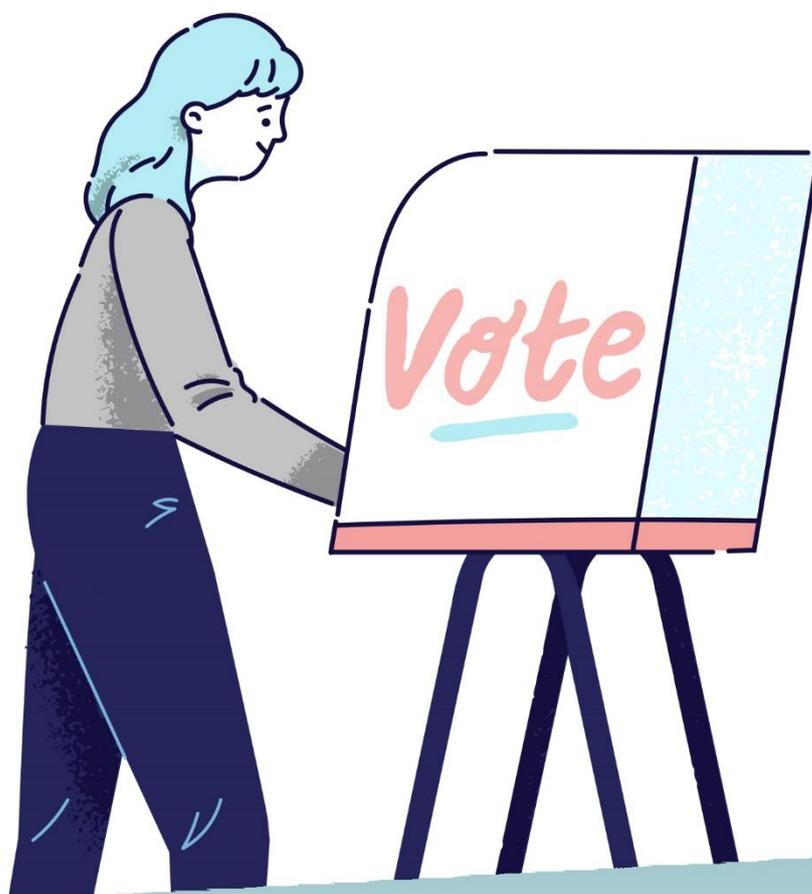


Women in politics

The ratio of women leaders in Europe and Hungary and the difference between men and women's political interest, participation and preferences

A series of analysis by
the 21 Research Centre



The United Nations officially declared March 8 as the United Nations Day for Women's Rights and International Peace in 1977. At the beginning of the 20th century in North America and Europe the day was connected to workers' movements, however, since then the emphasis has slowly shifted to women's equal rights and the women's role in politics and economics.

The following short analysis has two main parts: first, we are going to provide a description on the roles of women in politics in Europe and Hungary, presenting the ratio of women in the European Union and on national levels, and finally in the Hungarian parliament, while taking close a look at women's ratio of entry in the parliament. The second part contains an analysis on the political behaviour of women and men and the differences between them, using two databases from 2018 and 2021.

The adjusted sample represents the opinion of teachers working in Hungary along three dimensions (age, region, type of institution). In this brief report we are going to provide a snapshot of the research.

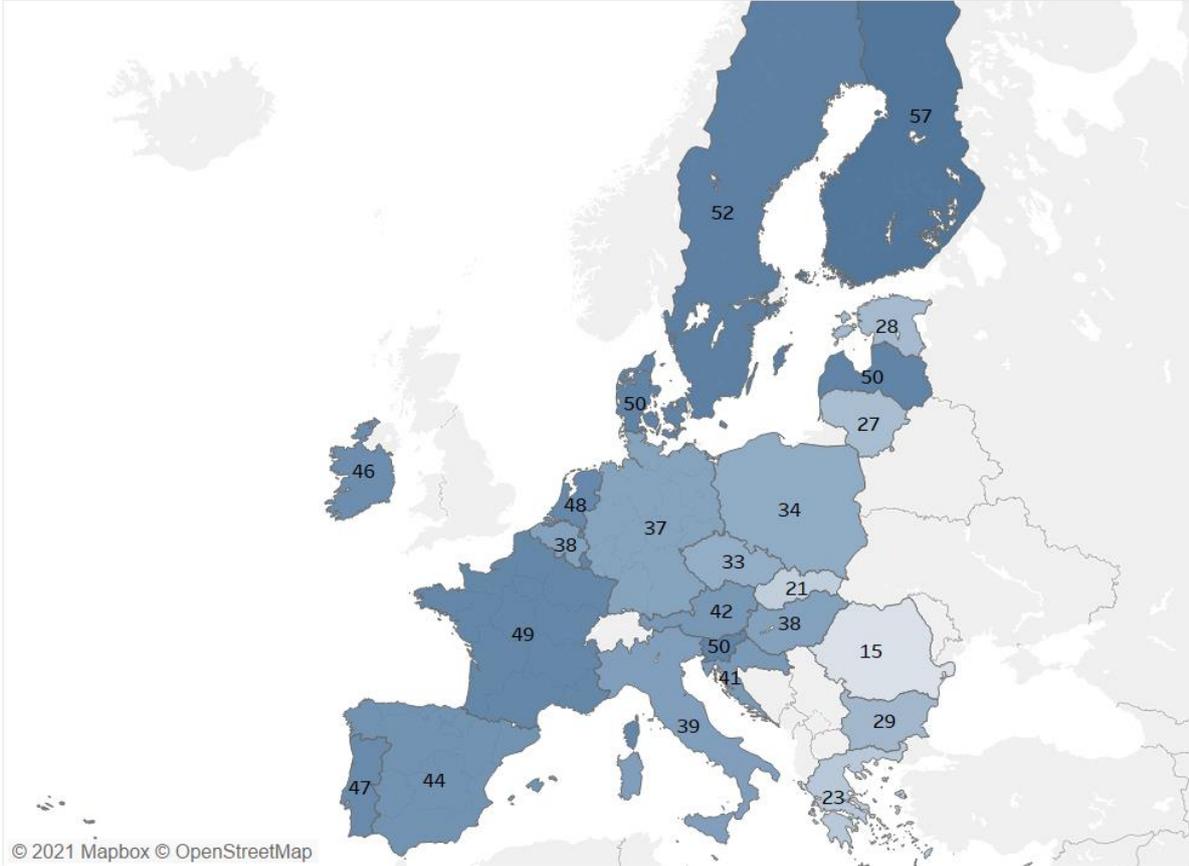
First part: The ratio of women leaders in Europe and Hungary

The fight for equal rights of women has been going on for centuries and it focused on equal political rights in the wake of the movement. In Hungary, women have had the right to vote since 1919, and the first female member of the Hungarian parliament, Margit Slachta was elected in the following years. The ratio of women in the parliament was rising between 1949 and 1980, but it was only because of top-down pressure. After the first democratic elections, the ratio of women in the parliament was 7%, and it has been stagnating around 10% ever since then. The relative situation compared to other European countries is becoming worse.

Women's participation in the parliament is the measure of equal opportunities, and it also reflects the attitude of society and political parties. It has practical dimensions, which include the validation of their particular point of view, putting women's issues on the agenda, and the representation of women's interests. Moreover, the acknowledgement of women as political actors has a symbolic value. Let's place the situation of women with political capital in Hungary within the international context. In the European Parliament there are 705 representatives, among which 277 are women (39%). The first figure shows the ratio of women in member states' EP delegations. Hungary has 21 representatives and 8 of them are women, which means that 38% of Hungarian mandates are held by women. This is equal to the ratio of women in the whole EP. A recent study shows that quotas are the most important explanatories of the gender ratio in EP lists.

Figure 1. The ratio of women among EP representatives of EU members (%). 2021 Mapbox, OpenStreetMap.

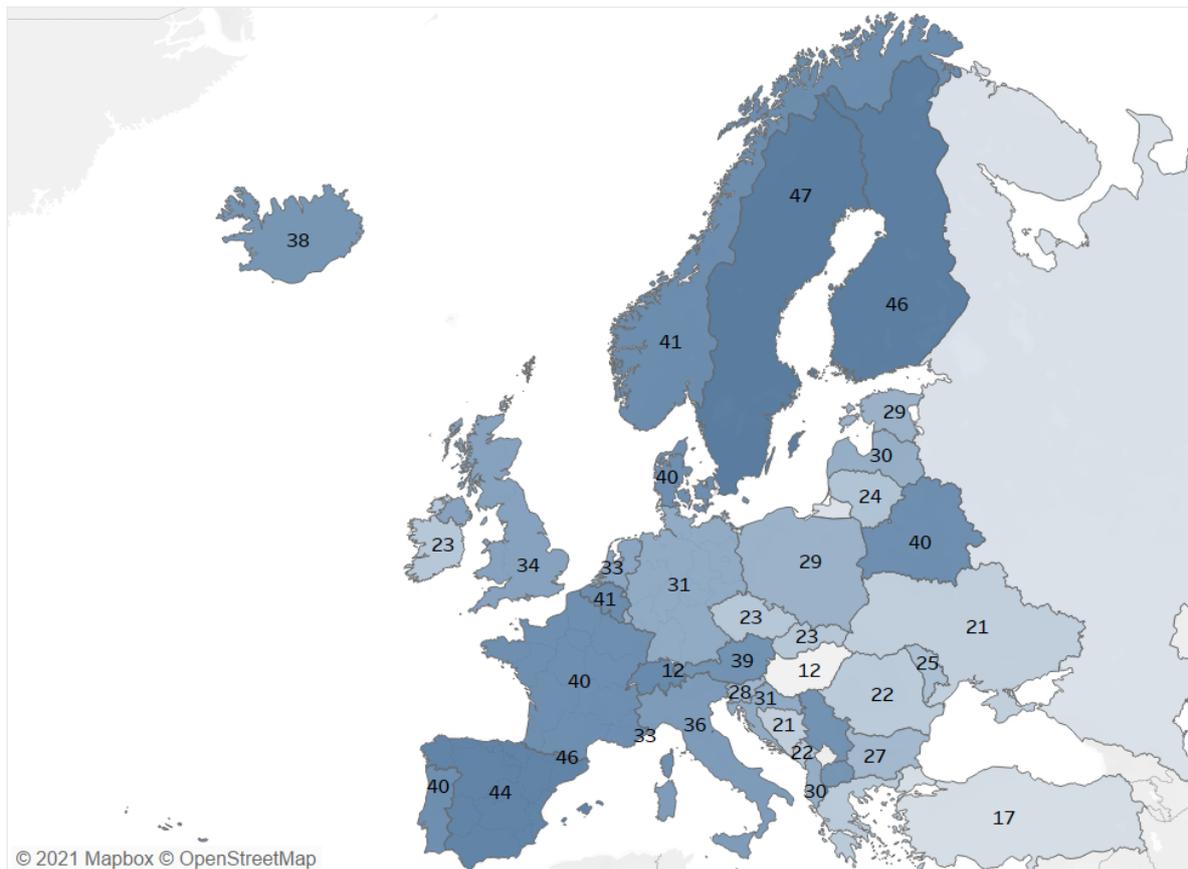
The ratio of women among EP representatives of EU members (%)



The second figure shows the composition of European countries’ national parliaments. Among European countries the ratio of women is the lowest in Hungary, being only 12%. The low ratio of women representatives in the Hungarian parliament is significant in regional context as well: the ratio is almost double in Slovakia and in the Czech Republic (23–23%), and even higher in Poland (29%). Hungary does not only appear among the last countries in Europe, but in the world as well: on the international list of women’s ratio in national parliaments Hungary is the 153rd. The ratio of women representatives is outstandingly high in Western Europe (44% in Spain, 40% in Portugal, 40% in France), and in Scandinavian countries, where quotas for elections are implemented.

Figure 2. The ratio of women in the national parliaments of different countries (%). 2021
 Mapbox, OpenStreetMap.

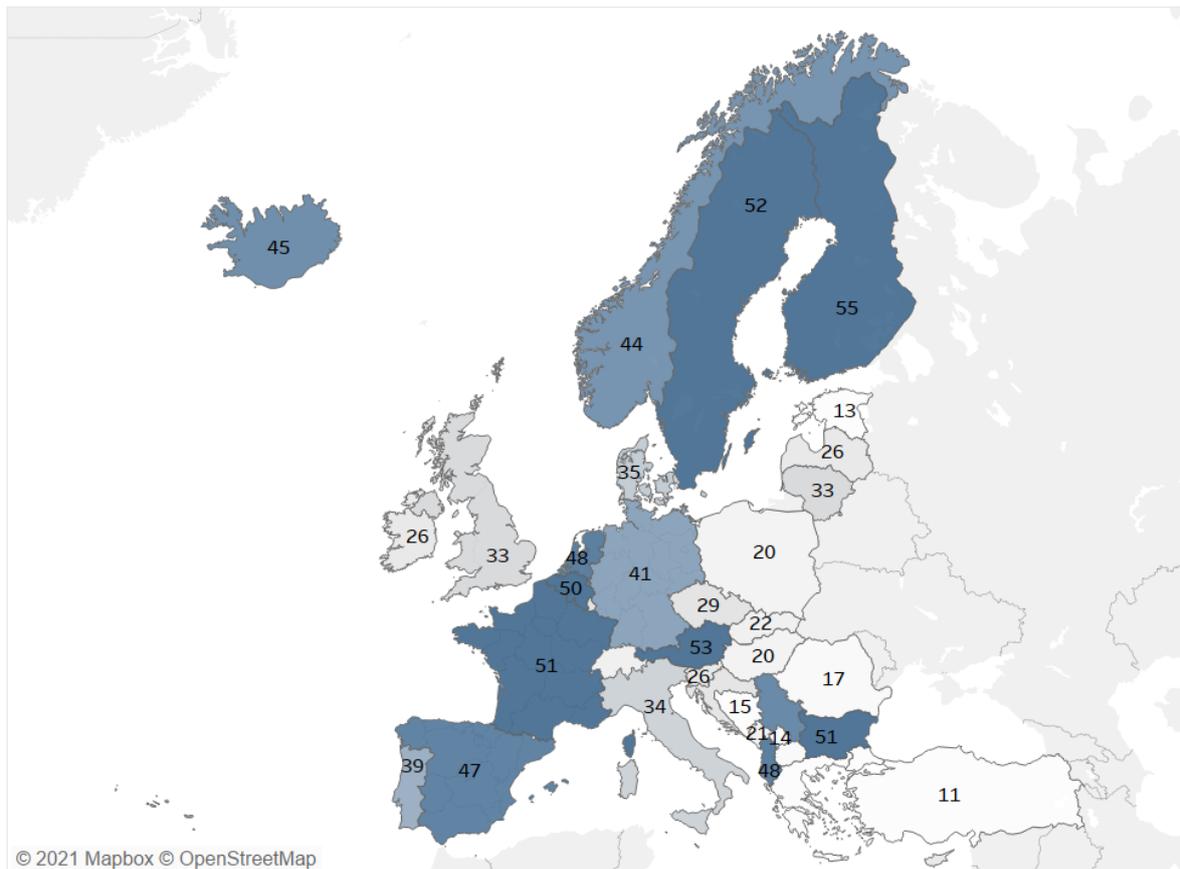
The ratio of women in the national parliaments of different countries



On the third figure we can see the composition of governments. The Hungarian government has 15 members without the prime minister, out of which 3 members are women. This ratio (20%) is average in the Eastern-Central European context, but far behind compared to Western and Nordic countries. At least half of the government members are women in Finland, Sweden, and Austria. What is more, we can find many female prime ministers in Northern countries, in Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Estonia. An interesting trend can be recognized in Balkan countries, where Bulgaria (52%), Albania (48%) and Serbia (46%) have many women in their cabinets.

Figure 3. The ratio of women in the national governments of European countries (%). 2021
Mapbox, OpenStreetMap.

The ratio of women in the national governments of European countries



To sum up, it would be desirable to have a balanced gender ratio in decision making bodies, however in this matter Hungary is far behind not only compared to Europe, but to the world average as well. This is the result of the low ratio of women running in individual election districts, which is less than 40% in every party. This ratio is significantly low in the governing parties, giving most representatives. Only 6% of the individual candidates of Fidesz-KDNP were women in the 2018 parliamentary elections. The ratio of women running in individual districts was also low among the mandate-winning opposition parties: Jobbik 8%, LMP 17%, MSZP-Párbeszéd 19%, DK 29%, Együtt 30%.

Representatives gaining mandates from party lists had a higher ratio of women, but not high enough to compensate for the majority of men. Among those getting a mandate from the list of Fidesz-KDNP 14% of them were women. Almost half of the representatives (43%) from the list of LMP, while a quarter of the representatives (25%) from the list of MSZP-Párbeszéd were women. 93 candidates get into the parliament from lists. In 2018, 16 women were elected parliamentary representatives from the lists, one from DK, 3-3 from LMP, MSZP-P and Jobbik and one female representative of Fidesz gained mandate.

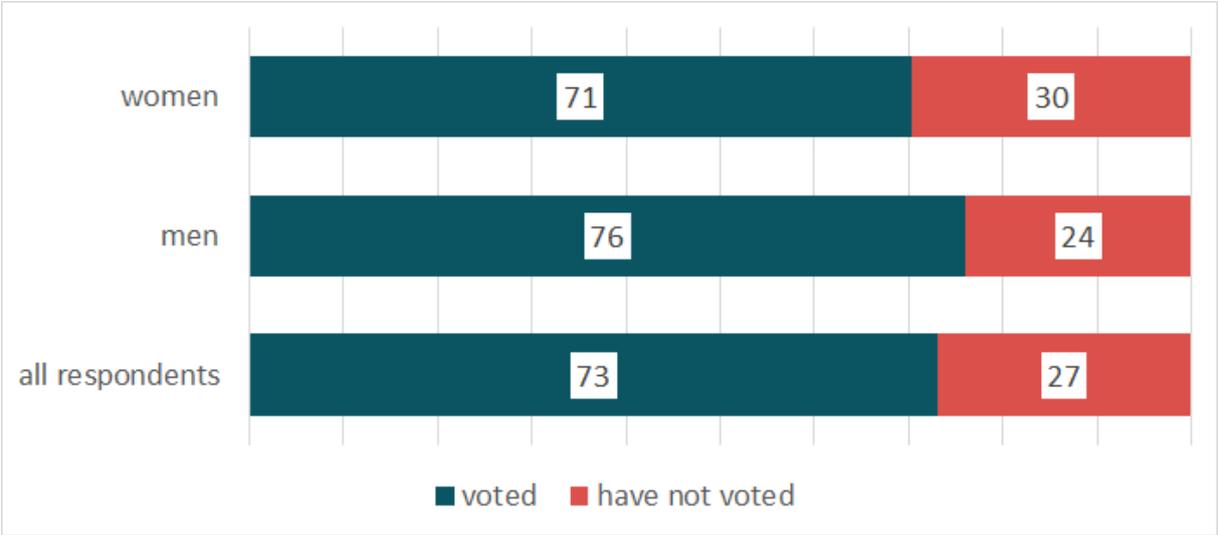
Second part: The difference between men and women's political interest, participation and preferences

The next section provides an analysis of voter turnout and political behaviour, focusing on the effects of gender. Is there a gender gap in voting turnout? Do men and women vote and think differently about politics? We are analysing these questions using two databases, the ESS database from 2018 and a country-level poll from 2021 made by Medián.

2018 – After the elections

According to political scientists, women had been less active during political elections, but this seems to change especially in the most developed countries (Kostelka et al, 2018). However, in Hungary there is still a gender gap in the voting turnout. During the last parliamentary elections 24% of men did not vote, while this ratio was higher by 5,5 percentage points for women (29,5%). This could be the result

of the higher ratio of women (61%) not feeling close to any political parties compared to men (54%).



To answer the question if gender determines voter turnout, we conducted a logistic regression, which enables us to control for demographic and political variables at the same time. Our dependent variable was participation during the last elections, while the explanatory variables consisted of demographic variables (gender, years of education, age, religiousness), political values and activities (satisfaction with democracy, the placement of oneself on the left-right scale, political interest, relation to country, political activity). In the table odds ratios can be read, which show how much the chances of participating in elections are altered by belonging to a certain category compared to the reference category (e. g. how much more or less likely are women to participate in the last elections compared to men).

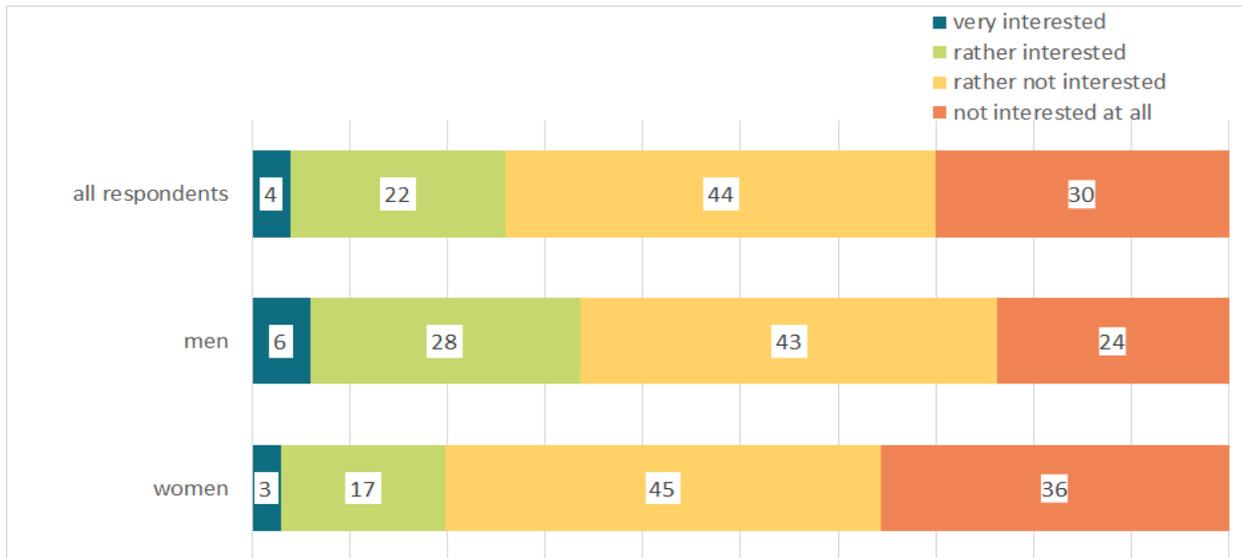
*p=0,005 **p=0,001			
	B	S.E.	Wald
Male	0,068	0,154	0,193

Years of education	0,1**	0,025	15,886
Age	0,005	0,005	1,213
Religiousness on a scale	0,069	0,029	5,643
Trust in parliament	-0,031	0,039	0,655
Satisfaction with the way democracy works	0,019	0,04	0,233
Left-right scale			24,566
Left	-0,202	0,265	0,58
Center	-0,864**	0,197	19,249
Political interest			47,902
Very interested	2,815*	0,935	9,068
Interested	1,629**	0,261	38,938
Less interested	0,725**	0,165	19,302
Feelings about country on a scale	0,058	0,032	3,145
Participated in how many forms of activity	0,216	0,143	2,29
Cox and Snell R	1,3		

Only the years of education turned out to be significant in the model (however, if only demographic variables were included, all of them would have been significant). Gender is only determinative if we do not control for political interest. This means that political variables and education are more determinant than gender. Location of oneself on the left-right scale proved to be decisive as well, those who place themselves in the middle are less likely to participate in the elections than those who place themselves on the right, however the voter turnout of leftists and rightists is not statistically different. Political interest obviously determines voter turnout, even a minimal interest increases the chances of participating and the higher the interest the more likely that the respondent votes.

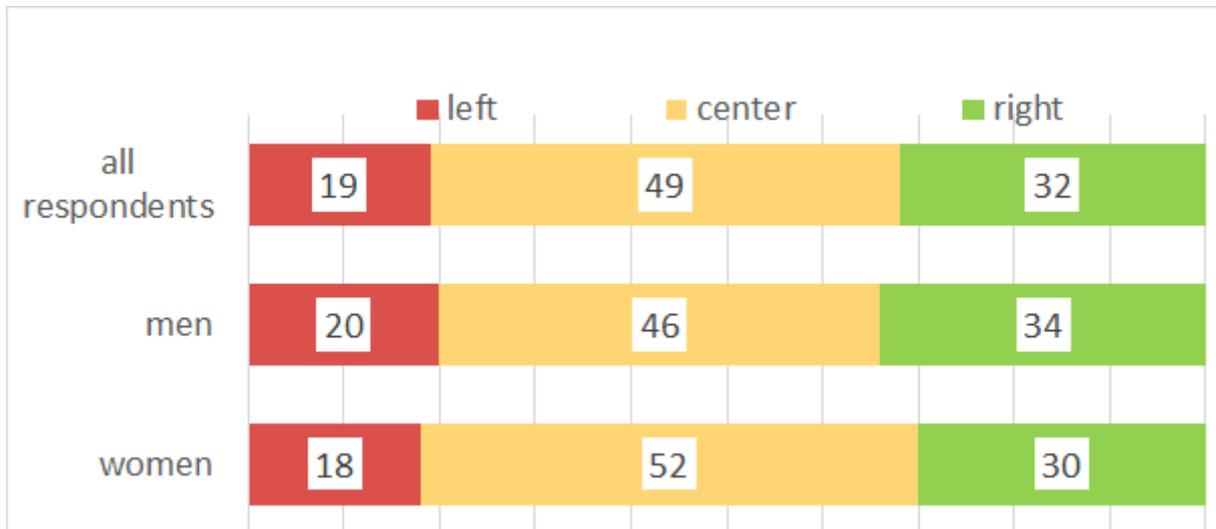
Political interest

Gender itself does not determine voter turnout, however it is worth analysing the differences in political behaviour between sexes. Political interest is relatively low in Hungary, only 4% is very interested in politics (6% of men and 3% of women). More than a third of women (36%) are not interested in it at all, whereas only 24% of men answered similarly. All in all, gender does not determine voter turnout but it affects political interest, which determines voter turnout.



Left-right scale

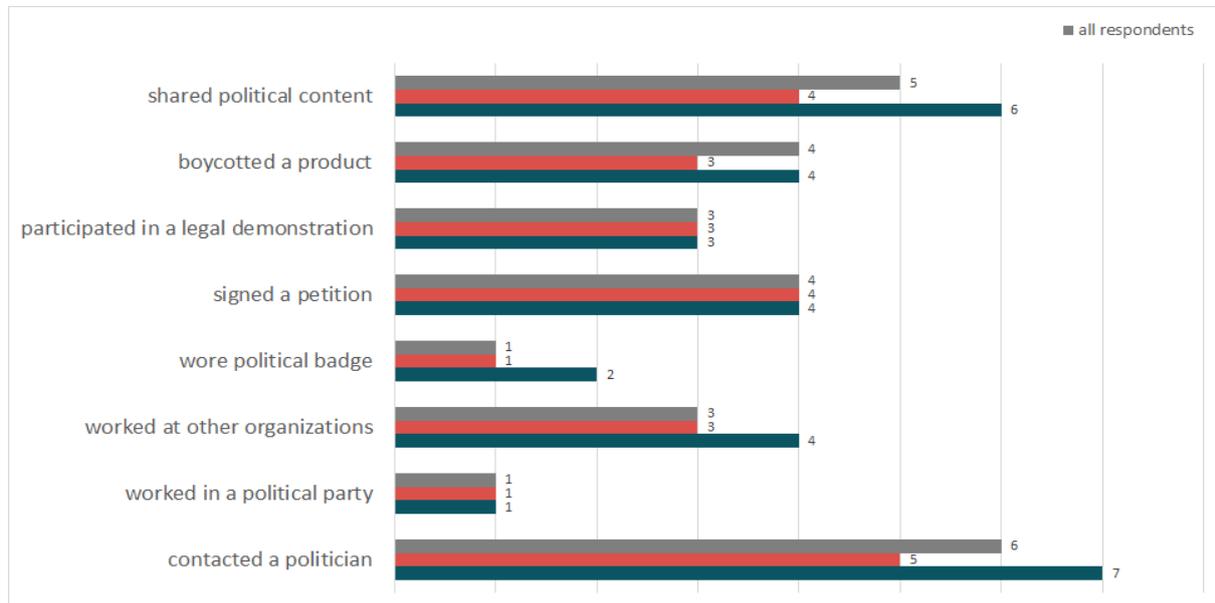
Self-placement on the left-right scale proved to have a significant effect on voter turnout, however it does not correlate with gender.



Other political variables

The popularity of political parties is not very different between genders, only two parties show bigger differences. 8% of men and 2% less, 6% of women have voted for

Jobbik during the last elections. The situation of MSZP is similar to that, the party is more popular among men (8%) than women (5%).



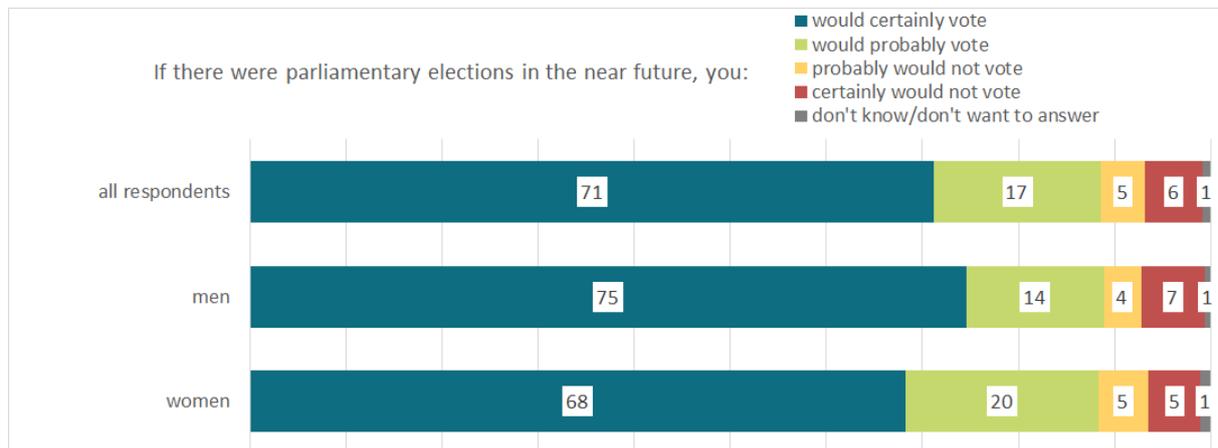
Political activity is very low in Hungary for both genders; however, men tend to be more active. More men (7%) have contacted politicians than women (5%), more of them shared political content (6% compared to women’s 4%), more men have participated in demonstrations and joined organizations. Boycott and campaign stickers are only slightly more popular among men, while joining political parties or action groups and signing petitions were equally popular between men and women (0,6% and 4% respectively).

2021 - Before elections

Voter turnout

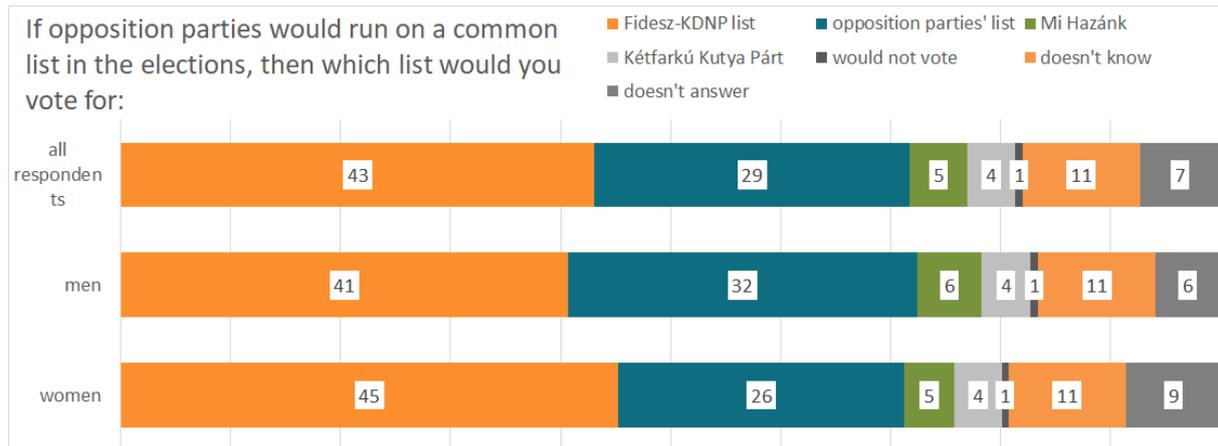
We analysed similar questions using a different database from 2021, where voter turnout is measured by asking if they would participate in elections in the near future. 7 percentage points less women responded that they would certainly vote

than men. However, if we add the two categories of certainly and probably voting, women and men have similar chances. In a multiple regression, controlling for age, type of settlement, income and education, there is still a significant difference, where women are less likely to certainly vote by 6,7%.



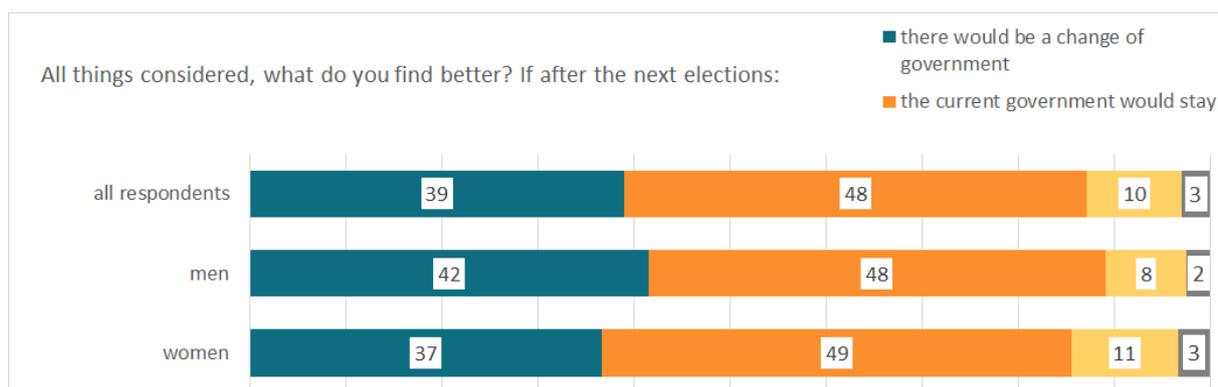
Political preferences

Is there a difference between the political preferences of women and men? More women (45%) are pro-government than men (41%) and more men would vote for the opposition list (32%) than women (26%). When choosing their political preferences, more women (20%) could or would not answer than men (17%). This could mean that women are more secretive about their political preferences, or they are more apolitical, or they feel like politics is a masculine field, therefore they don't want to form an opinion. When controlling for demographic variables, we have not found a significant correlation between gender and political preferences.



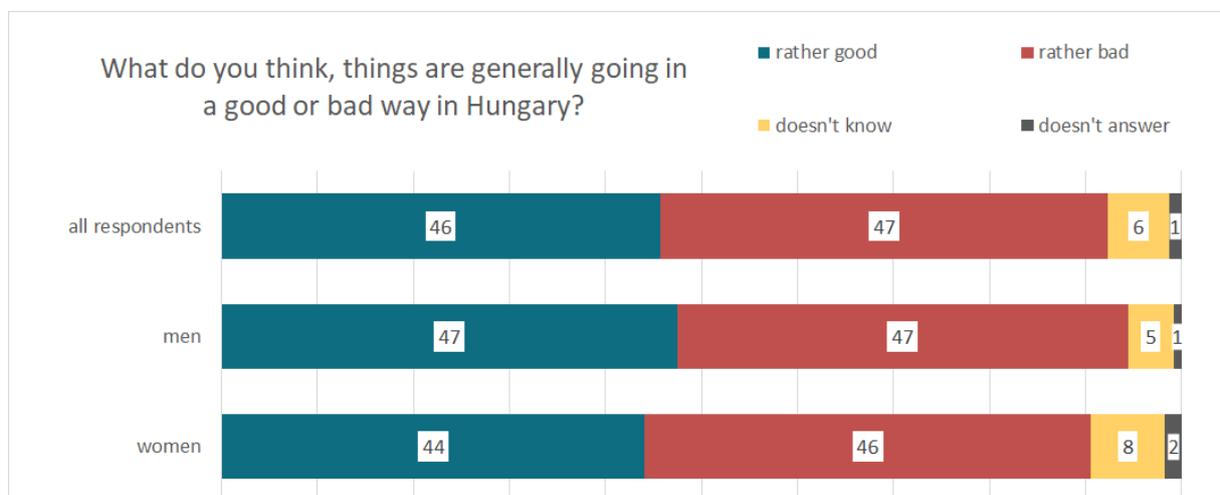
Change of government

5 percentage point less women are in favour of changing the government and similarly to the last question more women (14%) answered with not knowing or not wanting to answer, than men (10%). When conducting multiple regression, we have found no significant difference between the opinion of women and men. Instead, age and income were more determinative (the older the respondent was, the more likely they didn't want a change of government, the wealthier the respondent was, the more likely they wanted a change).



Are things going in a good way?

We also analysed the question whether the respondents think that generally, things in Hungary are going in a good or bad way. Women and men answered similarly, only slightly less women answered that things are going in a good way. There is no difference when controlling for demographic variables, but interestingly, when including political preferences, we have found that women are more pessimistic than men.



Summary

According to the academic literature, the gender gap in voter turnout slowly fades away. The analysis with logistic regression shows which events increase the probability of voting. When analysing the database of ESS from 2018, we found that gender was insignificant when controlling for other demographic variables. Education, political interest and the placement of oneself on the left-right scale were more significant than gender. The takeaway from the 2021 database is that women are less certain whether to vote in the next elections. Although the latter

database paints a more positive picture about the political interest of women, it is clear from both databases that more men claim to be very interested or interested in politics. There is no great difference between the preferred political parties of men and women. Women are a bit more pessimistic about the situation of the country, especially middle-aged groups.

If we recall the results of the first part of our analysis, we can see that there is a much greater inequality in women's engagement in politics compared to their political behaviour such as voting. What could explain this contradiction? Perhaps a similar number of women are interested in politics, but fewer ambition to take political roles. Or do women tend to support male politicians out of habit as well? Are there greater expectations towards female politicians? Does a double standard holding back women exist in reality too, or only in our heads? Maybe now, when equality is earning its rightful place at the top of the agenda, supply will follow, and we can catch up with Europe regarding the ratio of women in politics.

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