



Gender Balance in Politics

The composition of political assemblies and executives at all territorial levels often fails to reflect the gender diversity of the population they represent. The European Parliament elections held in June 2024 were an opportunity for progress, but rather resulted in a decline in the representation of women. Progress towards gender balance in political representation and decision-making is slow, particularly at the lower levels of governance (i.e. regional assemblies and local councils).

The European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) regularly monitors the situation in the EU and its 27 Member States (EU-27). This brief presents EIGE's data as of November 2024 on the representation of women and men in key political decision-making positions at the EU and national levels.

Enhanced strategies required beyond quotas for gender balance in parliaments

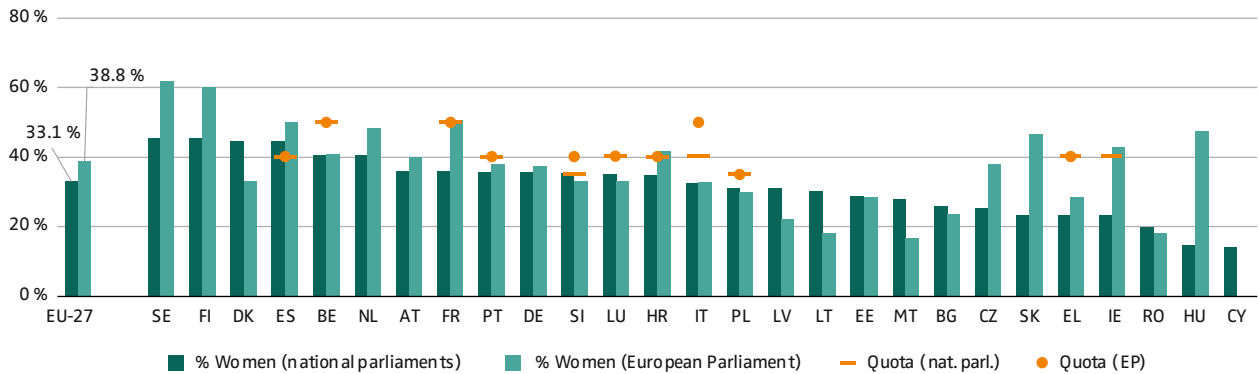
In November 2024, the members of the European Parliament (MEPs) comprised 38.8 % women and 61.2 % men ([Figure 1](#)), whilst the combined members of the single/lower houses of national parliaments in the Member States comprised 66.9 % men and 33.1 % women.

Of the 11 Member States with quotas for candidate lists for national parliaments, the majority have the same provisions for elections to the European Parliament. There are three exceptions: both Slovenia and Italy apply a higher quota to the European elections (respectively 40 % versus 35 % and 50 % versus 40 %), and Ireland has a 40 % quota for national elections but none for the European elections.

Spain (44.6 % women in parliament, 40 % quota) and Slovenia (35.6 % women in parliament, 35 % quota) are the two Member States in which the share of women members in the single/lower house of parliament has reached or surpassed the level of the legislated candidate quota. To date, the quota set for the European Parliament has been met in three countries: Spain (50 % of women MEPs, 40 % quota), France (50.6 % against 50 % quota) and Croatia (41.7 % with 40 % quota).

Evidence suggests that the quotas might have had an impact on boosting the share of women in parliaments (see [Figure 1](#)), but these need to be accompanied by deterrent sanctions (such as a rejection of candidate lists and/or financial penalty) and appropriate systems (i.e. applying 'zipped lists' where men and women have to be alternated, or rank every certain number of positions, etc.) to ensure women candidates are placed in 'winnable' seats to effectively result in more gender-balanced parliaments. For example, in Spain, the quota of 40 % of either sex has to be respected every five positions in the list.

Figure 1 | Share of women members in the single/lower house of national parliaments and in the European Parliament by Member State, quota threshold for candidate lists for national and European elections, November 2024

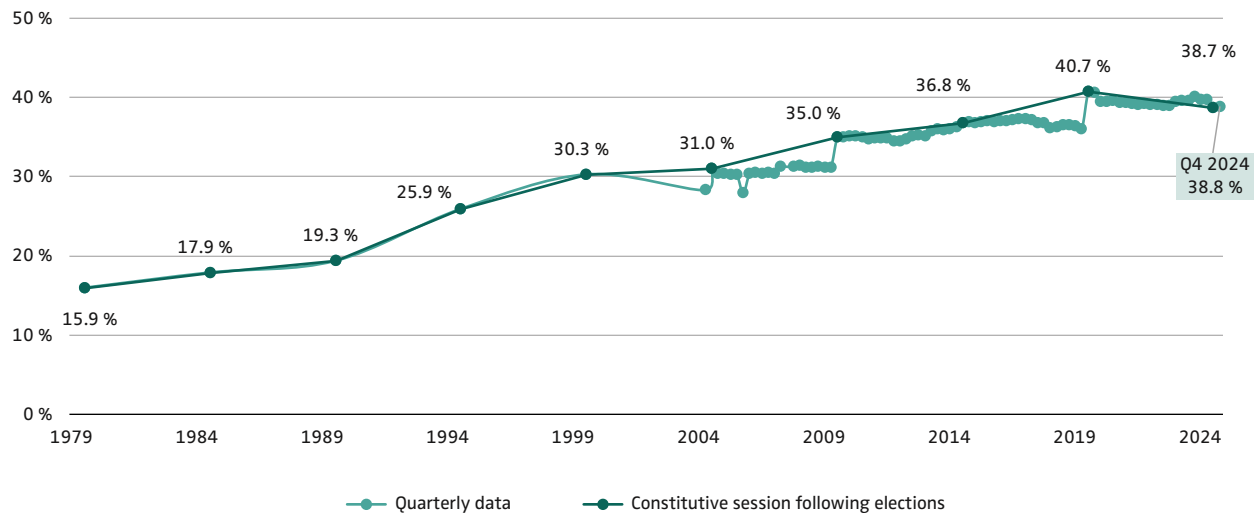


Source: EIGE Gender Statistics Database: [national parliaments](#) and [European Parliament](#).
 NB: Countries sorted by descending % of women in national parliaments. Quota: BE & FR (50 %); EL, ES, HR, LU & PT (40 %); PL (35 %); IE (40 % for national elections, none for European Elections), IT (40 % for national elections, 50 % for European elections), SI (35 % for national elections, 40 % for European Elections). MT does not have a legislative quota to candidate lists but a 'gender corrective' mechanism, which has no equivalent for elected MEPs for Malta.

2024 European Parliament elections – a missed opportunity for further progress

Following the June 2024 elections, a total of 279 women (38.8 %) and 440 men (61.2 %) took their seats at the constitutive session of the new European Parliament in July ⁽¹⁾. This was the first-ever European Parliament election in which the share of women MEPs fell compared to the previous election (from 40.7 % in June 2019) ([Figure 2](#)). The MEPs elected Ms Roberta Metsola to lead the Parliament.

Figure 2 | Share of women members of the European Parliament, quarterly and representation following constitutive session, 1979–2024 Q4



Source: [1979–1999 data from the European Parliament](#). Quarterly and constitutive sessions (corresponding to Q3 (third quarter) in all election years) data between 2004 and 2024 from EIGE's [Gender Statistics Database](#).

⁽¹⁾ Representing 719 of the 720 MEPs anticipated by EU legislation. One seat for Spain was not yet filled. [Data published by the European Parliamentary Research Service](#) shows 38.5 % women because they count 277 women and record one MEP with gender 'other'.

Uneven representation of women and men MEPs according to age

The youngest MEP was aged 23, whilst the eldest was 77 years old. The average age of MEPs across the Member States stands at 50, and data by sex shows that women are on average 3 years younger than men (48.2 versus 51.1).

There are more women (60 %, or 9 out of 15) MEPs aged under 30 compared to men (40 %, 6 out of 15) (Figure 3). Although the 30–39 age group is gender balanced (with at least 40 % of each gender), men account for around two thirds of the older age categories: 40–59 (63.2 %) and 60+ (68.2 %).

Figure 3 | Women and men MEPs by sex and age, November 2024



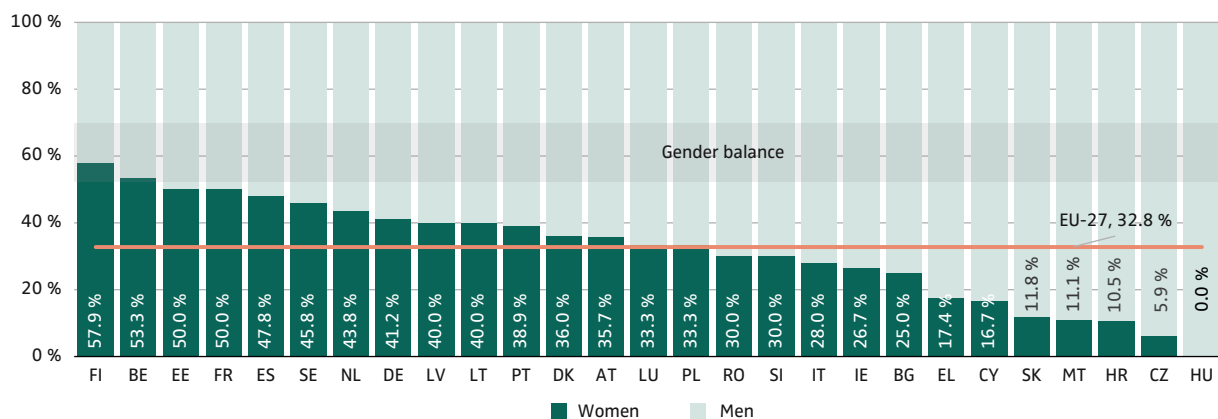
Source: EIGE ad hoc data collection (not published).

More women ministers needed in national governments in the EU

As of November 2024, senior ministers with a seat in the cabinet were predominantly male, representing 67.2 % of the positions. The proportion of women in government has seen a slight decline compared to November 2023, decreasing by 0.6 percentage points to 33.4 %.

There are notable differences between Member States. Governments were gender balanced (at least 40 % of each gender) in 10 countries (BE, DE, EE, ES, FR, LV, LT, NL, FI, SE) and remained predominantly composed of men in 4 countries: Slovakia (2 women out of 17, 11.8 %), Malta (2 out of 18, 11.1 %), Croatia (2 out of 19, 10.5 %) and Czechia, which has 1 woman in its 17-member cabinet (5.9 %). Hungary has had an all-male cabinet for over a year since the resignation of the only woman minister in August 2023 (Figure 4).

Figure 4 | Share of women and men in governments (senior ministers), November 2024

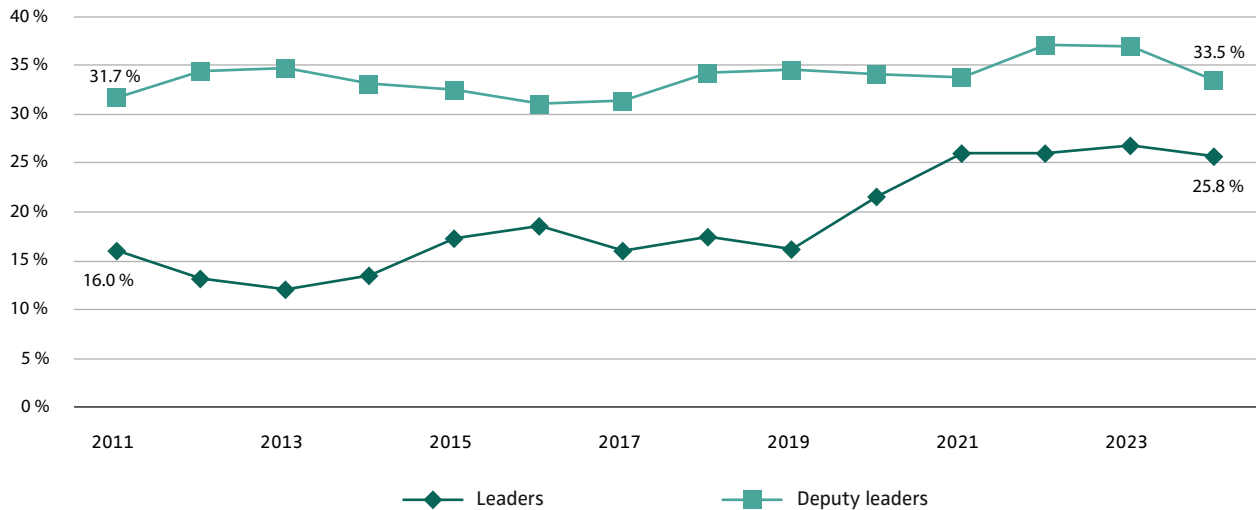


Source: EIGE Gender Statistics Database: National governments.

Majority of prominent political parties in the EU are chaired by men

Political parties are key to selecting candidates and shaping their gender representation, acting as gatekeepers for gender equality in parliament. However, EIGE data shows that major parties still struggle with gender balance. In the EU, women leading major political parties rose from 16 % in 2011 to 25.8 % in 2024, though men still hold three out of four leadership positions. Women's representation in deputy leadership roles has shown a progressive increase, now reaching 33.5 %. However, this represents a slight decline from 2023, but the power imbalance remains clear (Figure 5).

Figure 5 | Share of women leaders and deputy leaders of major political parties, EU-27, 2011–2024



Source: EIGE Gender Statistics Database: [major political parties' leaders](#) and [major political parties' deputy leaders](#).

At least 10 years to reach gender balance at lower levels of political decision-making

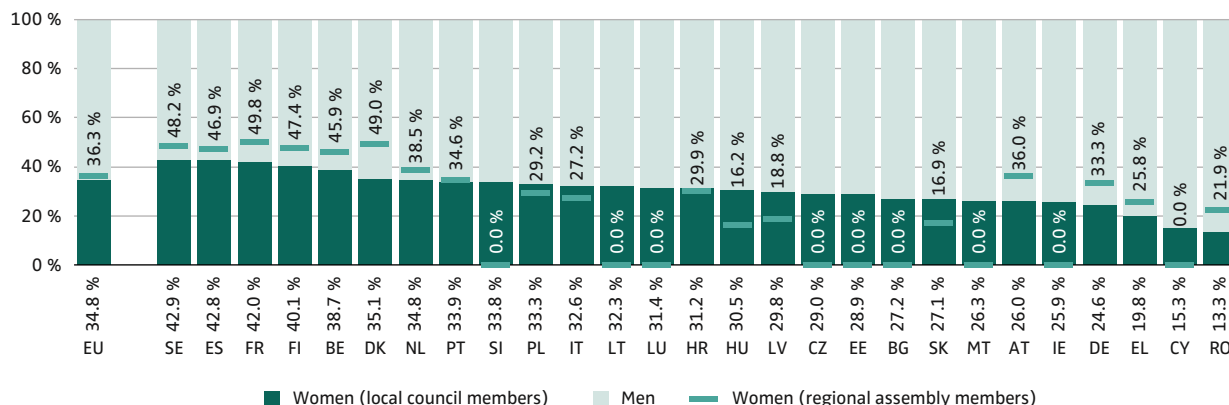
As of November 2024, women accounted for 36.3 % of members of regional assemblies across the EU, and 34.8 % of members of local/municipal councils (Figure 6). The EU situation at local/municipal councils is heavily influenced by France, which contributes more than two fifths of the councillors recorded (44 %). If France is excluded, the share of women local/municipal councillors across the remaining 26 Member States drops to 29.2 %.

From the 19 Member States in which there is a regional level endowed with powers of self-government, each gender had at least 40 % representation in both local/municipal and regional assemblies in Spain, France, Finland and Sweden. Belgium and Denmark have gender-balanced assemblies in the regions covered (45.9 % and 49 % women, respectively) ⁽²⁾, but lower shares of women in local/municipal councils (38.7 % and 35.1 % respectively). The Netherlands is close behind, edging towards gender balance in the regional assemblies (38.5 %), but with a lower proportion of women in local/municipal councils (34.8 %).

The remaining countries do not have gender balance in either level of governance. In Romania, women make up around one fifth of members of both local/municipal councils (13.3 %) and only 21.9 % of the regional assembly members.

⁽²⁾ Regional data for Belgium covers the Flemish Region, the Brussels Region and the Walloon Region, in addition to two German-speaking communities and the French-speaking community (Federation Wallonia Brussels). The competences of the Flemish Community have been unified with those of the Flemish Region and are exercised by one directly elected Flemish Parliament based in Brussels.

Figure 6 | Share of women and men in members of regional assemblies and local/municipal councils in EU Member States, 2024



Source: EIGE Gender Statistics Database: [local/municipal councils](#) and [regional assemblies](#).

NB: There are no regions endowed with powers of self-government in BG, EE, IE, CY, LT, LU, MT or SI. Data for regional assemblies in Portugal covers only the autonomous regions of the Azores and Madeira.

All data is based on data by country published in EIGE’s Gender Statistics Database and accessible [here](#). Comprehensive information about data specifications can be found on the metadata tab of each indicator (e.g. [here](#)).



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