

The quota mechanism introduced into the Polish electoral system in 2011 was an important step towards guaranteeing equal opportunities in electoral process for both men and women. Women are a minority group on the Polish political scene. Their share of positions in both central and local elected bodies does not exceed 30%. This report is a description of the situation of Polish women in politics since 1989, with a particular emphasis on local elections in 2010 and parliamentary elections in 2011. Authors analyze the first Polish elections in which quota mechanisms and FirstPast-The-Post system were implemented. They recommend solutions which would strengthen the role of women in politics.

Institute of Public Affairs (IPA) is a leading Polish think tank and an independent centre for policy research and analysis, established in 1995. Our mission is to contribute to informed public debate on key Polish, European and global policy issues. Our main areas of study include European policy, social policy, civil society, migration and development policy as well as law and democratic institutions.

The IPA has a team of in-house researchers/policy analysts and an extensive network of associate experts from academia and other paths of life. We publish the results of our projects in research reports, policy papers and books, which are broadly disseminated among members of parliament, government officials and civil servants, academics, journalists and civil society activists. Every year the IPA hosts dozens of conferences, seminars, round tables, workshops and other events with the participation of key policy and opinion makers. Our experts regularly comment on current policy issues in printed and electronic media.

WOMEN ON THE POLISH POLITICAL SCENE

MAŁGORZATA DRUCIAREK
MAŁGORZATA FUSZARA
ALEKSANDRA NIŻYŃSKA
JAROSŁAW ZBIERANEK



WOMEN ON THE POLISH POLITICAL SCENE

Authors:

**Małgorzata Druciarek
Prof. Małgorzata Fuszara
Aleksandra Nizyńska
Dr Jarosław Zbieranek**

INSTITUTE OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS
Law and Democratic Institutions Programme

This report was published with the support of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR).

The opinions and information it contains do not necessarily reflect the policy and position of ODIHR.

The research results presented in the report were gathered within the frames of the project “Women in the electoral process – towards equal access to political sphere”, financed by the Open Society Foundations.

Project coordinator: *Marcin Waszak*

Translation: *Bogumił Druciarek*

© Copyright by Instytut Spraw Publicznych and the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, Warszawa 2012

All rights reserved. No part of this report may be printed or reproduced without permission of the publisher or quoting the source.

ISBN: 978-83-7689-63-0

Published by:
Fundacja Instytut Spraw Publicznych
00-031 Warszawa, ul. Szpitalna 5 lok. 22
tel. 22 55 64 260, fax 22 55 64 262
e-mail: isp@isp.org.pl
www.isp.org.pl

Preface

The right to vote is a fundamental right of people living in countries with democratic systems. Through active (voting) participation and passive (running for elections) participation in the electoral process, citizens can influence political decisions that are taken by the authorities in their country.

For many decades, the right to vote was limited to only a part of society. Depending on the country's electoral system, only those with the required financial, social, educational or religious status were given the right to vote. Until the early 20th century, an important factor that significantly limited the total number of voters was the restriction on female voting. Women were not allowed to vote in or run for elections. They were treated similarly to persons under voting age and not allowed to participate in electing their political representatives. The first country in the world to grant women the right to vote in parliamentary elections was New Zealand (1893), joined after a decade by Australia. In Europe, Scandinavian countries led the way in granting voting rights to women – Finland (1906), Norway (1913), Denmark and Iceland (1915). The next wave came to Europe at the end of WWI. It started in the Netherlands in 1917, and in 1918, the wave reached Austria, Czechoslovakia, Georgia and Sweden. The group extended further in 1919 with Germany and Luxembourg.¹

Just after regaining independence, Poland also joined this group by adopting the following regulations on 28 November 1918: “Every citizen regardless of his/her sex shall be a voter in elections to the Sejm (the Lower Chamber of the Polish Parliament)” and: “Every citizen (both man and woman), who has the active voting right, can be elected to the Sejm”.² As a result, Poland granted female citizens both active and passive voting rights 14 years before Spain and 26 years before France. By comparison, Switzerland adopted female voting as late as in 1971.

However, despite its early adoption of women's right to vote, in terms of statistics on women's participation in politics, Poland pales in comparison to many other countries. Poland ranks 41 out of 136 countries in the global ranking of the proportion of women in parliaments maintained by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU),³ on par with Liechtenstein, which allowed female voting

1 International Parliamentary Union <http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/suffrage.htm>

2 Decree by the Head of State of 28 November 1918 on the electoral system for the Legislative Dz.Pr.P.P. 1918, no 18, pos. 46.

3 International Parliamentary Union <http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/arc/classif311011.htm>

only in 1984. In addition, in comparison to other participating States of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), Poland does not stand out when it comes to women's participation in politics. If we consider the proportion of women in the lower house of parliament, Poland reached the average for OSCE participating States only in 2011.⁴ Even so, Poland still has not reached the target set by the United Nations' Beijing Platform for Action,⁵ that is, 30% proportion of women in the lower house of parliament.

According to the Global Gender Gap Report⁶ of 2011, Poland ranked 42nd out of 135 countries. The indicators that presented the most challenges included the proportion of women in the parliament as well as the number of female ministers and female prime ministers. In order to tackle the limited presence of women in the public sphere, in January 2011 the Institute of Public Affairs, thanks to financial support of the Open Society Foundations, started a two-year research project "Women on the electoral lists", which aims to identify the barriers and limitations encountered by female candidates in the electoral process. An important prerequisite for addressing this topic in 2011 and 2012 was the preparation of a legal act aimed at ensuring equal opportunities in the electoral process, as well as the adoption of a new Electoral Code that imposes 35% quotas for men and women on electoral lists.

The present report is the result of research conducted during the project, and it presents an overview of women's role on the nation's political scene. It also describes the debate over parity and quotas that took place in Poland before the new electoral regulations were adopted. Further on in the report, the authors present the results of analyses of women's participation in the last elections held before quotas were introduced, i.e., the local government elections of 2010. The report then evaluates the impact on women's political participation of single-member constituencies in the framework of first-past-the-post (FPTP) voting systems, as this system is an essential element of the reform of the Polish electoral law. The effects of both legal reforms are summarized in the section describing women's role in the 2011 parliamentary elections. The summary contains recommendations that could help increase women's representation in Polish politics.

⁴ M. Krook, P. Norris, *Gender Equality in Elected Office: A Six-Step Action Plan*, OSCE, (<http://www.osce.org/odi-hr/81137>)

⁵ Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action of 15 September 1995 identifies twelve areas where female discrimination should be tackled, and defines what actions should be taken by the governments, international institutions, NGOs and the private sector in order to achieve this goal.

⁶ *The Global Gender Gap Report 2011*, (<http://www.weforum.org/reports/global-gender-gap-report-2011>). The Global Gender Gap Index was introduced by the World Economic Forum in 2006. It measures the magnitude and scope of gender-based disparities in economics, politics, education and health.

Introduction

Women are a minority group in the Polish political world. Their share of positions in both central and local authority bodies does not exceed 30%. Out of five fully democratic presidential elections after World War II, only two saw a female candidate: Hanna Gronkiewicz-Waltz in 1995 and Henryka Bochniarz in 2005. Neither of them made it to the second round, however. Nevertheless, Poland has had a female prime minister. On 10 July 1992, Hanna Suchocka of Unia Demokratyczna (Democratic Union) was appointed Prime Minister. However, she only remained in office for slightly more than a year. Until 2005, women's representation in the cabinets was insignificant, with the exception of the Cabinet of Prime Minister Jerzy Buzek (1997 – 2001), where the proportion of female ministers reached 16%. Apart from this case, most cabinets contained only one woman, while the Cabinet of Prime Minister Jan Olszewski had none. Only in the first decade of the 21st century, when the Cabinet of Prime Minister Kazimierz Marcinkiewicz (Prawo i Sprawiedliwość (Law and Justice)) was appointed on 31 October 2005, did the share of female ministers reach 20%; the share of female ministers has remained at this level ever since.

The low ratio of female ministers in subsequent cabinets may be one of the consequences of women's limited influence on the decision-making process within political parties. Males rule the parties, as illustrated by Table 1.

The low share of women on the boards of the key political parties – less than 20% in almost all cases – can adversely affect the chances of female party members to be nominated as a candidate and run for elections. PiS (Law and Justice is the only party with 25% female representation on the board, however, the board consists of only four members). This is significant because party leaders who sit on the party board take the main decisions regarding electoral lists.⁷ This decision-making process can be observed in the case of both local and central elections.

Over the years the share of female candidates in local government elections has been increasing. Nevertheless, in 2010 it reached just 31% (Chart 1). Furthermore, the growth rate has slowed down throughout the analysed period. Between 2006 and 2010, the female candidacy rate increased by as little as 2%.

⁷ M. Chmąj, M. Waszak, J. Zbieranek, *O demokracji w polskich partiach politycznych*, Institute of Public Affairs, Warsaw, 2011

Female ratio in party authorities		Platforma Obywatelska, PO (The Civic Platform)	Prawo i Sprawiedliwość, PiS (Law and Justice)	Sojusz Lewicy Demokratycznej, SLD (Democratic Left Alliance)	Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe, PSL (Polish People's Party)	Ruch Pailkota, RP (Pailkot Movement)
	Country Council (19%)	Party Committee (25%)	Country Council (14%)	Supreme Council (8%)	Country Council (0%)	
	Country Board (24%)	Political Committee (7%)	Country Board (15%)	Supreme Executive Committee (10%)	Country Board (40%)	
	Country Convention (25%)	Political Council (15%)	-	-	-	
	Body of Arbitration by Fellow Members (25%)	Body of Disciplinary Arbitration by Fellow Members (9%)	Country Party Arbitration Body (25%)	Main Body of Arbitration by Fellow Members (0%)	Country Party Arbitration Body (0%)	
	Country Appeals Commission (56%)	Country Appeals Commission (36%)	Country Appeals Commission (13%)	Main Appeals Commission (13%)	Country Appeals Commission (0%)	

Table 1. After: M. Chmaj, M. Waszak, J. Zbieranek, O demokracji w polskich partiach politycznych, Institute of Public Affairs, Warsaw, 2011

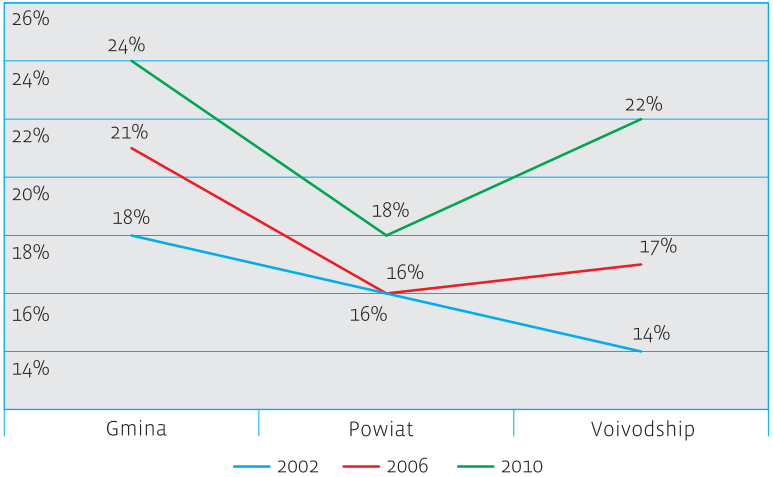


Chart 1.
Share of female deputies in respective councils

Source
National Electoral Commission

Obviously, the number of women elected is smaller than the number of female candidates (see Chart 2). A more detailed analysis of women's participation in the local government elections of 2010 is presented below.

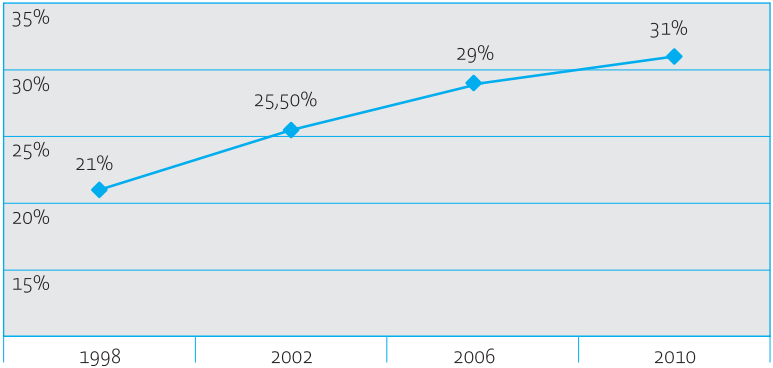


Chart 2.
Share of females among candidates in local government elections of all levels in respective years

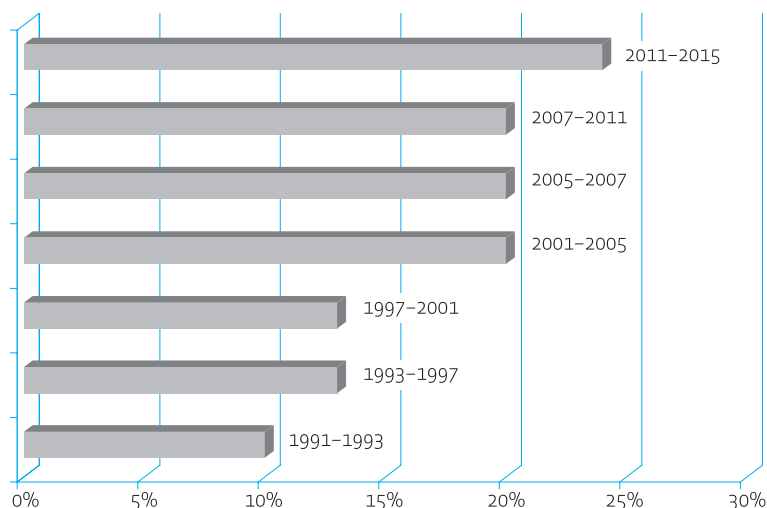
Source
National Electoral Commission

As in the case of local government elections, general elections after 1989 witnessed an increasing number of women elected to public office, albeit with some fluctuations. Between 1991 and 1993, the Sejm had a very low proportion of women members – just 10%. It is noteworthy that the first free elections held in Poland resulted in a significant decrease in the number of women elected to the parliament. Between 1985 and 1989, women accounted for 20% of the parliament, while in 1989, women made up just 13% of the parliament. In the parliamentary terms before 2001, the proportion of female members was stable, with women's representation ranging from 10% to 13%. In the fourth term of the Sejm, the proportion of female MPs reached 20%. The sudden increase in female representation in politics at the national level (see Chart 3) was related to the

fact that the three most significant parties at that moment – SLD (Democratic Left Alliance), UP (Labour Union) and UW (Freedom Union) adopted a policy of having a minimum 30% representation of each gender among their candidates.⁸ The increase in women’s representation was probably also enhanced by the activities of some feminist groups, such as OŚKa (which has organized annual conferences on government policy towards women since 1997) or Pre-elections Women’s Coalition. Additionally, special posters were created with the slogan “I’ve had enough of this! I support women in elections”.

Chart 3.
Percentage of female
MP’s in respective
terms of Lower
Chamber in Polish
Parliament

Source
National Electoral
Commission



PUBLIC DEBATE ON THE QUOTA MECHANISM

The first attempts to implement quota mechanisms in Poland took place during legislative work on the law on equal status of men and women. In 1996 a bill, prepared by Professors Małgorzata Fuszara and Eleonora Zielińska, was proposed to the Parliament as an initiative of the Parliamentary Women’s Caucus. After numerous amendments, another bill was proposed in 1997, although it had no chance of being passed during that term due to insufficient support in the parliament.

After the conservative AWS (Solidarity Electoral Action) won the elections, the chances to pass the bill on equal treatment remained low, as the parliamentary majority did not consider gender equality policy as a priority at that moment. Effectively, the bill on equal status of men and women was passed only in 2010. The main goal of the adopted law was to prove to the European Commission that Poland was meeting its European Union membership obli-

⁸ M. Fuszara, *Kobiety w polityce*, Wydawnictwo Trio, Warsaw 2007.

gations. Hence, the name of the adopted law: “Act on the Implementation of Certain Provisions of the European Union in the Field of Equal Treatment”.⁹ This law, however, does not tackle the issue of equal participation of men and women in politics.

Despite the failure of the first bills on equal treatment, the supporters of quotas continued to try to push through the legislature measures that would guarantee a certain number of places on the electoral lists to women. In 2001, a deputy of UW (Freedom Union), Olga Krzyżanowska, undertook another effort to introduce the quota mechanism into the electoral system – without success. The adoption of quotas by three political parties (Unia Wolności (Freedom Union), Sojusz Lewicy Demokratycznej (Democratic Left Alliance) and Unia Pracy (Labour Union)) just before the 2001 elections was slightly more successful. The mechanism adopted voluntarily by the political parties, without any sanctions for non-compliance, turned out to be an effective way of increasing women’s participation in politics. The politicians agreed to include more women on the electoral lists, but on their conditions, that is, without zipper system and relatively low gender quota, already applied by some political parties.

Attempts to introduce legal quotas continued, in particular by women’s groups. A breakthrough in the discussion on legal mechanisms for ensuring equal representation came with the Congress of Women – the meeting of more than four thousand women from across Poland that took place in June 2009. This Congress concentrated a significant level of activism on the part of the women’s movement in Poland. The Congress was organised by a group of women, including women’s NGO activists, but the majority of the conveners came from a non-NGO background: businesswomen, academics, actresses, directors, journalists, current and former ministers, as well as women of various professions, interests and political allegiances. The Congress was preceded by a series of regional conferences that attracted a lot of interest.

One of the Congress’s key demands was the adoption of equal (50%) access of men and women to the electoral lists (electoral gender quotas) through a so-called “zipper system”, where women and men are placed in alternate slots on the party lists. The zipper system eliminates the risk that either sex is pushed to the bottom of the list, and thus placed in unwinnable seats.

The enthusiasm towards a greater engagement of women in public life that arose out of the Congress, resulted in the creation of a Civic Committee of Legislative Initiative – “Time for Women”. It was created to facilitate the adoption of a quota requiring 50% representation of each gender on electoral lists, through the submission of a popular legislative initiative. The bill did not include, however, the zipper system or any other guarantee to ensure the fair distribution of winnable and unwinnable seats among male and female candi-

⁹ Dz. U. z 2010 r. Nr 254, pos. 1700 Act of 3 December 2010 on the Implementation of Certain Provisions of European Union in the Field of Equal Treatment.

dates. Nevertheless, the bill foresaw a sanction that would not allow registration of a non-compliant list.

Signatures supporting the bill were collected from 26 September 2009¹⁰. The need for equal opportunities for both sexes in the public sphere has been accepted by society (according to polls conducted by PBS DGA in July 2009, 61% of Poles supported parity) and on 21 December 2009, the bill was submitted to the Sejm. As in the case of many other popular legislative initiatives in Poland, the fate of the bill then passed into the hands of the MPs and not the experts of the Civic Committee of Legislative Initiative “Time for Women”. During the committee stage in Sejm the civic project has been seriously modified by politicians. After numerous attempts to delay discussion over the bill and discredit the initiative, eventually the law was passed. Although its form differed significantly from the initial assumptions, it still had the same goal – ensuring that women are granted a certain level of representation on electoral lists and thus similar (although not equal) chances of being elected to parliament.

The electoral gender quota system works only in case of elections held under proportional representation systems, where committees nominate more than one candidate on an electoral list registered in a given constituency (district). In Poland, this system applies since 2011 in the case of elections to the lower house of parliament (the Sejm) as well as legislatures at the level of voivodships (provinces) and powiats (counties). In the case of the Senate (upper house of the Polish parliament) and gminas (municipalities) a majority electoral system applies. In the latter system, quotas cannot be implemented, as nominating committees do not register electoral lists.

An act of 5 January 2011 that amended other acts on the electoral system and implemented gender quotas remained in effect for a short period of time – only 6 months. On 1 August 2011, the new Electoral Code was introduced. This comprehensive set of regulations of the Polish electoral system provided the legal basis for the application of quotas to the parliamentary elections of 2011. According to those regulations, each electoral list must contain at least 35% women and at least 35% men. A non-compliant list cannot be registered, and if it remains non-compliant for more than three days, it should be rejected in full by the electoral commission.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS

Although the newly introduced mechanism of electoral gender quotas was not applied to the local government elections, quotas undoubtedly influenced the tone of the public debate that preceded the 2010 voting. The issue of women’s participation in politics became one of the key issues discussed dur-

¹⁰ Polish law requires 100,000 signatures under the popular legislative initiative.

ing the electoral campaign. Additionally, in June 2010, the Second Congress of Women took place under the main slogan: “Time for elections! Time for women! Time for solidarity!” Congress activists also commenced workshops for active women who decided to make their debut and run for local government elections. The trainings organized by the Congress attracted a lot of interest among local women politicians across the country. Has this interest, however, translated into electoral success for women?

Women candidates in the 2010 local government elections

An analysis of local government elections in Poland clearly shows that, since the 1990s, the share of female candidates in local government elections has increased systematically. In 1998, women comprised one fifth of the candidates and in 2002, slightly more than a quarter. By 2006, the proportion of female candidates increased to 29% and finally reached 30% in 2010.

As illustrated by Chart 1 (page 5), in the case of local government elections, the share of female candidates has grown noticeably between elections, but at a decreasing rate. The 2010 elections saw only a two-percentage point increase compared to the previous election. As mentioned above, the gender quota came into force only in 2011, so this mechanism did not apply to the 2010 elections. It should be noted that at that time, Poland was experiencing a vivid debate on enhancing women’s participation in political life.

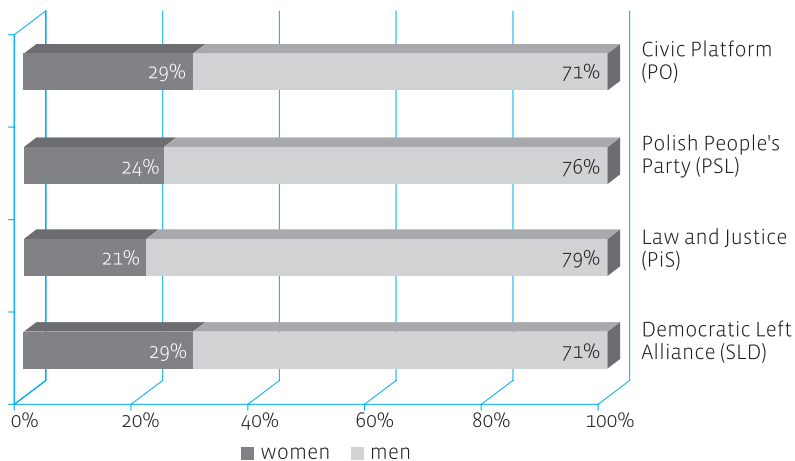


Chart 4. Share of female and male candidates on the electoral lists of political parties

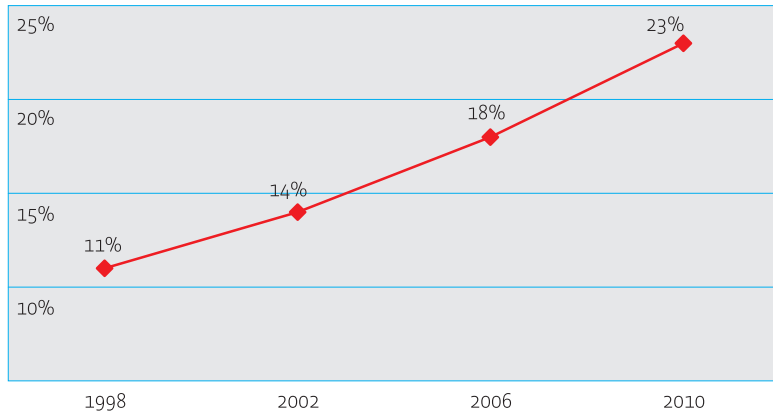
Source: National Electoral Commission

None of the researched parties exceeded the 30% threshold in terms of women candidates, as demonstrated by Chart 4. Only SLD and PO came close to that number. PiS was the political party with the lowest proportion, of women candidates (slightly more than one fifth).

Female deputies in local governments

Chart 5.
Share of female deputies elected to voivodship councils between 1998 and 2010

Source
National Electoral Commission



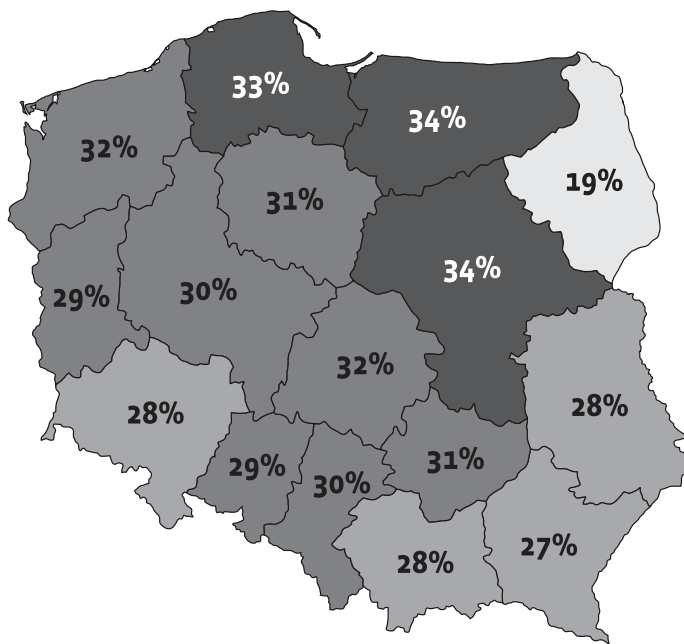
During the 12 years of political changes in Poland, women's participation in local government at the level of voivodships increased by 12 percentage points. In 2010, women won almost a quarter of mandates at this level. It is noteworthy that while the proportion of female candidates reached approximately 30%, the proportion of women among elected candidates remained at the same level.¹¹ This suggests that the 35% quota is likely to provide female representation at the so-called "critical mass" level of 30%. According to research, this is the minimum threshold of a group's representation in decision-making bodies, which can ensure that the interests of the group members will be taken into account.¹²

A similar tendency is apparent at the level of gminas (municipalities). In cases where the female share on the electoral lists was 50% and above, at least one third of the elected deputies for the term 2010-2014 were women. Parity turns out to be an effective mechanism of supporting women's real participation in politics, as it may guarantee, according to our statistical data, that the critical mass of women's representation is maintained. However, due to non-existing regulations regarding quotas, in the 2010 elections women comprised half of the candidates in just 2,5% of the country's gminas. A much larger number of constituencies has reached or exceeded the 35% threshold of female candidates, i.e., the threshold that is required by the Polish electoral system since 2011. In more than 35% of gminas and 8% of powiats the level of 35% of female candidates was reached without any legal or party rules. Reservation of 35% of positions on the electoral lists for women has resulted in at least one female candidate from each district being elected.¹³

¹¹ Two exceptions include świętokrzyskie voivodship with 31% female candidates and 10% female deputies and opolskie voivodship with 29% and 17% respectively.

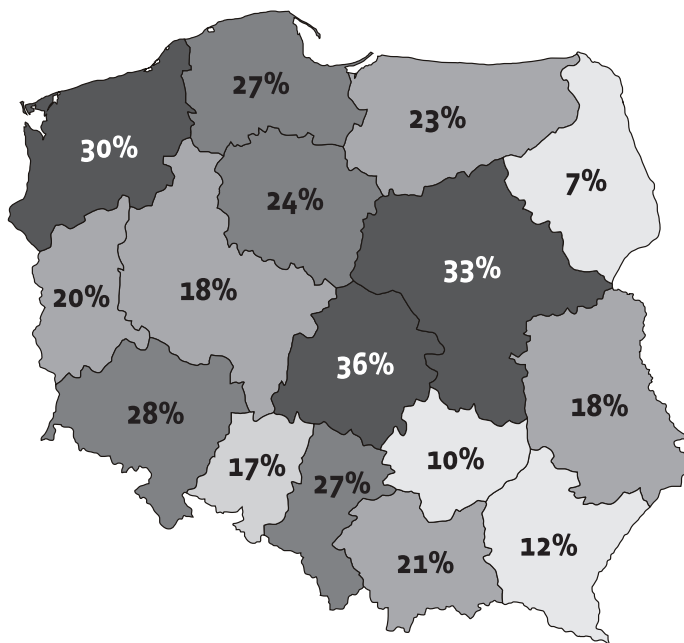
¹² D. Dahlerup (ed.), *Women, Quotas and Politics*, Routledge 2006.

¹³ There were only two gminas where no women were elected despite meeting the 35% quota on electoral lists (gmina Wilga and gmina Nowogard). Over half of the deputies in gmina Wilga are men elected from the list of



Map 1.
Share of female candidates at the voivodship level in the 2010 local government elections

Source
National Electoral Commission



Map 2.
Share of female deputies elected at the voivodship level in the 2010 local government elections

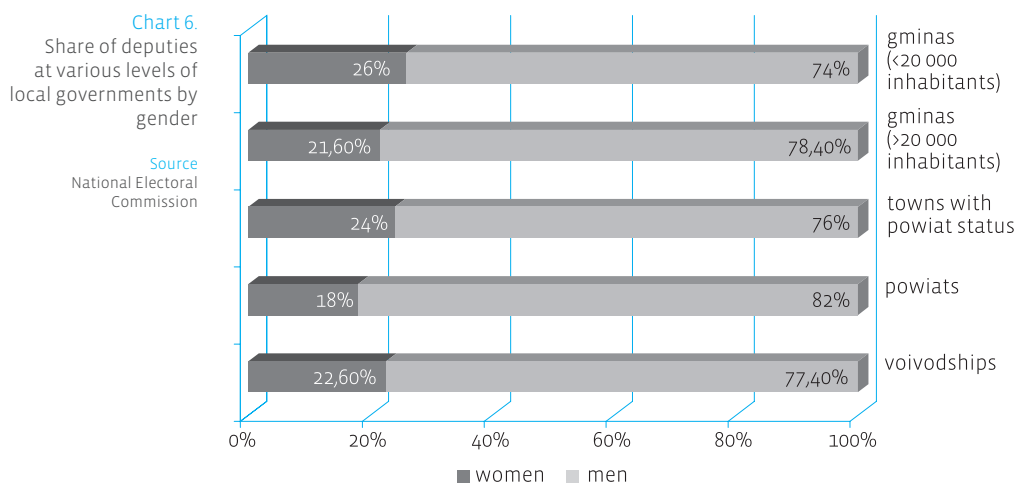
Source
National Electoral Commission

Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe, whereas in gmina Nowogard one third of the deputies are male representatives of local electoral committees.

Although in total, male deputies in local government heavily outnumbered female deputies, there were cases of some individual gminas where women deputies became a majority. After the 2010 elections, the councils of 93 gminas had female majorities. The highest share of municipalities with female majorities is located in the following voivodships: Lubuskie, Dolnośląskie and Zachodniopomorskie (around 10%). In terms of percentages, the lowest number of female-majority municipalities is located in the following voivodships: Lubelskie, Podkarpackie, Podlaskie and Wielkopolskie (around 1%).

Women in the Małopolskie voivodship seem to be in the worst situation as they have no majority in any gmina, and in 4,5% of gminas there are no female deputies at all. The ratio of all-male gminas is highest in Lubelskie and Podkarpackie voivodships. Some districts feature a female *wójt* or *burmistrz* (mayor in rural or urban-rural gminas respectively), who makes key managerial decisions. However, in 57 of the Polish gminas, women have no influence on the actions of the local government.

It is noteworthy that among the local governments at all levels the strongest female representation can be found in councils of gminas up to 20 thousand inhabitants and the weakest in councils of powiats.



As regards women's participation in the 2010 local governmental elections, it should be noted that in constituencies at the lowest level (i.e. gminas of up to 20 thousand inhabitants) with a majority electoral system, the proportion of women elected was significantly higher than elsewhere. Women comprise as many as 26% of the deputies in small gminas and 24% in towns with powiat status. Female representation in bodies of public authorities at the levels of voivodships and gminas is comparable. Powiat councils, however, have a much lower female ratio – women comprise just 18% of all deputies at this level.

Female representation in bodies of local authorities

A two-round voting system was implemented in Poland in 2002 by the act on direct elections of a mayor (called *wójt* in rural gminas, *burmistrz* in most urban and urban-rural gminas, and *prezydent* in towns with more than one hundred thousand inhabitants and some others that traditionally use the title). The 2010 elections resulted in minimal female representation in those offices. In 2002, among the elected mayors, women constituted only 7%. From election to election, the female representation has increased, however at a very low pace – in increments of one percentage point with each election.

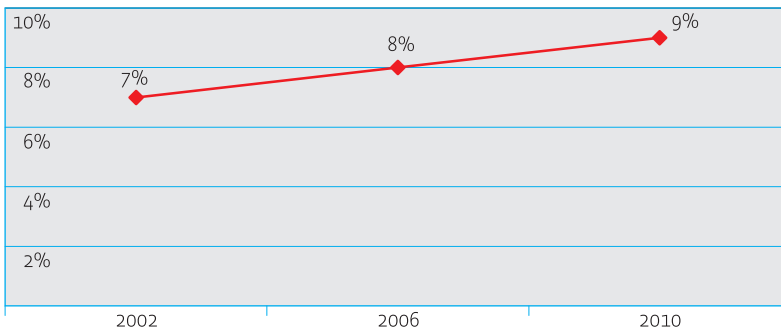


Chart 7.
Share of women among mayors

Source
National Electoral
Commission

The direct reason for limited female representation in bodies of public authorities at the level of gminas is the low number of female candidates running for those offices. In 2006, women comprised only 12% of candidates for mayors. The rate increased slightly in 2010, reaching 14%.

Another rationale for women's weak participation in public bodies at the level of gminas is the limited rotation of individuals in public office. As illustrated by Chart 8, as many as 70% of candidates who became mayors in 2010 were re-elected for the next term.

Among men, the ratio of newly elected to re-elected mayors is similar – 28% to 72%. In the case of female mayors, the ratio is 47% to 53%, as presented on Chart 9 (the re-elected mayors in gminas by gender).

When taking into account that in almost two thirds of gminas current mayors are re-elected for the next term, and that the percentage of females among the re-elected ones is minor (8%), it is not surprising that the female representation among mayors grows at a slow pace.

According to polls, on average, every second Pole supports the idea of quotas for women and for men on electoral lists. In the polls conducted in 2010 for the Institute of Public Affairs, 48% of respondents supported the need for an equal number of candidates of each gender on electoral lists.¹⁴ However, de-

¹⁴ K. Grot, A. Niżyńska, „Polacy o wyborach”, the Institute of Public Affairs, Warsaw 2010

Chart 8.
Mayors elected
in 2010

Source
The Institute of Public
Affairs, based on data from
the National Electoral
Commission

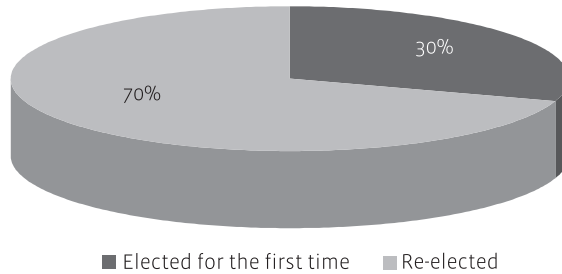
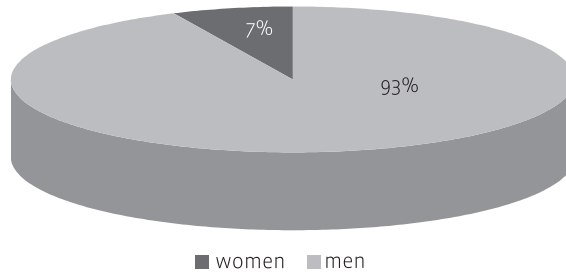


Chart 9.
Individuals that were
re-elected mayors
in 2010 by gender

Source
The Institute of Public
Affairs, based on data from
the National Electoral
Commission



spite the declared support for parity, many Poles still believe that women are not suitable to govern. According to the field research conducted by the team of Professor Małgorzata Fuszara after the 2002¹⁵ and 2010 elections, the key barrier for women's wide presence in politics, apart from their household duties, is the conviction that women do not have proper qualifications to govern. Examples can be found in statements made by men (*"a man's voice is always more concrete than a woman's, and his discernment is better"*¹⁶), as well as by women (*"Because men are more active in social life spheres, they have always struggled, changed and built more [than women]. It is a political struggle. One has to quarrel, clash opinions, there is always something going on, this is a struggle. Whereas the women's role was always the hearth and home, providing peace and quietness, making it work somehow, so that the warrior who came back home could find peace."*¹⁷)

The aloofness towards women in political and managerial positions is confirmed by analyses of women's presence in public bodies not only at the level of gminas. Map 3 illustrates the number of women in the executive branch at the level of voivodships.

¹⁵ M. Fuszara, *Kobiety w polityce*, Wydawnictwo TRIO, 2007, Warsaw

¹⁶ Statement by a farmer from a rural district, after: M. Fuszara, *Kobiety w polityce*, Wydawnictwo TRIO, 2007, Warsaw, page 160

¹⁷ Statement by a female deputy: A. Chełstowska, „Udział kobiet w wyborach samorządowych. Pajęczański powiat.” [typescript]



Map 3.
Number of women
on executive boards
of voivodships elected
in 2010

Source
The Institute of Public
Affairs

In half of Polish voivodships, there are no women on the executive boards. Women hold no majority on any of the boards. Out of 16 voivodships, only one has a woman heading the executive board (as marshal of the voivodship).¹⁸ This situation cannot be explained by an attachment to the individuals in offices, as members of the executive board are appointed indirectly – by deputies elected at the voivodship level. How much this choice is affected by the fact that men comprise 77% of all deputies remains to be discussed. However, there is no doubt that women are excluded from decision making on fundamental issues regarding development processes in their voivodships. Such matters as the distribution of EU funds, building the voivodship's development strategy, budget planning or the economic management of the region are just some examples of the competences of executive boards. The marginal presence of women in bodies responsible for making those decisions cannot be attributed solely to the limited number of women in voivodship councils that appoint members of executive boards. When appointing members of executive boards, council deputies are not obliged to choose only among themselves. Despite this, women are rarely nominated to the board.

¹⁸Ewa Polak from Platforma Obywatelska was elected the Marshal of Lubuskie voivodship.

EXPANSION OF FIRST-PAST-THE-POST VOTING IN THE POLISH ELECTORAL SYSTEM

For more than a decade in Polish political debates, demands were made to replace the electoral system of proportional representation with first-past-the-post voting (FPTP) based on single-mandate constituencies. Over the years, the concept of such electoral system has gained significant support in Polish society, and it became one of the key points on the agendas of some political parties, including PO, which in 2011, won parliamentary elections for the second time in a row.

The proposed changes are intended to affect mainly the voting system to the Sejm (currently, MPs are elected to the Sejm under proportional representation), but they may be hard to implement as it will require changing the Constitution of Poland. According to supporters, the FPTP system could be applied to other elections as well – for example, to the Senate and local governments.

Almost immediately after the 2007 elections, PO commenced a debate regarding the need to change the Constitution in order to allow for implementation of the FPTP system. With no doubt, this initiative was in accordance with what the majority of Poles expected. They perceived the new system as a single remedy to all imperfections of the political system (see Chart 10 and 11).¹⁹

However, due to the scepticism of other parliamentary groups, including PSL (the coalition partner of the PO (Civic Platform) at that time) towards the proposed changes, in November 2007 PO came up with a proposal that “half of MPs or even two thirds of them would be elected under a FPTP system, mainly in large cities. The remaining MPs would be elected under the proportional representation system”²⁰. Despite a softening of their proposal, PO still could not count on sufficient support to change basic electoral acts, let alone the Constitution. The difficulties in implementation of the FPTP system have triggered a vivid reaction from impatient civil society organizations that supported the idea (they claimed that this issue should be the subject of a national referendum)²¹ and some right-wing commentators, who envisaged that the entire political scene in Poland could be divided between two parties.²² Despite the fact that the demand to implement FPTP has been raised many times in the public debate, after numerous talks with the Polish People’s Party, the politicians of PO decided to withdraw their proposal. They declared that they had reached a “compromise”, i.e., an agreement between PO and PSL aimed at the implementation of the FPTP system in local government elections (it has not been agreed, though, whether all levels of local government will be included). So far the FPTP system has been introduced in elections to the councils of

¹⁹ Polacy o proponowanych zmianach w systemie politycznym, *Komunikat z badań*, CBOS, Warsaw, April 2008.

²⁰ D. Kołakowska, E. Olczyk, *Okręgi jednomandatowe poróżnią koalicjantów?*, “Rzeczpospolita”, 3 November, 2007.

²¹ E. Olczyk, *Bój o jednomandatowe okręgi wyborcze*, “Rzeczpospolita”, 15 November, 2007.

²² M. Migalski, *Jak pozbyć się SLD*, “Rzeczpospolita”, 19 February, 2008.

gminas in 2010. The project to apply the FPTP system to elections to the Sejm has been suspended for the time being.

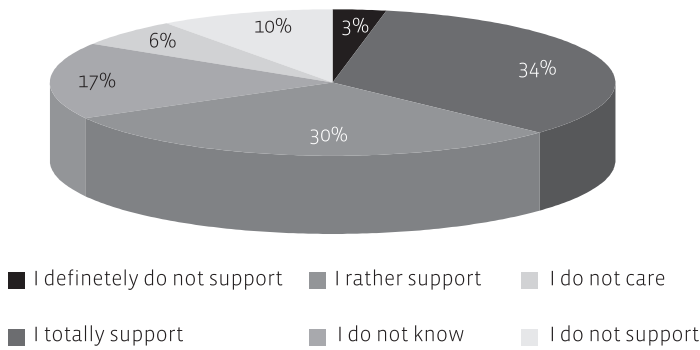


Chart 10. Do you support the introduction of first-past-the-post voting system, which means, that in one electoral district one deputy is elected?

Source
CBOS 2008

The proposal to implement the FPTP system has been heavily criticised by some of the expert communities. The negative consequences resulting from the potential implementation of the new system have been pointed out repeatedly. One of the arguments used against the change was that FPTP voting limits women’s access to politics. According to research quoted in Poland, female candidates have little chance to be elected to bodies of public authorities dominated by men. According to 1995 research on gender representation in parliaments of countries with stable democratic systems, parliaments elected under FPTP systems had 11% of female MPs whereas in parliaments elected under proportional representation, women’s representation was approximately 20%. These rates in 2004 amounted to 14,4% and 27,6% respectively.²³ There were claims that in countries using the FPTP system, the issue of pushing women out of politics became so serious that a variety of special mechanisms had to be applied in order to limit the negative impact of the voting system. One specific example is twinning, where for each constituency choosing from among male candidates, another constituency chooses from among female candidates (this mechanism is used in Wales and Scotland).²⁴

There was, however, no significant response to these expert opinions. In the next stages of the legislative process on amending the electoral law that continued between 2009 and 2010, PO focused on implementation of FPTP in elections to the Senate and local governments, as this did not require amending the Constitution. Those changes were easier to implement, as the Senate elections were held already under the majority electoral system (but according to multi-member as opposed to single-member constituencies).

²³ R. Markowski, *System wyborczy – system partyjny – jakość demokracji. O jednomandatowych okręgach wyborczych*, Warsaw 2010, page 6.

²⁴ B. Michalak, A. Sokala, *Leksykon prawa wyborczego i systemów wyborczych*, Warsaw 2010, page 102.

Eventually, after months of work, on 5 January 2011, the Sejm passed the new Electoral Code that was signed by the President on 19 January 2011. The Code introduced the new method of electing senators using the FPTP system with single-member constituencies. This meant that beginning from the 2011 elections, each constituency will have only one mandate and each elector will vote for only one candidate. As mentioned above, under previous regulations, two to four senators were elected in one district and each voter could choose the respective number of candidates. For many years, the Senate had less female members than the Sejm, which was elected under the proportional representation system (at the end of the 2007-2011 term, among 100 senators, there were only seven women).

According to the Electoral Code, the FPTP method was introduced also at the level of gmina councils. Thus, the first step towards the expansion of the FPTP method in the Polish electoral system has been achieved.

Public opinion on the introduced changes

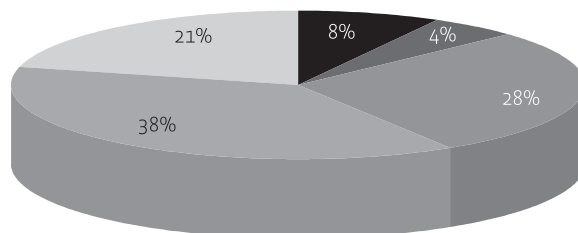
According to polls conducted by the Institute of Public Affairs and CBOS before the 2011 parliamentary elections, the majority of respondents (66%) favourably perceived the application of the FPTP system to Senate elections. Among them, 38% appreciated the simplicity of the system and 28% pointed out that it is crucial that the “best” candidate wins.

Those respondents opposing the new regulations are in the minority (13%), whereas 5% stressed that under FPTP, a person with a minor advantage over another candidates can win the mandate. Eight per cent of the interviewees preferred the possibility of distributing their support among a number of candidates, the option available in multi-member districts. More than one fifth (21%) of the interviewees displayed a neutral attitude towards the new regulations.

Chart 11.

In the 2011 election, for the first time we will be voting for Senators using the first-past-the-post mechanism. It means that we will be voting for just one instead of two or more candidates. Do you support this solution?

Source
CBOS 2008



- No, because I prefer to split my support over several candidates
- No, because the elected candidate could have had only minimal advantage over others
- Yes, because under this method, the best candidate wins
- Yes, because voting for just one candidate is simpler
- I do not know

Men are strong supporters of the FPTP mechanism (73%). Women tend to be more restrained – as many as 60% of women are in favour, but one quarter is neutral towards this method.

Perspectives

Notably, the regulations introduced in 2011 are perceived as the first stage of FPTP implementation in the Polish electoral system. While the introduction of the mechanism in elections to the Sejm will be hard to carry out (because it requires an amendment of the Constitution), the proposal remains on the agenda of the ruling political party. It seems that introduction of FPTP at all levels of local governments is feasible. One of the supporters of this initiative is the current President of Poland, who has promised: “After the parliamentary elections, I intend to put forward a proposal to amend the electoral system at all levels of local governments, so that the deputies would be elected under the FPTP system.”²⁵

PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS

In the year 2011, deep changes to the Polish electoral law took place. Undoubtedly, they had an impact on the parliamentary elections that were carried out in the autumn of the same year. These systemic electoral reforms affected and have the potential to affect levels of women’s representation in different ways. On the one hand, electoral reforms introduced the quota mechanism, which guaranteed a minimum of 35% representation of both men and women on the electoral lists. This was a big step forward in the process of equalisation of women’s and men’s participation in public bodies. However, at the same time, these changes constituted a step back because the first-past-the-post voting system was applied to the elections to gmina councils. The above-described negative consequences of this step will not help increase the participation of minority groups in politics. These two tendencies clashed in Poland during the parliamentary elections.

Female candidates in the 2011 parliamentary elections

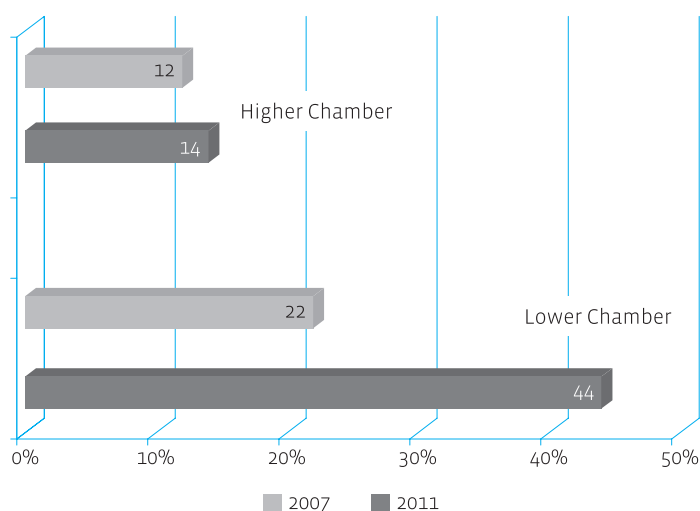
During the parliamentary elections that took place in 2011, for the first time in Polish history the registration of political party lists by the electoral committee depended on meeting the required proportion of male and female candidates on the electoral lists. As a result, the percentage of women candidates doubled as compared to the previous elections. 3,063 women stood for the lower house of parliament, and 69 for the upper house. They constituted, respective-

²⁵ Jednomandatowe okręgi w Sejmie po wyborach, Portal Samorządowy, <http://www.portalsamorzadowy.pl/prawo-i-finance/20613.html> (as at 2 December 2011)

ly, 44% and 14% of candidates. Such a disparity between the two houses of the parliament can be explained by the fact that elections to the Senate were held under the majority electoral system and – as a consequence – neither electoral lists with multiple candidates nor the quota mechanism applied to them.

Chart 12.
Female candidates
in parliamentary
elections in 2007
and 2011

Source
The Institute of Public
Affairs



Political parties not only met their obligations, but also exceeded the required quota. PiS, whose electoral lists contained the least number of women, exceeded the required limit of female candidates by 5%, and reserved for them 40% of positions on their lists. The highest proportion of female candidates (48%) was found on the electoral lists of Polska Partia Pracy. This party, however, does not enjoy significant levels of popular support – in the previous elections it obtained only 0,5% of all votes. Among Polish leading political parties, SLD nominated the most women candidates– they occupied 44% of the party’s lists. Forty-two per cent of PO candidates were female and, in the case of the PSL, the rate reached 41%.

Among the candidates of the four biggest political parties (PO, PiS, SLD and PSL), on 19 electoral lists registered in all 41 electoral districts, women occupied at least half of the positions. In this respect, SLD compared favourably with other parties: in 10 electoral districts, more than 50% of their registered candidates were women. By comparison, PiS managed to achieve parity on its electoral lists only in the Radom district.

Presence on the list is just the beginning of the long road to electoral success. Besides support received from one’s political party, success in campaigning and winning voters’ approval, an important issue is a candidate’s *position* on the list. The most desired positions are “number ones”, that is, candidates opening the lists. Voters tend to cast their votes for “number ones” most often. In general, in 2011 only 21% of the abovementioned positions on all registered

electoral lists were given to women. From this point of view, SLD no longer enjoys the position of most “women-friendly” among leading political parties. PO registered the highest number of female candidates opening electoral lists (14 out of 41 districts). PiS guaranteed 10 female “number ones”, while PSL and SLD gave women six opening positions each. RP (Palikot Movement) registered the lowest number of women running for office from the first position on the list – only four female candidates enjoyed such a position. These differences reflect to a great degree the real support that each party enjoyed in pre-elections polls. The support for RP for a long time oscillated around the elections threshold (5% in Poland), PSL reached 6% and SLD fluctuated around 10%.

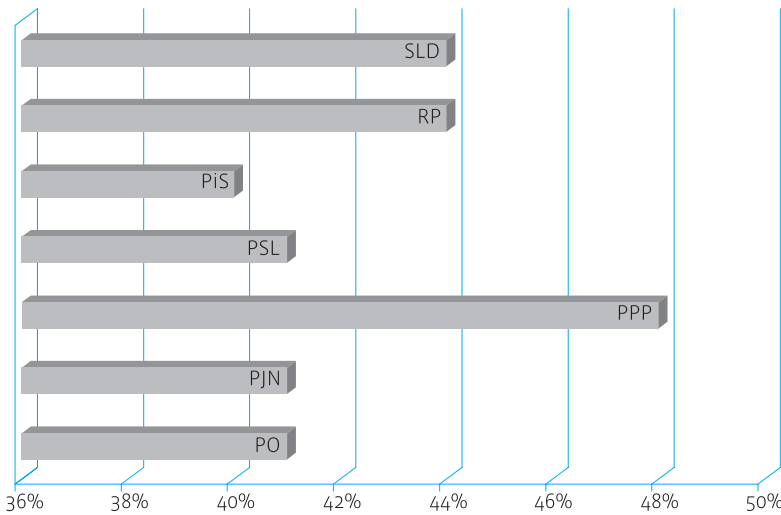


Chart 13
Share of women on the electoral lists of political parties in the 2011 parliamentary elections

Source
National Electoral Commission

The leaders of political parties were aware of the fact that if some of their candidates managed to enter the Sejm, they would be the ones from the top of electoral lists. This may be why men were positioned as “number ones” more often than women. PiS and PO, each receiving 30% support according to pre-elections polls, could “risk” having a woman as a leader of the list with greater frequency, being almost sure that from the same list at least a few more candidates would enter the lower house of the parliament. No wonder that in this context, the leader of the opinion polls – PO – was the only one among political parties present in the sixth term of the Sejm that placed a female candidate in at least one of the three top positions on the list in all electoral districts. Already during elections of 2007, PO introduced the so-called “soft quotas”²⁶ as part of their party regulations, according to which the top three

²⁶ Soft quotas include non-mandatory quotas, voluntary party targets or minimum recommendations adopted by particular political parties in their internal regulations. See also: D. Dahlerup (ed.), *Women, Quotas and Politics*, Routledge 2006.

positions on the electoral list had to comprise at least one female candidate and the top five positions – at least two of them. In the 2011 parliamentary elections, SLD guaranteed their female candidates running for an office one of the top three positions on the lists in 40 out of 41 electoral districts. It was a different situation as regards the PSL and the PiS. PSL excluded women from the top three positions on the electoral lists in 38% of districts in which they had registered their candidates. PiS placed a lower number of women at the top of the electoral list: no women from PiS featured in the top three positions of the lists in more than 50% of electoral districts. The equal proportion of men and women on the electoral lists of all political parties was achieved only at the 14th position.

Just as important as position on the electoral list is the district from which candidates run for office. Support for political parties differs, depending on the region of Poland. Despite its strong position nationwide, PO cannot count on victory in the Podkarpackie or Świętokrzyskie voivodships – traditional PiS bastions. It is possible to identify which regions identify strongly with specific political parties by looking at the results of previous elections. If we take into consideration the regional factor, the number of seats in parliament won in former elections and the position on the electoral list, we are able to determine for each party in a concrete district the so-called “winnable positions”, that is, positions on the list that statistically increase the chance of being elected. PO guaranteed the highest number of these “best” positions to women – 38%; in the end, one in four “winnable positions” was taken by PiS female candidates. SLD reserved 23% of the position for women and the lowest number of “winnable positions” on the list was given by PSL.

The majority of women that entered the lower house of parliament were placed at the top of electoral lists. Thirty-one female deputies were elected from among the “number ones”. Twenty-five women won their seat in the Sejm by having run for office from the second place on the electoral list. Twenty of the new female deputies were placed in third position on the list. The remaining 33 female politicians elected to the parliament were not placed among the top positions on the electoral lists. Some of them even succeeded from the 10th or 14th position. However, there were some cases of women opening electoral lists and not entering parliament. As many as nine female “number ones”- five from PSL and four from SLD – lost the elections. Among them was the former Minister of Labour and Social Policy, Jolanta Fedak, and the former Marshal of the Sejm, Ewa Kierzkowska. In four cases, the losing “number ones” were overtaken by men running for office from the same electoral list. There were also cases of political parties saving for female candidates the opening positions on the list in districts in which eventually they did not obtain a single seat in the Sejm – that was the case of Katarzyna Piekarska, a well-known activist of SLD.

Still, we should take note of the fact that in 24 cases, women running for office from lower positions won seats in the lower house, thus overtaking male candidates positioned higher on the same lists. This was the case in Lubelskie district, where two women placed in positions 5 and 6 received more votes than a man positioned third on the list. A similar situation took place in Wałbrzych, where Agnieszka Kołacz-Leszczynska, from PO, entered the Sejm from the 7th position, leaving behind two male candidates placed in 5th and 6th position respectively.

We may observe a relation between the presence of women in so-called “winnable positions” (determined on the basis of the number of seats obtained in a certain district during previous elections by each political party) and their participation in the parliamentary club of a given party. The more “winnable positions” given to women, the more female deputies entered parliamentary clubs, which is illustrated in Chart 14.

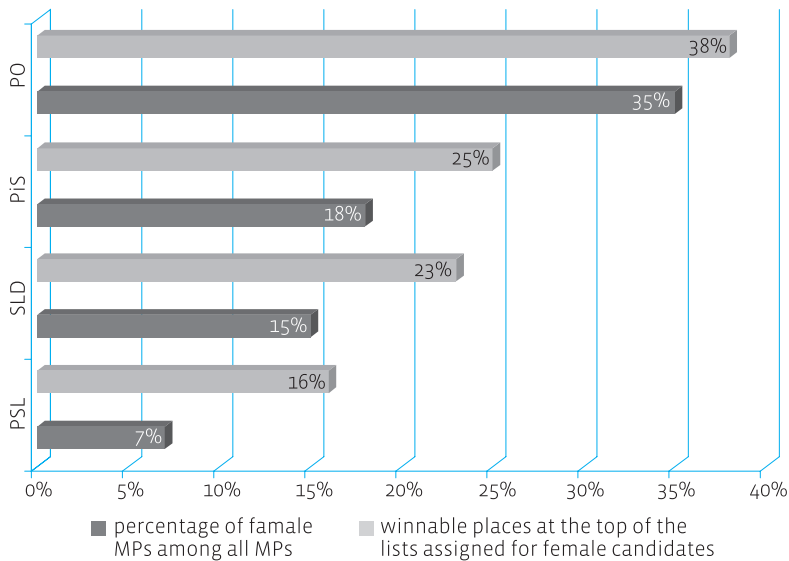


Chart 14. Impact of winnable places on the share of female MPs in the Sejm’s parliamentary clubs

Source
The Institute of Public Affairs and Dominik Batorski (ICM UW), Michał Bojanowski (ICM UW); Data includes only the parties that took part in the 2007 elections. The result of the LiD (Left and Democrats Coalition) was used as to forecast winnable positions within SLD in 2011.

Being in the top positions on the electoral lists was not the only factor that had an influence on electoral success. As noted above, the number of women on the lists differed from one region to another. Taking into consideration the lists of all political party electoral committees²⁷, the highest number of women candidates ran in Wałbrzych, Rybnik and Płock (women constituted more than 47% of the total number of candidates). The lowest number of women – less than 40% – standing as candidates was found in Rzeszów. However,

²⁷ According to the Polish electoral law, candidates are put up by electoral committees. There are three types of committees: political parties’ electoral committee, coalition electoral committee (e.g. of several political parties), voters’ electoral committee (of citizens who are not members of political parties). The voters’ electoral committees play an important role in local government elections.

when analyzing the results of parliamentary elections, it is difficult to identify a direct relation between the total number of women candidates on the electoral list, and women elected in a given district. Only in the case of Wałbrzych, where women constituted 47,7% of all candidates, did the proportion of female deputies exceed 60%. To give an example, the percentage of mandates won by women in Rzeszów and Rybnik is similar (around 20%), despite large disparities between numbers of female candidates on the lists of all electoral committees registered in the abovementioned districts.

Presence in the electoral campaign and the image of a candidate created within it are also important factors of electoral success. Taking into consideration political party electoral committees campaigns, broadcast on public television during free air-time from 24 September 2011 until 7 October 2011, it can be seen that women were definitely less present in the campaign than men.²⁸ Only 27% of candidates shown in media campaigns were female. Thirty-seven women and 103 men were presented in national broadcasts. In the broadcasts shown in the voivodship of Mazowsze, 44 women and 116 men made an appearance. Above all, women were associated with their family roles. They mainly spoke about family policy. This was not conducive to the creation of an image of women as competent individuals aware of how public institutions work and capable of assuming decision-making responsibility at the national level. None of the women appearing in 335 spots broadcast nationwide and in Mazowieckie voivodship spoke on foreign policy or national matters.

In conclusion, the most important drivers of women's successful election to the Sejm included position on the electoral list, the choice of electoral district, as well as the results of particular parties in the previous elections. For these reasons, the lack of the zipper system resulted in a limited effectiveness of the quota mechanism. Yet the doubling of the proportion of females on the electoral lists has translated into a breaking of the 20% barrier of women women MPs only for the second time in the history of the Polish Parliament (between 1980 and 1985 there were 23% female deputies in the single-chamber parliament).

Between 2007 and 2011, the 94 female MPs seated in the Sejm comprised 20% of the total number of deputies. Following the 2011 elections, however, the number of women among the MPs amounted to 110, i.e. 24% of all members of the lower house of parliament. The highest share of women can be found in the parliamentary faction of PO (35%). PiS has 18% women in its club, SLD – 15%, Ruch Palikota and Solidarna Polska both 12.5%. The parliamentary faction of the PSL is the only one with less than 10% female members.

²⁸ For a wider analysis of women's image in media campaigns before the 2011 parliamentary elections, see: E. Rekosz, *Women and men in television electoral campaign. Parliamentary elections of 2011*, Warsaw, Institute of Public Affairs, 2011 (typescript)

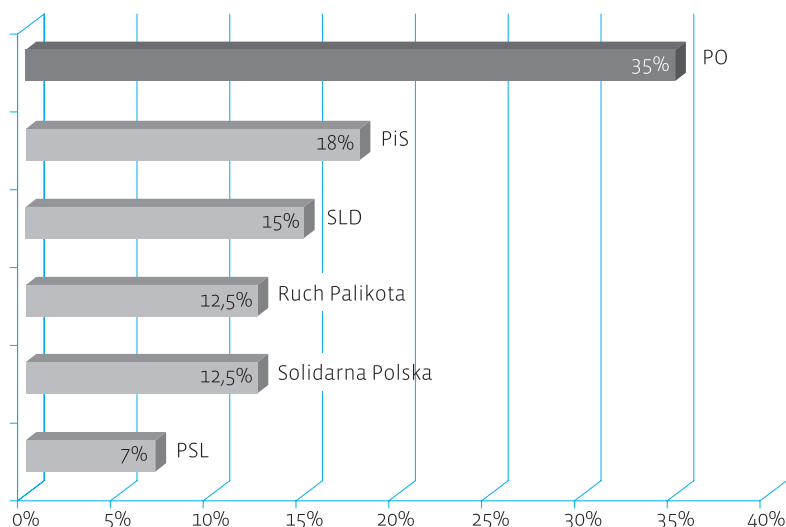


Chart 15.
Share of women
in the Parliamentary
Factions after the
2011 elections

Source
The Institute of Public
Affairs

The share of female members of a particular faction should be reflected in their representation on the faction's board. However, each of the parliamentary factions is headed by a man. There are nine female vice-chairs in the seventh term of the Sejm, which is illustrated in Table 2 below.

Parliamentary Faction	Share of women on board of parliamentary faction	Females-to-males ratio among the vice-chairs
PO (Civic Platform)	40%	6 females/5 males
PiS (Law and Justice)	38%	2 females/4 males
PSL (Polish People's Party)	14%	0 females/3 males
SLD (Democratic Left Alliance)	20%	1 female/2 males
RP (Palikot Movement)	18%	2 females/4 males

Table 2.

Source
The Institute of Public
Affairs

Noticeably, in the seventh term of the Sejm, a woman became Marshal of the Sejm for the first time in Polish parliamentary history. There is one more woman on the board of the Sejm – Deputy Wanda Nowicka from Ruch Palikota. Counter to earlier announcements, SLD designated a man to join the board – Deputy Jerzy Wenderlich. Massive gender disproportions are clearly visible in the Sejm elected in 2011 among chairpersons of the permanent standing committees. Out of 26 committees, only three are headed by women – the committees on Culture and Media, Deputies' Ethics, and European Union Affairs.

The adoption of the new Electoral Code that implemented gender quotas, however, had no direct impact on women's participation in elections to the Senate. Under the new electoral law, deputies to the Senate are elected on

a first-past-the-post basis.²⁹ In terms of gender distribution among the candidates to the Senate elections in 2007 and in 2011, a small increase in the share of female contenders took place. Among the candidates to the Senate in 2007 there were 47 women and 338 men, whereas in the 2011 elections, there were 69 and 430 respectively. The share of women running for the mandate increased slightly from 12,2% to 13,8%. The comparison between the 2007 and 2011 elections looks entirely different when it comes to the number of women actually elected to the upper house of parliament. Only eight women were elected to the seventh-term Senate, whereas in 2011, 13 women were elected senators. All elected women ran for the office as candidates of a political party. At the same time, many strong candidates running from independent platforms failed in their bid for election, despite great support from voters. Among them was Izabella Sierakowska, who received one third of the votes in Lublin, and Barbara Dolniak, who won one fifth of the votes in Sosnowiec. There is one woman on the Senate's board, which consists of four seats. Out of 18 standing committees in the Senate, only one is headed by a woman (the Environment Committee), while another one has a female vice-chairperson (Foreign Affairs Committee). Women's real participation in the executive bodies of the upper house of parliament is therefore minimal.

The noticeable but minor increase in female representation in the Senate does not mean that Poland has achieved a satisfactory level of women's representation in the upper chamber of parliament. Compared to the other 76 countries with two-chamber parliaments, Poland ranks 20th in terms of the proportion of female senators.³⁰

Women in the bodies of the executive branch

After the parliamentary elections in 2011, for the first time won by the ruling political party, executive power remains in the hands of representatives of the coalition between the PO (Civic Platform) and the PSL (Polish People's Party). The Prime Minister, Donald Tusk, has replaced some members of the Cabinet, but that has not translated in a higher share of female ministers. In the previous Cabinet, consisting of 19 members, there were five women.³¹ Currently, the Cabinet, expanded to 20 seats³², features four female ministers – Minister of Science and Higher Education – Barbara Kudrycka, Minister of National Education – Katarzyna Szumilas, Minister of Regional Development – Elżbieta Bieńkowska, and Minister of Sport and Tourism – Joanna Mucha.

²⁹ A detailed analysis of this institution along with its implications for women's participation in politics can be found in the chapter "Expansion of the FPTP voting in the Polish electoral system" above.

³⁰ Source: IPU Parline Database <http://www.ipu.org/parlinee/WomenInParliament.asp?REGION=All&typesearch=1&LANG=ENG> (as at 16 November 2011)

³¹ As at the date of the Government's appointment – 16 November 2007.

³² As at the date of the Government's appointment – 18 November 2011.

Summary

The amendments to the electoral law introduced in 2011, aimed at increasing women's representation in politics, have resulted in doubling the share of women candidates on electoral lists, compared to the 2007 elections. The increase in women's representation in the parliament, however, was not as substantial as expected. Nevertheless, it is remarkable that the highest share of women MPs (24%) in Polish parliamentary history has been achieved. Yet, from the European perspective or even that of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe,³³ Polish women still have very limited representation in the country's legislative bodies.

Naturally, in the post-elections debate there were critical opinions voiced with respect to the functioning of the system of gender quotas,³⁴ yet one should not underestimate the fact that for the first time a woman was appointed Marshal of the Sejm – the nation's second most important office. Although the appointment of Ewa Kopacz does not directly result from the law – as the Electoral Code only regulates female representation among candidates – it is fair to assume that the debate over gender quotas and women's role in politics influenced the decision. Yet the debate has not been followed by all of Polish society. According to polls conducted by CBOS and the IPA³⁵ one month before the elections, almost half of the Polish population (41%) had no idea how the new quota mechanism worked. More than a quarter of respondents understood the quota system as an allocation of a certain number of seats in the Sejm to women, and only 22% was aware that gender quotas ensure a minimum of 35% female candidates on electoral lists.

In the 2011 elections, for the first time the Senate was elected under the FPTP system. Despite the assumption, that majority electoral system will support independent candidates, the majority of Poles voted for representatives of political parties. Among the 100 MPs in the Senate, only 13 women were elected. This was an increase in comparison to the previous term of the Senate (seven female senators), yet the representation of women in the upper house of parliament remains below 15% and their presence on boards of standing committees is insignificant.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Taking into account the abovementioned factors influencing the level of women's representation in local and national politics, the following steps

33 M. Krook, P. Norris, *Gender Equality in Elected Office: A Six-Step Action Plan*, OSCE, (<http://www.osce.org/odi-hr/81137>)

34 Statement by Jarosław Kaczyński, Chairman of PiS of 11 October 2011 after: R.Grochal, „Kobiet więcej, ale ciągle mało”, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 12 October, 2011.

35 *Wiedza i opinie Polaków o prawie wyborczym i mechanizmach kampanii*, *Komunikat z badań*, CBOS, IPA, Warsaw, September 2011.

can be recommended in order to increase the level of female participation in the political decision-making process. The recommendations are divided into those requiring legislative changes and those related to the public debate on women's participation in politics in Poland.

Proposed legislative changes:

1. A debate should be initiated over the return to proportional representation voting at all levels. According to all analyses, this system is significantly better at fostering equalization of gender opportunities. Simultaneously, a debate should be opened over the possible ways of equalizing gender opportunities in majority electoral systems (*twinning, all women's short-list*).
2. Electoral regulations on gender quotas in proportional elections should include provisions introducing the zipper system, where female and male candidates are placed in alternate slots among the top ten positions on a party's candidate list.
3. The regulations of the National Broadcasting Council (KRRiT) on the detailed procedure for conducting an electoral campaign in radio and television broadcasts by the authorized electoral committees of political parties should include obligations to provide a more balanced amount of air-time to candidates of both genders.

Proposed changes to the internal functioning of political parties and parliamentary clubs:

1. Parliamentary clubs should promote female speakers in parliamentary debates.
2. Political parties should promote gender balance on their boards.

Proposed changes regarding the public debate:

1. A multidimensional debate should be held on political priorities of men and women. It should take place, *inter alia*, in the Parliamentary Women's Caucus..
2. By way of nominating coordinators for gender equality in governmental agencies, the equality policy should be enhanced and gender prejudice should be eliminated.
3. Recognition of women's priorities requires co-operation of female MPs and NGOs that host gender debates. According to research, remaining within the area of traditional convictions on what is "political" and what is "non-political" causes female MPs to pursue goals and paths that have been previously set by men. This conformism is not in line with the expectation of the female electorate. Introduction of deliberative democracy in

the form of wide debates on political priorities that engage various social groups could help bring together the electorate's expectations on the one hand, and actions of both male and female politicians on the other.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- M. Chmaj, M. Waszak, J. Zbieranek, *O demokracji w polskich partiach politycznych*, the Institute of Public Affairs, Warsaw 2011.
- D. Dahlerup (ed.), *Women, Quotas and Politics*, Routledge 2006.
- M. Fuszara, *Kobiety w polityce*, Wydawnictwo Trio, Warsaw 2007.
- M. Fuszara, *Kobiety w samorządach lokalnych: wybory 2011*, the Institute of Public Affairs, Warsaw 2011.
- M. Krook, P. Norris, *Gender Equality in Elected Office: A Six-Step Action Plan*, OSCE, 2011.
- R. Markowski, *System wyborczy – system partyjny – jakość demokracji. O jednomandatowych okręgach wyborczych*, Warsaw 2010.
- B. Michalak, A. Sokala, *Leksykon prawa wyborczego i systemów wyborczych*, Warsaw 2010.

Research reports

- Polacy o proponowanych zmianach w systemie politycznym, Komunikat z badań*, CBOS, Warsaw, April 2008.
- Wiedza i opinie Polaków o prawie wyborczym i mechanizmach kampanii, Komunikat z badań*, CBOS, the Institute of Public Affairs, Warsaw, September 2011.
- The Global Gender Gap Report 2011*

Press releases

- D. Kołakowska, E. Olczyk, *Okręgi jednomandatowe poróżnią koalicjantów?*, „Rzeczpospolita”, 3 November, 2007.
- E. Olczyk, *Bój o jednomandatowe okręgi wyborcze*, „Rzeczpospolita”, 15 November 2007.
- M. Migalski, *Jak pozbyć się SLD*, „Rzeczpospolita”, 19 February 2008.
- R. Grochal, *Kobiet więcej, ale ciągle mało*, „Gazeta Wyborcza”, 12 October 2011.

Online sources

- <http://www.ipu.org/parlinee/WomenInParliament.asp?REGION=All&typesearch=1&LANG=ENG>
- <http://www.pkw.gov.pl>
- <http://www.portalsamorzadowy.pl/prawo-i-finanse/,20613.html>

