

Małgorzata NIEWIADOMSKA-CUDAK

University of Economics and Human Sciences in Warsaw

ORCID: 0000-0002-1745-7707

## **Factors Determining the Greater Participation of Women in Local Government Presidential Elections in Poland**

**Abstract:** The issue of women's representation in the bodies of executive power in Polish local government is generating increasing interest in the context of women's activity in local politics. The purpose of the publication is to explain the reasons affecting the low representation of women in local presidential elections. The author answers the question of the low representation of women in mayoral elections and examines whether existing stereotypes about the role of women in society are the main barrier affecting the decision to run in these local government elections. Are there also other reasons that hinder running for the city's executive body? With the research questions posed in this way, the author aims not only to initiate a discussion on women's participation in local government bodies, but also to determine the reasons for their underrepresentation and to identify effective methods of counteracting this phenomenon once the barriers are identified.

**Key words:** local government elections, executive authority, female candidate, female mayor, female participation

---

### **Introduction**

**T**he evolution of women's participation in local mayoral elections has brought significant transformation, including the introduction of direct elections for mayors and city presidents in 2002 (Ustawa, 1990). Following the introduction of new laws, various publications have analysed the legal position of mayors (Dąbek, 2004; Podgórski 2004). Some researchers focus on the competition between actors participating in local elections in the context of the proposed legislative changes (Tomczyk, 2012). Still others draw attention to the link between local government elections and national politics (Flis, 2018) and the rivals of elected of-

ficials who have decided to run for the highest local government office (Flis, Gendźwiłł, Stolicki, 2018). The keen interest in women's representation in local elections has spurred dedicated statistical analyses (Druciarek, Przybysz, Przybysz, 2019; Druciarek, Nizynska, 2011; Niewiadomska-Cudak, 2017; Niewiadomska-Cudak, 2020). Globally, research into the significance of proportionality suggests that as the number of women reaches a 'critical mass', attention to women's political issues tends to increase as well (Childs, Krook, 2008). Efforts to enhance women's political participation have led to specific strategies for recruiting women into political roles at national, provincial, and local levels (Krook, 2015).

The analysis of women's participation in mayoral elections, spanning from the introduction of general and direct elections to the office in Poland in 2002 to the most recent election in 2018, reveals female underrepresentation. Additionally, the author presents data on the participation of women in local executive bodies in other EU member states and around the world.

The aim of the publication is to elucidate factors contributing to the low representation of women in local mayoral elections. To address this, the author poses the following research question: Are prevailing stereotypes regarding the societal perception of women's roles the primary barrier affecting the decision to stand for candidacy in local elections, or are there additional considerations making the race difficult?

With the research questions framed as such, the author aims not only to spark a discourse on women's involvement in local governance but also to pinpoint the causes behind their underrepresentation and delineate effective strategies for mitigating this phenomenon once the barriers are delineated. Based on the questions formulated in this manner, the following research hypothesis was posited: Women's engagement in municipal executive roles in Polish cities is influenced not solely by societal perceptions of women's roles but also by the political and social milieu, financial stability, and a lack of motivation to pursue the highest office in the city. The study employed methods appropriate for political science research to accomplish its objectives. Embracing a comprehensive approach to political recruitment involves examining not only the electoral phase but also the candidate selection process. Effective monitoring necessitates gathering both quantitative and qualitative data. By integrating these two sources, a nuanced understanding of the advancement of women's participation in local elections for the highest municipal office is obtained.

The evolving landscape of local politics, shaped by ongoing changes in Polish legislation and the emergence of new contenders prepared to engage in electoral competition, underscores the necessity for ongoing research in this domain.

### **Regulatory framework for direct mayoral elections in cities**

Regulations and procedures governing the election and dismissal, as outlined in Article 169(3) of the Constitution of the Republic of Poland of 2 April 1997, were to be established through separate legislation. As per the Act on direct mayoral election of 20 June 2002<sup>1</sup> the executive body was to be elected through a process of universal suffrage, ensuring equal participation, direct voting, and secrecy of the ballot (Niewiadomska-Cudak, 2011, p. 42).<sup>2</sup> The law provides for two rounds of elections. As stipulated in Article 4 of the Law, a candidate who garnered more than half of valid votes is deemed elected. Hence, securing an absolute majority of votes (50% plus 1) is necessary. The now obsolete law of 2002 outlined that the active voting rights, including the ability to elect the mayor, were granted to those eligible for candidacy in the elections to the municipal council. Conversely, the eligibility for candidacy extended to any Polish citizen who had attained the age of 25 by the voting day and had his/her permanent residency in a given municipality.

The 2002 Act was superseded by the regulations outlined in the Electoral Code of 5 January 2011, which retained the aforementioned norms for the elections, including the provision for two rounds in the event that no candidate secures an absolute majority by obtaining over 50% of the votes in the first round (Ustawa, 2011). Revised: The amendment is found in Article 472, which specifies that a candidate for mayor cannot simultaneously run for mayor in another municipality and for a county council or provincial assembly seat. Additionally, a candidate for mayor may only contest a seat on the council of the municipality in which they are running

---

<sup>1</sup> The law was in effect until 1 August 2011. Then, it was repealed by Article 10 item 4 of the Act of 5 January 2011; Provisions introducing the Act – Electoral Code, Journal of Laws No. 21, item 113.

<sup>2</sup> Until 2002, the members of the executive body, i.e. the municipal executive, were elected by the council. These were therefore indirect elections. It is worth noting, however, the concept of direct election emerged during the work on the 1990 electoral law.

for mayor<sup>3</sup>. The Electoral Code has expanded the pool of individuals with active voting rights to include non-Polish EU citizens who have attained the age of eighteen by the day of the election.

An age criterion was instituted for those exercising voting rights and those seeking candidacy (Uziębło, 2014, p. 6). To qualify for mayoral candidacy, an individual needed to be at least 25 years old on the election day. Researchers suggest that for passive voting rights, voters determine whether a candidate is deemed suitable to represent them (Chrzanowski, 2020, p. 254; Uziębło, 2014, p. 22). Piotr Uziębło contends that holding a local government or parliamentary position into advanced age is uncommon. He cited the case of Senator James Strom Thurmond in the United States Senate, who served until the age of 101 as an example.

Additional amendments were introduced in 2018 through the Act of 11 January 2018, which modified certain laws to enhance citizen involvement in the election, operation, and oversight of certain public entities (Ustawa, 2018). This amendment extended the term of office at all levels of local government and for the executive body in municipalities from 4 to 5 years. Additionally, it introduced a provision allowing for the possibility of serving dual terms in the executive body. The amendments, which limited the terms of office of mayors to two terms, were included in Article 5(4) of the Law of 11 January 2018 and in the Electoral Code in Article 11(4). This section stipulates that “a person who has previously been elected twice as a mayor in the same municipality in a mayoral election ordered pursuant to Article 474(1) shall not be eligible for election as a mayor in that municipality”. Advocates of this change emphasized that it would enhance municipal management, as a mayor who serves for an extended period tends to fall into routine, exhibiting diminishing creativity and innovative thinking. Moreover, insufficient turnover in these positions could contribute to the low participation of women in municipal executive elections (Niewiadomska-Cudak, 2020, p. 32).

The term of office for the mayor coincides with that of the city council and ends on the last day of the council's tenure. In 107 Polish cities, president of city is elected and, as per current legislation, serves as the executive authority in cities with populations exceeding 100,000 inhabitants. This also includes cities where, until the enactment of the Act, the mayor served as the executive-managing body (Ustawa, 1990).

---

<sup>3</sup> These changes were made in 2018 by the Act of 11 January 2018 amending certain laws to increase the participation of citizens in electing, functioning and controlling public bodies. Journal of Laws of 2018 item 130.

### Women's participation in mayoral elections in 2002–2018

Since the implementation of direct mayoral elections, the increase in women's participation has been marginal. Research indicates that between the 2002 and 2018 elections the average rise in the proportion of female mayoral candidates was just 1.6% (Niewiadomska-Cudak, 2020, p. 416).

A slightly higher increase of 2.73% was observed in the most recent election. However, it would be premature to assume that future elections will continue to see similar or higher figures. Optimism regarding the growing number of female candidates is premature. The data in the table below indicates that between the 2006 and 2010 elections, the increase did not even reach one percent, standing at just 0.87%.

Table 1

#### Percentage of women running for and elected to the office of mayor

Year	Percentage of female candidates standing for election	Number of women elected to the office of mayor
2002	10.66%	2 (1.87%)
2006	12.33%	4 (3.21%)
2010	13.19%	7 (6.54%)
2014	14.37%	12 (11.21%)
2018	17.10%	11 (10.28%)

**Source:** Own calculations based on data from the National Electoral Commission.

It is worth noting that the increase in the number of elected women mayors has also been minimal. Even during the last elections in 2018, there was a regression, with only 11 female city presidents elected per 107 cities, accounting for just over 10%. However, since the advent of universal and direct elections, there has been a gradual increase in the number of women mayors. The data reveals that progress has been modest. It was only in 2014, compared to the preceding election, that more women held the highest office in the city. However, the 2018 election, despite seeing the highest number of women candidates since 2002, halted this upward trend. It wasn't until during the term that the group of female mayors expanded, notably with Aleksandra Dulkiewicz, who assumed the highest office in Gdansk following the tragic death of Paweł Adamowicz. Citizens in Gdańsk elected her in the first round on 3 March 2019. The number of female mayors rose to 12. However, in 2022, after the death of Grażyna Dziedzic, who had been in the mayor's seat in Ruda

Śląska (*Michał...*, 2022)<sup>4</sup> since 2010, the situation was back to the status at the beginning of the term. It is worth noting that among the seven candidates running in the by-election in Ruda Śląska, there was only one woman. However, she did not advance to the second round (Jędrusik, 2022). Unlike the 2014 elections for mayor of Ruda Śląska, where two women faced off in the second round, this scenario did not repeat itself. This marked the first occurrence of such a situation since 2002. Grażyna Dziedzic, seeking re-election, competed against Aleksandra Maria Skowronek, the latter supported by the Civic Platform. Skowronek, who was Dziedzic's rival in the 2014 elections, assumed the role of 3rd Deputy Mayor for Urban Development eight years later after Michał Pierończyk won the early elections (*Zastępcy...*, 2022). Notably, the second round of the early elections in Ruda Śląska saw the meeting of the two former deputy mayors: Krzysztof Mejer and Michał Pierończyk (Kurczonek, 2022).

In the 2018 election in Zabrze, Małgorzata Mańka-Szulik, aiming for her fourth re-election, encountered Agnieszka Małgorzata Rupniewska, a candidate of the Coalition Electoral Committee for Civic Platform, Modern, and Civic Coalition. This mirrored a situation reminiscent of what occurred four years earlier in Ruda Śląska (Niewiadomska-Cudak, 2020, pp. 265–320).

During the parliamentary term of 2014–2018, Anna Milczanowska, who served as the mayor of Radomsko, stood for candidacy in the 2015 parliamentary elections. Upon winning a parliamentary seat, she resigned from her mayoral post. Subsequently, Jarosław Ferenc assumed the position in the early elections held in February 2016. This resulted in a decrease in the number of women occupying this office in Poland to 11. A regression was also observed in the number of cities where no women ran in the city president elections.

Table 2

**Cities with no female candidates for city president office**

Year	Number of cities
2002	46
2006	47
2010	51
2014	41
2018	43

**Source:** Own calculations based on data from the National Electoral Commission.

<sup>4</sup> On 25 September 2022, residents of Ruda Śląska elected Michał Pierończyk in the second round of early elections, following the death of Grażyna Dziedzic.

Based on the data, it can be inferred that the number of cities without any female candidates for mayor decreased to 41 in 2014. However, four years later, there was an increase in such municipalities. In the most recent election, the highest number of these instances was observed in the Silesian Province, where nine out of 24 cities held executive body elections without the participation of women (Niewiadomska-Cudak, 2020, p. 418).

In 2018, there were statistically more than four men for every woman running in the city president elections, whereas in 2002, there were more than eight. With each subsequent election, this ratio has decreased. Additionally, research indicates a decline in the number of individuals choosing to run for the mayoral seat. In 2002, there were 797 candidates (712 men and 85 women), whereas 16 years later, there were 538 candidates (446 men and 92 women), marking a decrease of 259 candidates.

These trends might undergo changes when city presidents elected in 2018 are no longer eligible to seek the third re-election, provided that the provision limiting terms to two continues to operate within the Polish law.

It is also noteworthy that the current term of office for local government authorities, initially set to conclude on October 21, 2023, was extended until April 30, 2024. This extension came about as the Sejm of the Republic of Poland passed an act on September 29, 2022, prolonging the term of office of local government bodies (Act 2022). According to Article 1(1), (2), and (3) of this Act, the terms of municipal councils, county councils, provincial assemblies, district councils of the capital city of Warsaw, mayors of rural and urban municipalities, and city presidents, which were scheduled to end in 2023, are now extended until April 30, 2024.

The EU average for female representation in local government executive bodies stands at only 17.4 percent. Among EU countries, only nine exceed this average, with Finland (39%), Sweden (31.7%), the Netherlands (28.7%), and Slovakia (25.3%) staying in the forefront. In Poland, women account for 12% in these bodies. Ten EU countries fall below this ratio. Romania sits at the bottom of the list with 4.5% of women in local executive positions (*Local...*, 2021). Paris has now joined the ranks of the 10% of cities worldwide where women hold governance positions. Anne Hidalgo of the Socialist Party has been leading the French capital since 2014. In her first run, she secured victory by defeating Nathalie Kosciusko-Morizet, a former Minister of Ecology in François Fillon's government, in the second round of local elections. In the 2020 elections,

Hidalgo faced off against Rachida Dati and Agnès Buzyn (*Municipales 2020 à Paris...*). She won in the second round and currently rules in Paris (Segaunes, 2020). In 2014–2020, women presided over 17% of the cities along the Seine, a figure exceeding the European average of around 15% for female mayors or mayors in 2020. Other cities worldwide that have been or are currently led by women include Mexico City under Claudia Sheinbaum (2018–2023), Oslo with Marianne Borgen (2015–2023), Barcelona Ada Colau (2019–2023), Bogotá in Colombia with Claudia López (from 2019), and Montréal governed by Valérie Plante (from 2017) (Kucharczyk, 2020; Shingler, 2017).

### **Reasons for the low representation of women in city president elections in Poland**

In 2002, the direct mayoral elections sparked increased interest in local governance, marking the inaugural major assessment of campaign strategies geared towards securing victory for candidates running for the top positions in municipalities. City presidents were elected in 107 cities, with a total of 797 candidates participating, among whom only 85 were women (Państwowa Komisja Wyborcza, 2002). Eleven of these women represented electoral committees supporting specific female candidates, while 40 ran promoted by Voters' Electoral Committees. The remaining candidates were put forth by political parties active in the Polish political landscape at that time (Niewiadomska-Cudak, 2020, p. 123). In this electoral campaign, few women contended against formidable male opponents backed by extensive political apparatus. Men emerged victorious in 105 cities. While the number of such cities diminished over the 16-year period, with fewer than 90 maintaining male mayors, many incumbents sought re-election.

It is noteworthy that candidates with robust political backgrounds stood a better chance of winning. Despite having committees under their own names, they maintained affiliations with specific political parties and even held leading positions in their respective regions. This was evident in cases like Hanna Zdanowska. Mariola Czechowska, the mayor of Bełchatów, received backing from the Law and Justice Party, while Beata Moskał-Słaniewska, the mayor of Świdnica, enjoyed support from the New Left.

The infrequent rotation in mayoral positions serves as a deterrent for women considering running in local mayoral elections. This reluctance



stems from the prolonged tenure of incumbent mayors, who often enjoy greater visibility and various promotional advantages, making it challenging for new candidates to compete. Implementing statutory term limits could address the issue of perpetual mayors. Following their success in the 2018 election, some of these mayors even transitioned to successful runs for the upper house of the Polish parliament. Wherever elections were held again, men turn out to be victorious<sup>5</sup> (Kubicka-Zach, 2019).

Table 3

**Limited rotation in the position of mayor**

Year	City presidents elected for their first term of office	City presidents elected for their second term of office	City presidents elected for their third term of office	City presidents elected for their fourth term of office	City presidents elected for their fifth term of office	City presidents elected for their sixth term of office
2018	30/2	35/6	14/2	8/1	10/0	10/0

**Source:** Own calculations based on data from the National Electoral Commission.

Table 4

**Female mayors in the 2018–2023 term of office (after statutory changes, until 30 April 2024)**

Name	City	Year	Terms of office
1	2	3	4
Małgorzata Mańska-Szulik	Zabrze	2006	4
Hanna Zdanowska	Łódź	2010	3
<b>Grażyna Dziedzic</b>	Ruda Śląska	2010–2022	currently Michał Pjerończyk Deputy Mayor since 2010
Maria Czechowska	Bełchatów	2014	2
Sabina Nowosielska	Kędzierzyn-Koźle	2014	2
Anna Hetman	Jastrzębie Zdrój	2014	2
Beata Klimek	Ostrowiec Świętokrzyski	2014	2
Sława Umińska-Duraj	Piekary Śląskie	2014	2
Beata Moskal-Słaniewska	Świdnica	2014	2

<sup>5</sup> Zygmunt Frankiewicz, who has been mayor of Gliwice since 2002, and Vadim Tyszkiewicz, mayor of the city of Nowa Sól since 2002, as well as former mayors: Janusz Gromek, mayor of Kołobrzeg serving multiple terms and member of Board for the ZMP, Bogdan Zdrojewski, mayor of Wrocław serving multiple terms, and Janusz Pęcherz, mayor of Kalisz, have been elected senators in 2019. Kołobrzeg was the only city with a woman taking the post of mayor, whereas in other cities, the positions were still held by men.

1	2	3	4
Krystyna Danilecka-Wojewodzka	Słupsk	2018	1
Anna Mieczkowska	Kołobrzeg	2018	1
Aleksandra Dulcikiewicz	Gdańsk	2018	from 3 March 2019 re-election following the death of Paweł Adamowicz

**Source:** Own calculations based on the National Electoral Commission.

It is challenging to discuss “long-serving female city presidents” due to their scarcity in local government executive bodies. Among the 11 women, only two merit such a title. Małgorzata Mańka-Szulik, the mayor of Zabrze, boasts the longest tenure. Hanna Zdanowska, the “true manager” of Łódź, as she often describes herself, has held office since 2010 (*Platforma...*, 2010). It has already been decided that she will run for re-election (Matusiak, 2024).

Political parties are more inclined to nominate women when they perceive uncertain victory prospects or when it benefits their image, potentially amplifying their political capital. A prime example is Aleksandra Dulcikiewicz, who previously held the position of deputy mayor. Following the tragic demise of Paweł Adamowicz, she opted to contest the mayoral election for the City of Gdańsk in 2019, backed by the Civic Coalition.

The by-elections held during the eighth term of local government for the mayoral position suggest that in cities where a woman had previously held office, such as Ruda Śląska, the odds favoured men who had previously served as deputy mayors, the closest aides to Grażyna Dziejczak, the mayor who passed away in June 2022 (Kurczonek, 2022). The mayor did not endorse any female candidate to compete for the city’s highest position.

Another factor contributing to the low representation of women in local mayoral elections is the lack of female solidarity. As Joanna Marszałek-Kawa noted, this is a psychological issue, as women are often reluctant to be ‘led’ by other women (Marszałek-Kawa, 2010, p. 233). Women who have entered the realm of politics and attained high positions have been observed to cooperate with and promote men rather than their female counterparts (Niewiadomska-Cudak, 2014, p. 203). Magdalena Środa goes further describing women in politics as either unruly or tacit “ferns”, merely serving as ornamentation for male leaders, while independent-minded women that focus on advancing their own careers

are swiftly “neutralised” (Środa, 2009, pp. 346–347). Women attempting to forge their own political paths without the backing of a party leader may find themselves deprived of any support from their fellow female colleagues who advocate a strong party leader (Niewiadomska-Cudak, 2014, p 205). They refrain from establishing their own female political networks, as the inclination to appease male leaders outweighs the commitment to female solidarity. Moreover, they tend to promote men over women and more frequently delegate deputy roles to men than to women, as demonstrated by the late mayor of Ruda Śląska.

Another significant hurdle is the substantial financial investment required for election campaigns. Women who opt to run in local presidential elections independently, without the backing of a political party, must endeavour to secure funding for their campaigns themselves. Insufficient financial support diminishes electoral prospects for female candidates, as they are unable to achieve widespread visibility through expensive mass advertising or paid media placements in traditional and online channels. This limitation diminishes their ability to compete effectively against rivals backed by well-funded political parties that benefit from public subsidies and grants (Ustawa, 1997). Independent candidates are compelled to explore more cost-effective avenues to engage with voters, such as organising grassroots campaigns to directly connect with the electorate.

Cultural norms dictating gender roles are a primary factor contributing to the underrepresentation of women in high-level local government positions. In recent years, Poland has witnessed a conservative shift in societal attitudes, which reinforce traditional gender roles and underscore distinct social and civic expectations towards women (Kwiatkowska, 2018). Findings from a 2021 report on Polish women, reflecting their evolving values in contemporary society, reveal a significant divide: 30% prioritize career, 30% prioritize family, while 40% express reluctance to choose, deeming both spheres equally important (*Polki...*, 2021, pp. 14–69). The report also highlights that one in five respondents is pursuing further education at the cost of personal free time, while 14% sacrifice sleep for this purpose. Surprisingly, only 18% acknowledge their partner’s contribution in sharing household duties. A staggering 55% express dissatisfaction with their partner’s lack of support in their professional development, and 62% admit concerns about being promoted facing increased workload, overtime, and need to travel, compounded by their partners’ inability to share duties. Additionally, 67% of respondents agreed that if

a partner earns well and holds a prestigious position, there is no need for the respondent to take career risks. Conversely, 59% expressed concerns that a partner might feel uncomfortable if the respondent earned more or held a higher position. Interestingly, for younger women born after 1996, the top values include honour (45%), truth, friendship, and family, while for women aged 50 and above, family (36%) and health (33%) take precedence.

The report paints a picture of a conservative society, hesitant towards change and spontaneity. Women find themselves tethered to family and home, caught between family life and professional aspirations. Many are reluctant to advocate for themselves, fearing to ask for promotion, salary increase, and other entitlements, thus relegating their careers to the background while accepting that it is typically men who climb the career ladder. However, despite these challenges, 61% of women consider professional development and recognition important, and they believe their partners and families should show understanding (*Polki...*, 2021, p. 69). Yet, they often lack the courage to pursue their goals.

The findings from the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report 2022, indicating that it may take approximately 132 years to fully close the gender gap in its broadest sense (Witkowska, 2022), paint a disheartening picture. Moreover, the data highlighted above underscores the reluctance of Polish women to engage actively in public life, resulting in a low percentage of female participation in local elections for the highest office in the city.

Additionally, the immense responsibility associated with assuming the highest office in the city, coupled with remuneration that fails to match the significance of the position, serves as a significant deterrent to entering electoral competition, particularly for accomplished professional women. As per the amendment to the Act of 17 September 2021 on the remuneration of individuals in key public positions, the maximum salary may not exceed 11.2 times the base amount defined in the Budget Act of 23 December 1999 (Ustawa, 2021).

The salary of Mayor of Łódź Hanna Zdanowska consists of PLN 10,770 basic amount, PLN 4,100 functional allowance, PLN 4,461 special allowance, PLN and 2,154 long service allowance. The total gross amount is PLN 21,485 per month (Darda, 2021). In relation to the responsibilities and the earnings of the CEOs in Łódź-based municipal companies answerable to the mayor, the mayor's salary is far from exorbitant (Darda, 2022).

### Concluding remarks

The analysis highlights a significant barrier impacting the decision to pursue the office of mayor, notably the absence of a robust political background, essential for navigating the complexities of an expensive campaign. Women recognise that insufficient financial resources hinder their ability to contend for this position. The presence of a formidable incumbent mayor dissuades women from entering the electoral race and creating the pool of female candidates. If the incumbent mayor enjoys popularity and circumstances align for his/her re-election, contesting the office entails the risk of facing insurmountable competition. Another factor is the absence of female solidarity; women often fail to support each other and are more inclined to select men over women as their deputies. Stereotypes persistently wield a powerful influence on women's political engagement, potentially steering them towards entirely different spheres of involvement. Research indicates that Polish society exhibits strong conservative tendencies, prioritising the family, with women often perceived as its main pillar. Fear of change pervades Polish women attitudes, leading many to opt for combining family life and work rather than delving into political engagement. Insufficient support from their male partners further exacerbates the burden of domestic responsibilities. Moreover, professionally accomplished women hesitate to enter costly elections with uncertain outcomes, preferring to maintain their established careers. This sentiment is reinforced by the modest salary of a city mayor, which fails to adequately incentivise them given the responsibilities involved.

How can we effectively encourage women to become more politically active? One critical step lies in the reform of Polish political parties. This necessitates statutory changes to ensure gender equality within party structures. If we consider parties to be 'guardians of democracy,' tasked with advancing gender equality in democratic society, then revising internal regulations becomes a priority. These reforms should guarantee equal opportunities for both female and male members not just in party elections but also in external elections at all levels of government determined by universal suffrage. In some statutes, particularly within formations positioned, as claimed by their leaders, on the right side of the Polish political spectrum, there is a notable absence of provisions advocating for gender equality within the party and in external spheres (Niewiadomska-Cudak, 2022, pp. 727–743). Linking the allocation of public finances to political parties with the fulfilment of gender equality criteria could serve as a powerful in-

centive for parties to prioritize gender equality initiatives. By making funding contingent on these criteria, parties would be incentivized to actively promote gender equality and expedite the elevation of women to higher positions in local elections. Currently, there is a tendency for parties to favour male candidates in local presidential elections, as leaders may be hesitant to invest significant resources in female candidates who could potentially face greater challenges in competing with their male counterparts for the highest office in the city. The report on “Women’s Passive Electoral Rights,” jointly conducted by the Office of the Ombudsman and the University of Social Sciences and Humanities on December 4, 2018, revealed that in the 2018 municipal elections, only 16.5 percent of respondents voted for women for the position of mayor or city mayor. In stark contrast, the majority, comprising 83.5 percent, cast their votes for male candidates. The report highlights that farmers exhibited the highest rate of voting for women, with 29% expressing their preference. As noted by A. Kwiatkowska, “this trend may be attributed to the greater range of choices available in smaller municipalities. In these areas, which are less influenced by central party decisions, a higher number of women candidates run for office and hold stronger positions compared to the average” (Kwiatkowska, 2018).

Secondly, the current system of financing election campaigns needs to be changed. Presently, the quota ceiling prescribed by law is often disregarded, as candidates initiate their campaigns well before the official announcement, effectively circumventing existing regulations. Moreover, larger political entities have the capacity to allocate significantly more resources, sourced from grants or subsidies, compared to local committees established by community groups.

Thirdly, studies examining women’s perceived core values indicate a societal leaning towards conservatism, which underscores traditional gender roles and societal expectations. To counter this, there is a pressing need to prioritise education that fosters creativity, openness, adaptability to change, and respect for diversity. This educational approach should emphasize the significance of equal rights and opportunities for all genders and advocate for a departure from outdated gender stereotypes.

Fourthly, it is imperative for women to recognise that solidarity, mutual support, respect, and acceptance are indispensable for establishing a robust support network, particularly during electoral campaigns and in various public roles. By championing their female colleagues and actively participating in initiatives that endorse inclusive politics, women can convey a message of unity rather than division within society. Embracing

diversity presents an opportunity to fully harness its potential, fostering a culture of collaboration where individual approaches and ideas are valued. Courage, the rejection of prejudices and stereotypes, willingness to learn, and openness to diverse perspectives serve as catalysts for dismantling barriers that hinder women's decisions to run for office.

### **Interesy konkurencyjne:**

Autor oświadczył, że nie istnieje konflikt interesów.

**Competing interests:** The author has declared that no competing interests exist.

### **Wkład autorów**

Konceptualizacja: Małgorzata Niewiadomska-Cudak

Analiza formalna: Małgorzata Niewiadomska-Cudak

Metodologia: Małgorzata Niewiadomska-Cudak

Opracowanie artykułu – projekt, przegląd i redakcja: Małgorzata Niewiadomska-Cudak

### **Authors contributions**

Conceptualization: Małgorzata Niewiadomska-Cudak

Formal analysis: Małgorzata Niewiadomska-Cudak

Methodology: Małgorzata Niewiadomska-Cudak

Writing – original draft, review and editing: Małgorzata Niewiadomska-Cudak

## **Bibliography**

- Childs S., Krook M. L. (2008), *Critical Mass Theory and Women's Political Representation*, "Political Studies" 56 (3), pp. 725–736.
- Chrzanowski M. (2020), *Zastosowanie cenzusu w wyborach do organów stanowiących jednostek samorządu terytorialnego*, „Przegląd Prawa Konstytucyjnego”, no. 4 (56).
- Darda M. (2021), *Maksymalna podwyżka dla prezydent Łodzi Hanny Zdanowskiej (PO). Ile teraz zarobi?*, 23.12.2021, „Dziennik Łódzki”, <https://lodz.nasze-miasto.pl/maksymalna-podwyzka-dla-prezydent-lodzi-hanny-zdanowskiej/ar/c1-8605199>, 27.02.2023.
- Darda M. (2022), *Dochody prezesów łódzkich spółek. Rekordzista zarobił prawie pół miliona. Ranking*, 07.05.2022, „Dziennik Łódzki”, <https://dzienniklodzki.pl/dochody-prezesow-lodzkie-spolek-miejskich-rekordzista-zarobil-prawie-pol-miliona-ranking/ar/c1-16325881>, 28.02.2023.

- Dąbek D. (2004), *Pozycja ustrojowa wójta (burmistrza, prezydenta) w zreformowanym samorządzie gminnym*, in: *Samorząd lokalny w Polsce*, eds. S. Michałowski, A. Pawłowska, Wydawnictwo UMCS, Lublin.
- Druciarek M., Niżyńska A. (2011), *Wybory samorządowe w 2010 r. z perspektywy kobiet. Sytuacja kandydatek i samorządowców zasiadających w organach władzy lokalnej*, in: *Wybory 2010. Polska i świat*, eds. M. Jeziński, W. Peszyński, A. Seklecka, Wydawnictwo Adam Marszałek, Toruń.
- Druciarek M., Przybysz D., Przybysz I. (2019), *Kobiety w polityce lokalnej. Strategie partii politycznych w wyborach samorządowych 2018 roku*, Instytut Spraw Publicznych, Warsaw.
- Filis J. (2018), *Wybory samorządowe – wzory zaangażowania*, [https://ruj.uj.edu.pl/xmlui/bitstream/handle/item/71251/flis\\_wybory\\_samorzadowe\\_wzory\\_zaan-gazowania\\_2018.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y](https://ruj.uj.edu.pl/xmlui/bitstream/handle/item/71251/flis_wybory_samorzadowe_wzory_zaan-gazowania_2018.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y), 21.02.2024.
- Flis J., Gendźwił A., Stolicki D. (2018), *Rywale włodarzy: doświadczenia i szanse samorządowych pretendentów*, „e-Politikon”, no. 26, pp. 33–64.
- Jędrusik P. (2022), *Kandydaci na prezydenta Rudy Śląskiej. Kim są*, 27.08.2022, TVS, <https://tvs.pl/informacje/kandydaci-na-prezydenta-rudy-slaskiej-kim-sa/>, 15.03.2023.
- Konstytucja Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej z dnia 2 kwietnia 1997 r., Dz. U. Nr 78, poz. 483 ze zm.
- Krook L. M. (2015), *Promoting women's political participation a monitoring guide*, UN WOMEN, [https://mlkrook.org/pdf/unw\\_monitoring\\_guide\\_china.pdf](https://mlkrook.org/pdf/unw_monitoring_guide_china.pdf), 21.02.2024.
- Kubicka-Zach K. (2019), *Włodarz wybrany do parlamentu traci mandat samorządowy*, 15.10.2019, „prawo.pl”, <https://www.prawo.pl/samorzadz/zakaz-laczenia-mandatu-w-samorzadzcie-i-parlamencie-mandat-wojta,489212.html>, 20.02.2023.
- Kucharczyk M. (2020), *Wybory samorządowe we Francji: Hidalgo, Dati, czy Buzyn? – Paryż miastem kobiet*, <https://www.euractiv.pl/section/demokracja/news/wybory-samorzadowe-we-francji-2020-hidalgo-dati-czy-buzyn-paryz-miastem-kobiet/>, 22.02.2024.
- Kurczonek P. (2022), *Wybory prezydenckie w Rudzie Śląskiej 2022 – WYNIKI. W drugiej turze Michał Pieronczyk i Krzysztof Mejer*, 12.09.2022, „ruda śląska, naszemiasto”, <https://rudaslaska.naszemiasto.pl/wybory-prezydenckie-w-rudzie-slaskiej-2022-wyniki-w-drugiej/ar/c1-8990353>, 24.02.2023.
- Kwiatkowska A. (2018), *Kobiety w wyborach a mechanizmy antydyskryminacyjne – stan aktualny i prognozy na przyszłość*, Raport z badania „Bierne prawa wyborcze kobiet”, 4.12.2018, <https://bip.brpo.gov.pl/sites/default/files/Raport%20o%20biernych%20prawach%20wyborczych%20kobiet%2C%202018.pdf>, 25.02.2023.
- Local/municipal councils: mayors or other leaders and members* (2021), Gender Statistics Database, [https://eige.europa.eu/gender-statistics/dgs/indicator/wmidm\\_pol\\_parl\\_wmid\\_locpol/bar/year:2021/geo:EU27\\_2020,IPA,EEA, BE, BG, CZ, DK, DE, EE, IE, EL, ES, FR, HR, IT, CY, LV, LT, LU, HU, MT, NL, AT, P](https://eige.europa.eu/gender-statistics/dgs/indicator/wmidm_pol_parl_wmid_locpol/bar/year:2021/geo:EU27_2020,IPA,EEA,BE,BG,CZ,DK,DE,EE,IE,EL,ES,FR,HR,IT,CY,LV,LT,LU,HU,MT,NL,AT,P)



- L,PT,RO,SI,SK,FI,SE,UK,IS,LI,NO,ME,MK,AL,RS,TR,BA,XK/sex:M,W  
UNIT:PC/POSITION:PRES\_CNCL/EGROUP:MUNICIP, 23.02.2023.
- Marszałek-Kawa J. (2010), *Brakuje nam solidarności, czyli dlaczego kobiety nie głoszą na kobiety?*, in: *Kobiety w polityce*, red. J. Marszałek-Kawa, Wydawnictwo Adam Marszałek, Toruń.
- Matusiak T. (2024), *Oficjalne: prezydent Łodzi Hanna Zdanowska walczy o reelekcję*, <https://lodz.wyborcza.pl/lodz/7,35136,30620887,oficjalne-prezydent-lodzi-hanna-zdanowska-walczy-o.html>, 22.02.2024.
- Michał Pierończyk został wybrany na nowego prezydenta Rudy Śląskiej, 26.09.2022, „Serwis Samorządowy PAP”, <https://samorzad.pap.pl/kategoria/aktualnosci/michal-pieronczyk-zostal-wybrany-na-nowego-prezydenta-rudy-slaskiej>, 08.02.2023.
- Municipales 2020 à Paris: « Je n'ai pas besoin d'un chaperon pour faire de la politique », lance Rachida Dati*, <https://www.20minutes.fr/municipales/2807967-20200625-municipales-2020-direct-candidates-mairie-paris-affrontent-lors-dernier-tant-attendu-debat-bfm-tv>, 22.02.2024.
- Niewiadomska-Cudak M. (2011), *Wybory samorządowe w Łodzi w latach 1990–2006*, Wyd. A. Marszałek, Toruń.
- Niewiadomska-Cudak M. (2014), *Reprezentacja wyborcza kobiet po wejściu Polski do Unii Europejskiej*, Wyd. Vizja Press&IT, Warsaw.
- Niewiadomska-Cudak M. (2017), *Skutki wprowadzenia zapisów kwotowych na zwiększenie udziału kobiet w Radzie Miejskiej w Łodzi w wyborach w 2014 roku*, in: *Obszary aktywności kobiet. Wybrane aspekty filozoficzne, społeczne i polityczne*, eds. A. Kołomycew, A. Pięta-Szawara, Wyd. Uniwersytet Rzeszowski, Rzeszów.
- Niewiadomska-Cudak M. (2020), *Kobiety w samorządowych wyborach prezydenckich w Polsce w latach 2002–2018*, Wydawnictwo AEH, Warsaw.
- Niewiadomska-Cudak M. (2022), *Konstytucyjna zasada równości kobiet i mężczyzn w statutach wybranych partii politycznych*, in: *Prawo konstytucyjne w systemu prawa. Księga jubileuszowa dedykowana profesorowi Stanisławowi Bożkowi z okazji 70. rocznicy urodzin i 45-lecia pracy naukowej*, eds. R. Skarżyński, E. Dużelewska, J. Matwiejuk, A. Jackiewicz, A. Olechno, L. Jamroz, A. Bartnicki, K. Bezubik, Wyd. Temida 2, Białystok.
- Państwowa Komisja Wyborcza, *Wybory 2002*, <https://wybory2002.pkw.gov.pl/wojt/t1/dk2/index.html>.
- Platforma bierze Łódź. Zdanowska: będę prawdziwą gospodynią*, 05.12.2010, „Wprost”, <https://www.wprost.pl/221227/platforma-bierze-lodz-zdanowska-bede-prawdziwa-gospodynia.html>, 24.02.2023.
- Podgórski M. K. (2004), *Pozycja ustrojowa organów samorządu gminnego po reformie 2002 roku*, in: *Miscellanea iuridica*, vol. 4, *Współczesne problemy samorządu terytorialnego – dostęp do informacji publicznej*, eds. A. Drogoń, A. Lityński, G. Sibiga, Tychy.
- Polki 2021, Nowe wartości czy nowe czasy. Jakie są Polki? Co jest dla nich ważne i z jakimi zasadami idą przez życie?* (2021), Gedeon Richter, <https://www.ge->

- deonrichter.pl/uploads/Raport-Polki-2021-Nowe-Wartosci-Na-Nowe-Czasy.pdf, 25.02.2023.
- Segaunes N. (2020), *Municipales 2020: pourquoi Anne Hidalgo a gagné à Paris*, <https://www.lopinion.fr/politique/municipales-2020-pourquoi-anne-hidalgo-a-gagne-a-paris>, 22.02.2024.
- Shingler B. (2017), *Valérie Plante elected mayor of Montreal, beating out Denis Coderre*, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/montreal/quebec-montreal-denis-coderre-valerie-plant-1.4388700>, 22.02.2024.
- Środa M. (2009), *Kobiety i władza*, Wydawnictwo WAB, Warsaw.
- Tomczyk Ł. (2012), *Prezydenci miast. Analiza rywalizacji w wyborach samorządowych*, Wydawnictwo Marina, Wrocław.
- Ustawa z 27 czerwca 1997 r. o partiach politycznych, Dz. U. 2022, poz. 372, ze zm.
- Ustawa z dnia 11 stycznia 2018 r. o zmianie niektórych ustaw w celu zwiększenia udziału obywateli w procesie wybierania, funkcjonowania i kontrolowania niektórych organów publicznych, Dz. U. 2018, poz.130.
- Ustawa z dnia 17 września 2021 r. o zmianie ustawy o wynagrodzeniu osób zajmujących kierownicze stanowiska państwowe oraz niektórych innych ustaw, Dz. U. 2021, poz. 1834.
- Ustawa z dnia 20 czerwca 2020 r. o bezpośrednim wyborze wójta, burmistrza i prezydenta miasta, Dz. U. Nr 113, poz. 984.
- Ustawa z dnia 29 września 2022 r. o przedłużeniu kadencji organów jednostek samorządu terytorialnego, Dz. U. 2022, poz. 2418.
- Ustawa z dnia 5 stycznia 2011 r. Kodeks wyborczy, Dz. U. Nr 21, poz. 113.
- Ustawa z dnia 5 stycznia 2011 r. ustawa – Kodeks wyborczy, Dz. U. 2022.1277.
- Ustawa z dnia 8 marca 1990 r. o samorządzie gminnym, Dz. U. 2023, poz. 40.
- Uziębło P. (2014), *Cenzusy wyborcze w XXI w. – potrzeba nowego podejścia*, in: *Wykłady im. Prof. Wacława Komoranickiego*, wykład VI, Toruń.
- Witkowska N. (2022), *Gender gap – wyrównanie różnic potrwa 130 lat?*, 30.09.2022, RAPORT CSR.PL., <https://raportcsr.pl/gender-gap-wyrownanie-roznic-potrwa-130-lat/>, 25.02.2023.
- Zastępcy Prezydenta* (2022), Urząd Miasta, Ruda Śląska, <https://www.rudaslaska.pl/urząd-miasta/prezydent-miasta/zastepcy-prezydenta/>, 08.02.2023.

---

## Czynniki determinujące większy udział kobiet w samorządowych wyborach prezydenckich w Polsce

### Streszczenie

Problematyka reprezentacji kobiet w organach władzy wykonawczej w polskim samorządzie wywołuje coraz większe zainteresowanie w kontekście aktywności kobiet w polityce lokalnej. Celem publikacji jest wyjaśnienie przyczyn wpływających na

niewielką reprezentację kobiet w samorządowych wyborach prezydenckich. Autorka odpowiada na pytanie dotyczące niskiej reprezentacji kobiet w wyborach na urząd prezydenta miasta oraz bada czy istniejące stereotypy dotyczące roli postrzegania kobiet w społeczeństwie są główną barierą wpływającą na podjęcie decyzji o starcie w tych elekcjach samorządowych. Czy są także inne przesłanki, które utrudniają start w wyborach do organu wykonawczego w mieście? Dzięki tak postawionym pytaniom badawczym autorka pragnie nie tylko zainicjować dyskusję na temat uczestnictwa kobiet w organach władzy samorządowej, ale także ustalić przyczyny ich niedoreprezentowania oraz wskazać skuteczne metody przeciwdziałania temu zjawisku po zidentyfikowaniu barier.

**Słowa kluczowe:** wybory samorządowe, organ władzy wykonawczej, kandydatka, prezydentka miasta, partycypacja kobiet