starting from the 1st place on the list, shall not exceed 70 per cent in each integer group of 3 (1-3, 1-6, 1-9 and subsequently up to the end of the list.)"
- ✓ **The provision defined by Article 100.2**, which is concerned with the distribution of mandates:
"... Where... the mandates of the political party are distributed among representatives of the same sex, the last candidate shall give up his or her mandate to the candidate of the unrepresented sex under the smallest number in the first part of the national list, if any."
- ✓ **The provision defined by Article 100.3**, which guarantees that *"if, as a result of mandate waiver, the number of representatives of any sex in the given faction falls below and results in less than 25 per cent, the mandate shall be given to the next candidate of the less represented sex."*
- ✓ **The provision defined by Article 130.2**, which is concerned with nomination of candidates for community local councils based on the proportional electoral system and applies, in addition to local council elections of Yerevan, Gyumri, and Vanadzor, also to communities that have more than 4000 residents:
"In the electoral list of a political party (alliance of political parties) and each of the political parties included in the alliance, the number of representatives of each sex, starting from the 1st place on the list, shall not exceed 70 per cent in each integer group of 3 (1-3, 1-6, 1-9 and subsequently up to the end of the list)."
- ✓ **The provision defined by Article 141.6**, which is concerned with the summarization of the results of elections to community local councils and the order of mandate distribution:
"If the mandates of a political party are distributed among representatives of the same sex, the mandates of the better represented sex exceeding 70 per cent shall be given to the candidates of the less represented sex under the smallest number, if any, thus ensuring not less than 30 per cent representation of the underrepresented sex."
- ✓ **The provision of Article 141.8**, which is concerned with giving up mandates in the elected faction:
"... where as a result of mandate waiver or election and early termination of powers, the number of representatives of any sex in the given faction falls below and results in less than 25 per cent, the mandate shall be given to the next candidate of the less represented sex in the electoral list of that political party (alliance of political parties), if any."

PART 2. WOMEN’S POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IN THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS

Twenty-five political forces participating in the 2021 early parliamentary elections (21 parties and 4 alliances) overall included in their lists **2613 candidates, 956 of whom or 36.6% were women, which is more than the sex proportion requirement for candidates in party lists stipulated by the Election Code.** The number of women candidates is also higher than the number of them featured by political forces in the 2018 National Assembly early elections.

Women’s representation in the electoral lists of the political forces in the 2018 and 2021 parliamentary elections

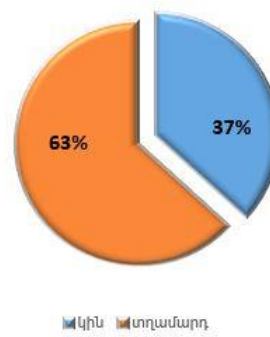
ԱԺ ընտրություններ 2018 թ.
Պատգամավորի թեկնածուներն ըստ սեռի



2018 NA elections
MP candidates according to sex

Female Male

ԱԺ ընտրություններ 2021 թ.
Պատգամավորի թեկնածուներն ըստ սեռի



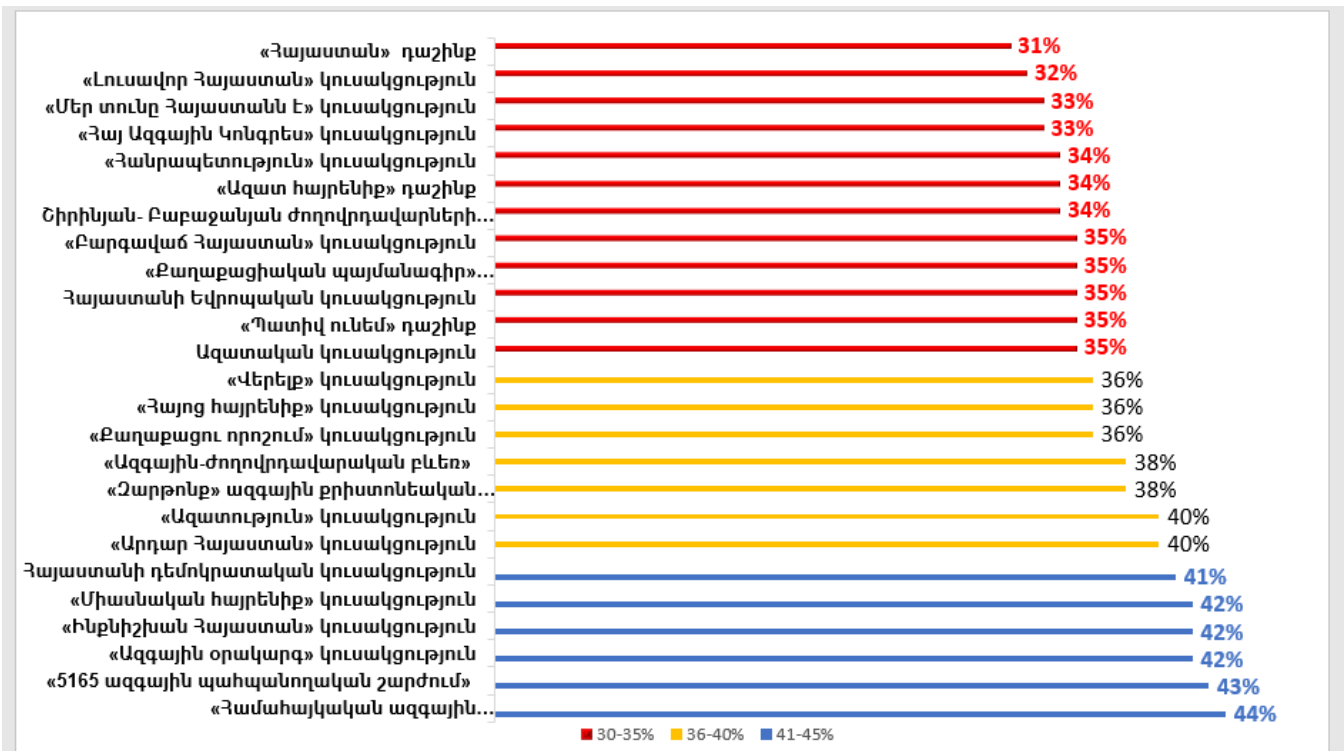
2021 NA elections
MP candidates according to sex

Female Male

Source: WomenNet.am

The indicator of women’s inclusion in the electoral lists of political forces fluctuated within the limits of 31-44%. Twenty of the political forces participating in the parliamentary elections had 31-40% of female candidates in their lists, and six of them 40-44%⁵.

2021 parliamentary elections: women’s representation in the party candidate lists of political forces



“Hayastan” Alliance

“Bright Armenia” Party

“Our Home is Armenia” Party

“Armenian National Congress” Party

“Republic” Party

“Free Homeland” Alliance

⁵ According to the law, party electoral lists have also a second part envisioned for candidates representing national minorities. Overall, 14 candidates were featured in that part, three of which were women. Representatives of national minorities were featured by only five political forces: “Armenian National Congress,” “Civil Contract,” “Prosperous Armenia,” “Sovereign Armenia” parties and “Armenia” (“Hayastan”) alliance.

Shirinyan-Babajanyan Alliance of Democrats
“Prosperous Armenia” Party
“Civil Contract” Party
European Party of Armenia
“I have the Honor” Alliance
Liberal Party
“Rise” Party
“Armenian Homeland” Party
“Citizen’s Decision” Social-Democratic Party
“National-Democratic Pole” Pan-Armenian Party
“Awakening” National Christian Party
“Freedom” Party
“Fair Armenia” Party
Armenian Democratic Party
“United Homeland” Party
“Sovereign Armenia” Party
“National Agenda” Party
“5165 National Conservative Movement” Party
“Pan-Armenian National Statehood” Party

Source: WomenNet.am

The electoral lists of only two in 25 political forces were headed by women: Lusine Avagyan was number one on the list of the “United Homeland” party and Karine Tonoyan was in the first place on the candidate list of the “5165 National Conservative Movement” party. Although the president of the “Armenian Homeland” party is a woman, Anahit Yeghoyan, she was featured in the second place on the electoral list.

When compiling the lists, the overwhelming majority of the political forces were guided by the lower threshold requirement of the law, featuring first female candidates in the third place. Only three political forces featured women in the second place of their candidate lists.

As a result of the parliamentary elections, the National Assembly of the 8th convocation had **36 or 33.6% women (35.5% as of November 1, 2022) among its 107 MPs**. In essence, the 5% increase of the quota stipulated by law ensured the increase of women’s representation in the National Assembly by 11.5%, which demonstrates the effectiveness of the applied quota.

The dynamics of women’s representation in the Parliament based on the results of 2018 and 2021 elections

Աժ ընտրություններ	Կիրառված քվոտայի չափը	Քաղաքական ուժերի ընտրացուցակներում կանանց ներկայացվածություն	Նորընտիր Ազգային Ժողովի կազմում կանանց ներկայացվածություն	Աճը նախորդ գումարման համեմատ
2018թ.	25%	32%	24%	+7%
2021 թ.	30%	37%	35.5%	+ 11.5%

NA elections

The quota percentage

Women’s representation in the lists of political forces

Women’s representation in the newly elected National Assembly

Increase as compared to the NA of the previous convocation

According to the CEC data

An analysis of the dynamics of women’s representation in the National Assembly after the introduction of the quota demonstrates that the quota was especially effective during the 2021 parliamentary

elections, which is determined by transition to the simple proportional electoral system. The latter, in contrast with the practice of using territorial lists, ensured that women's representation in the elected body be not only at the level defined by the law, but even higher.

The dynamics of women's representation in the Parliament after the introduction of the quota

Տարի	Գումարում	Ներդրված քվոտա	Ընտրակարգ	Կանանց ներկայացվածությունը խորհրդարանում
1995	1-ին գումարում	-	40 համամասնական/ 150 մեծամասնական	6%
1999	2-րդ գումարում	-	56 համամասնական/ 75 մեծամասնական	3.1%
2003	3-րդ գումարում	5%	75 համամասնական/ 56 մեծամասնական	5.3%
2007	4-րդ գումարում	15%	90 համամասնական/ 41 մեծամասնական	9.2%
2012	5-րդ գումարում	20%	90 համամասնական/ 41 մեծամասնական	10.7%
2017	6-րդ գումարում	25%	համամասնական/ տարածքային	18%
2018	7-րդ գումարում	25%	համամասնական/ տարածքային	24%
2021	8-րդ գումարում	30%	Պարզ համամասնական	34%

Year Convocation Introduced quota Electoral system Women's representation in the Parliament

Convocation

1st convocation

2nd convocation

3rd convocation

4th convocation

5th convocation

6th convocation

7th convocation

8th convocation

Electoral system

40 proportional/150 majoritarian

56 proportional/75 majoritarian

75 proportional/56 majoritarian

90 proportional/41 majoritarian

90 proportional/41 majoritarian

Proportional/territorial

Proportional/territorial

Simple proportional

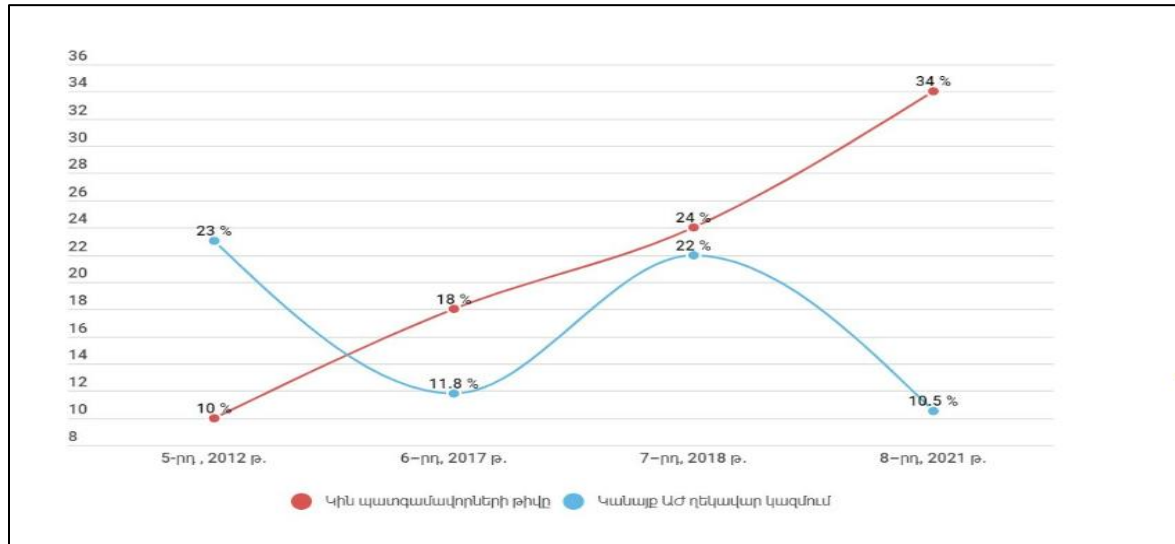
According to the RA National Assembly data

Although the quota has apparently improved the indicators of women's representation in the National Assembly, it has not made an impact on women's representation in the Parliament's leadership positions.

The number of women among the leadership of the National Assembly of the eighth convocation is disproportionately low as compared to women's representation among the Parliament's MPs: only 10.5% of women are involved in the NA Council heading only two out of the twelve NA standing committees. It is noteworthy that starting in 2007, one of the deputy speakers of the National Assembly was always a woman; however, there are no women among the three deputy speakers of the Parliament of the eighth convocation. In newly independent Armenia, a woman has never been Speaker of the Parliament.

This problem is especially apparent when comparing the dynamics of the quota application and women’s representation among the National Assembly MPs and leadership.

The dynamics of women’s representation among the National Assembly leadership in 2012-2021



5th, 2012 6th, 2017 7th, 2018 8th, 2021

Number of female MPs Women among the NA leadership

Source: *WomenNet.am*

One can state that the increase of women’s representation in the National Assembly thanks to the application of the quota has not led to formation of a “critical mass” of women in the legislative body, due to their incomparably low involvement in the Parliament’s leadership. In essence, more than 30% representation of women in the National Assembly has not led to an increase of their actual impact on political decisions, thus revealing the entire spectrum of problems connected with development and enhancement of women’s political leadership, starting with the absence of a national machinery for women’s advancement and ending with lack of responsibility among political parties for women’s political growth.

Due to shortcomings with respect to development of women’s political leadership, the top power positions in Armenia continue to be held by men. The RA President, Prime Minister, Deputy Prime Ministers, and Chief of Prime Minister’s Staff are men. The gender composition of the RA Government

does not reflect the changes in the National Assembly induced by the quota: only one of the twelve Ministries is headed by a woman. This tendency was maintained in the composition of the three Cabinets in the 2017-2021 period. Women's involvement is noticeable only in the positions of Deputy Ministers, which, however, do not have powers to impact political decisions. Only nine (19%) among 47 Deputy Ministers are women and there are no female Deputy Ministers in half the Ministries. As for women's representation in regional (marz) administration, only one out of the ten marzes is headed by a woman and only one of the Deputy Governors is a woman.

Summing up, one can state that although, thanks to the effective quota application in the 2021 parliamentary elections, there is a significant progress in terms of the indicators of women's representation in the National Assembly, the principle of gender equity in the leadership of the legislative body and formation of the executive power was apparently breached. This has neutralized the effectiveness of the gender quota from the perspective of ensuring true democracy at the decision-making level, thus revealing the existing shortcomings and gaps with respect to formation of women's political leadership.

PART 3. WOMEN'S POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IN LOCAL SELF-GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS

According to the data provided by the RA Ministry of Territorial Administration and Infrastructures, thanks to the gender quota application in the 2021-2022 local self-government (LSG) elections held on the basis of the proportional electoral system, substantial progress was achieved in terms of women's representation in local councils.

The dynamics of women's representation in local councils

ԿԱՆԱՅԲ ԱՎԱԳԱՆԻՆԵՐԻ ԿԱԶՄՈՒՄ



Women in Local Councils

As of February 2020

The general number of communities

The number of consolidated communities

Male Female

As of November 2022

The general number of communities

The number of consolidated communities

Male Female

*Source of infographics: WomenNet.am
According to the data of the RA Ministry of Territorial Administration and Infrastructures*

In 2021, elections in 45 out of 52 communities were held based on the proportional electoral system and in seven communities inhabited by national minorities based on the majoritarian electoral system.

Sixty-six political forces running in all elections based on the proportional electoral system overall presented 167 electoral lists, where 1798 or 34% out of 5350 featured candidates were women. After self-withdrawals or taking back documents, the number of candidates was 4547. Although the number

of women and men that had withdrawn their candidacies was almost equal, women’s representation in the candidate lists decreased to 31 per cent.

According to the CEC data, in 2021, as a result of the LSG proportional elections, 1008 members of local councils were elected with 313 or 31% of them being women. Taking into consideration that before the elections, the number of women among 3205 members of local councils in communities included in the 45 consolidated clusters was 280 (8.7%), women’s representation in the noted communities increased by at least 3.5% reaching 31%.

Sixty-four candidates, of whom 13 or about 20% were women, participated in local council elections based on the majoritarian electoral system, which were held in seven communities of national minorities. Forty of the nominated candidates, of whom five or 12.5% were women, were elected. The number of the elected women is not only almost by half lower than the results of the proportional elections with the application of the quota; it is even lower than women’s representation (17.5%) in the local councils of the noted seven communities before the elections.

Women’s participation in the 2021 LSG elections

ՏԻՄ ընտրություններ 2021	Մինչ ընտրությունները ավագանիներում կանանց ներկայացվածության %-ը	Քաղաքական ուժերի ընտրացուցակներում կանանց ներկայացվածության %-ը	Նորընտիր ավագանիների կազմում կանանց ներկայացվածության %-ը
Համամասնական ընտրակարգով 45 համայնքներում	8.7%	34%	31%
Մեծամասնական ընտրակարգով 7 համայնքներում	17.5%	20%	12.5%

LSG elections

Proportional in 45 communities

Majoritarian in 7 communities

% of women’s representation in local councils before the elections

% of women’s representation in the candidate lists of political forces

% of women’s representation in the newly elected local councils

According to the CEC data

Comparing the results of the 2021 local self-government elections held based on the proportional and majoritarian electoral systems, one can state that the gender quota enshrined in the RA Election Code, which was applied in the LSG proportional elections, largely helped the increase in the percentage of women's representation in local councils. The quota was not applied during the majoritarian elections and, consequently, instead of progress, certain regress was recorded.

Thanks to the application of the quota, positive outcomes were recorded also as a result of the elections held in 17 communities of Armenia's eight marzes (territorial-administrative units) on September 25, 2022. Fifty-four parties and alliances of parties running in the elections featured, on average, 34% of female candidates in their electoral lists. Ninety-nine or 30.85% of the elected 321 local council members are women, which marks a significant progress as compared to women's representation in the local councils of the same communities before the elections.

As for election of community heads, this issue is not regulated by quota and in case of the proportional electoral system, largely depends on candidate lists presented by political forces. These lists are rarely headed by women. Rare are also female nominations for the position of the community head in case of the majoritarian electoral system.

Thus, only four out of 167 candidate lists in all the LSG proportional elections held in 2021 are headed by women. The elections resulted in only two women being elected community heads and these women were heads of their communities before the elections, i.e. they were reelected.

Twelve candidates were nominated for elections of community heads, which were held in five communities inhabited by national minorities and there were no women among them. Women had not headed these communities before the elections either.

Only one out of 54 candidate lists presented by political forces for the LSG elections held in 2022 was headed by a woman, who, however, was not elected. There was an exceptional case in the community of Berd, where the candidate heading the list of the alliance winning in the LSG elections was arrested and a woman candidate, who was in the third place of the electoral list of the same alliance, was elected community head.

The dynamics of women's representation in LSG bodies

	2012	2016	2020	2022
Կանայք ավագանիների կազմում	9.6%	11.7%	10.7%	25.6%
Համայնքների կիս ղեկավարներ	2%	2.1%	1.8%	5.6%
Կանայք վարչական ղեկավարների թվում	-	-	5.4%	5.5%
Համայնքների թիվ	915	793	502	71

According to the data of the RA Ministry of Territorial Administration and Infrastructures

Women in local councils

Female community heads

Female administrative heads

The number of communities

Looking at the dynamics as compared to 2020, one can state that, if, in 2020, nine of Armenia's 502 communities were headed by women, which made up 1.8%; according to the 2022 data, four in 71 communities are headed by women (5.6%): the consolidated communities of Vagharshapat in Armavir, Amasiya in Shirak, Berd in Tavush, and the non-consolidated community of Verin Dvin in Ararat marz.

Observation of the dynamics of women's representation among administrative heads demonstrates that, if, as of 2020, 22 or 5.4% out of 409 administrative heads were women, according to the 2022 data, 43 or 5.5% of 781 administrative heads are women. It should be noted that administrative heads have a much more limited scope of decision-making powers than community heads.

The dynamics of women's representation in local councils confirms the effectiveness of the gender quota. It is important that in contradistinction with 2020, when there were no women in local councils of more than half of the communities, today, thanks to the application of the quota, there are few communities, where women are not involved, and that is due to a number of circumstances that came to light in the LSG elections and reduced the impact of the quota.

In particular, a number of cases were recorded, when the quota requirement in the electoral lists of the political forces was maintained and no less than 30% of female candidates were included in the lists, however, women were not included in local councils or factions formed as a result of the elections.

The reason for this is that women included in the candidate lists would withdraw their candidacies or waive their mandates, due to which, at the time of mandate distribution, there would be left no female candidates in the lists and local councils would be replenished only by male candidates. In this situation, in essence, the guarantees envisioned by Points 6 and 8 of Article 141 of the Election Code, which stipulate the requirement of 30% representation of the less represented sex as a result of mandate distribution and the requirement of at least 25% representation in the event of mandate waiver in the elected faction, do not work.

Overall, only in the 2021 elections, recorded were twelve cases, when at different stages of the electoral process, all women on the electoral list withdrew their candidacies and nine more cases, when only one or two female candidates remained in the electoral list.

The scope of reasons for this is quite broad and requires additional research. For example, elected female municipal councilors preferred to continue their paid work as an employee in community administration, or women resorted to self-withdrawal because of political pressures, or parties decided women's mandate waiver, or women's inclusion in the electoral list was a mere formality right from the start and women were included in the candidate list at the moment of nomination only to adhere to the requirement of the law and afterwards withdrew their candidacies, etc. The OSCE/ODIHR observers had pointed out the fact of formal nominations of women in Armenia's elections in their final report on the December 9th, 2018 parliamentary elections, *"While gender quota assumes more efforts be undertaken by political parties to encourage and facilitate women political participation, regrettably many contestants only formally included women in the candidate lists."*⁶ It is apparent that the problem exists and has become more profound in LSG elections, which is confirmed by research and discussions in the regions.

Overall, the transition of LSG elections to the proportional electoral system and the application of the gender quota have made an apparently positive impact on increase of women's representation in local councils, in spite of the fact that some phenomena were noticed, which reduced the impact of the quota. The transition to the proportional electoral system has made almost no impact on increase of

⁶ <https://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/armenia/413567>

women's number among community heads, thus revealing problems with the coming-to-be of women's political leadership.

PART 4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The analysis of the dynamics of women's representation in the RA Parliament and local self-government bodies, assessments of documents related to the topic, research and expert opinions, as well as the results of the discussions held in Yerevan and the marzes have led to the following conclusions:

- The national legislation is consonant with the recommendations of international documents. In particular, the proportion and wording of the gender quota enshrined in the RA Election Code create a real basis for significantly increasing women's representation in the National Assembly and LSG bodies.
- The 2021 parliamentary and LSG elections resulted in significant increase in women's representation in the National Assembly and local councils as compared to the preceding years, which allows viewing the applied quota as an effective means for expanding women's political activism.
- The gender composition of the Governing Council of the National Assembly, the Cabinet of Ministers and regional authorities does not reflect the significant progress in women's representation among MPs induced by the gender quota. In that context, one can state that the quota, having helped the improvement of political indicators, has not promoted women's political leadership.
- The 35.5% women's representation in the RA National Assembly has not led to the formation of women's "critical mass" (at least 30%) and fulfillment of expectations connected with that threshold since, according to international approaches and experience, it leads to positive changes in the political and legislative field only when, parallel to that, women are appointed or elected to leadership and influential positions in the Parliament, in the Government and other governing bodies.⁷
- Women's massive self-withdrawals from party candidate lists or mandate waivers manifest during the LSG elections allow concluding that in some cases the application/adherence to supporting mechanisms (quota) is merely formal, which, though it leads to increase in women's representation

⁷ Gender-Sensitive Parliaments: A Global Review of Good Practice', Palmieri Sonia, IPU 2011.

in local councils, discredits the idea of women's political participation in public perceptions and is a serious impediment for the coming-to-be of women's political leadership.

- Observations on the formal nature of women's inclusion in the candidate lists were made by international observers also during parliamentary elections, however, this phenomenon became more explicit and visible during the LSG elections due to the underdevelopment of parties at the local level.
- After the transition to the proportional LSG elections, due to the absence of the opportunity for nominations through civic initiatives, certain resource of women that has been developed by leadership schools over a period of many years has been left out of the elections.
- Many of the female leaders that have experience of working in local councils, in spite of received proposals, refused to be nominated in the candidate list of any party due to extreme polarization of the political situation and underdevelopment of parties at the local level.
- Overall, irrespective of the electoral system in effect during LSG elections, the issue of women's poor representation among community heads is a problem of women's political leadership. In case of proportional elections, this problem is the responsibility of parties. Taking into consideration the fact that women's representation in the party leadership is very low and often does not correspond even to the gender proportion among the rank and the file members, the issue of heading candidate lists is resolved in favor of men. The experience demonstrates that even in those cases, when the party head is a woman, it is not always the case that the candidate list is headed by a woman. In case of majoritarian elections, the reasons are stereotypes and lack of resources impeding women's leadership.
- Women's absence in the heading positions of the candidate lists during the parliamentary and LSG elections, as well as formal nature of women's inclusion in the candidate lists point to serious shortcomings and gaps in developing principles guiding gender-sensitive cadre policies inside parties, as well as formation of women's leadership and compilation of candidate lists. Electoral processes indirectly affirm the fact that the encouraging mechanisms introduced by the RA Law on Political Parties with a view to expanding women's representation in party leadership bodies are not working yet and the parties do not fully realize their share of responsibility in ensuring women's political advancement.
- In this context, the issue of formation of women's political leadership becomes a priority among the objectives outlined within the state's gender policies.

**RECOMMENDATIONS AIMED AT PROMOTION OF WOMEN'S POLITICAL
PARTICIPATION IN ARMENIA**

- To aim the state gender policies at formation of women's political leadership based on the goal of *strengthening the national machinery for women's advancement* outlined in the 2019-2023 RA Strategy of the Gender Policy.
- To be consistent in creating additional guarantees for promoting women's political leadership and ensuring women's participation in decision making.
- To ensure responsible participation of all stakeholders involved in political processes and first and foremost of political parties in formation and fulfillment of women's political leadership.
- To initiate the process of gender support mechanisms and application of quota not only for elected, but also for political and top appointed positions in the executive power, based on the recommendation on expanding the application of temporary special measures made in the Concluding observations of the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women regarding the seventh periodic report of the Republic of Armenia.
- To study and propose, within the framework of improvement of the RA electoral legislation, mechanisms aiming at prevention of the phenomena reducing the impact of the gender quota as manifested in the LSG and parliamentary elections.
- To improve the collection of gender statistics and monitor women's representation in the LSG system and the executive, legislative and judicial powers at all levels.
- To be consistent in gender mainstreaming of electoral processes by the RA Central Electoral Commission.
- Harmonize the legislation related to the LSG system taking into consideration the peculiarities of the consolidation processes and transition to the proportional electoral system.
- To envision an opportunity for nominations through civic initiatives within the framework of the proportional electoral system in LSG elections, which can be a temporary solution to fully using the resource of experienced and active women in local councils in the conditions of the underdevelopment of parties at the local level.
- To take into account the principle of gender equality or apply the gender quota when appointing administrative heads.
- To initiate programs and training courses on women's political leadership, to encourage gender equality and national and local initiatives aiming at women's empowerment.

- To cooperate with civil society to overcome harmful practices triggering gender discrimination at the community level.
- To improve legislative mechanisms for formation of women's leadership in parties without confining oneself only to the mechanism of financial encouragement.

This policy brief has been prepared based on an analysis of the results of the 2021 RA National Assembly and the 2021-2022 local self-government elections and reflects the viewpoints of the project's experts and of the participants in dialogue events held in Yerevan and the RA marzes.

This Policy Brief was funded with UK aid from the UK Government. The views expressed do not necessarily reflect the UK Government's official policies. The views expressed in this material are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent those of the UNDP.