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## Voters' Attitudes towards the Gender Quota System in Elections in Poland and the Possibility of Its Modification

Postawy wyborców wobec systemu kwotowego w wyborach w Polsce i możliwości jego modyfikacji

### • Abstract •

The article concerns the support for the gender quota system in the elections in Poland. The research was conducted on a double sample of adults for a representative national research, by means of quota sampling method (n = 2119). The respondents who believed that there is insufficient representation of women in parliament outnumbered those with the opposite opinion. We have observed a reluctance among the respondents to introduce solutions aimed at strengthening women's representation. The difference in views were determined by political preferences, gender, age, domicile, and education. Women and leftist supporters more frequently believed that there are too few women in parliament and supported quotas, as opposed to men and persons with right-wing views. The differences were observed in the

### • Abstrakt •

Artykuł dotyczy poparcia dla systemu kwotowego w wyborach w Polsce. Badanie przeprowadzono na podwójnej próbie osób dorosłych dla reprezentatywnego badania ogólnopolskiego, metodą doboru kwotowego (n = 2119). Respondenci, którzy uważali, że nie ma wystarczającej reprezentacji kobiet w parlamencie, przeważali nad respondentami prezentującymi zdanie przeciwne. Zaobserwowaliśmy niechęć respondentów do wprowadzania rozwiązań mających na celu wzmocnienie reprezentacji kobiet. O różnicy poglądów zdecydowały preferencje polityczne, płeć, wiek, miejsce zamieszkania i wykształcenie. Kobiety i zwolennicy lewicy częściej uważali, że w parlamencie jest za mało kobiet, i opowiadali się za kwotami, w przeciwieństwie do mężczyzn i osób o poglądach prawicowych. Różnice zaobserwowano w najmłodszej kategorii

youngest age category, where women more often opted for quotas than men.

wiekowej, w której kobiety częściej opowiadały się za kwotami niż mężczyźni.

**Keywords:** women's parity; political preferences; right-wing; left-wing; gender quotas

**Słowa kluczowe:** parytet kobiet; preferencje polityczne; prawica; lewica; kwoty płci

## Introduction

Equality constitutes the foundation of every democratic legal order within which the rights and freedoms of individuals are respected. Women were deprived of their right to vote for years. Underrepresentation of women in politics was influenced, i.a., by socio-economic, cultural, legal, and historical factors (Thames, 2017; Elchardus & Spruyt, 2012; Cross & Pruyzers, 2019). The application of legal forms strengthening the women's activity in politics depends on the type of electoral system. Electoral quotas constitute the mainstream in the concept of equal opportunities as a positive measure whose aim is to equalize opportunities for the discriminated group and correct imbalances (Squires, Lovenduski, & Krook, 2009). In recent years, electoral quotas have become a significant and popular solution in the attempts to cure the underrepresentation of women in parliaments (Dahlerup & Freidenvall, 2005; Wängnerud, 2009).

The article presents the results of the survey of voters' attitudes towards the proposed changes to the quota system in Poland. Contributing to the global scientific discussion on women's participation in politics, the problem is very relevant in the case of Poland. Although Polish women were among the first in the world to receive voting rights in 1918, and, in 2011, the quotas were adopted by law, the representation of women in parliament is not large. The article shows the results of surveys on gender quotas in Polish electoral system. We also raise the issue of accepting the solutions that could be introduced: equal gender representation on the lists and alternation of men and women on the lists. The results showed the lack of support for existing quotas and for the introduction of effective changes in electoral system for the increase of women's representation.

## Background

The research on quotas focuses on four areas: types of quotas, relations between quotas and substantive representation of women, women's political participation, and gender equality (Franceschet & Piscopo, 2008; Swiss & Fallon, 2017; Schwindt-Bayer, 2009; Kim & Fallon, 2023). The considerations regarding the issue of quotas are focused on theoretical aspects, which involve discussions on argumentation for and against such regulations, as well as empirical studies on the implementation and the consequences of quota policy.

The term 'quota' should be interpreted as a minimum and maximum level of representation of women or a given gender, while the term 'parity' (French: *parité*, Latin: *paritas*, i.e., equality) means an equal representation of people constituting a particular body (Krook, 2014; Wawrowski, 2007).

Quotas may apply to various political bodies, both those elected and appointed. Depending on the criterion adopted, different methods of determining quotas may be differentiated. Mona Lena Krook (2006) has divided the gender quotas in elections into: reserved-seats quotas, which consist in distributing a certain number of seats to women in a given representative body, quotas applied by political parties, and quotas introduced by law guaranteeing women a certain percentage among candidates in elections. Quotas may help increase women's representation, but the effectiveness of quotas depends on their structure: the size of quotas, the regulations for the distribution of women on the lists, and the sanctions for failure to comply (Schwindt-Bayer, 2009).

The discussion held on ensuring equal opportunities in the elections for women and men raises not only the issue of parity, but also the distribution of the candidates on the list. This concerns the number of women and men, as well as ensuring them at least similar positions on the lists (Fuszara, 2012; Dahlerup & Freidenvall, 2010). The implementation of electoral gender quotas is spreading rapidly, however, it also encounters strong resistance. Although settled in national discourses, the arguments for and against the implementation of quotas are similar (Dahlerup & Freidenvall, 2010). Quotas aim at countervailing structural discrimination which prevents qualified women from taking office (Westfall & Chantiles, 2016). The introduction of quotas does not induce immediate improvement of electoral results and increase of percentage of women in parliaments (Freidenvall & Krook, 2011). The attention is drawn to a longer-term impact of the solutions such as electoral quotas, suggesting that the real quantitative and qualitative effects will occur over time (Thames, 2017).

The idea of ensuring the representative selection of women gave rise to controversy in many European countries, even the ones involved in assuring equal opportunities. It is because electoral quotas are associated with evading competitive processes and ignoring the principle of substance which, according to the opponents of quotas, ought to guarantee the election based on qualifications and merits, not gender (Bacchi, 2006). A classic matter of merits and achievements constitutes a serious problem for the opponents of gender quotas. They fear that the elected might be not properly prepared to fulfil their duties as quotas will lead to a selection based solely on gender, not merits (Dahlerup & Freidenvall, 2010).

Currently, around half of the countries use various kinds of gender quotas system (Westfall & Chantiles, 2016; Fernández & Valiente, 2021). France and Serbia are among the European countries where the quota system has constitutional status. Statutory regulations on parity for women were introduced, i.a., in Belgium (1994, 2002), France (2000, 2003, 2007, 2008), Spain (2007), Macedonia, Serbia, Slovenia (2004), and Portugal (2006). Although the quotas have been used in electoral systems for some time, the researches indicate a relatively high proportion of European citizens (circa 41%) who believe that the number of women in politics is sufficient or even too high (Fernández & Valiente, 2021). The countries which introduced obligatory quota mechanisms observed an increase in acceptance for a greater number of women in politics than in those without such mechanisms (Fernández & Valiente, 2021).

Ideology is a significant variable in researching the number of women candidates on electoral lists (Paxton & Kunovich, 2003; Kittilson, 1999). The research so far has confirmed that leftist and environmental groupings are far more conducive to increasing the presence of women than rightist, conservative ones (Santana & Aguilar, 2019). Leftist parties treat the pursuit of quotas as one of their main objectives, discuss the need for quotas more often, raising the awareness among their electorate and, as a result, support for quotas is stronger among them (Fernández & Valiente, 2021).

For some countries, the implementation of quota system is a sign of modernization in the context of international community (Freidenvall & Krook, 2011). Political representation of women is more frequently understood in terms of 'symbolic representation', including women in the development of democracy or even legitimacy of political system (Wängnerud, 2009).

Proportional representation system with open lists is the current electoral system used in elections to the lower house of parliament in Poland (Górecki & Kukołowicz, 2014; Jankowski & Marcinkiewicz, 2019; Gamboa & Morales, 2021). A first draft bill of the introduction of quota system, as part of the gender equality act, was

prepared in 1996, as amended, reintroduced to parliament in 1997, and was not examined. In 2001, the parliament rejected the draft to introduce a minimum quota of 30% of each gender on candidate lists (Fuszara, 2012). Another draft bill was created in 2009 on the initiative of Women's Congress, and it provided for introducing the gender parity on the lists. In 2010, the works on a new draft introducing parity were initiated by the Citizens' Committee "It's Time for Women". In the course of the legislative work, this demand changed significantly, and the gender parity was replaced with a quota mechanism (Fuszara, 2012). Eventually, an act guaranteeing 35% of representatives of each gender on the lists, at district level, for elections to the lower house of parliament was passed on January 5, 2011. The system is restrictive – a list cannot be registered unless it has the required percentage of representatives of each gender.

Studies on the quota system in Poland have so far focused on the analysis of results which women obtained before and after the introduction of quotas (Górecki & Kukołowicz, 2014; Gwiazda, 2017; Jankowski & Marcinkiewicz, 2019; Gendźwiłł & Żółtak, 2020). Our research concerns the attitude the voters have towards the quota system. We also debate if the applied quota system is sufficient, and if an equal participation of women and men on electoral lists would be better. Also, if in such a case a method based on alternate distribution of women and men should be applied. The support of the voters is crucial here. Political groupings may avoid declarations to introduce regulations assuring equal opportunities for women in the election law if they are not accepted in their prospective electorates.

## **The aim and methodology of research**

The aim of conducted research was to examine the attitudes of respondents towards the means to equalize electoral opportunities for women through the implementation of parities. As a result of the analysis of the research done so far, the following research problem has been formulated: What variables condition the acceptance of women's participation in political life and the introduction of gender parity in elections in particular categories of the respondents.

Quota sampling method was applied in the research. General population (people over 18 with right to vote) was divided into 16 subgroups (provinces). Sample selection for each subgroup was prepared based on the following criteria: age (6 groups), gender (2 groups), place of residence (2 groups). The size of particular subgroups was calculated based on demographic data published by Statistics Poland, and

reflected the actual divisions in a given population. The sample size was determined at a double-sample level for representative national research.

The research was conducted basing on the authors' questionnaire survey conducted in 2019 in Poland. The pollsters, while selecting respondents, used the research implementation card. The respondents filled in the questionnaires on their own, the task of a pollster was to collect and submit the surveys. The 2119 correctly filled surveys were qualified in accordance with the adopted criteria of research sampling.

Of the statements where the respondents could determine the acceptance level using Likert scale four were distinguished:

- [A] Polish parliament does not have a sufficient women's representation in terms of numbers.
- [B] Obligatory appearance of at least 35% representatives of each gender on lists is a good solution.
- [C] Including the same number of women and men on the lists of candidates should be obligatory.
- [D] Women and men should be put on lists of candidates in alternate order.

Statement [A] examines the respondents' views on the size of women's representation in parliament. The responses to statement [B] indicate the level of acceptance of the existing quota system. In the case of the statements [C] and [D], we examine the views concerning potential solutions under discussion, equal number of representatives of each gender on the lists, and a zipper system.

## Research results

The results of answers, without distinguishing particular categories, manifested the predominance of people who share the view that women in Polish Parliament are not represented sufficiently in terms of numbers (43.4%) over their opponents (20.86%) in total population of respondents. However, only 13.75% of the surveyed definitely agreed with the statement (Table 1). A large group of the surveyed had no opinion on this matter (35.7%).

34.22% of the surveyed supported the statutory obligation to include at least 35% of representatives of each gender on the lists of candidates, a 26.18% were against. 46.87% of the surveyed reacted negatively to the idea of putting women and men in even numbers. Every fifth respondent (20.47%) definitely opposed the same number of women and men among candidates. 18.43% of the surveyed were in favour, and 34.71% had no opinion. Every fifth respondent (20.25%) agreed with

Table 1. Quantitative and Percentage Distribution of Answers to Statements [A], [B], [C] and [D]

Variable	N	Definitely no	Rather no	Hard to say	Rather yes	Definitely yes
[A]	2095	106	331	748	622	288
		5,06%	15,8%	35,7%	29,69%	13,75%
[B]	2104	249	302	833	547	173
		11,83%	14,35%	39,59%	26,0%	8,22%
[C]	2106	431	556	731	255	133
		20,47%	26,4%	34,71%	12,11%	6,32%
[D]	2099	316	501	857	306	119
		15,05%	23,87%	40,83%	14,58%	5,67%

the statement that women and men should be put on lists of candidates in alternate order, and almost twice more respondents (38.92%) were against such a solution. People who did not have an opinion were the largest group here (40.83%).

Table 2. The Mann-Whitney Test U for Variable 'Sex'

Variable	U	Z	p	Z(corrected)	p
[A]	436580,5	8,03498	0,000000	8,36957	0,000000*
[B]	461593,5	6,52746	0,000000	6,82318	0,0000*
[C]	463287,5	6,46935	0,000000	6,71136	0,000000*
[D]	486224,0	4,57862	0,000005	4,79536	0,000002*

Note: \* The result is statistically significant for  $p < 0.05$

The results of the Mann-Whitney U Test carried out for variable 'sex' indicate statistically significant differences ( $p < 0.05$ ) in the respondents' answers in the case of all analysed statements. In the case of variables (age, place of residence, education, political preferences) of not numerous categories, the Kruskal-Wallis Test was applied (Table 3). The results showed that in the case of statement [A] the statistically significant differences were identified in the case of place of residence ( $H(6, N = 2095) = 13,48565$   $p = ,0359$ ), education ( $H(3, N = 2058) = 10,79057$   $p = ,0129$ ) and political preferences ( $H(5, N = 2090) = 86,23299$   $p = ,0000$ ). The statistically significant differences in the distribution of answers to the statement [B] were observed for variable age ( $H(5, N = 2103) = 12,35249$   $p = ,0303$ ) and political preferences ( $H(5, N = 2098) = 52,26246$   $p = ,0000$ ). In the case of the statement [C], the Kruskal-Wallis test indicated the statistically significant differences for

variable 'place of residence' (H (6, N = 2106) = 19,18999 p = ,0039) and political preferences (H (5, N = 2100) = 58,81754 p = ,0000). The last statement under analysis [D] showed the differences in the distribution of answers for variable place of residence (H (6, N = 2099) = 13,04100 p = ,0424) and political preferences (H (5, N = 2093) = 56,72884 p = ,0000).

Table 3. The Kruskal-Wallis Test for Variables: Age, Place of Residence, Education and the Division of Political Leanings in Respect of Left-Right Preferences

Variable	N	Age	Place of residence	Education	Left-right division
[A]	2095	H (5, N = 2094) = 10,95033 p = ,0524	H (6, N = 2095) = 13,48565 p = ,0359*	H (3, N = 2058) = 10,79057 p = ,0129*	H (5, N = 2090) = 86,23299 p = ,0000*
[B]	2104	H (5, N = 2103) = 12,35249 p = ,0303*	H (6, N = 2104) = 3,842658 p = ,6980	H (3, N = 2065) = 3,133813 p = ,3707	H (5, N = 2098) = 52,26246 p = ,0000*
[C]	2106	H (5, N = 2105) = 9,377725 p = ,0949	H (6, N = 2106) = 19,18999 p = ,0039*	H (3, N = 2068) = 5,616985 p = ,1318	H (5, N = 2100) = 58,81754 p = ,0000*
[D]	2099	H (5, N = 2098) = 4,628293 p = ,4629	H (6, N = 2099) = 13,04100 p = ,0424*	H (3, N = 2061) = 3,747584 p = ,2900	H (5, N = 2093) = 56,72884 p = ,0000*

Note: \* The result is statistically significant for  $p < 0.05$

All the statements showed statistically significant correlations with low correlation strength for variable 'gender' and 'political leanings' ( $p < .01$ ) (Table 4). Moreover, in the case of age, a very poor positive correlation was observed ( $\rho = 0.06$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) for the statement [B]. A very poor positive correlation was also observed between education and the statement [A] ( $\rho = 0,057$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ).

Table 4. The Distribution of Spearman's Rank Correlation for Variables Gender, Age, Place of Residence, Education and Political Leanings in Respect of Left-Right Preferences

Variable	N	Gender	Age	Place of residence	Education	Left-right division
[A]	2095	-0,182*	0,029	0,023	0,057*	-0,143*
[B]	2104	-0,163*	0,060*	-0,010	-0,001	-0,101*
[C]	2106	-0,144*	0,040	0,023	-0,026	-0,093*
[D]	2099	-0,108*	0,017	0,057*	-0,011	-0,125*

Note: \* Correlations are significant with  $p < 0.05$



51.46% of surveyed women and 34.72% of men expressed that women were not represented sufficiently in Polish parliament. The opposing view was held by 32.48% of women and 39.2% of men. Considerable differences were identified in the division for age categories, in particular between the youngest women and men. In the category of 18–24 years, 55.55% of surveyed women agreed, and 15.15% disagreed with the statement [A]. In the case of men from the same age category, 19.04% agreed with the statement, and 39.05% of the surveyed disagreed. Similar differences occurred in the category of 25–34 years, in which 52.94% of the surveyed agreed with the statement [A], and 10.69% held the opposite view. Whereas among men in this age category the surveyed who disagreed with the statement [A] exceeded those who did agree with the difference 28.5% to 27.46%. The remaining older categories did not display such big differences between the replies of women and men. Both women and men who agreed with the statement that women do not have a sufficient representation in parliament predominated the surveyed who disagreed. However, the percentage of men who agreed with the statement was lower than the percentage of women in each age category.

The highest percentage of residents of the largest cities agreed with the statement [A]. In the cities with residents from 200,000 to 500,000, the percentage was 53.41 of the surveyed. The lowest percentage of the opponents of the statement [A] was observed among the voters living in the country (18.71%).

Education was an important factor in the estimation whether women's representation is sufficient. The higher the education, the stronger the view that too few women sit in parliament. Similar differences were noted in the case of age of the surveyed. Younger people, particularly women, identified not sufficient representation of women in parliament more often than older people. The number of respondents who agreed with the statement [A] grew along with the rising levels of education. 34.04% of the surveyed with primary education, 41.15% with secondary, and 47.75% with higher education shared the opinion. The lowest percentage of people who disagreed with the statement (19.21%) was observed in the group of respondents with higher education. The percentage of the surveyed who did not form an opinion on the statement decreased as the levels of education rose. They constituted 45.74% in a group with primary education, and 33.03% in a group with higher education.

The respondents with leftist and centre-left views mostly agreed with the statement [A], respectively 58.79% and 59.91%. In the group of respondents with centre, centre-right and rightist views such answers were given by 45.07%, 35.36%, and 33.49%, respectively. The surveyed with centre-right (28.04%) and rightist views (30.54%) more frequently opposed the statement on the underrepresentation

of women in parliament than those with centre-left (11.98%) and leftist views (20.36%). The respondents with leftist and centre-left views also constituted a lower percentage of people who were undecided (20.83% and 28.19%) than among the respondents with centre-right (36.58%) or right-wing views (35.97%).

In terms of the statement [B], 38.11% of women and 30% of men supported the current rules concerning the 35% quota of each gender on lists of candidates. In a group of surveyed men, more were against (33.76%) than for. In a group of surveyed women, 19.19% were against the currently binding quotas. A considerable percentage of women (42.69%) and men (36.24%) were not able to form their opinion on this matter. The difference between the percentage of the surveyed men who definitely agree (6.93%) and definitely disagree with the idea of quotas (16.63%) is significant.

In the case of the youngest category, the most significant differences were noted between women and men. In the group of youngest men, the number of opponents was the highest (47.62%) and the number of supporters of effective quotas was the lowest (22.85%) in comparison with other age categories. In the case of the youngest women, it was the opposite – supporters constituted 41%, and opponents constituted 16%, in comparison with the other women age groups.

In the groups of respondents with centre-right and rightist views, opponents outnumbered supporters. Quotas were supported by 30.89% of centre-right respondents, and 36.58% of them objected. In the case of rightist respondents, 28.38% supported quotas, and 33.11% were against. 43.31% of the respondents with leftist views supported quotas, and 23.05% of them objected. Only in the case of respondents with centre-left views, quotas were supported by more than a half of the surveyed (51.54%), and the lowest percentage was against (20.27%).

40.24% of women and 54.06% of men opposed the statement [C] that putting the same number of women and men on candidate lists should be obligatory. In the group of men, 27.03% definitely disagreed, and in the case of women – 14.42%. The supporters of the parity on lists constituted 20.16% of women respondents and 16.53% of men respondents. The fewest supporters (12.23%) and the highest number of opponents (51.84%) of introducing the women and men parities on candidate lists were observed among the respondents residing in rural villages.

The shift of the respondents views from the left to the right corresponded with a decrease of supporters and an increase of opponents of gender parity on candidate lists. Although the opponents of parities exceeded the supporters among the respondents with leftist and right-wing views, the parity was supported by 33.18% of the respondents with leftist views and 23.89% with centre left views. 37.32% of the respondents with leftist views and 41.59% with centre-left views opposed the

parity. The majority of respondents with centre-right or right-wing views opposed the introduction of women and men parity on candidate lists. In the case of the centre-right, they constituted 53.66%, and the right – 58.46%. 15.04% with centre-right views and 13.77% with right-wing views supported the parity.

Women respondents (34.19%) as well as men respondents (44.08%) opposed putting women and men in alternate order on lists of candidates. 21.66% of women and 18.7% of men supported the idea. The highest percentage of opponents was noted among the residents of rural villages (46.21%). Also, the lowest percentage of supporters (15.92%) was observed in this group. The highest percentage of supporters of the alternate order on the lists of candidates was noted among the residents of cities with 200,000 up to 500,000 residents (24.53%). In the case of declared political leanings, the shift from the left to the right was in line with the decreased percentage of respondents supporting the appearance of women and men on lists of candidates in alternate order. The respondents with leftist views supported the idea in the amount of 30.69%, with centre-left views – 25.44%, centre – 25.20%, centre-right – 16.73%, and rightist – 14.86%. More than a half of the respondents with right-wing views (50.9%) opposed such changes.

## Discussion and conclusions

The implementation of electoral women's quotas in Poland contributed to an increased percentage share of women on the lists of candidates, however, the number of seats won by women was lower than the introduced quota. The respondents who agreed that women are not represented sufficiently in parliament exceeded the respondents who opposed in our study. However, they did not constitute a majority. Some substantial differences in this matter occur between people with rightist and leftist leanings. The respondents with leftist leanings indicated that the number of women in parliament was too low, and right-wing supporters more frequently had the opposite view. In the 2015 survey, Polish women and men with rightist views were more likely than those with leftist views to agree with the statement that women are under-represented in politics (Musiał-Karg, 2015).

Wide differences in our research were also noted with regard to the gender of the respondents. Women more frequently than men stated that women are not sufficiently represented in parliament. The studies covering the majority of European countries could be referred to at this point. In all countries, women who believed that there ought to be more women in politics constituted a higher percentage than men (Fernández & Valiente, 2021).

Our research showed that the respondents more frequently indicated to the underrepresentation of women in parliament, however, at the same time, they were not in favour of introducing solutions aimed at changing this situation. Quota supporters constituted a majority, however, they accounted for only 34% of all the respondents. Similar research results were obtained in Ireland where low support for quotas was also observed, four years after the implementation (Keenan & McElroy, 2017).

In turn, the research conducted in Australia suggests that the general differences between genders in terms of supporting various types of gender parities are disappearing when political views are taken into consideration. Irrespective of gender, the respondents supporting a political party opting for quotas were more likely to share this view. Whereas women and men supporting the political party opposing quotas were more frequently against them, too. The correlation between the acceptance or the lack of acceptance for quotas with political preferences was more significant than the correlation with a gender difference (Beauregard, 2018).

Our studies showed that in the case of including the same number of women and men on the lists of candidates and putting them in alternate order, there were more opponents of such solutions than supporters. The latter solution could be particularly beneficial for women in the view of the position on the lists. However, the greatest differences occurred between women and men respondents in the youngest age category. Nearly a half of men opposed the effective quotas, and in the case of women it was 16%. Two times more young women supported quotas compared to young men. Similar differences concerned the opinion on whether women are sufficiently represented in parliament or not. The youngest men opposed quotas and women representation more frequently than men from other age group categories. The women in the lowest age group category expressed their support for quotas and shared the view on underrepresentation of women in parliament more often than women in older age categories.

Although the implementation of quotas resulted in an increase of elected women, there are considerable differences in different countries. The countries where parities were applied by 2000 had on average 2.4% more women in parliament than those countries which did not implement such regulations (Paxton, Hughes, & Painter II, 2010). The global average number of women in lower houses of parliament in January 2021 amounted to 25.6%. Considering the percentage of women in global population, the proportions are not deemed satisfactory, despite a noticeable increase compared to 2001 (18.8%) (Vojvodić, 2021).

The evolution of proportion of women in Belgian and Greek parliaments should be considered significant examples for the quotas influence. In 1993,

women constituted 9.4% in Belgium, 6% in Greece, and 13% in Poland. The implementation of quotas in Belgium in 1999 was accompanied by an increase of women mandates, in 2009, there were already 42% of women parliamentarians. After implementing the quotas in Greece, the percentage of women in parliament accounted to 20.7% (Górecki & Pierzgalski, 2022). In Poland, shortly before the introduction of thresholds, after the 2005 and 2007 elections, there were respectively 14.56% and 18.69% of women in the lower house. The introduction of quotas led to an increase of percentage of women in parliament in subsequent elections, respectively in 2011 – 23.91%, in 2015 – 27.17%, and in 2019 – 28.47% (Gwiazda, 2017; Górecki & Pierzgalski, 2022).

One should not identify views supporting quotas with the objectives of all women. The views on these matters differ among women supporting the left and women supporting the right (Allen & Goodman, 2021). 40.24% of women in our studies opposed mandatory inclusion of the same number of women and men on the lists, and 33.76% opposed the effective quotas. However, over a half of surveyed women agreed with the statement that women are not sufficiently represented in parliament.

The presented research results show that attitudes towards parities, quota system and putting different genders in alternate order on lists differ among the respondents with leftist and rightist views. The respondents with rightist or centre-right views tended to oppose implementation of changes which foster equal opportunities for women. It may have a connection with the fact that leftist circles and parties are more willing to accept the statutory quotas and parities, similarly to a voluntary implementation of quotas on the lists of candidates (Kittilson, 1999; Praud, 2012). The implementation of quotas first appeared in Poland within political parties' structures in the left-wing parties. It was the Polish left initiative to submit a proposal to introduce quotas in the electoral law. The same applied to other European countries. For example in Denmark, the influence of feminist ideas and activation of women was particularly visible in the Social Democratic Party and Socialist People's Party, and gender equality became for these an official political objective (Siim, 2000). In Portugal, it was the evolution of views in the leftist Socialist Party which led to the introduction of the quota system (Baum & Espírito-Santo, 2012). In Hungary, with no statutory quota system, the leftist parties voluntarily applied such solutions when creating the lists of candidates, and the voters with leftist views more frequently supported the implementation of quotas.

The conclusions of conducted research are not favourable for the supporters of the implementation of quota system in Poland, and its further changes. The majority of respondents did not support the currently binding quota system. They also

opposed or remained neutral towards the implementation of an equal representation of women and men on the candidate lists. Nevertheless, the differences between women and men in the youngest groups of respondents are notable, larger than in the case of women and men in different age categories. It would be advisable to do further research, especially among the youngest voters, in order to find the reason for such a disparity. It may be relevant in terms of changes which might occur as next generations of electors enter their adult life. The issues related to gender quotas on candidate lists will continue to be under discussion in the coming years.

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