

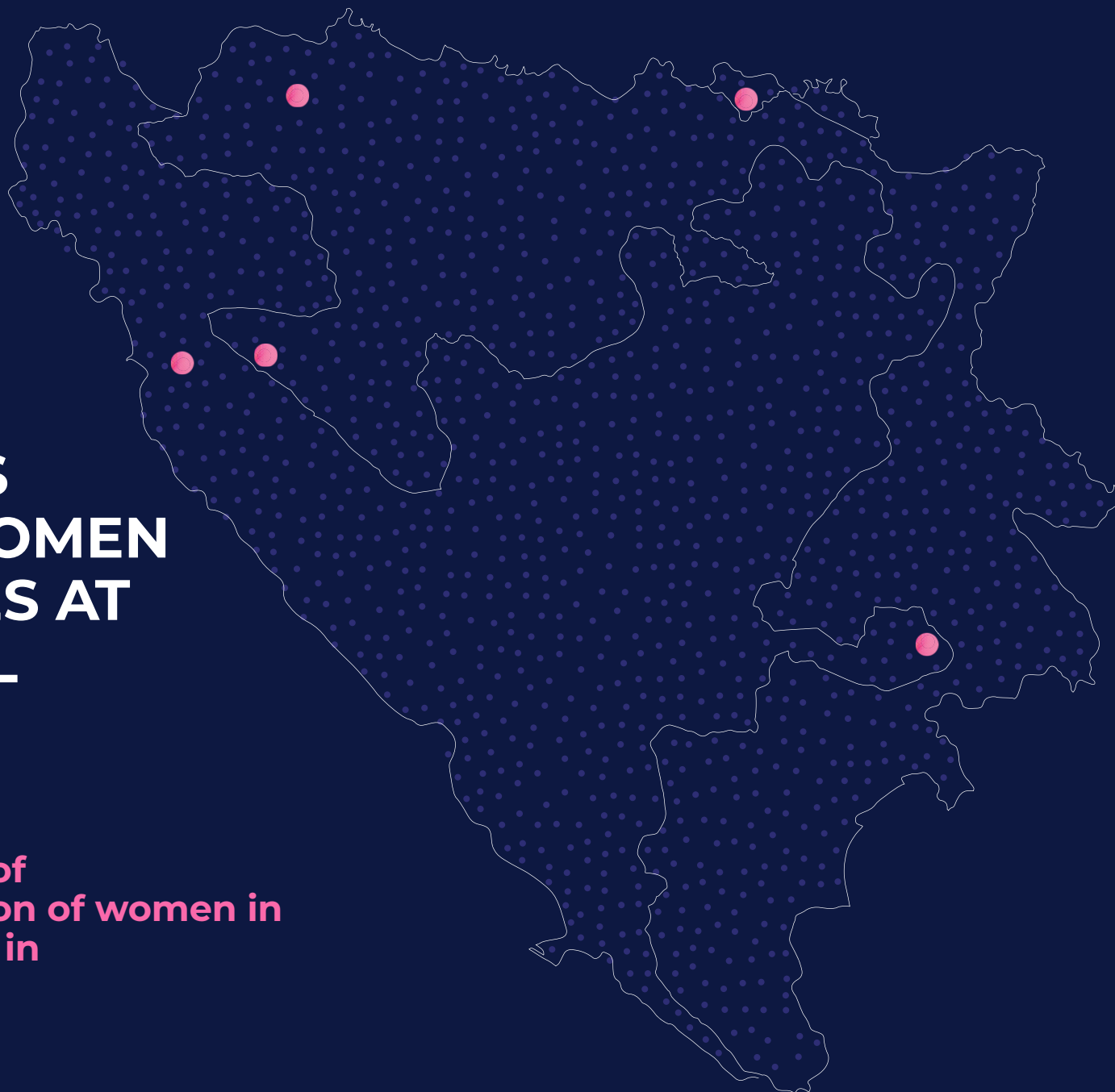
From Quota To Elections

ANALYSIS OF CANDIDATE LISTS AND ELECTED WOMEN REPRESENTATIVES AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

Bosnia and Herzegovina

Presentation of the results of
the analysis of representation of women in
local self-government units in
Bosnia and Herzegovina

Banja Luka, March 2024



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Introduction¹

Local self-government, cities and municipalities, represent the level of government with which citizens are in the most direct contact, and are therefore one of the most important actors within the political system when it comes to achieving equality between women and men.

Administrative and territorial organization of Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) - Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Republic of Srpska and Brčko District - Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina consists of 10 cantons, and cantons consist of municipalities and cities. Republic of Srpska consists of municipalities and cities. Brčko District is a separate administrative unit¹.

In the Republic of Srpska, the Law on Local Self-Government regulates the system of local self-government, units of local self-government, the terms and conditions of their formation, affairs of local self-government, bodies of local self-government units, mutual relations between assemblies of local self-government units and mayors and heads of municipalities, property and financing of units of local self-governments, acts and publicity of the work of the bodies of local self-government units, the procedure of supervision over the work of the bodies of local self-government units, forms of direct participation of citizens in local self-government, cooperation of the bodies of local self-government units, the relationship between the republic authorities and the bodies of local self-government units, the protection of the rights of local self-government and other issues of importance for exercising the rights and duties of local self-government units. The Law on the Principles of Local Self-Government in FBiH regulates: definition of local self-government, scope of self-government, bodies of local self-government units, mutual relations of councils and heads of local self-government units, local self-government, financing and property, public work, direct participation of citizens in decision-making, administrative supervision, cooperation of local self-government units and higher authorities, relationship and cooperation between fed-

eral and cantonal authorities and local self-government units, supervision of the implementation of laws, as well as other issues. In the Federation of BiH, cantonal assemblies adopt laws on local self-government, based on the Law on Principles of Local Self-Government in the FBiH.

Each unit of local self-government (city or municipality) disposes of its property, financial resources (budget), collects local taxes, fees and contributions, determines and implements spatial planning policies, housing policies, collects and utilizes fees for the use of public goods at its disposition, uses and manages construction land, natural resources and the funds generated by their use, manages communal infrastructure, establishes, manages and finances kindergartens and elementary schools, local radio and television stations.

The authorities in which these policies are decided are the municipal and city assemblies.

The city mayor, among other things, prepares and submits the draft budget to the assembly, executes it, proposes economic, development or spatial plans, including the use of public land.

Brčko District of Bosnia and Herzegovina is specific as it has a mayor, a government that does not consist of ministries but of departments, an assembly, a separate judiciary, police, and an employment agency. Brčko District of Bosnia and Herzegovina is a unique administrative unit of local self-government that is under the sovereignty of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The powers of the District in the matter of local self-government derive from the fact that each of the entities delegated to the Government of the District all their powers in connection with the administration that were previously exercised by two entities and three municipal authorities on the territory of the pre-war Brčko municipality. The competences of public authorities in the District are determined by Article 8 of the Statute of Brčko District of BiH².

¹ Agency for Statistics of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Bosnia and Herzegovina in numbers, 2022, Sarajevo in 2023. https://bhas.gov.ba/data/Publikacije/Bilteni/2023/NUM_00_2022_TB_1_BS.pdf

² Statute of Brčko District of Bosnia and Herzegovina ("Official Gazette of Brčko District BiH", number 2/2010 - revised text), available at <https://www.paragraf.ba/proписi/brcko/statut-brcko-distrikta-bosne-i-hercegovine.html>

Subject² of analysis

This analysis of the representation of women in the legislative powers in local self-government units in the Republic of Srpska and the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as women mayors and municipality heads, is looking for an answer to the question of whether, and if so, to what extent, women participate in decision-making at the local level of government, after the local elections in 2012, 2016 and 2020, and what is the trend of representation of women in municipal/city assemblies and women at the head of local communities in the indicated period.

For the purposes of the analysis, desk research was performed of the available data on the websites of the Central Election Commission of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Agency for Statistics of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Republic Institute of Statistics (Republic of Srpska), the Federal Institute of Statistics (Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina), as well as recent publications on the topic of this research.



The legal³ framework

governing the issue of equal participation of women in public and political life

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, a legal framework has been established to govern the issue of equal participation of women in public and political life.

Article 20 of the Law on Gender Equality in BiH ("Official Gazette of BiH", number 32/10 - revised text) establishes that equal gender representation in public life exists when one of the genders is represented by at least 40%:



„(1) State bodies at all levels of government organization and local self-government bodies, including legislative, executive and judicial authorities, political parties, legal entities with public powers, legal entities that are owned or controlled by the state, entity, canton, city or municipalities, or whose work is controlled by the public body, will ensure and promote equal gender representation in management, decision-making process and representation. This obligation also exists for all authorized candidates during the election of representatives and delegations in international organizations and bodies.



(2) Equal gender representation is in place in cases where one gender is represented by at least 40% in the bodies referred to in paragraph 1 of this article

(3) When there is no equal representation as in paragraph 2 of this article, the situation is considered as gender-based discrimination.

(4) The bodies referred to in paragraph 1 of this article, in order to achieve equal gender representation and eliminate gender discrimination, are obliged to adopt special measures prescribed by article 8 of this law."

Article 4.19, paragraph 3, of the BiH Election Law³ is aligned with the Law on Gender Equality in BiH, and it is established that equal representation exists when one gender is represented by 40% of the total number of male and female candidates on the list:



„Each candidate list includes male and female candidates, who are equally represented. Equal gender representation exists in the case when one gender is represented by at least 40% of the total number of candidates on the list. Candidates of the less-represented gender are distributed on the candidate list as follows: at least one candidate of the less-represented gender among the first two candidates, two candidates of the less-represented gender among the first five candidates and three candidates of the less-represented gender among the first eight candidates, etc.“

Regardless of the affirmative measure established by the Law on Gender Equality and the Election Law, in BiH, due to traditional notions of the roles of women and men among other things, politics is still perceived as men's work, which is one of the reasons why women are a minority in decision-making processes in the political, and consequently also in the social and economic spheres of life.

³The revised text of the BiH Election Law is available at: https://www.izbori.ba/Documents/documents/ZAKONI/izborni_zakon_PRECISCENI_TEKST-bos.pdf

In the Analytical Report of the European Commission with the Opinion on Bosnia and Herzegovina's request for membership in the European Union, it is stated, among other things:⁴



„Women are underrepresented in politics and public life. The Law on Gender Equality provides special measures to achieve at least 40% representation of each gender in legislative, executive and judicial authorities at all levels. However, these measures have not been fully implemented.“

In the latest report on Bosnia and Herzegovina for 2023⁵, it is stated that despite the appointment of two women, one as the chairperson of the Council of Ministers and one as a member of the Presidency, the number of politically engaged women who participated in the elections in October 2022 has decreased, and that it is necessary to further harmonize legislation with the Law on Gender Equality, implement measures to reduce verbal violence against politically engaged women, increase the visibility of women candidates and improve the culture in political parties to ensure equal participation of women.

⁴Available at: http://europa.ba/?page_id=63863, page 49.

⁵Report on Bosnia and Herzegovina for 2023 with the document Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, for the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, Communication on the EU enlargement policy for 2023. Available at: <https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/2023/lzvj%C5%A1taj%20o%20Bosni%20i%20Hercegovini%20za%202023.%20-%20BHS%20prijevod%20%28002%29.pdf>, str. 14, 37.

Although there is a declarative agreement that achieving a more appropriate ratio between women and men in all areas of public life and in all places where decisions are made is a necessary prerequisite for improving the position of women and achieving equality between women and men, as a matter of human rights and a way to build a just and developed society, the opportunities for women's political participation and their political influence are still extremely limited within the framework of most political parties.

The Resolution 2111 of Council of Europe (2016)⁶, on assessing the impact of measures to improve the representation of women in politics, states that in most member states of the Council of Europe, women are still largely underrepresented in politics. The Resolution calls on member states of the Council of Europe to adopt measures to promote women's participation. Electoral quotas have been recognized as the most effective way to achieve significant and rapid progress, provided they are properly designed and consistently implemented. Quotas should be adapted to the electoral system in force, ambitious targets should be set and strict penalties should be prescribed for non-compliance. The Resolution draws attention to social factors that determine women's participation in public life, such as the social protection system, parental leave, division of care and household duties, and others that member countries must strengthen. Strong action should be directed at overcoming the economic factors such as the gender wage gap, access to occupations and careers, as well as cultural factors and stereotypes that are often associated with the image of women as a part of the household with only the parental role. The Resolution suggests that member states should consider the principle of parity in their constitutions or their electoral legislation, and when it comes to quotas and other positive measures, to include rules on the nomination of candidates that will aim to ensure equal gender representation.

⁶The text of Resolution 2111 (2016) is available at: <https://www.parlament.ba/act/ActDetails?actId=869&lang=sr>



Key findings ⁴

Local elections in 2012

Local elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina were held on October 7th in 2012.

Heads of municipalities and city mayors, as well as municipal and city assemblies, were elected in the elections.

The decision on calling and holding local elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina in 2012⁷ called direct elections for:

- **78** municipal councils in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina,
- **61** municipal assemblies in the Republic of Srpska,
- **139** heads of municipalities/municipalities in Bosnia and Herzegovina,
- Assembly of Brčko District of Bosnia and Herzegovina,
- Assembly of the City of Banja Luka, i
- Mayor of the City of Banja Luka.

Local elections were not held in Mostar in 2012 (local elections were not held in Mostar from 2008 to 2020 due to disputes over the electoral law). According to data of the BiH Agency for Statistics, presented in the The-

matic Report "Women and Men in Bosnia and Herzegovina"⁹, the candidates in the Local Elections 2012, according to the level of government, were:

	Total	Women	Men	% Women	% Men
For the mayor/head of municipality	550	40	510	7,3	92,7
For council/assembly	29.652	10.694	18.958	36,1	63,9
For national minorities	149	25	124	16,8	83,2

Table 1.

83.8% of the elected councilors/members and mayors in the 2012 local elections were men, and 16.2% were women.

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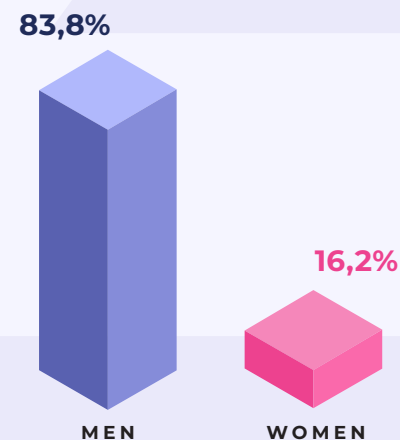


Chart 1.

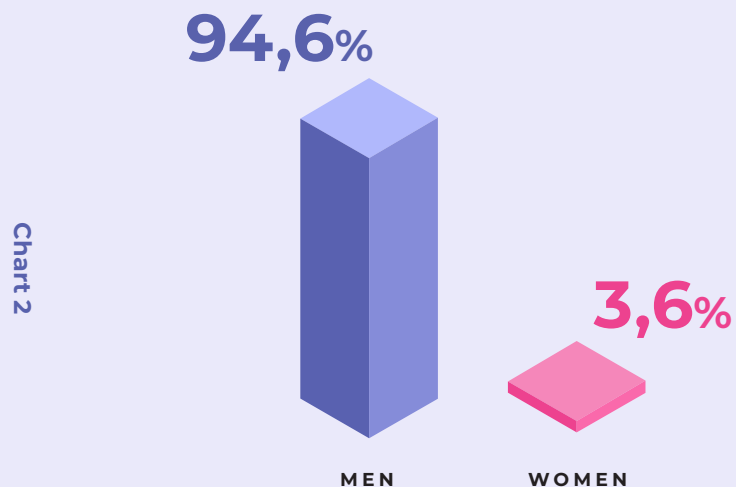
⁷ Decision available at: https://www.izbori.ba/Documents/Izbori2012/odluka_o_raspisivanju-hrv.PDF

⁸ In 2010, the Constitutional Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina canceled the special election rules for Mostar, that is, declared the Statute and part of the Election Law of Bosnia and Herzegovina unconstitutional, thus suspending the elections in Mostar. Since then, Mostar was governed by the mayor, without a city assembly, and the budget was passed by the Parliament of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. In July 2020, the Parliament of Bosnia and Herzegovina, after the agreement of the largest political parties, with the mediation of the international community, amended the Election Law and the Central Election Commission of Bosnia and Herzegovina made a decision to hold elections in Mostar on December 20, 2020, after 12 years of not having them.

⁹ Agency for Statistics of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Sarajevo, 2013 edition, p. 46-49.

96,4% of men and 3,6% of women was elected for the heads of municipalities and mayors.

MAYORS/HEADS OF MUNICIPALITIES 2012



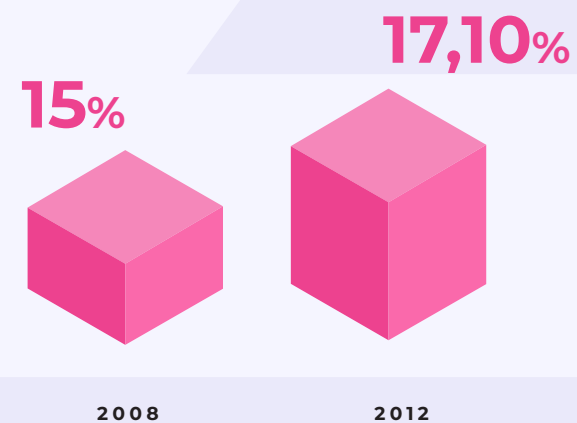
The BiH Agency for Gender Equality Agency has published an analysis of the representation of women in municipal councils, municipal assemblies, city councils and the Brčko District Assembly after the 2012 local elections¹⁰.

The analysis published by the BiH Agency for Gender Equality was based on the established results of the 2012 Local Elections published by

the BiH Central Election Commission. The results of this analysis point to the fact that women are still underrepresented gender in most local legislative bodies.

Compared to the local elections of 2008, when an average of 15% of women were elected to municipal councils/municipal assemblies, according to the data presented in this Analysis, an average of 17,1% of women were elected in the local elections of 2012.

WOMEN ASSEMBLY MEMBERS 2008 - 2012



Grafikon 3.

¹⁰Available at: <https://arsbih.gov.ba/667-2/>

Key findings 4.1

Local elections in 2016

In 2016, the local elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina were held on October 2.

Mayors of municipalities and city mayors, as well as municipal and city assemblies, were elected in the elections.

Elections are called for¹¹:

74 municipal councils in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina,
57 assemblies of municipalities in the Republic of Srpska,
131 heads of municipalities in Bosnia and Herzegovina,
4 city councils in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina,
6 city assemblies in the Republic of Srpska,
10 mayors in Bosnia and Herzegovina,
Assembly of Brčko District of Bosnia and Herzegovina.
Elections were not held in Mostar.

¹¹Decision on Calling and Holding Local Elections 2016, Central Source Commission, available at: https://www.izbori.ba/Documents/Lok_Izbori_2016/Izbori_Administracija_GCB/Odluke/Odluka-05042016BO-hrv.pdf

According to data from the Central Election Commission of Bosnia and Herzegovina¹², the candidates in the 2016 Local Elections, according to the level of government, were, as stated in Table 2:

	Ukupno	Žena	Muškaraca	%žena	%muškaraca
Za načelnika	418	26	329	6,22	93,80
Za vijeće/skupštinu	29.884	12.498	17.386	41,2	58,18
Za nacionalne manjine	143	18	125	12,59	87,41

A total of 3,119 mandate holders were elected to municipal/city councils and municipal/city assemblies, out of which 2,544 were men and 575 were women and among them 26 were representatives of national minorities (23 men and 3 women). In municipal/city councils and assemblies of municipalities/cities in Bosnia and Herzegovina, almost every fifth mandate went to women. Chart 4 shows the percentage participation of women and men as councilors/members:

COUNCILORS/ASSEMBLY MEMBERS 2016

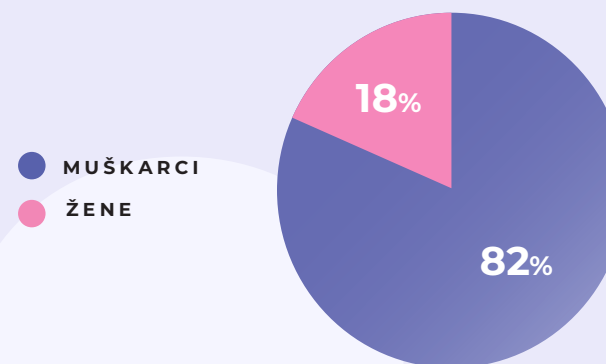


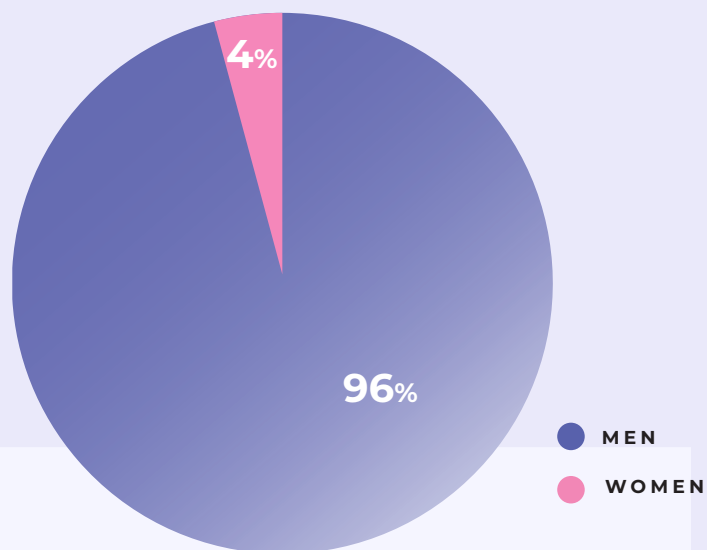
Chart 4

¹²IREPORT ON THE CONDUCT OF LOCAL ELECTIONS IN 2016, page 36, see page 2 - corrected data, Sarajevo, February 2017

In the Local Elections of 2016, out of 140 confirmed mandates for head of municipality/mayor, 134 mandates or (96%) went to men, and 6 or (4%) to women, as presented in Chart 5:

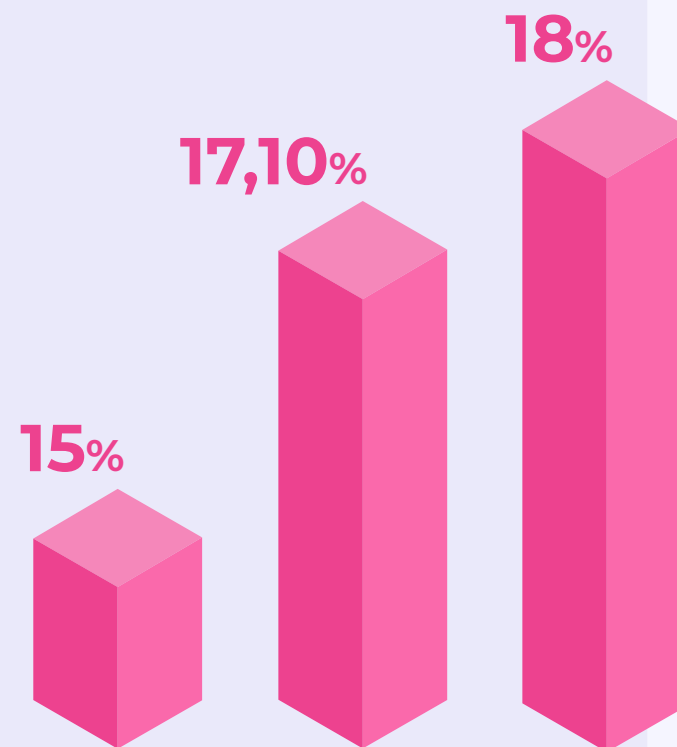
MAYORS/HEAD OF MUNICIPALITIES 2016

Chart 5



Women were elected mayors in the municipalities: Istočni Drvar, Jezero, Kalinovik, Novo Goražde, Mrkonjić - Grad and Visoko. The voters decided that the mayoral positions in the term 2016-2020 will be trusted to Divna Aničić (SNSD, Mrkonjić Grad), Snežana Ružičić (SNSD, Jezero), Amra Babić (independent candidate, Visoko), Mileva Komlenović (SNSD, Kalinovik), Mila Petković (SNSD, Novo Goražde) and Milka Ivanković (Native Social Democrats) – Mile Marcheta, Eastern Drvar).

**WOMEN ASSEMBLY MEMBERS
2008/2012/2016**



Grafikon 6.

From Chart 6 we can see that the percentage of women's participation in local councils/assemblies is slightly increasing: in 2008, 15% of women councilors were elected in Bosnia and Herzegovina, in 2012, 17.1%, and in 2016, 18%.

Key findings 4.2

Local elections in 2020

Local elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina were held on November 15, 2020.

Heads of municipalities and city mayors, as well as municipal and city assemblies, were elected in the elections.

- **64** municipal councils in the Federation of BiH,
- **56** municipal assemblies in the Republic of Srpska,
- **120** heads of municipalities in BiH,
- **14** city councils in the Federation of BiH,
- seven town assemblies in the Republic of Srpska,
- **22** mayors in BiH i
- Assembly of Brčko District¹³.

In Mostar, these elections were the first after 2008 and were held on December 20th, 2020¹⁴.

For the 2020 Local Elections, the Central Election Commission of BiH certified a total of 30,809 candidates (12,832 women or 41.65% and 17,977 men or 58.35%), as follows:

- 425 candidates for the position of head of municipality/mayor;
- 30,384 candidates for the position of councilor, of which 197 candidates for guaranteed mandates for members of national minorities.

The gender structure of certified candidates was as follows:

- 29 women and 396 men were certified as heads of municipalities/mayors;
- 12,803 women were certified for municipal councils/municipal assembly, city council/city assembly, Brčko District Assembly, out of which 40 were members of national minorities, and 17,581 men, out of which 157 were members of national minorities.

A total of 370 candidates were certified for the Local Elections in the City of Mostar, out of which:

- 209 (56.49%) men and
- 161 (43.51%) women.

Out of 425 candidates for mayor, only 29 were women, which is 6.82% of the total number of candidates.

	Total	Women	Men	%Women	%Men
For the mayor/head of municipality	425	29	396	6,8	93,2
For council/assembly	30.168	12.753	17.415	39642,27	57,73
For national minorities	197	40	157	20	80

Table 3

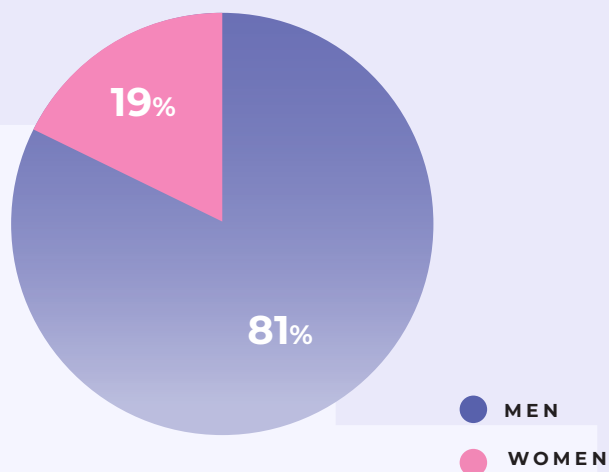
¹³The decision on calling and holding the Local Elections in 2020 is available at: https://www.izbori.ba/Documents/Lokalni_izbori_2020/Ostalo/Odluka_o_raspisivanju_lokalnih_izbora_2020-hrv.pdf

¹⁴U In January 2004, the High Representative of the International Community in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Paddy Ashdown, adopted the Statute of the city of Mostar. National quotas were introduced to prevent one nation from having a majority in the city council. Part of the Statute were special election rules that formed six election units: three majority Croat and three majority Bosniak. In November 2010, the Constitutional Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina issued a decision on the partial amendment of the Statute of Mostar and the Electoral Law of BiH, judging them unconstitutional in the part that refers to the fact that the same number of councilors are elected from the area of the six former Mostar municipalities, even though they have different numbers of voters. In June 2018, Irma Baralija, a resident of Mostar, filed

a complaint with the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg against Bosnia and Herzegovina because, due to the non-holding of elections, she was denied the right to vote and be elected as a member of the city council of the City of Mostar in 2008, which led to discrimination based on place of residence. The European Court of Human Rights ruled unanimously on October 29, 2019 that there was a violation of Article 1 of Protocol No. 12 (general prohibition of discrimination) of the European Convention on Human Rights. The verdict orders the Parliament of Bosnia and Herzegovina to amend the Election Law, no later than six months after the verdict becomes final (legally binding), in order to enable the holding of local elections in Mostar. In July 2020, amendments to the Electoral Law were adopted, providing the new way of electing city authorities in Mostar (see chapter 19 of the Electoral Law - City of Mostar).

In the Report of the Central Election Commission on the implementation of the Local Elections 2020¹⁵, it is stated that, according to the consolidated results of the Local Elections held on November 15, 2020, local elections in the City of Mostar held on December 20, 2020, and repeated elections in the City of Dobož and the municipality of Srebrenica (February 21, 2021), a total of 3,319 officials were elected (627 women and 2,692 men).

Chart 7



According to the data in Chart 7, it can be seen that almost every fifth woman was elected to municipal/city councils and assemblies of municipalities/cities in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which is 1% more than in the previous local elections held in 2016, and 2% more % more than in the Local Elections of 2012, and even 4% more than in 2008 (graph number 8). Nevertheless, the percentage of elected women is more than half of the legally guaranteed quota for candidate lists (40% less represented sex).

¹⁵CENTRAL ELECTION COMMISSION OF BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA, June 2021, page 72.

WOMEN ASSEMBLY MEMBERS 2008/2012/2016/2020

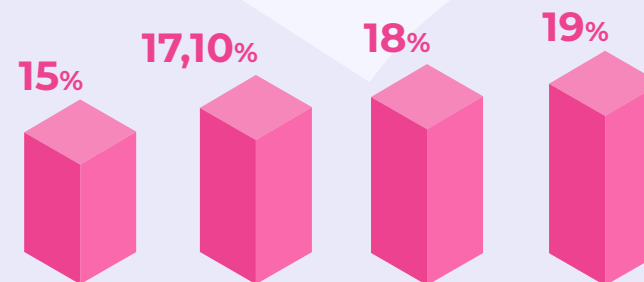


Chart 8

When it comes to the election for heads of municipalities/mayors, in the local elections of 2020, out of 142 elected mayors/mayors, 137 (96.5%) are men and 5 (3.5%) are women.

Tables 4 and 5 present the consolidated data after the local elections held on November 15, 2020, local elections in the City of Mostar and repeated elections in the City of Dobož and the municipality of Srebrenica:

2020	Women	%Women
Total	627	18,9
Heads of municipalities/mayors	5	4,0
Municipal/city councils and municipal/city assemblies	662	20,6

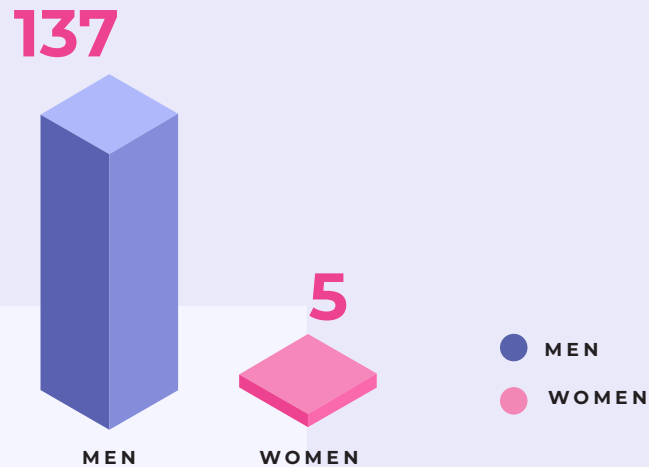
Table 4

	Men	%Men
Total	2692	81,1
Heads of municipalities/mayors	137	96,0
Municipal/city councils and municipal/city assemblies	2555	79,4

Table 5

HEADS OF MUNICIPALITIES/MAYORS 2020

Chart 9



Data from the Agency for Statistics of Bosnia and Herzegovina presented in the thematic publication "Women and men in BiH"¹⁶ confirm that in the Local Elections of 2020, five women mayors were elected in the municipalities: Odžak, Drvar, Istočni Drvar, Jezero and Novo Goražde. The number of inhabitants in each of these municipalities is less than 20,000.

¹⁶Issue 2021, p. 104-106

¹⁷Article 13 of the BiH Electoral Law stipulates that the municipal head, or the mayor, is elected in accordance with the Electoral Law, constitutions, entity laws and the municipal or city statute. The electoral law, depending on how the city itself is organized, leaves room for constitutional and/or legal solutions at lower levels to regulate the way the mayor is elected. Considering that the City of Sarajevo consists of four municipalities, the FBiH Constitution, by amendment 16, in the section "City authorities", stipulates that "for the area of two or more

The number of directly elected women mayors after the 2020 elections is lower - in 2016, six were elected, and in 2020, five female mayors, the same number as elected in the local elections held in 2012.

	2012.	2016.	2020.
Women heads of municipalities/mayors	5	6	5
Municipal/city councils and municipal/city assemblies	498	575	662

Table 6

It is important to say that one more city in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the City of Sarajevo, has a woman mayor. However, it is important to say that the citizens do not elect the mayor of the City of Sarajevo, the mayor of Sarajevo¹⁷ is not directly elected. Nevertheless, the City Council of Sarajevo elected a woman as the mayor of the largest city in Bosnia and Herzegovina, so the number of women mayors after the 2020 local elections remained unchanged.

municipalities that are urban and territorially connected by the daily needs of citizens, a city is formed as a unit of local administration and self-government, in accordance with the federal law and, among other things, stipulates that the City Council elects the mayor. Given that Sarajevo is the only city with multiple municipalities, this provision in the FBiH Constitution prevents the direct election of the mayor and requires changes to the Constitution of the Federation. See Radio Free Europe: <https://www.slobodnaevropa.org/a/kako-se-biraju-gradsko-vije%C4%87e-i-gradona%C4%8Delnik-sarajeva-/31115932.html>

Republic of Srpska and BiH Federation 4.3

summary results of local elections 2012 – 2020¹⁸

Elected councilors of municipal and city assemblies in the Republic of Srpska by gender*

Year	Total	Men	Women
2012	1265	1082	183
2015**	1280	1092	188
2016	1293	1081	212
2020	1301	1080	221

Table 7

- * The councilors of the East Sarajevo City Assembly are not included
** Data are presented for 2012, as well as data after the first elections held in 2015 for councilors of the Stanari Municipal Assembly

¹⁸Republic Institute of Statistics, STATISTICAL YEARBOOK, 2021 (second, corrected edition), p. 58-59. Publication available at: https://www.rzs.rs.ba/static/uploads/bilteni/godisnjak/2021/03izb_2021.pdf

Elected municipal councilors in the Federation of BiH by gender¹⁹

Year	Total	Men	Women
2012	1800	1482	318
2016	1803	1437	366
2020	1845	1448	397

Table 8

From the above data listed in Tables 7 and 8, it can be seen that the number of women elected councilors in the Republic of Srpska, and councilors in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, slightly increased from 2012 to 2020.

¹⁹Federal Bureau of Statistics, "Statistical yearbook/yearbook FBiH 2023", p. 79. Publication available at: https://fzs.ba/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/Statisticki-godisnjak-ljetopis-FBiH-2023_.pdf

Concluding observations⁵

The local level of government is closest to women and men citizens. At the local level, concrete steps are taken and decisions are made that most directly affect their daily lives.

Local self-government, cities and municipalities, present the level of government with which citizens are in the most direct contact and are therefore one of the most important levels of government within the political system when it comes to achieving equality between women and men.

This analysis sought an answer to the question of whether, and if so, to what extent, women participate in decision-making at the local level of government, after the local elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina in 2012, 2016 and 2020, and what is the trend of representation of women in municipal/city assemblies and women at the head of local communities in the indicated period. Also, information was sought on whether and how many women are at the head of cities and municipalities and, if there are any, which cities and municipalities they are.

The general conclusion is that women are underrepresented in local assemblies: although there is a slight increase in the number of elected women - from 17.1% after the local elections in 2012, over 18% after the local elections in 2016, to 19% after the local elections in 2020, the representation of women in local councils/assemblies is far from that guaranteed by

the quota for candidate lists. Out of the quota of 40% female candidates, less than 20% were elected. The analysis of the number of men and women on the election lists, that is, candidates for the elections, confirmed that the participation of women in the elections is in accordance with the laws prescribed by the measure of affirmative action: the number of women candidates for the council/assembly ranged from 36.1% in the local elections 2012, to 41.82% in the 2016 local elections, and 42.27% in the 2020 local elections.

The number of female candidates for city/mayor was too small: from 7.3% in the local elections in 2012, 6.22% in the local elections in 2016, and 6.8% in the local elections in 2020. The number of elected women mayors is devastating: in the observed period, the number of women ranged from five to six: after the 2012 elections, five women were elected (3.6%); after the 2016 elections six were elected, and in the local elections held in 2020 five female mayors were directly elected. The number of inhabitants in each of the municipalities where women are directly elected mayors is less than 20,000. An exception to this rule is the election of Benjamina Karić as the mayor of the City of Sarajevo, the largest city in Bosnia and Herzegovina, with the fact that the mayor was chosen by the City Council, not the citizens in elections.

The results of the research "From quota to elections - analysis of candidate lists and elected representatives at the local level - Bosnia and Herzegovina" confirm the need to continue designing and implementing activities with elected women at the local, entity and BiH levels of government.

Equal representation of women and men in decision-making positions is one of the main indicators of the success of efforts to achieve gender equality and democratization of society. The average participation of women at the world level, including in Bosnia and Herzegovina, although constantly increasing in the period after the Second World War, is around 20%. Women are still a minority, not only in legislative bodies - parliaments, but also in local councils/assemblies, as confirmed by this research.

Recommendations ⁶

for further activities

- For the local elections in 2024, obtain comparative statistical data on the number of men and women who are running for re-election and the number of those who have given up re-candidacy.
- Conduct qualitative research that will indicate whether women more often decide to leave politics, if so, why - whether due to difficulties in establishing a balance between professional obligations and family life, whether because they were not taken seriously as councilors, whether due to dissatisfaction with the atmosphere of confrontation or the feeling that they cannot progress sufficiently due to the strong network of male solidarity and similar reasons; Include interviews with women whose mandates have ended to gain insight into the reasons that led them to withdraw from re-candidacy.
- Make an analysis of the representation of female candidates and elected women politicians in the media, as well as the influence of the media on the prospects of female candidates for election and winning mandates in the 2024 local elections.
- After the local elections in 2024, collect data on how many city/municipal assemblies have a woman as president.
- For the general elections in 2026, monitor whether the success of women elected at the local level resulted in political advancement towards entity or BiH level candidacy or even eventual election - a conversation with such women can provide information and insight into whether adequate representation of citizens' interests and female citizens in local assemblies leads to the creation of a base of qualified and experienced women candidates for positions in general elections or, on the contrary, success at the local level is perceived as a threat to male candidates.
- Offer cooperation and support to Women's Forums within political parties.
- Continue designing and implementing activities with elected women at the local, entity and BiH levels of government.

In Banja Luci,
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