

WOMEN IN POWER AND DECISION-MAKING IN GEORGIA

Gender equality in political representation and leadership is not just a matter of social justice but a fundamental pillar of inclusive governance. Empowering women to engage actively in political processes and assume leadership roles realizes the full potential of a diverse society, and enhances the quality and effectiveness of decision-making. **Gender-balanced leadership fosters greater legitimacy, trust and accountability, ultimately strengthening democratic institutions and advancing progress.**

Women are underrepresented in the parliament and local government.

The enactment of a gender quota mechanism by the Georgian Parliament in 2020 has significantly improved women’s political participation. This positive trend is expected to be reversed by the abolishment of mandatory electoral quotas in 2024.¹

In the Parliament, the share of women MPs has risen to 19 per cent as of 2023, marking a notable increase from 14 per cent in 2019 (Figure 1).² However, this is still far from the global average of 26.5 per cent of women in national parliaments (Figure 2).³

FIGURE 1:
Proportion of women MPs, 2016–2022
(percentage)

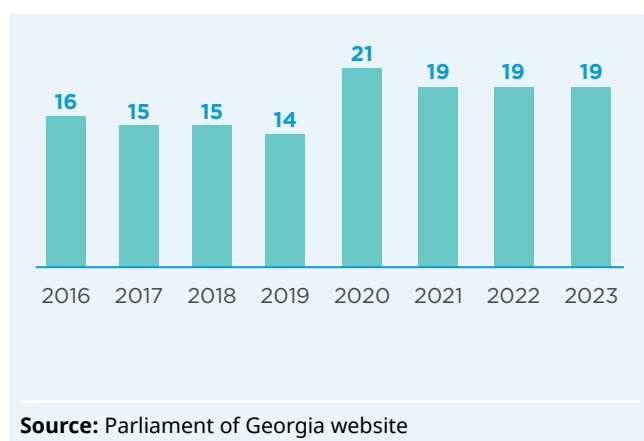
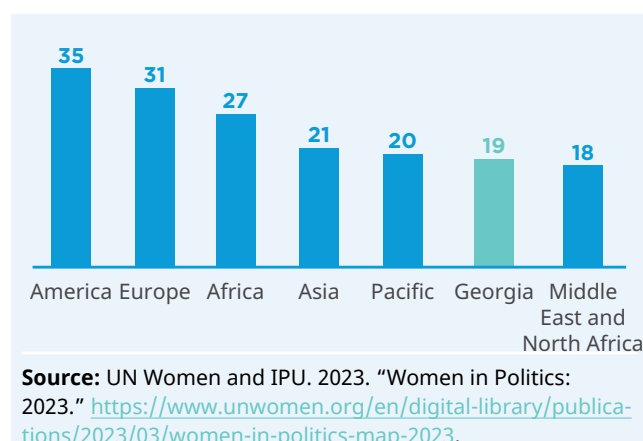
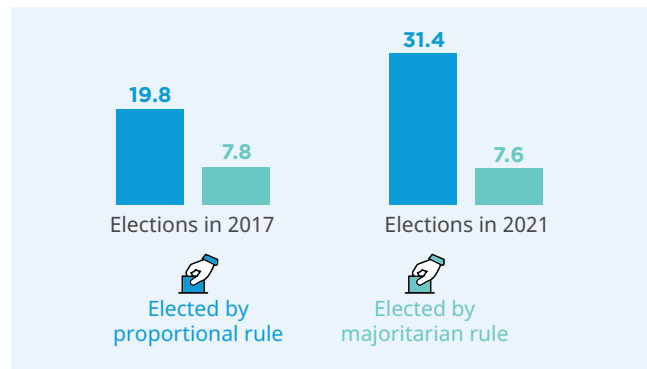


FIGURE 2:
Proportion of women MPs, by region, 2023
(percentage)



In local self-governance bodies, the percentage of women elected increased from 13.8 per cent in 2017 to 24 per cent in 2021, reflecting a significant advancement. Women achieved notable success from the proportional lists, winning 31.4 per cent (441) of mandates, which is a considerable rise above their 19.8 per cent win in 2017 (Figure 3). The 2021 local elections for mayor showed slight progress, with three women elected compared to one in 2017. Although only one woman was elected out of the five mayors of self-governing cities, 17 per cent of candidates were women. In addition, although only two women were elected mayor of 59 self-governing communities, Tbilisi had the highest representation of female candidates. There were no female governors of the regions of Georgia among the nine centrally appointed governors.⁴

FIGURE 3: Proportion of women elected to the local self-government bodies, by election year (percentage)



Source: NDI 2022

Women are underrepresented in decision-making roles in the executive government and public service.

By the start of 2023, **out of 12 ministers** (excluding Prime Minister, who was also man), **only two** (17 per cent) were women, down from four in 2021.⁵ Even at the deputy ministerial level, women are not fairly represented. In 2021, **26 per cent** of deputy ministers were women, but by 2023, their share had dropped to **23.5 per cent**.

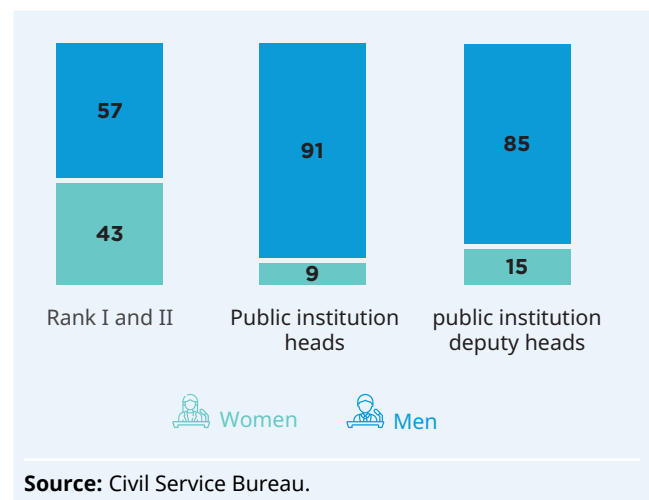
FIGURE 4: All things being equal, would you support female or male candidate for the following positions?

Ministries	Ministers		Deputy Ministers	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
State Ministry for Reconciliation and Civic Equality		1	2	1
Ministry of Regional Development and Infrastructure	1		2	1
Ministry of Justice	1		4	1
Ministry of Internal Affairs	1		4	
Ministry of Defence	1		4	1
Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development	1		5	2
Ministry of Foreign Affairs	1		4	1
Ministry of Finance	1		4	1
Ministry of Education and Science	1		2	1
Ministry of Internally Displaced Persons from the Occupied Territories, Labour, Health and Social Affairs	1		1	2
Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture	1		4	1
Ministry of Culture, Sport and Youth		1	3	
Total	10	2	39	12

Source: Government of Georgia

In Georgia’s public service sector, women comprise about one third of civil servants—when including the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA) in the calculation—and 59 per cent when excluding the MIA. Women comprise 43 per cent within the rank I and rank II managerial positions (Figure 5) and 34 per cent within the rank I managerial positions. However, the gender gap widens significantly when considering the gender balance in top managerial positions: women make up only 9 per cent of heads of public entities and 15 per cent of deputy heads of public entities. These data show that regardless of the relative increase in women’s participation in public service in recent years (39 per cent of women in rank I and II managerial positions in 2018, compared to 43 per cent in 2022), top ranking positions in public service remain dominated almost exclusively by men. Moreover, the latest data show that there has been a tangible decrease in women’s representation at the level of heads of public agencies—from 15 per cent of women in 2019 to 9 per cent in 2022.⁶

FIGURE 5: Proportion of women and men in Rank I and II positions in civil service and heads and deputy heads of public institutions, 2022 (percentage)

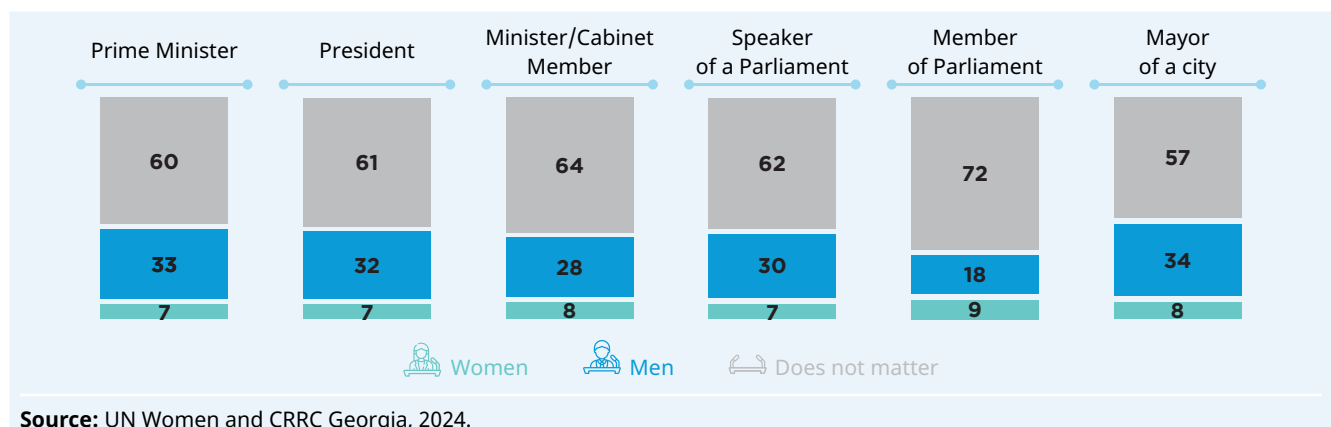


The representation of people with disabilities among public servants remains low, with only 0.30 per cent of women and 0.16 per cent of men with disabilities. Moreover, among male and female public servants with disabilities, only 23 per cent held managerial positions in 2022.⁷

While stereotypes persist, majority of Georgian public supports gender equality in politics.

Recent public opinion study shows that most of the public (57% or more) suggests that one’s sex does not matter when considering a person’s candidacy for president, prime minister, member of parliament or government. However, among those preferring one sex over another, men are preferred in every role.⁸

FIGURE 6: All things being equal, would you support female or male candidate for the following positions?



Every fourth person in Georgia (27 per cent) believes that traditional views on women’s and men’s roles in society is the biggest obstacles for women in Georgia to engage in politics.

Irrespective the stereotypes, majority of Georgia’s population favour more women participating in politics:



63% of Georgia’s population believe that increased involvement of women in politics would benefit the country.



65% believe that women’s presence in Parliament will lead to them having greater influence on political priorities and policies.⁹

Violence against women greatly hinders women’s participation in politics and decision-making.

More than half (54 per cent) of female candidates have encountered various forms of violence and harassment during their election campaigns or political careers, with these incidents frequently involving men from opposing political parties.¹⁰ Alarming, more than half (52 per cent) of those who experienced such violence did not report it to any authority due to reasons such as distrust in the authorities, fear of damaging their or their party’s reputation, or a belief that their reports would not be taken seriously.¹¹

Workplace sexual harassment remains prevalent in Georgia, including across the public sector.

Approximately one third (34 per cent) of civil servants have reported experiencing sexual harassment at work, including 20 per cent of men and 41 per cent of women.¹² Since 2018, more than a dozen ministries or state agencies, including the Ministry of Defence, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development, have developed and implemented internal mechanisms to prevent and respond to sexual harassment. However, the Law of Georgia on Public Service does not provide for specific mechanisms on workplace sexual harassment, such as mandatory internal policies and/or staff trainings.

Key recommendations:

- **Establish well-defined internal gender policies within political parties:** Support and empower women in politics by addressing issues like violence and sexual harassment. Set targets for women’s representation in leadership positions. Create mechanisms for their promotion and advancement within the party. Establish mechanisms to monitor and evaluate the implementation of gender-related policies.
- **Develop comprehensive legislation and policies to increase women’s representation:** Aim for equal representation with 50 per cent women and 50 per cent men in decision-making bodies. Align with the goals outlined at the sixty-fifth session of the Commission on the Status of Women.
- **Address stagnation of women’s representation in public service:** Implement strategies to overcome barriers hindering women’s advancement. Provide equal opportunities for career advancement, mentorship and training programmes. Empower women to take on leadership roles within the civil service sector.
- **Implement measures to address and prevent violence against women in politics:** Focus on psychological violence and social media harassment. Create gender-sensitive institutions and legislative entities to enable women to exercise their political rights without fear of intimidation or harm.
- **Introduce legislative amendments on sexual harassment:** Ensure that the amendments require public service entities to adopt internal mechanisms for preventing and responding to sexual harassment and to implement mandatory sexual harassment training for staff.

Endnotes

1. Parliament of Georgia. 2024. "Parliament endorsing amendments to election code in III reading on gender quotas." <https://shorturl.at/VGUiX>.
2. Ibid.
3. UN Women and IPU (Inter-Parliamentary Union). 2023. "Women in Politics: 2023." <https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2023/03/women-in-politics-map-2023>.
4. Government of Georgia, "Governors." https://www.gov.ge/index.php?lang_id=GEO&sec_id=373
5. Government of Georgia. "Members of the Government." https://www.gov.ge/index.php?lang_id=GEO&sec_id=27.
6. UN Women. 2023. "Gender Impact Assessment of the Law of Georgia on Public Service." Brief. <https://georgia.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2023/09/gender-impact-assessment-of-the-law-of-georgia-on-public-service>.
7. Civil Service Bureau. 2021. Statistics in Civil Service 2021. <http://csb.gov.ge/en/navigations/საჯარო-სამსახურის-სისტემა/საჯარო-სამსახურის-პოლიტიკა/საჯარო-სამსახურის-სტატისტიკა/>.
8. UN Women and CRRC Georgia. 2024. "Gender Equality Attitudes Survey" (upcoming).
9. Ibid.
10. UN Women. 2023. "Violence against Women in Politics in Georgia." Brief. <https://georgia.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2023/08/violence-against-women-in-politics-in-georgia>.
11. Ibid.
12. UN Women and CRRC (Caucasus Research Resource Center). 2021. Workplace Sexual Harassment in the Civil Service in Georgia. <https://georgia.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2021/09/workplace-sexual-harassment-in-the-civil-service-in-georgia>.