

2025 PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS: AN ANALYSIS OF AN ELECTORAL COMPETITION

Preliminary analysis of candidates through the lens of gender equality

Chisinau 2025

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On September 28, 2025, regular parliamentary elections will be held in the Republic of Moldova to elect 101 deputies to the 12th Parliament of the Republic of Moldova, the sole legislative and supreme representative body of the people. The election will be declared valid if at least one-third of the voters registered on the electoral rolls turn out to vote. Access to Parliament is conditional on reaching the electoral threshold established by law: 5% for political parties, 7% for electoral blocs, and 2% for independent candidates. Between July 20 and August 19, 2025, political parties, electoral blocs, and independent candidates submitted the necessary documents to the Central Electoral Commission to be registered as electoral competitors.

The CEC Regulation (Decision No. 1204/2023, amended in 2025) stipulates, first and foremost, that the nomination of candidates shall be based on the principles of legality, transparency, fairness, and equal opportunity; election officials are required to examine all files openly, impartially, and without discrimination. Parties and blocs may submit lists of candidates with a minimum of 51 and a maximum of 111 persons, and independent candidates must submit subscription lists with 2,000–2,500 signatures, with a favorable provision for women: independent female candidates may be registered with at least 1,000 signatures. The regulations then detail the stages of submission, verification, and drawing of lots for the documents to determine the order of registration on the ballot. For independents, the procedure involves setting up an initiative group to collect the necessary signatures, but the candidate may also opt to collect signatures individually. The CEC determines the place and period for submitting documents, forms commissions to receive them, and verifies compliance with legal requirements; the lists submitted must include biographical data, declarations of assets, and, where applicable, the candidate's electoral symbol.

From a gender perspective, the law provides explicit mechanisms to ensure equitable representation for both sexes. According to Article 68(3) of Electoral Code No. 325/2022, lists of candidates for parliamentary and local elections shall be drawn up in compliance with the minimum representation quota of 40% for both sexes, and the positioning of candidates on the lists shall be done according to the formula: a minimum of four candidates of the opposite sex for every ten places. The regulatory framework emphasizes that these requirements are mandatory; failure to comply with them may result in the rejection of the list by the CEC. Parties and electoral blocs may replace or add candidates up to 30 days before election day (in accordance with the maximum limit provided for in Article 111(2) of the Electoral Code), and up to 10 days before election day they may change the order or exclude candidates or withdraw the entire list. These changes must be approved by the competent body of the party and validated by the Central Election Commission, which shall adopt a decision within a maximum of 5 days. The CEC may reject changes that do not comply with the conditions set out in Article 68(3) and Article 115 of the Electoral Code.

In addition, both the law on political parties and the CEC's decisions require parties to use part of their public subsidies to promote the participation of women and young people, and for each woman elected to parliament or local government, parties receive proportional financial supplements.

The Partnership for Development Center (CPD) has been monitoring parliamentary and local elections from a gender equality perspective for more than 15 years. The analysis of the regular parliamentary elections of September 28, 2025, covers several areas: (i) how men and women are presented on the list of candidates: compliance with the minimum representation quota of 40% for both sexes when drawing up the lists of candidates for the early parliamentary elections and the positioning of candidates on the lists in accordance with the latest legislation (a minimum of four candidates for every ten places); (ii) the income and economic opportunities of male and female candidates: analysis of the income declarations of male and female candidates and correlation with their presence on the lists of candidates. (iii) access of male and female candidates to the media: the analysis covers four types of media products: news, talk shows, election debates, and commercials. The purpose of the monitoring is to identify the level of

presence of women in general in the television media during the election campaign and to correlate this with their presence on the candidate lists. **(iv)** voters' perceptions of female and male candidates: this analysis was based on an opinion poll in which respondents comment on gender roles in the family, household, and society; **(v)** parties' electoral programs: examination of political commitments to gender equality and inclusion by assessing the measures and promises made in electoral programs and the willingness of parties to support legislative initiatives in this area; **(vi)** gender analysis of lower-level electoral bodies and the electoral apparatus: assessment of the composition of constituency councils, electoral offices, and electronic system operators to identify the degree of compliance with the principle of gender balance and barriers that may limit women's participation in election administration structures.

This document is the second preliminary report in the process of monitoring the parliamentary elections of September 28, 2025, carried out by the Partnership for Development Center (CPD) from a gender perspective. The report aims to assess how electoral competitors comply with legal obligations regarding the application of the double quota system and the principles of equal opportunities, as well as to provide a detailed analysis of the demographic and socio-economic characteristics of the candidates. A total of 21 electoral competitors—11 political parties, 4 electoral blocs, and 4 independent candidates—are examined to highlight both compliance with the regulatory framework and how political actors implement their commitments to gender equality and equitable representation.

GLOSSARY

CEC – Central Election Commission

PAS – Action and Solidarity Party (

PDA – Political Party "Democracy at Home" (

PP CUB - Political Party Coalition for Unity and Prosperity

PP ALDE - Political Party Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe

PNM - Political Party

PSDE - Political Party European Social Democratic Party

PP MRM - Political Party RESPECT MOLDOVA MOVEMENT

BE PATRIOTIC - Electoral Bloc "Patriotic Alliance of Socialists, Communists, Heart and Future of Moldova"

BE ALTERNATIVA - Electoral Bloc "ALTERNATIVA"

BE ÎMPREUNĂ - Electoral Bloc "ÎMPREUNĂ"

PP LOC - Political Party League of Cities and Communes

PP AUR - Political Party ALLIANCE FOR THE UNION OF ROMANIANS

PAM - Political Party Alliance "MOLDOVENII"

PL - Liberal Party

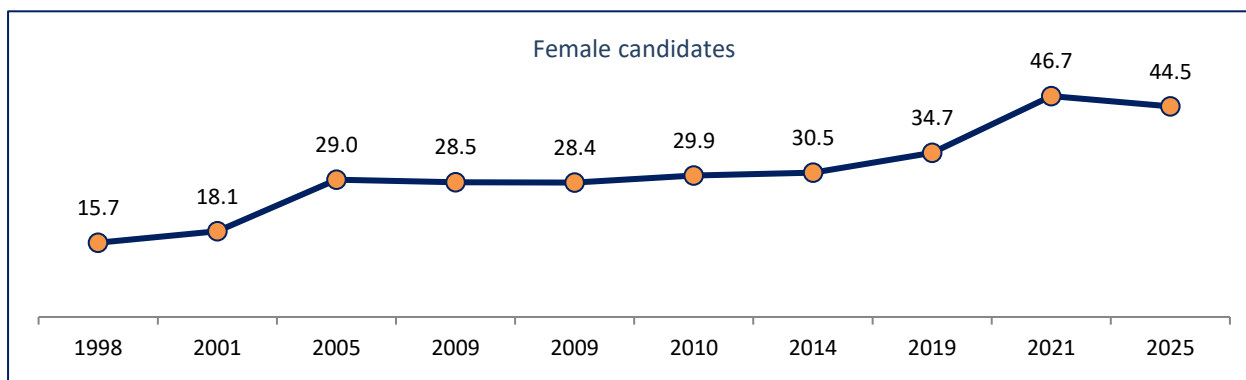
BE BUN - "Blocul Unirea Națiunii" Electoral Bloc

CI - Independent Candidates

GENDER REPRESENTATION ON POLITICAL PARTY CANDIDATE LISTS

The 2025 parliamentary elections are marked by a relatively balanced representation of women on candidate lists. According to data provided by the Central Electoral Commission, women make up 44.5% of all registered candidates, a figure that indicates a relatively balanced gender representation on electoral lists. This representation is largely the result of the implementation of legislative provisions that require political parties to comply with a certain gender parity (40%) when drawing up candidate lists. However, compared to the 2021 parliamentary elections, when women accounted for 46.7% of candidates, we see a slight decrease in their share. This dynamic suggests that legislative mechanisms must be supported by real political commitments and concrete measures to ensure both the numerical presence of women on candidate lists and their effective participation in the electoral competition and subsequent decision-making processes.

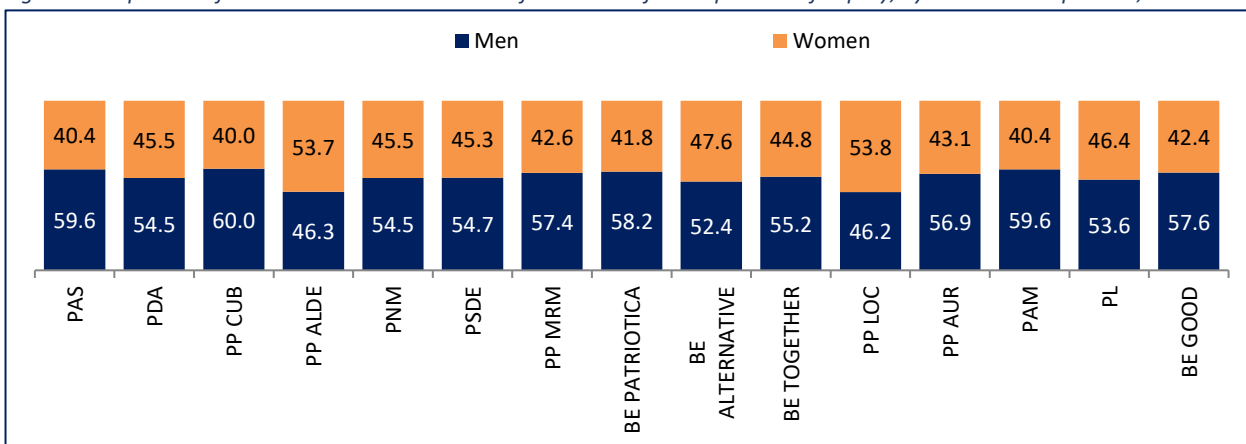
Figure 1. Share of women among candidates for the position of deputy, %



Source: CPD calculations based on data provided by the Central Election Commission, 2025

Although compliance with the gender quota was a condition for admission to the electoral competition, the way in which political parties applied this requirement reveals differences in their commitment to promoting gender equality. All political parties participating in the 2025 parliamentary elections complied with the provisions of the Electoral Code¹, which imposes a minimum gender representation threshold on candidate lists. However, a comparative analysis of the electoral lists shows that some parties strictly limited themselves to complying with the minimum mandatory quota, while others went beyond the legal requirements, including more than 50% women among their candidates (PP LOC, PP ALDE). This variation reflects two aspects: (i) the different degrees to which gender equality is embraced as a political value and strategic objective in the candidate selection process; (ii) the greater capacity to ensure balanced representation on smaller lists.

Figure 2. Proportion of women and men on the lists of candidates for the position of deputy, by electoral competitors, %

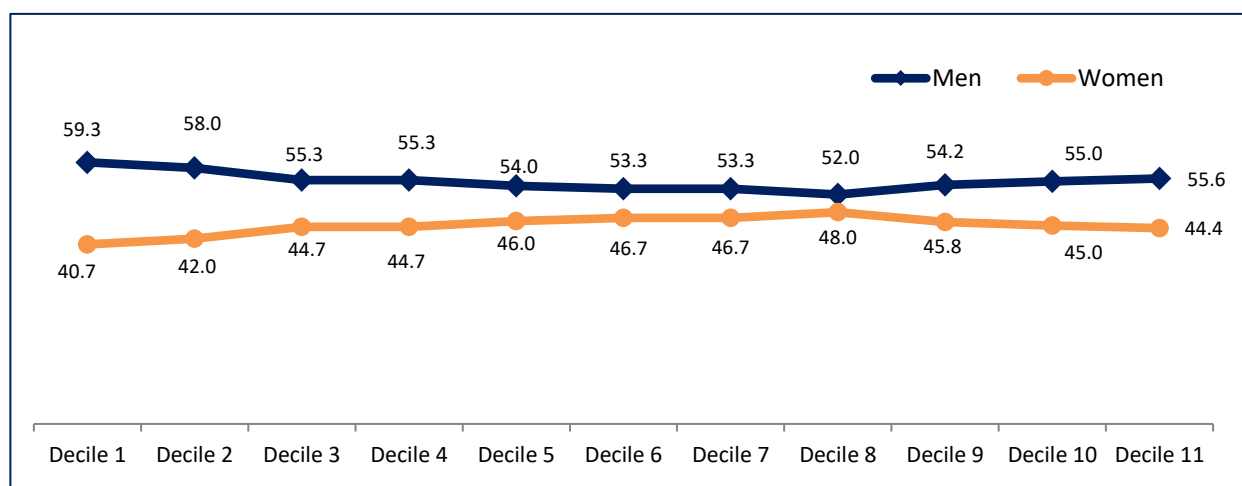


¹ Electoral Code, Art. 68(3), https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=149860&lang=ro#

Source: CPD calculations based on data provided by the Central Election Commission, 2025

The proportion of women in the top places on the list exceeds the 40% threshold. The representation of women in the eligible segments of the electoral lists provides a more nuanced picture of the parties' commitment to gender equality. Although the numerical presence of women on candidate lists is relatively balanced, an analysis of their positioning reveals some fluctuations. In the top 10 positions, considered the most competitive and with the highest chances of securing a parliamentary seat, women represent 40.7% of all candidates, while in the next decile (positions 11–20) the proportion of women rises slightly to 42%. Although these figures indicate representation close to parity in eligible areas, they mark a slight decline from the 2021 elections, when 42.7% of candidates in the first decile were women. This trend suggests that, despite overall progress, parties remain cautious about placing women in positions with the best chances of entering Parliament, which may negatively influence their effective representation in the legislature.

Figure 3. Positioning of women and men on the lists of candidates for the position of deputy, by gender and decile, %



Source: CPD calculations based on data provided by the Central Election Commission, 2025

Legislative changes introducing the double quota system have fundamentally changed the way women are positioned on electoral lists. The graph below on the trend in the positioning of female candidates on lists, by deciles, reflects the impact of electoral legislation on women's real chances of eligibility.

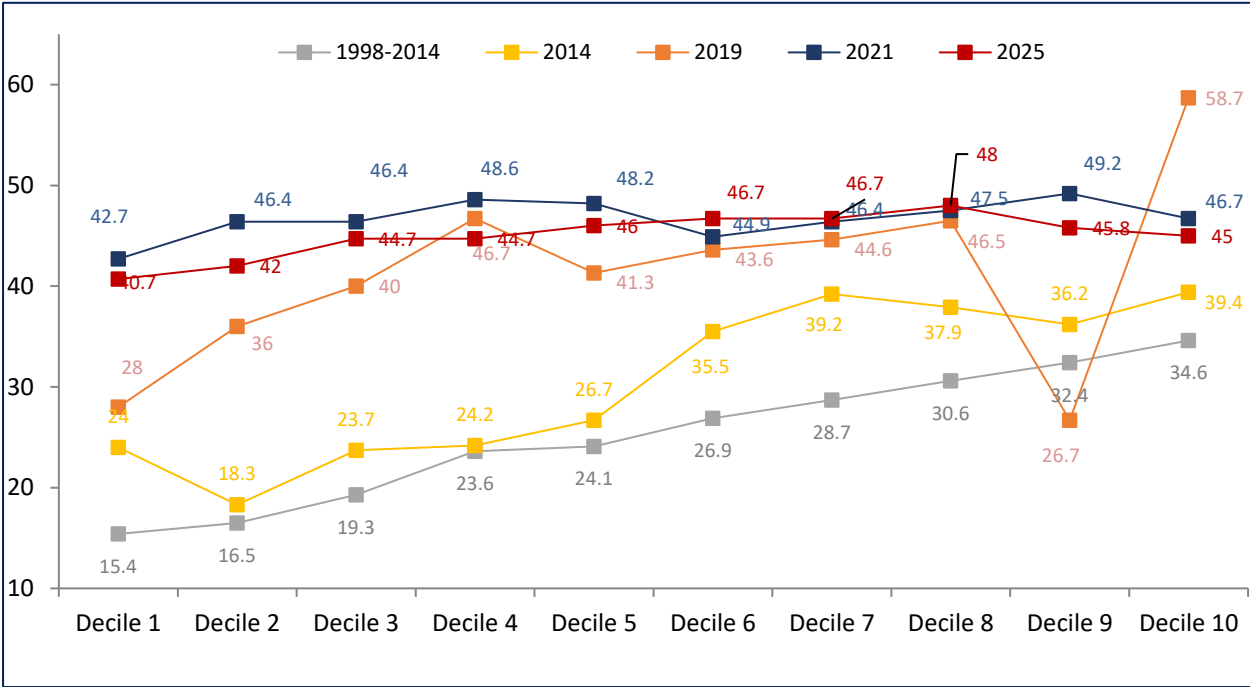
If we analyze the evolution carefully, we see that before 2016, women were disproportionately placed at the bottom of the lists: their share increased noticeably in the last deciles—that is, in positions with low chances of eligibility—while in the first deciles, where there is the highest chance of obtaining a mandate, their presence was much lower. In 2016, the 40% gender quota was introduced for the first time, but it applied to the entire list, with no rules on placement, which allowed parties to formally comply with the numerical quota but continue to place most female candidates at the bottom of the lists.

In 2019, a double quota system was approved, applied only to local elections at that time and with a special derogation, whereby each group of 10 candidates had to include at least three people of the opposite sex. This formula began to gradually change the distribution pattern but did not eliminate the tendency for women to be oversaturated in the lower deciles. The essential change will take place in 2021, when the double quota system comes into full effect: a minimum of 40% for both sexes and at least 4 candidates of the same sex in each group of 10 places. From this point on, the representation of women on the lists becomes balanced across the entire structure of the lists, including in the top deciles, i.e., in eligible positions. The difference between their share at the top and bottom of the lists disappears, showing that the legislative changes have not only strengthened the obligation to comply with the quota, but have fundamentally changed party practice, transforming it from a formal exercise into a real mechanism for ensuring equal opportunities for women in electoral competition. It is important to note that this quota works symmetrically: it protects both women and men in situations where one gender could become underrepresented. A concrete example is the 2023 local general elections², when some

² <https://progen.md/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/Raport-Alegeri-combinat-1.pdf>

parties presented lists with a lower proportion of men, and the Central Election Commission forced them to comply with the requirement of balanced representation. Thus, if it is maintained, the double quota system will ensure fair representation of both genders on electoral lists and guarantee real chances of eligibility for women and men alike.

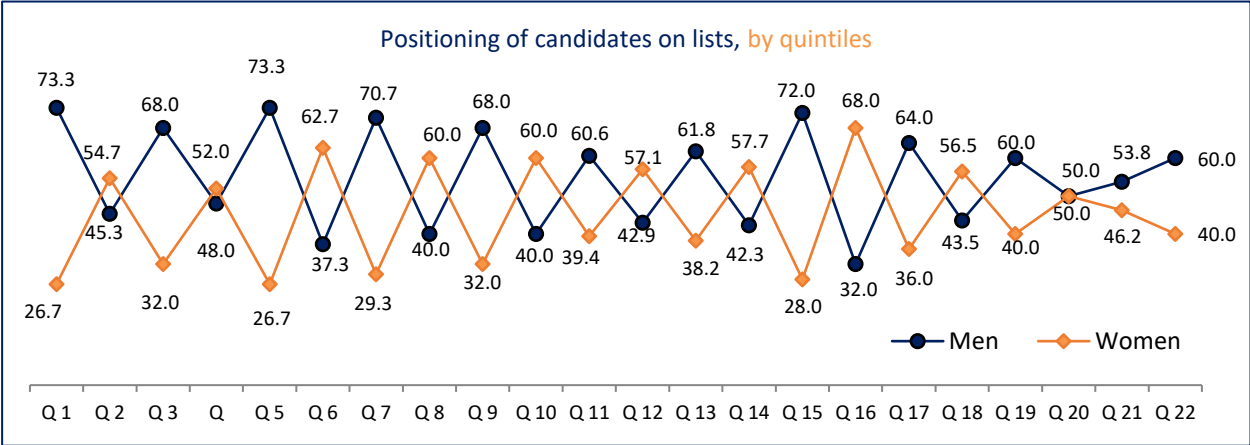
Figure 4. Trend in the positioning of women on lists of candidates for the position of deputy, by year and decile, %



Source: CPD calculations based on data provided by the Central Election Commission, 1998-2025

Although gender quotas are respected, men dominate the top of the list, while women are concentrated in the quintiles with lower chances. The graph shows that in the first quintiles—i.e., in the areas considered eligible—men are significantly more numerous, with shares exceeding 70% in certain sequences (Q1, Q5, Q7, Q15). Women, although they meet the 40% numerical threshold, are concentrated more in the median and lower quintiles, i.e., in positions with lower chances of eligibility. These fluctuations reflect the fact that compliance with the gender quota does not automatically mean equal access to eligible positions. The distribution by quintiles shows that men dominate the top of the list, while women are often pushed towards segments with lower visibility and fewer opportunities. To correct this imbalance, it may be necessary to switch to a different regulatory system, such as introducing provisions for placement every 5 places or applying the zig-zag formula (alternating women and men on the list). Such a system, also known as "zipper" or "zebra," requires parties to place candidates of different genders next to each other so that the list contains 50% women and 50% men.

Figure 5. Positioning on the lists of candidates for the position of deputy, by gender and quintiles, %



Source: CPD calculations based on data provided by the Central Election Commission, 2025

The positioning indicators show that, although women have gained ground in the last two decades, men continue to dominate the top of the lists and the first 5 positions. The data show that the average position of men on the lists is consistently more favorable than that of women: in 1998, the difference was 10 places, and in 2025, it remains 4 places. At the top of the lists (first position), men dominate almost completely – in most electoral cycles, the number of men in first position far exceeded the number of women (the difference reaches 16 in 2010 and 14 in 2025). The same trend is confirmed for the top 5 positions: in 1998, only 5.3% of the top 5 positions were held by women, while in 2025 their share increases to 28.2%. Although progress is visible, men retain a dominant presence, over 70%, in this segment, which is essential for eligibility. This situation can also be explained by the fact that, as a rule, the first position on the list is reserved for party presidents, and most parties in the Republic of Moldova continue to be led by men.

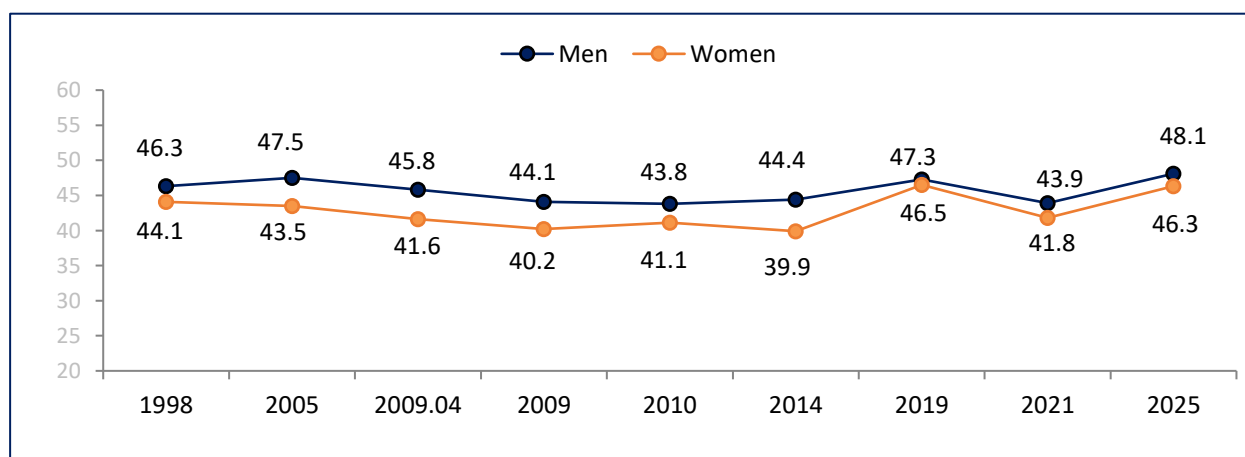
Table 1. Main indicators of positioning on lists

		Election									
Indicator		1998	2001	2005	2009	2009	2010	2014	2019	2021	2025
Average position on lists	Men	46	48	48	49	48	47	44	43	43	38
	Women	56	56	53	55	56	58	53	50	45	42
	Difference	10	8	5	6	8	11	9	7	2	4
No. of persons at the top of the list	Men	13	17	10	10	8	18	18	12	18	14
	Women	2	0	1	2	0	2	2	3	4	1
	Difference	11	17	9	8	8	16	16	9	14	13
Percentage of top 5 positions	Men	94.7	94.1	78.2	78.3	90.0	85.0	76.9	72.0	73.0	71.8
	Women	5.3	5.9	21.8	21.7	10.0	15.0	23.1	28.0	27.0	28.2

Source: CPD calculations based on data from the Central Election Commission, 1998-2025

The average age of candidates running for parliament is higher than in previous elections. Looking at the evolution of the profile of candidates on electoral lists since 1998, we see that this year the average age of candidates is 47.2 years. This is the highest value to date, preceded by the 2019 election, when the average age was 46.9 years. In all other elections, the average age of candidates was below 45. From a gender perspective, the trend remains constant: the average age of male candidates is higher than that of female candidates. This year, the difference remains, with men having an average age approximately 2 years higher than women. The average age of candidates above 46 suggests that young people continue to face obstacles in accessing political office.

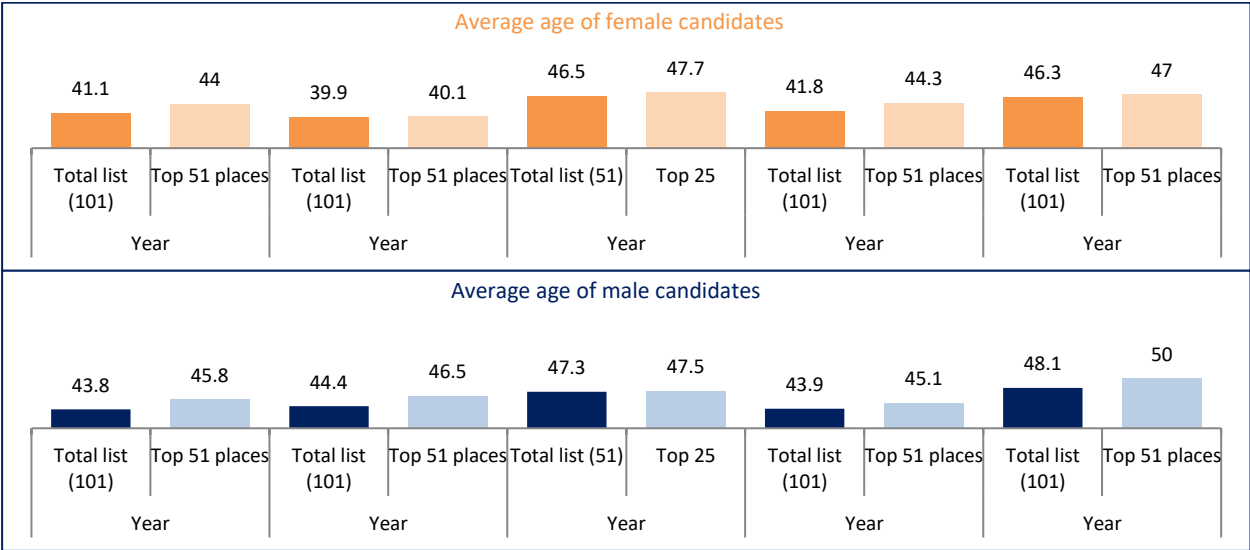
Figure 6. Trend in the average age of women and men on the lists of candidates for the position of deputy, years



Source: CPD calculations based on data provided by the Central Election Commission, 1998-2025

The age of candidates remains a factor influencing their placement on electoral lists. Electoral competitors tend to nominate older candidates for the most eligible places. Over the years, it has been observed that the average age of candidates included in the first half of the electoral list is higher on average by 2–3 years, than the average age of all candidates on the list, with smaller differences in the case of women. In this year's election, the men placed in the top 51 positions on the electoral lists are, on average, 50 years old – 1.9 years older than the average age of all male candidates. In contrast, for women, the difference is insignificant: those placed at the top of the lists have an average age only 0.7 years higher than the overall average of female candidates. Thus, the data suggest that experience and political seniority are important criteria for candidates nominated for eligible positions.

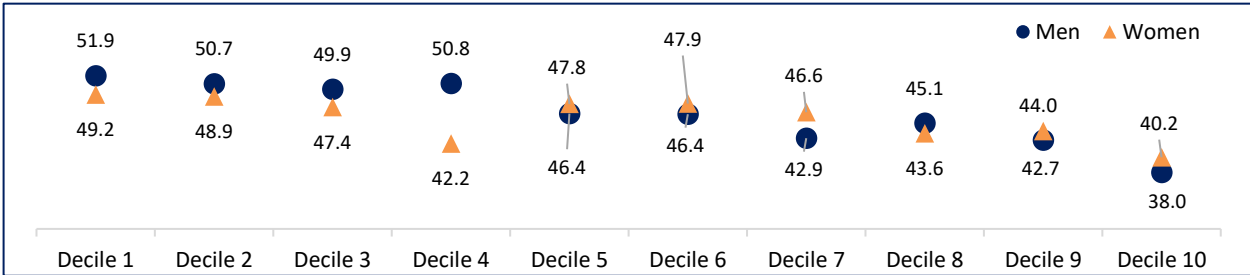
Figure 7. Trend in the average age of candidates on the lists of candidates for the position of deputy, by gender, years



Source: CPD calculations based on data provided by the Central Election Commission, 2010-2025

Detailed analysis shows that younger candidates are predominantly placed at the bottom of electoral lists, where their chances of entering Parliament are lower. The data shows that the average age of candidates in the first decile (the first 10 positions considered most competitive) is 50.5 years, while in the last decile (positions 91–111³) it drops significantly, reaching only 39.1 years. The difference between the two extremes is significant—11.4 years—indicating a systematic placement of younger candidates at the bottom of the lists, thus giving them fewer chances of entering Parliament. This ranking has important implications for the renewal of the political class and the participation of younger generations in decision-making processes, suggesting a preference among parties for more experienced candidates, but also, possibly, a reluctance to offer real opportunities to young people in politics. This dynamic can intersect with gender factors, particularly affecting young women, who are at the intersection of two categories that are underrepresented in eligible positions.

Figure 8. Average age of candidates running for deputy, by decile and gender, years

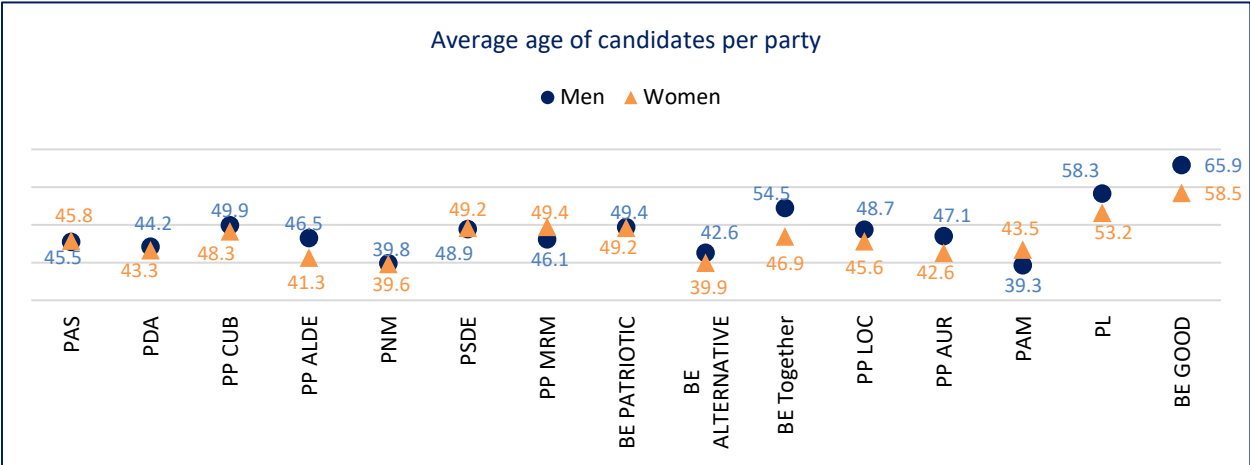


Source: CPD calculations based on data provided by the Central Election Commission, 2025

³ According to the Electoral Code, Art. 111(2), the political party or electoral bloc shall submit a list of candidates comprising no fewer than 51 and no more than 111 persons, https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=149860&lang=ro#

The comparative analysis shows significant differences between political parties in terms of the average age of the candidates proposed. Thus, some parties promoted lists dominated by younger candidates, with average ages between 39 and 41, signaling a greater openness to the integration of young people into decision-making structures. In contrast, other parties maintain a composition dominated by people with average ages between 55 and 62, indicating a preference for candidates with longer political experience or a more conservative organizational culture. These differences can significantly influence not only the internal dynamics of the parties, but also the nature of the election campaign and the political priorities promoted, including youth policies, digitalization, and gender equality.

Figure 9. Average age of candidates nominated by each party for the position of deputy, by gender and electoral competitors,



years

Source: CPD calculations based on data provided by the Central Election Commission, 2025

About 70% of candidates come from urban areas, and almost half are from Chişinău. The graph in Figure 10 confirms that the selection of candidates for parliamentary elections is mainly based on urban areas: almost 70% of those registered come from cities, and the remaining 30% from rural areas. More than half of the candidates (45.4%) come from Chişinău, while the next largest contributors—Bălţi, Ialoveni, Comrat, and Criuleni—each account for less than 4%. The rest of the districts provide small fractions, most of them less than 1% of the total. This distribution shows how centralized political life is: parties recruit mainly from the capital and a few large urban centers, where political networks, resources, and visibility exist. Rural localities remain underrepresented due to their smaller populations and limited political infrastructure. Therefore, although the gender quota ensures a balance between women and men, the geographical reality suggests that participation in the national competition is dominated by urban candidates, and parties should expand their recruitment to rural areas to reflect the country's diversity.

Figure 10. Distribution of candidates running for deputy, by gender and place of residence, %

Source: CPD calculations based on data provided by the Central Election Commission, 2025

FINDINGS

This section brings together the most important conclusions drawn from the analysis of candidates for the parliamentary elections of September 28, 2025. It provides an overview of the main trends related to gender representation, age structure, territorial distribution, and positioning on lists, highlighting both the progress and the current limitations of the electoral process. These findings are useful benchmarks for understanding the profile of the electoral competition and interpreting future developments.

1. Balanced gender representation, but slightly declining: Women make up 44.5% of all registered candidates, indicating a numerical balance close to parity on the lists. However, this share is slightly down from the 2021 elections (when it was 46.7%). The current balance is due to the double quota system imposed by law, but the decrease in the percentage of women highlights the need for continued political commitment to maintain and increase women's participation in politics.

2. Parties' commitment to gender quotas varies: All political parties have complied with the legal requirement of a minimum of 40% female representation on their lists, but their approaches differ. Some parties have limited themselves to including only the minimum number of women required, while others have gone beyond the legal requirements, including even more than 50% female candidates on their lists. This contrast highlights different levels of commitment to gender equality as a priority. While some parties treat gender quotas as a strictly formal obligation, others view them as a strategic objective, demonstrating greater openness to balanced representation.

3. Women still underrepresented in leading positions: Although the proportion of female candidates on the lists is, overall, close to parity, men continue to dominate the top of the lists. In the top 10 positions (the most eligible), women represent about 40% of the candidates. However, in the top 5 positions, their share drops to only 28.2%. In most parties, the head of the list is a man (in 2025, only a handful of lists were opened by women), which shows that, despite progress, women's access to positions with the best chances remains limited.

4. The double quota guarantees fair representation: With the introduction of the double quota system, candidate lists have become gender balanced. This rule ensures that neither women nor men can be represented by less than 40%, which provides real and equal opportunities for both sexes across the entire list. If the system is applied, gender balance will be maintained. However, considering the previous findings on the positioning of candidates in quintiles and at the top of the lists, it is necessary to reflect on improving the current placement provisions. One option would be to switch to a "3/2" formula for each quintile or to apply a "zigzag" system (alternating women and men), so that balance is guaranteed not only at the level of the list, but also in the positions most relevant to eligibility.

5. The age of candidates influences their placement on the lists: Parties prefer to place older candidates at the top of the lists. In the top 10 positions, the average age is 50.5 years, and in the last 10 places it drops to 39.1 years – a difference of over 11 years, which shows that young people usually end up at the bottom of the lists.

6. Most candidates come from urban areas and Chişinău: Approximately 70% of candidates are from cities, and almost half are from the capital alone. Bălţi municipality accounts for less than 4% of candidates, followed by districts such as Ialoveni, Comrat, and Criuleni. This urban concentration can be explained by the greater resources available in cities, but also by the fact that the population in villages is smaller and predominantly elderly.

ABOUT THE PARTNERSHIP FOR DEVELOPMENT CENTER

Created in 1998, the *Partnership for Development Center (CPD)* is a public institution that aims to contribute to the promotion of an integrative discourse on gender issues, the status of women, and equal opportunities for women and men. The CPD is a non-governmental organization that advocates for the implementation of the concept of gender equality in all areas of life, the promotion of public policies in this field, addressing issues related to the role of women in society and their empowerment, and the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women. It is also a center for documentation, information, and training center for relevant NGOs and initiative groups.

Purpose. To develop and strengthen resources and mechanisms for the equitable empowerment of women and men to promote gender equality in the Republic of Moldova by supporting a coherent approach to influencing policies.

Mission. CPD promotes the values of gender equality as part of an open society to strengthen a genuine gender partnership.

Vision. CPD advocates for the building of a community with equal prospects and opportunities for its members, a society in which women and men are full citizens, able to solve problems together, benefit equally from new opportunities, and engage fully in political, economic, and social activities.

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