

*Łukasz Tomczak*

University of Szczecin, Poland

lukasz.tomczak@usz.edu.pl

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6808-0364>

*Rafał Iwański*

University of Szczecin, Poland

rafal.iwanski@usz.edu.pl

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6345-9677>

## The Polish Towards Political Participation and Professional Development of Women in the Context of Ideological Divisions

The activity of women in politics is one of the significant areas of research. The subject of women's rights connected with it, concerns mostly issues related to the concept of equality. Equality is one of the basic values which frequently coexists "collaterally with the concept of justice, especially in conceptions advocating the natural equality"<sup>1</sup>. The category of equality currently constitutes the foundation of every democratic legal order, within which liberties and rights of individuals are respected. The European Union countries have a legal framework guaranteeing gender equality, and the importance of it is emphasized in electoral debates as an essential element in the functioning of the democracy<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> A. Pacześniak, *Kobiety w Parlamencie Europejskim. Przelamywanie stereotypu płci w polityce*, Wydawnictwo Atla 2, Wrocław 2006, p. 65.

<sup>2</sup> H. MacRae, *Double-Speak: The European Union and Gender Parity*, "West European Politics", 2012, No. 35/2, p. 302.

Nevertheless, the sole introduction of the principle of equal rights regardless of gender does not necessarily mean that equality was achieved.

There are numerous factors which affect lower representation of women in politics. Political factors include, i.a., the type of electoral system and the activities of political parties. Socio-economic factors include professional and household duties, barriers in education, feminization of poverty and unemployment. Ideological, psychological and cultural factors are related to attributing certain social roles to women and men, negative stereotypes concerning political activity of women<sup>3</sup>. While searching for reasons for low participation of women in politics, the researchers indicate cultural factors<sup>4</sup>. However, the ones which hinder women's political activity change very slowly<sup>5</sup>.

There is a particular division of roles in a traditional family model. The status of a woman is designated by the position of a husband, and her role is limited to managing the household. The stereotypical place of a woman in the society is reduced to the care of the house and the family, whereas the issues of professional career and public participation are treated as the area of men's activity<sup>6</sup>. The opponents of activities promoting more involvement of women in politics often express the stereotypical opinion that women lack effectiveness<sup>7</sup>. Although voters make their decisions based on the views of candidates, it is difficult to eliminate the existing gender stereotypes.

Initially, related to the role performed in the family, the inequalities between women and men are currently noticed in the labour market<sup>8</sup>. Although the differences in educational attainment declined, the professional standing as compared to men is changing very slowly. The issues related to double burden, professional and household work and unemployment contribute to a lower participation of women in political life<sup>9</sup>. Also, the positions in the labour market

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<sup>3</sup> A. Żukowski, *Wybory a reprezentacja polityczna kobiet*, "Studia Wyborcze", Vol. III, 2007, p. 65.

<sup>4</sup> F. Thames, *Understanding the Impact of Electoral Systems on Women's Representation*, "Politics & Gender", No. 13(3), 2017, p. 385.

<sup>5</sup> M. De Paola, V. Scoppa, R. Lombardo, *Can gender quotas break down negative stereotypes? Evidence from changes in electoral rules*, "Journal of Public Economics", No. 94(5–6), 2010, p. 344.

<sup>6</sup> J. Zajko-Czochańska, *Uwarunkowania prawne działalności politycznej kobiet w państwach Unii Europejskiej*, [in:] *Kobiety w wyborach. Wybory kobiet*, eds. Ł. Tomczak, K. Zawadzka, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Szczecińskiego, Szczecin 2020, p. 47.

<sup>7</sup> D. Dahlerup, L. Freidenvall, *Judging gender quotas: predictions and results*, "Policy & Politics", 2010, No. 38(3), p. 410.

<sup>8</sup> K. Leśniak-Moczuk, *Determinanty i skutki wyboru ról społecznych kobiet*, [in:] *Obszary aktywności kobiet. Wybrane aspekty filozoficzne, społeczne i polityczne*, eds. A. Kołomycew, A. Pięta-Szawara, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Rzeszowskiego, Rzeszów 2017, p. 43.

<sup>9</sup> M. Musiał-Karg, *Polacy o aktywności kobiet w polityce. Czy należy wprowadzać dodatkowe mechanizmy zwiększające udział Polek w życiu politycznym*, "Political Preferences", No. 8/2014, p. 64.

are affected by traditional social roles of women. Perceived stereotypically, they result from natural biological differences between men and women, which enable them to or prevent them from performing particular jobs<sup>10</sup>.

There is a common misconception that women are not interested in politics. Such a thesis was confirmed by the research being conducted since the 1990s<sup>11</sup>. It was emphasized that it was a result of excessive burden of household duties, and the duties connected with rearing children<sup>12</sup>. The activity of women's movements started to result in changes, which is not indicative of the changes in social attitudes.

There are differences to be noticed in terms of addressing the issue of women by political parties. In the West, the introduction of separate policy towards women entailed an increasing number of women in parties, especially the left-wing parties, and parliaments<sup>13</sup>. In Poland, leftist and rightist groupings have different attitudes to women's place in the social life and family. While leftist parties' programmes present the family as a partnership, without specifying the roles of men and women, the right-wing politics relates to the traditional character of the family, based on conservative values. The left-wing parties advocate the need for increasing social and professional participation of women, while for the right-wing parties women's professional activity is a result of economic necessity<sup>14</sup>.

Based on the research conducted so far, the following questions may be asked: What is the attitude of respondents towards women's participation in politics? What is the significance of the attitude towards the traditional division of roles in the family in terms of the assessment of women's participation in politics? How do respondents assess opportunities in professional development for women? Are there differences among respondents in the assessment of effectiveness in regard to sex? Is sex of the candidate important for the voters?

The following research problem has been formulated: Are there any dependencies between the attitude towards women's participation in politics

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<sup>10</sup> M. Armuła, *Kobieta na polskim rynku pracy – czy dalej niedoceniana?*, [in:] *Kobiety w sferze publicznej. Teoria i praktyka*, ed. M. Pataj, Wydawnictwo Adam Marszałek, Toruń 2015, p. 67.

<sup>11</sup> M. Szpunar, *Kobiety w polityce – aktywne czy pasywne?*, [in:] *Kobiety w polityce*, ed. J. Marszałek-Kawa, Wydawnictwo Adam Marszałek, Toruń 2010, p. 48.

<sup>12</sup> E. Lisowska, *Równouprawnienie kobiet i mężczyzn w społeczeństwie*, Oficyna Wydawnicza SGH, Warszawa 2010, p. 217.

<sup>13</sup> M. Caul, *Women's representation in parliament. The Role of Political Parties*, "Party Politics", Vol. 5. No. 1, 1999, p. 85.

<sup>14</sup> Ł. Tomczak, *Równouprawnienie kobiet w programach i praktyce działania polskich partii politycznych*, [in:] *Kobiety we współczesnej Europie*, ed. M. Musiał-Karg, Wydawnictwo Adam Marszałek, Toruń 2009, p. 132.

and the sex, place of residence, age, education and political preferences of the respondents? The following hypotheses were applied:

H1: Men more often than women claim that lower women's participation in politics is natural.

H2: The differences in opinions on a greater effectiveness of men as compared to women in politics are connected with the sex of respondents.

H3: Respondents with rightist views show a greater acceptance towards a traditional division of roles in the family.

H4: Respondents with leftist views notice the inequality in professional development between men and women more often.

H5: In the elections, the candidate's gender has a greater significance to respondents with rightist views, regardless of their gender.

### Research methodology

The quota-stratified sampling method was applied in this research, and the research sample was 2110 respondents. It constitutes double the number of representative sample for the population of Poland, with a 95% confidence level, 0.05 fraction size, and a margin of error of 3%. Based on the demographic data from the Statistics Poland (GUS), the sample size was determined for each province considering the distribution in terms of age (6 categories), place of residence (city/country) and sex. The research was conducted in 2019. In order to collect data, a regular paper questionnaire survey was handed to respondents by pollsters.

The research was conducted based on the authors' questionnaire survey. The respondents could determine the acceptance level using Likert scale referring to five statements:

- [A] I support the traditional division of roles in the family: a man maintains the family, and a woman performs household duties and brings up children.
- [B] Women do not have the opportunities for professional development on equal terms with men.
- [C] It is natural that fewer women than men engage in politics.
- [D] Men are more effective politicians than women.
- [E] The candidate's gender is important to me when voting.

In order to verify statements on the significance of differences between the medians for the researched variable, U Mann-Whitney test was applied, one of the variables had only two groups, as well as Kruskal Wallis test, for the variables with a not very large number of categories (age, place of residence, education). Also, Spearman rank correlation was calculated to check the dependencies of qualitative characteristics.

## Result

More than a half of respondents (55.6%) disagreed with the statement [A], 28.1% of respondents held the opposite view, and 16.3% had no opinion (Table 1). U Mann-Whitney test indicated statistically significant differences among the respondents in terms of sex (Table 2). Women expressed their lack of acceptance towards statement [A] slightly more often, 61.3%, than men, 49.4% ( $\rho = 0.14$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). In terms of political views statistically significant difference was noted in the distribution of responses ( $H(5, N = 2104) = 139,0832$   $p = 0,000$ ) (Table 3). In a group of respondents with rightist views, 43.6% of the surveyed agreed with the statement [A], 17.1% of whom expressed strong support. At the other extreme in the group of respondents with leftist views 17.9% expressed their support, and only 7.8% expressed strong support ( $\rho = 0.17$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). Thereby, the hypothesis (H3) was confirmed, which stated that people with rightist views express a greater acceptance towards a traditional division of roles in the family. The applied Kruskal-Wallis test showed that differences in the distribution of responses occur also in the case of variables: age, place of residence and education (Table 3). The lowest support was noted in the category of respondents aged 65 or more (45.2%), whereas in the remaining age groups it did not exceed 28.6%. The residents of rural areas supported the traditional roles in the family slightly more often (32.9%) than the residents of cities. In the case of respondents from cities with more than 500 000 inhabitants, only 21.1% supported the statement [A]. The analysis of research for the variable education showed that the higher the education, the lesser the support for the statement [A] ( $\rho = 0.24$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). In the group of respondents with higher education, 19.9% of the surveyed expressed their support, and 52.1% with elementary education.

Table 1. Quantitative and percentage distribution of answers to statements

| Variable       | Definitely no | Rather no | Hard to say | Rather yes | Definitely yes |
|----------------|---------------|-----------|-------------|------------|----------------|
| [A] (n = 2110) | 587           | 587       | 344         | 386        | 206            |
|                | 27.8%         | 27.8%     | 16.3%       | 18.3%      | 9.8%           |
| [B] (n = 2098) | 192           | 441       | 521         | 604        | 340            |
|                | 9.2%          | 21.0%     | 24.8%       | 28.8%      | 16.2%          |
| [C] (n = 2096) | 240           | 517       | 672         | 526        | 141            |
|                | 11.5%         | 24.7%     | 32.1%       | 25.1%      | 6.6%           |
| [D] (n = 2093) | 363           | 508       | 717         | 368        | 137            |
|                | 17.3%         | 24.3%     | 34.3%       | 17.6%      | 6.6%           |

|                |       |       |       |      |      |
|----------------|-------|-------|-------|------|------|
| [E] (n = 2098) | 845   | 795   | 266   | 133  | 59   |
|                | 40.3% | 37.9% | 12.7% | 6.3% | 2.8% |

Source: Authors' own elaboration.

Table 2. Mann-Whitney U test for the variable "sex"

| Variable | U        | Z        | p        | Z<br>(corrected) | p        |
|----------|----------|----------|----------|------------------|----------|
| [A]      | 467337.5 | -6.30918 | 0.0000   | -6.48829         | 0.0000   |
| [B]      | 405867   | 10.34544 | 0.0000   | 10.63372         | 0.0000   |
| [C]      | 462729.5 | -6.1766  | 0.0000   | -6.38965         | 0.0000   |
| [D]      | 429962.5 | -8.44983 | 0.0000   | -8.74063         | 0.0000   |
| [E]      | 547419.5 | -0.14286 | 0.886404 | -0.15246         | 0.878821 |

Source: Authors' own elaboration.

Table 3. Kruskal-Wallis test for variables: age, place of residence, education and distribution of political preferences on the right-left axis

| Variable | Age                                 | Place of residence                  | Education                           | Right-Left axis                     |
|----------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| [A]      | H(5, N = 2110) = 84.17344 p = .0000 | H(6, N = 2110) = 23.10926 p = .0008 | H(3, N = 2071) = 126.6132 p = 0.000 | H(5, N = 2104) = 139.0832 p = 0.000 |
| [B]      | H(5, N = 2098) = 12.25832 p = .0314 | H(6, N = 2098) = 6.733886 p = .3462 | H(3, N = 2059) = 4.493996 p = .2128 | H(5, N = 2092) = 39.36772 p = .0000 |
| [C]      | H(5, N = 2096) = 8.602347 p = .1260 | H(6, N = 2096) = 21.68941 p = .0014 | H(3, N = 2057) = 16.16733 p = .0010 | H(5, N = 2090) = 90.68694 p = .0000 |
| [D]      | H(5, N = 2093) = 15.62873 p = .0080 | H(6, N = 2093) = 4.102348 p = .6628 | H(3, N = 2057) = 31.11239 p = .0000 | H(5, N = 2087) = 71.22712 p = .0000 |
| [E]      | H(5, N = 2098) = 19.44765 p = .0016 | H(6, N = 2098) = 7.115694 p = .3103 | H(3, N = 2060) = 31.08059 p = .0000 | H(5, N = 2092) = 4.319600 p = .5044 |

Source: Authors' own elaboration.

Nearly half of the respondents (45%) agreed with the statement [B] that women do not have the opportunities for professional development on equal terms with men, 30.1% had the opposite view, and every fourth respondent (24.8%) had no opinion on this matter. The result of U Mann-Whitney test

indicated the statistically significant differences in the distribution of answers for variable sex ( $p = 0.000$ ). What is more, a half of women (51.4%) agreed with the analysed statement, and every fifth woman definitely agreed. In the case of men, 35% supported the statement [B], but only 9% definitely supported the statement. The results of Kruskal-Wallis test indicated significant differences in the respondents' answers in terms of political views ( $H(5, N = 2092) = 39.36772$   $p = .0000$ ) and age ( $H(5, N = 2098) = 12.25832$   $p = .0314$ ). In the case of respondents with leftist or centre-left views, 55.5% of respondents agreed with the statement [B]. As the political leanings were shifting to the right, the support for the statement [B] was decreasing. 45% of the surveyed in the group of respondents with centre views agreed with the statement, centre-right views 41.7%, and rightist views 36.4% ( $\rho = -0.06, p < 0.05$ ). The analysis of the collected data allows to confirm the hypothesis (H4) stating that respondents with leftist views notice the inequality in professional development between men and women more often.

More than a third of the surveyed (36.2%) disagreed with the statement [C], and a similar percentage did not form an opinion on the matter (32.1%). The statistically significant differences are noted in terms of the responses by sex ( $p = 0.0000$ ). 41.2% of women disagreed with the statement [C], and 30.5% of men had a similar opinion. There is a similar percentage of respondents who were undecided in both groups, approximately 31.5%. The analysis of the collected data allows to confirm hypothesis (H1) that men more often than women claim that lower women's participation in politics is natural. Kruskal-Wallis test for variables with not significant number of categories indicated statistically significant differences in the responses of the surveyed in terms of the place of residence ( $H(6, N = 2096) = 21.68941$   $p = .0014$ ), education ( $H(3, N = 2057) = 16.16733$   $p = .0010$ ) and political views ( $H(5, N = 2090) = 90.68694$   $p = .0000$ ). The highest percentage of undecided respondents was noted among the residents of rural areas – 39.7%. 23.6% of respondents in this group supported the statement [C], and 36.7% were against. The remaining groups of the surveyed noted a slightly higher percentage of respondents opposing the statement [C], particularly among the residents of the largest cities 46% ( $\rho = -0.08, p < 0.001$ ). Education appeared to be a significant variable. Support for the statement [C] was the highest in the group of respondents with elementary education (43%), and the lowest among the respondents with higher education (20.3%) ( $\rho = -0.09, p < 0.001$ ). In the case of respondents with leftist views, 53.2% disagreed with the statement [C], whereas 31.8% of respondents with rightist views 31.8% ( $\rho = 0.11, p < 0.001$ ).

Statement [D] was supported by 24.2% of the surveyed, every third respondent did not have an opinion, and 41.6% opposed the statement. A higher percentage

of women (48.3%) than men (34.3%) disagreed with the statement ( $p = 0.0000$ ). It allows to confirm hypothesis (H2) that the differences in opinions on a greater effectiveness of men as compared to women in politics are connected with the sex of respondents. The results of conducted Kruskal-Wallis test showed that the statistically significant variables are education ( $H(3, N = 2057) = 31.11239$   $p = .0000$ ) and political views ( $H(5, N = 2087) = 71.22712$   $p = .0000$ ). Among the group of respondents with higher education, 27.1% agreed with the statement [D], while 34.7% with elementary education ( $\rho = -0.12$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). 21.9% of respondents with leftist views expressed their support, while in the case of those surveyed with rightist views, it was 35.2% ( $\rho = 0.10$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ).

A vast majority of respondents (78.2%) pointed that the sex of candidate is not important for them in the elections [E]. The conducted U Mann-Whitney test manifested no statistically significant differences in the distribution of answers in terms of the sex of respondents ( $p = 0.8788$ ). Whereas, Kruskal-Wallis test for variables with no significant number of categories indicated no statistically significant differences in the responses of the surveyed in terms of political views ( $H(5, N = 2092) = 4.319600$   $p = .5044$ ). Thereby, the hypothesis (H5) indicating that respondents with rightist views value the sex of the candidate more was rejected. Kruskal-Wallis test showed statistically important differences in the distribution of respondents' answers in terms of variables age ( $H(5, N = 2098) = 19.44765$   $p = .0016$ ) and education ( $H(3, N = 2060) = 31.08059$   $p = .0000$ ). 82.5% of respondents in the youngest age category 18–24 disagreed with the analysed statement, and the percentage in the remaining groups in this category was slightly lower, approximately 77%. 70.9% of respondents disagreed with the statement [E]. 72.4% of the surveyed with vocational education had a similar opinion, 80.5% with secondary education and 79.2% with higher education ( $\rho = -0.09$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ).

## Discussion

The research indicates that an increased women participation in politics influences the increased number of women in public institutions<sup>15</sup>. This in turn leads to changes in politics since women launch different political initiatives from men, particularly in terms of women's, children's and families' rights, as well as family and education<sup>16</sup>.

<sup>15</sup> V. Mechkova, R. Carlitz, *Gendered accountability: when and why do women's policy priorities get implemented?*, "European Political Science Review", 2021, No. 13, p. 17.

<sup>16</sup> A. Westfall, C. Chantiles, *The Political Cure: Gender Quotas and Women's Health*, "Politics & Gender", 2006, No. 12, p. 470.



The majority of the surveyed did not support the traditional division of roles in the family, nor did they acknowledge lower women's participation in politics as natural. However, the surveyed differ among their answers, especially in terms of sex and political leanings. Men, particularly with rightist views, claimed more often than women that lower women's participation in politics is natural. It was confirmed by the results of earlier research where a bigger percentage of men than women thought that women are less suited for politics than men<sup>17</sup>.

Our research showed that respondents with rightist views were more in favour of the traditional division of roles in the family. The surveyed rightists more often than leftists considered lower women's participation in politics as natural. Reference could be made to prior studies, where leftist voters, as opposed to rightist voters, believed more often that women are not active enough in politics. For instance, in the research of Magda Karg-Musiał, approximately 47.6% of voters with leftist views did not agree with the statement that women in Polish politics are active enough, where 39.7% agreed. Whereas in the case of voters with rightist views 27.3% disagreed with the statement, and 52.8% held the opposite view<sup>18</sup>.

Prior studies noted that the percentage of respondents who believe men are more fit for politics than women increased with age. Similarly, the older the respondents, the higher the percentage of those who feel that women should run the household, and let men run the country<sup>19</sup>. However, along with rising levels of education, beliefs overtly preferring men in politics were less common<sup>20</sup>. Similar conclusions are drawn from our research. The higher the education, the lower the acceptance towards the notion that a lesser women participation in politics than men is natural.

## Conclusions

Constituting a half of the electorate, women cannot be excluded, both in achieving their objectives, and the participation in political life. The surveyed with leftist views more often acknowledged the inequalities in professional development between women and men. It has been proven that the differences in beliefs on a greater effectiveness of men than women in politics are related

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<sup>17</sup> R. Siemieńska, *Nie mogą, nie chcą czy nie potrafią? O postawach i uczestnictwie politycznym kobiet w Polsce*, Wydawnictwo "Scholar", Warszawa 2000, p. 27.

<sup>18</sup> M. Musiał-Karg, *Polacy o aktywności kobiet w polityce...*, *op. cit.*, p. 67.

<sup>19</sup> M. Szpunar, *Kobiety w polityce...*, *op. cit.*, p. 55.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 55–56.

to the sex of respondents. The sex of the candidate did not prove to be relevant to making electoral decisions by the surveyed.

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**Summary:** Opinion on the involvement of women in politics was examined. Men and right-wingers more often than women and left-wingers saw less involvement of women in politics as natural. Leftists more often paid attention to the inequalities in the professional development of women and men. The differences in beliefs about the greater effectiveness of men than women in politics were related to the gender of the respondents.

**Keywords:** women's rights, elections, right and left

#### **Polacy wobec partycypacji politycznej i rozwoju zawodowego kobiet w kontekście podziałów ideologicznych**

**Streszczenie:** Zbadano opinię na temat zaangażowania kobiet w politykę. Mężczyźni i zwolennicy prawicy częściej niż kobiety i zwolennicy lewicy uznawali mniejsze zaangażowanie kobiet w politykę za naturalne. Lewicowcy częściej zwracali uwagę na nierówności w rozwoju zawodowym kobiet i mężczyzn. Różnice w przekonaniach o większej skuteczności mężczyzn niż kobiet w polityce wiązały się z płcią badanych.

**Słowa kluczowe:** prawa kobiet, wybory, prawica i lewica