

FEM·ABLE



FEM-ABLE

Promoting women's participation
in the political domain

NATIONAL REPORT FOR LITHUANIA

Deliverable D2.2

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1. OVERVIEW OF THE POLITICAL AND SOCIAL LANDSCAPE

Lithuania is a Baltic country that joined the European Union and NATO in 2004. It has a population of about 2.8 million people and a land area of 65,300 square kilometres.

1.1. Political landscape

Lithuania is a parliamentary republic with a semi-presidential system, where the president is the head of state and the prime minister is the head of government (Urbanavičius, 1999). The president is elected by popular vote for a five-year term and can serve up to two terms. The prime minister is appointed by the president and approved by the parliament, which is called the Seimas. The Seimas is a unicameral legislative body with 141 members elected for four-year terms by proportional representation and single-member constituencies (Ibid.). The current President of Lithuania is Gitanas Nausėda, who took office in July 2019. He is an independent candidate who won the second round of the presidential election with 66% of the votes. He replaced Dalia Grybauskaitė, who served two terms as president from 2009 to 2019 (BNS and LRT, 2019). The current prime minister of Lithuania is Ingrida Šimonytė, who took office in December 2020. She is the leader of the Homeland Union - Lithuanian Christian Democrats (TS-LKD), a conservative party that won the most seats in the 2020 parliamentary election (Masiokaitė-Liubinienė, 2022). She formed a coalition government with two liberal parties: the Liberal Movement (LRLS) and the Freedom Party (LP). The coalition holds 74 seats in the Seimas, while the opposition consists of four parties: the Lithuanian Farmers and Greens Union (LVŽS), which was the ruling party from 2016 to 2020; the Social Democratic Party of Lithuania (LSDP); the Labour Party (DP); and the Electoral Action of Poles in Lithuania - Christian Families Alliance (LLRA-KŠS) (BNS, 2020).

Municipalities are the basic units of local self-government in Lithuania. They are responsible for providing public services, such as education, health care, social welfare, public order, and environmental protection. There are 60 municipalities in Lithuania, each governed by a directly elected council and a mayor. Municipalities vary in size and population, ranging from Vilnius, the capital city with over half a million inhabitants, to Neringa, a coastal resort with less than 3,000 residents. (Republic of Lithuania Law on Local Self-Government, 2014)

The main political issues that Lithuania faces include coping with the aftermath of COVID-19 pandemic and its economic and social consequences; enhancing its energy security and diversifying its energy sources; maintaining its defence capabilities and readiness in light of Russia's aggression in Ukraine and elsewhere; supporting democratic movements and human rights in neighbouring Belarus; fostering innovation and digitalization in its economy and public administration; addressing social inequalities, poverty, and emigration; and promoting its culture, language, and identity at home and abroad (Bankauskaitė and Šlekys, 2023).

1.2. Social landscape

The population growth rate in Lithuania is 0.2%, which is one of the lowest in the European Union (EU). The main reasons for the low population growth are low fertility, high emigration and negative natural increase. The population of Lithuania is composed of 86.5% Lithuanians, 5.8% Poles, 4.5% Russians, 1.3% Belarusians and 1.9% other ethnic groups (European Commission, 2023).

The official language is Lithuanian, which belongs to the Baltic branch of the Indo-European language family. Other languages spoken in Lithuania include Polish, Russian, Belarusian and Ukrainian.

The majority of Lithuanians are Roman Catholics (~77%), followed by Orthodox Christians (~4.1%), Old Believers (~0.8%), Lutherans (~0.6%), Reformed Christians (~0.2%) and other religions (1.1%). About 16% of the population are not affiliated with any religion (Ališauskienė, 2018).

Lithuania has a high level of human development, ranking 35th out of 189 countries in the Human Development Index (HDI) in 2020. The HDI measures the average achievements in three dimensions: life expectancy, education and income (United Nations, 2022). Lithuania has a life expectancy at birth of 75 years, a mean years of schooling of 12.7 years (United Nations, 2018) and a gross national income per capita of \$23,690 (PPP) (MacroTrends, n.d.). Lithuania also has a high level of human capital, scoring 0.7 out of 1 in the Human Capital Index (HCI) in 2020 (World Bank Open Data, 2020). The HCI measures the amount of human capital that a child born today can expect to attain by age 18, given the risks of poor health and poor education (ResilienceLinks, 2022) Lithuania performs well in terms of survival rate, learning-adjusted years of school and adult survival rate.

Lithuania is a member of the EU, NATO, OECD and other international organizations. It has a market-based economy that is integrated with the EU single market. The main sectors of the economy are services (68.3% of GDP), industry (28.5% of GDP) and agriculture (3.3% of GDP). The main exports are refined petroleum products, machinery and equipment, chemicals and food products. The main imports are crude petroleum, machinery and equipment, vehicles and chemicals (Bertelsmann Stiftung BTI, 2022).

Lithuania faces some challenges in terms of demographic decline, aging population, income inequality and environmental sustainability. The government has adopted various policies and strategies to address these issues, such as promoting family-friendly measures, attracting foreign investment and talent, reducing poverty and social exclusion, enhancing innovation and competitiveness, and implementing green transition and digital transformation.

Lithuania is a small but dynamic country that has achieved significant progress in terms of human development and economic growth since its independence from the Soviet Union in 1990 (Encyclopedia Britannica, n.d.). It has a diverse and rich culture that reflects its history and identity. It also has a strong commitment to democracy, human rights and European integration (Bertelsmann Stiftung BTI, 2022).

1.3. National institutional mechanism for gender equality

Lithuania aims to mainstream gender equality into all policies and areas of life. This is ensured by:

Legal framework

a) The Law of the Republic of Lithuania on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men (1998) is aimed at ensuring the implementation of equal rights for women and men enshrined in the Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania, creating equal opportunities for women and men, and prohibiting any discrimination.

The law also provides a mechanism for the implementation of equality between women and men in all areas. Every state and local government institution and body must:

- Ensure that all legislation they prepare and adopt incorporates equal rights for women and men;
- Develop and implement programmes and measures aimed at equal opportunities for women and men;
- Ensure that the provision of administrative and public services does not violate the equal rights of women and men, etc.

The areas covered by the law are: employment, education and training, protection of consumer rights, social security.

b) Article 26 of the Labour Code stipulates that employers must implement the principles of gender equality and non-discrimination on other grounds.

c) Article 4(7) of the Law of the Republic of Lithuania on Strategic Management establishes the principle of gender equality and non-discrimination, which states that "the preparation and implementation of planning documents shall take into account the principle of gender equality, equal opportunities and non-discrimination (on the grounds of sex, race, nationality, citizenship, language, origin, social status, religion, beliefs, or attitudes, or age, the integration of aspects of gender equality and equality of treatment, disability, sexual orientation, ethnicity, religion and other discriminatory grounds) in the planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation phases, with a view to preventing the emergence of obstacles or limitations of opportunities which may have adverse consequences for women or men, as well as for groups in society which may be affected by discrimination".

d) Other legal acts

- Law on the Amendment of Article 20, Paragraph 1 of the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women and the Ratification of the Optional

Protocol to the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women.

- 10 September 1995 Seimas Resolution No I-1035 on the ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

Institutional mechanism dedicated to gender equality, covering all levels, in close cooperation with a wide range of non-governmental organisations, social partners and researchers. The mechanism includes:

a) Parliamentary level:

- **Committee of Human Rights**
- **Committee on Social Affairs and Labour**
- There is **Women's parliamentary group** in Lithuania composed of 17 members. (https://www.lrs.lt/sip/portal.show?p_r=38730&p_k=1).

b) Government level:

- The Ministry of Social Security and Labour formulates, organises, coordinates and monitors the implementation of national gender equality policy.
 - The responsible structural unit is the **Equal Opportunities, Women and Men Equality Unit** at the Ministry of Social Security and Labour (<https://socmin.lrv.lt/lt/veiklos-sritys/moteru-ir-vyru-lygybe?lang=lt>).
 - The Ministry of Social Security and Labour also acts as coordinator of the **horizontal principle "equal opportunities for all" of the National Progress Plan**.
- **The Commission for Equal Opportunities for Women and Men** works under the Government.
- **The Lithuanian Statistical Department** collects and provides gender-segregated statistics in various fields.

c) Municipalities level

- All municipalities are obliged to comply with their obligations under the Law on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men and the Law of the Republic of Lithuania on Strategic Management to mainstream gender equality in their strategic documents and to implement related measures.
- Some municipalities have already appointed a person responsible for gender equality issues.
- The Ministry actively cooperates with municipalities on gender equality issues.

d) An independent supervisory authority - the Office of the Equal Opportunities Ombudsperson, which monitors the implementation of the Law on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men and the Law on Equal Opportunities.

e) The societal and academic level consisting of:

- Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) working on gender equality, women's and men's rights and needs, which are actively consulted on gender equality issues, and collaborate in the preparation of strategic documents and in the implementation of the measures set out in these documents;
- The Equal Opportunities Network and the Equal Opportunities Researchers Network;
- Other social partners, e.g. the Women's Committee of the Lithuanian Labour Federation, the Women's Centre of the Lithuanian Confederation of Trade Unions, the Lithuanian Women's Trade Union Solidarumas, etc;
- Gender Equality Study Centres at universities.

Strategic documents

The National Progress Plan 2021-2030, which sets out the strategic objective of 2. increasing the social well-being and inclusion of the population, strengthening health and improving Lithuania's demographic situation. In order to achieve the strategic goal, the following relevant progress objectives are to be implemented:

- To create an appropriate, supportive and family-friendly environment, which would allow for the proper performance of family functions and, at the same time, for a more active and successful participation in the labour market, to strengthen equal opportunities for women and men, to promote fertility, to ensure and maintain the emotional well-being of families and children, to develop quality services accessible to all families with children.
- Enhance the well-being of persons with disabilities and their families, the elderly and other vulnerable and marginalised groups, their integration into society and the labour market, and address housing and homelessness. The objective is based on a personalised approach, aiming to ensure that social assistance is delivered as close to the individual as possible and is tailored to the needs, situation and capacities of individuals.

The National Development Plan also enshrines the horizontal principle of "equal opportunities for all".

In 2023, the **Action Plan on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men 2023-2025** was adopted, which aims to promote equality between women and men in a coherent, comprehensive and systematic manner, to eliminate disparities between the status of women and men, to inform the public about the measures taken to promote equal opportunities between women and men, to strengthen inter-institutional co-operation in the field of equality between women and men, and to ensure the implementation of the provisions of the Law on Equality of Opportunities for Women and Men in the context of the European Union's and the EU's international obligations in the field of equality between women and men.

The Development Programme for Strengthening Family Policy of the Ministry of Social Security and Labour of the Republic of Lithuania, which manages the Development Programme for the period 2021-2030, identifies the problem of failure to ensure equal opportunities for women and men. Progress measure "Ensure the reduction of stereotyped attitudes towards the roles of women and men in the family and society".

The Social cohesion development programme of the Ministry of Social Security and Labour of the Republic of Lithuania, which is the manager of the development programme for the period 2021-2030, identifies the problem of social exclusion due to possible discrimination (on the grounds of gender, social status, age, disability, language, origin, race, nationality, citizenship, beliefs or opinions, sexual orientation, ethnicity, religion, health or any other grounds). Progress measure - "Implement the principles of equal opportunities, gender equality".

1.4. Legal framework on gender equality in Lithuania

Article 29 of the **Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania** declares that "all persons are equal before the law, the court and other state institutions or officials. Human rights cannot be restricted or privileged on the basis of sex, race, nationality, language, origin, social status, religion, belief or opinion."

The **Law of the Republic of Lithuania on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men** (1998) regulates the equality of women and men. The provisions of this law can be used in situations where women may be discriminated against on the basis of gender. It also indicates what actions are considered discrimination and prohibits it and defines the scope of application. The law also details the responsibility of state and municipal institutions and bodies to prepare and implement programs and measures to ensure equal opportunities for women and men according to their competence. The 2017 amendment to the law included definitions of discrimination, harassment, sexual harassment, a provision was returned to the law that prohibits not only sexual harassment, but also harassment based on a person's gender in the workplace or any other discrimination based on gender.

The **Equal Opportunities Law of the Republic of Lithuania** entered into force in Lithuania on November 18, 2003, the purpose of which is to ensure that the equal rights of people enshrined in the Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania are implemented, and to prohibit any direct and indirect discrimination based on age, sexual orientation, disability, race or ethnic independence, religion or beliefs.

In order to protect and ensure survivors of domestic violence in 2011 May 26 the Parliament of the Republic of Lithuania adopted the Law on Protection against Domestic Violence.

Lithuania has signed, but not yet ratified, the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and eliminating violence against women and domestic violence, which entered into force in 2014 (Istanbul Convention).

1.5. Institutions responsible for Gender equality in Lithuania

Lithuanian Parliament adopted the Republic of Lithuania Law on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men on 1 December 1998. This law came into effect on 1 March 1999. The first **Equal Opportunities**

Ombudsperson was appointed on 20 April 1999. On the grounds of Constitution's article 73 the Office of the Equal Opportunities Ombudsperson was established on 25 May 1999 by the Parliament of the Republic of Lithuania and its regulations were approved. On 1 January 2005 a new Law on Equal Treatment came into force. Ombudsperson's mandate was extended and guaranteed the right to file complaints to the Equal Opportunities Ombudsperson in cases of discrimination on grounds of age, sexual orientation, disability, race, ethnic origin, religion or beliefs.

The **Office of the Equal Opportunities Ombudsperson** is a budgetary institution financed from the state budget. Ombudsperson, by proposal from the Speaker of the Seimas, is assigned for a term of five years by secret voting in Parliament. Ombudsperson is accountable to Parliament and is responsible for the enforcement of the Law on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men and the Law on Equal Treatment.

2. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND ON WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN POLITICS AND POWER POSITIONS

1896 -1917

In the 19th century Lithuania, women became involved in charity organizations, and towards the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century, they started participating in the activities of emerging political parties. The Lithuanian Social Democratic Party, founded in 1896, declared political equality for both genders. Later, the Lithuanian Democratic Party, formulating its core principles in 1903 and aiming for Lithuania's independence, recognized political and voting rights for women. Notable women like Felicija Bortkevičienė, Gabrielė Petkevičaitė-Bitė, and Liuda Purėnienė were involved in these party activities. In 1905, the Lithuanian Christian Democrats emphasized in their program the equal representation of all genders in parliament through fair, direct, secret, and compulsory voting, without distinction of faith, nationality, gender, or class. Prominent women such as Magdalena Galdikienė and Ona Muraškaitė were active in Christian party activities. Despite the parties advocating gender equality, women did not have voting rights during that time. (Akmenytė-Ruzgienė, n.d.).

During the significant Lithuanian assembly known as the Great Assembly of Vilnius, held on December 4-5, 1905, where demands for Lithuanian autonomy were voiced, women also participated alongside men. Most of the delegates, total 2,000, were elected in local gatherings. Among the delegates were future members of the Lithuanian Republic Seimas, including Felicija Bortkevičienė, Gabrielė Petkevičaitė-Bitė, and Liuda Purėnienė. Women continued to actively engage in various societal and political organizations, forming groups, focusing on education, social care, healthcare, and women's rights. The women's emancipation movement was catalyzed by World War I. Amid the war, as many Lithuanians retreated to Russia's depths,

the Petrapilis Seimas was convened in 1917, where notable Lithuanian women figures, including future parliamentarians, participated.

1917-1940

The first concrete step towards re-establishing Lithuanian sovereignty occurred on September 22, 1917, when the Lithuanian Conference, held in Vilnius, elected a 20-member Lithuanian Council and charged it with proclaiming Lithuania's independence. Interestingly, no women became delegates at this conference. Women's organizations protested this fact and urged for at least one female representative in the Lithuanian Council. Despite

Joana Pavalkytė – Griniuvienė

In 1905, J. Griniuvienė joined the Lithuanian Social Democratic Party, whose ideas aligned with J. Griniuvienė's beliefs.

1910, J. Griniuvienė began to take care of the imprisoned members of the 'Šviesos' Society and the society's criminal case. She helped to win some of their cases in court.

educated and qualified women being available, there were no women among the Council members throughout its existence.

The principal institution of the newly forming Lithuanian State, expressing sovereign power, began considering the possibility of declaring Lithuania as a constitutional monarchy rather than a democratic republic. During the summer of 1918, members of the Lithuanian State Council who were monarchists even presented the Constitution of the Lithuanian State. This constitution was more than eloquent – for instance, in the article "About the Seimas," it emphasized that: "The Seimas is elected by universal and direct elections through secret ballot. It consists of 93 members." It explicitly stated that women do not have the right to vote: "The right to vote is not granted to: 1) women, 2) persons under guardianship, 3) bankrupt persons, 4) persons receiving aid for the poor [...]" The Lithuanian State Council, while attempting to decide on Lithuania's state structure, exceeded its powers, sparked significant disputes among Council members, and faced accusations of usurping the Constituent Assembly's authority. The situation changed after a few months when the democratic path of Lithuania's state development was once again declared. (ibid.)

In 1918, on November 2nd, the Lithuanian State Council adopted the fundamental principles of the Temporary Constitution of the Lithuanian State, which defined the rights and responsibilities of Lithuanian citizens and the functions of governmental institutions. Although this legal document did not explicitly mention granting women the right to vote, it stated that "citizens, no matter what their sex [...], are equal before the law" (meaning both men and women would be equally accountable for crimes, have equal

Gabrielė Petkevičaitė-Bitė

Petkevičaitė worked with her father in a pharmacy and privately tutored in Lithuanian, violating the Lithuanian press ban.

Her first article was published in Varpas in 1892 and dealt with women's issues.

In May 1920, she was elected to the Constituent Assembly of Lithuania and, as the second oldest member of the assembly.

In 1926 she was a candidate in the 1926 Lithuanian presidential election.

Emilija Spudaitė-Gvildienė

A member of the Lithuanian Christian Democratic Party, in 1920 she was elected to the Constituent Assembly from constituency.

She was re-elected in 1922, 1923 and 1926, serving in the Seimas until it was dissolved following the 1926 coup.

After the Seimas was disbanded, she served as chair of the Lithuanian Catholic Women's Society.

inheritance and property rights, pay equal taxes, etc.), and reiterated that the "Constituent Assembly is elected through universal, direct, equal, and secret voting. In summary, the principles of women's suffrage were declared in the foundational articles of the Temporary Constitution, but the actual right to vote was solidified through the implementation of these provisions in the Law on Constituent Assembly Elections, which was adopted by the Lithuanian State Council on October 30, 1919, and came into effect on December 2, 1919, following its publication in the official publication "Laikinosios Vyriausybės žinios" (Gazette of the Temporary Government). Contemporaries of these elections later recalled: "When Lithuanian political groups were organizing for the Constituent Assembly elections, all included women on their candidate lists. Lithuanian women did not need to fight for that right, whereas even today, there are countries where women cannot vote for their own parliament or be elected to it." It seems that Lithuanian women obtained the right to vote without major struggles, protests, or demonstrations in city squares. However, quiet resistance towards suffrage did exist. For instance, during the Constituent Assembly elections, the President of the Lithuanian State and the Prime Minister had to issue a statement urging Lithuanian citizens to fulfil their civic duty and uphold gender equality, which was not yet universally understood. (ibid.)

Sofija Kymantaitė-Čiurlionienė

To raise funds to support struggling students, activists organized cultural evenings with lectures, music, plays. During several such evenings, plays by Čiurlionienė were performed.

March 1929, she attended a meeting on the situation in Eastern Europe organized by the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom in Vienna.

In 1930–1936, she was the leader of the Lithuanian girl scouts.

The Lithuanian Constituent Assembly stands out because its inaugural session on May 15, 1920, was presided over by what was termed the "age presidency," consisting of women. It was humorously remarked at the time that women temporarily took over the reins of power in the country, as the "age presidency" fulfilled the role of transitional power. The "age president" (usually the oldest Assembly member) was 59-year-old Gabrielė Petkevičaitė-Bitė, and the "age secretary" (usually the youngest Assembly member) was 24-year-old Ona Račiukaitienė (Muraškaitė). According to Kazys Grinius, "to journalists, this was a worldwide sensation." Gabrielė Petkevičaitė-Bitė, taking advantage of the age-based privilege, addressed the session attendees: "I am fortunate that fate has granted me the great honour of inaugurating the proceedings of our independent homeland's Constituent Assembly today, on behalf of the country's landlord, and of welcoming all who have gathered here.

I am fortunate to do this as an old fighter for the independence of my nation, as a woman who has so passionately desired equal rights, as a member of our society who has never ceased to fight against any form of subjugation, regardless of whether it's national, social, or economic." This marked the first and only time that a woman was mentioned in the inaugural session of the Constituent Assembly, and women's rights were addressed. Nonetheless, the primary goal was to solidify the Independence of the Republic of Lithuania, and its citizens pursued this goal regardless of gender distinctions. (ibid.)

The Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania is an exceptional institution where women achieved significant heights in their political careers. One notable figure is Magdalena Galdikienė, who

Salomėja Stakauskaitė

1920 she was one of five women elected to the Constituent Assembly.

Before World War 2, she secretly engaged in pedagogical work. After establishing the 'Saulė' Seminary in Panevėžys, she taught and led there.

Supported by her brothers, she created Catholic schools in Panevėžys, Jurbarkas, which were the first Lithuanian gymnasiums.

became the only female member of the Seimas Presidium. In 1926, she held the position of Deputy Chair of the Seimas, the highest state position a woman had held between 1918 and 1940 in Lithuania. Despite the candidacy of female parliamentarians Liuda Purėnienė, Magdalena Galdikienė, and Emilija Gvildienė for the Seimas leadership roles in 1923, none of them succeeded. The situation changed in 1925 when Magdalena Galdikienė was elected to the Seimas Presidium. She served as the Deputy Secretary of the Second Seimas and on March 5, 1926, she assumed the role of Deputy Chair of the Second Seimas. This achievement marked a significant breakthrough considering the challenges women faced in occupying top government positions during that time in Lithuania. (ibid.)

In 1926, this Seimas had to elect the President of the Republic of Lithuania. Two candidates out of four were women – G. Petkevičaitė and F. Bortkevičienė, but they did not receive sufficient support and were not elected. The very fact that women participated in the elections of the president of the state in 1926 as candidates is very important and shows the strength of the Lithuanian women and their desire to struggle for the real equality of political rights.

Women were also active in their organisations: in 1928, the Council of Women of Lithuania was established, which had an objective to coordinate women's movement. In 1937, the Second Congress of women was held in which the issues of women's rights were much discussed and in which demands were raised to implement the constitutional provisions of women's rights in reality. The Second Women's Congress asked to implement the equality of men and women enshrined in the Constitution of 1928, i.e. that women's rights would not be narrowed by laws and decrees of the Government, that women would participate in the preparation of the civil code and that women would also be elected to the Seimas. Due to the problems that emerged during the movement of women, the undemocratic political system, undemocratic constitutional reforms and negative attitude of male politicians to women's participation in politics, the women's movement did not have a significant influence on the policy of the State of Lithuania in the fourth decade of the twentieth century (Birmontienė and Jurėnienė, 2019).

Felicija Bortkevičienė

1920, as a candidate of the Peasant Union, she was elected to the Constituent Assembly of Lithuania

1920, together with the Lithuanian Popular Socialist Democratic Party (LPSDP), she established publishing company AB Varpas (bell), which she headed until 1930.

1922, she helped reestablish the Lithuanian Women's Union which she chaired until 1928.

1940-1990

The focus on parity in both politics and the workplace was a key principle of the communist system under the Soviet regime from 1940 to 1990. Women played an equal role in economic production as it was a constitutional expectation that all citizens had both a right and an obligation to work and "allegiance to the state was placed above that of the family and the family was seen as an economic unit supporting state objectives" (Metcalf and Afanassieva, 2005). At this time, the economy was based on labour-intensive industries and it was difficult to support a family on one income, which coupled with the ideology led to a significant increase in women's activity in the workplace (Lafont, 2001). Consequently, at the time of independence the levels of participation of women in the workplace including managerial and professional levels, were much higher than other western European countries (Metcalf and Afanassieva, 2005). Indeed, women account for over 70% of those employed in professions (Biermann et al., 2011) capitalizing on their

easy access to higher education during the Soviet period and becoming a “revalued resource” (Motiejūnaitė, 2010). Certainly, the stable presence of women in the labour market and in the professions runs counter to the movement of women in and out of the labour market in many Western capitalist societies where women have been regarded as a “reserve army of labour” (Beechey and Perkins, 1987) or in response to fluctuations in the economic cycle. This normalization of women in the labour market should make it easier for women to play an equal role in employment, however, the persistence of State-sponsored patriarchy counters any advantage gained.

1991-Today

The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 opened new possibilities for women's political participation in Lithuania. The country regained its independence and embarked on a process of democratic transition and market reforms. Women were actively involved in the independence movement and the formation of new political parties and civil society groups. However, women also faced new challenges, such as economic hardship, social inequality, and political instability. Women's representation in parliament dropped from 21% in 1990 to 7% in 1992. The reasons for this decline include the lack of institutional support, the dominance of male elites, the resurgence of traditional gender stereotypes, and the low priority given to gender issues. In Lithuania, the proportional representation system was replaced by a mixed system that combined proportional and majoritarian elements. This new system favoured larger and more established parties, which tended to nominate fewer women than smaller and newer parties. As a result, women faced discrimination and exclusion from party lists and leadership positions. The political landscape became more polarized and competitive, with new parties emerging and old parties reorganizing to secure voter support. Women were often seen as less electable and popular than men, leading to further exclusion. Meanwhile, Lithuania faced economic and social challenges from market reforms and integration into the European Union. This increased the demand for experienced and qualified candidates who could handle complex and technical issues. Unfortunately, women were often perceived as lacking the necessary expertise and skills. Since then, women's representation in parliament has fluctuated between 10% and 18%, depending on the electoral system, the party system, and the public opinion.

The situation of women in politics in Lithuania has changed significantly since 2004, when the country joined the EU. Before that, Lithuania had only one female Prime Minister, Kazimiera Prunskienė, who served from 1990 to 1991. The first female speaker of parliament was Irena Degutienė, who was elected in 2009 and again in 2012. The second female prime minister was also Degutienė, who served as acting PM twice, in 1999 and 2001. A factor that boosted gender equality in politics in Lithuania was the emergence of more women leaders in prominent positions. For instance, in 2014, Dalia Grybauskaitė was re-elected as the president of Lithuania, becoming the first woman to hold this office for two consecutive terms. In 2016, Ingrida Šimonytė became the first woman to lead the Ministry of Finance, and in 2020, she became the prime minister of Lithuania, leading a coalition government that has a gender-balanced cabinet (Lapinskė, 2020).

However, despite these achievements, gender equality in politics in Lithuania still faces some obstacles and challenges. For example, women are still underrepresented in some sectors and regions, such as agriculture, energy, defence, and rural areas. Women also face more barriers and stereotypes than men when entering and advancing in politics, such as lack of resources, media attention, mentoring, and networking opportunities. Furthermore, women often have to balance multiple roles and responsibilities at home and at work, which can affect their political participation and career development. The EU accession brought new

opportunities and challenges for women in politics in Lithuania. On one hand, it opened up new spaces for dialogue and cooperation with other European countries and institutions, as well as with civil society organizations and activists working on gender equality issues. On the other hand, it also exposed some of the gaps and barriers that women face in accessing and exercising political power in Lithuania. (ibid)

One of the recent developments that have attracted attention is the emergence of women at the top of three parties. These parties are led by Ingrida Šimonyte (Homeland Union – Lithuanian Christian Democrats), Viktorija Čmilytė-Nielsen (Liberal Movement), and Aušrinė Armonaitė (Freedom Party). This phenomenon has been seen as a sign of transformation of Lithuania's political culture and a potential boost for gender equality.

3. CURRENT STATISTICS ABOUT WOMEN'S POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IN LITHUANIA

3.1. Parliament of the Republic of Lithuania - Seimas

The current Speaker of the Parliament (Seimas) Viktorija Čmilytė-Nielsen is a woman, born in 1983. She was first elected to the Parliament on 14 November 2016 and to this position on 13th of November 2020 m. The parliament consists of 141 members, with 100 men and 41 women. This constitutes a 29% representation of women.

The current Prime Minister of the current 18th Government Ingrida Simonytė is a women, born in 1974. She is a Lithuanian economist and politician, who served as Minister of Finance in the cabinet of Andrius Kubilius II (2009-2012).

There is no an electoral quota for women in place in the majority of political parties. Only Lithuanian Social Democratic Party has established in their Statute that the number of representatives of one sex in all elected bodies of the party and in the lists of candidates standing for election may not exceed 60 per cent.

Temporary special measures – as electoral quotas - help achieve gender balance in political decision-making more quickly. They are time-limited, i.e. they have to be withdrawn once de facto equality between women and men is established. Article 4 of the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) makes the application of these measures binding on all States. However, temporary special measures have not been legalised in Lithuania, despite the repeated recommendations of the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women to Lithuania following the consideration of Lithuania's Fourth, Fifth and Sixth Reports on the implementation of CEDAW

in Lithuania. The absence of temporary special measures is one of the main reasons why the number of women in politics is growing very slowly, as the experience of various countries shows. (OHCHR, 2019)

The “Women in politics: 2023” map, created by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) and UN Women, presents data for women in executive positions and national parliaments as of 1 January 2023. It ranks Lithuania in 75th position in the world for women's representation in parliament, with 29 percent of seats held by women. This is still below the global average of 25.5 percent and far from the Nordic countries that have over 40 percent of women Members of Parliament. Lithuania also ranks 24th in the world for women's representation in government, with 42 percent of ministerial positions held by women in 2023. (Women in Politics: 2023, n.d.)

According to World Economic Forum, Lithuania ranked in Top 10 in the Global Gender Gap Index, Lithuania was ranked 8th out of 156 countries in the world in the Global Gender Gap Index 2021. Lithuania has made the most progress in women's political empowerment, which is why it has risen to the top 10 of the gender equality leaders. This high position in the country ranking was due to the increased representation of women in the Government and the Seimas. The share of women among ministers has changed to 42 %. The number of women in Parliament has also increased.

3.2. The Municipalities

The results of the elections of 2023: according to the Central Electoral Commission of the Republic of Lithuania given statistics, from 433 candidates to mayoral elections, only 110 candidates were female. This adjusted to 25% of candidates being female.

After the municipal council and mayoral elections in 2023, from the 60 regions mayoral positions, only 6 were filled by women. This represents only 10% of next tenure mayors who are female.

3.3. Members in the European Parliament

During the 2019-2024 tenure in the European parliament, 11 candidates were elected from Lithuania, from which only 3 female candidates were elected. This represents 27% of total candidates in the European parliament from Lithuania being female representatives.

3.4. EIGE power indicators for 2022 (Lithuania)

The Gender Equality Index (GEI) is a tool developed by the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) to measure gender equality in the European Union. The GEI is based on a set of indicators that measure gender equality in seven domains: work, money, knowledge, time, power, health, and violence.

With 60.6 out of 100 points, Lithuania ranks 20th in the EU on the Gender Equality Index. Its score is 8.0 points below the EU's score. Lithuania's progress has been slower compared to other Member States, resulting in a drop in ranking by three places. Since 2019, Lithuania's score has increased the most (+ 2.2 points) compared to other Member States, but the country has retained its rank at the 20th place. Improvements in the domains of power and knowledge are the main drivers of Lithuania's higher score.

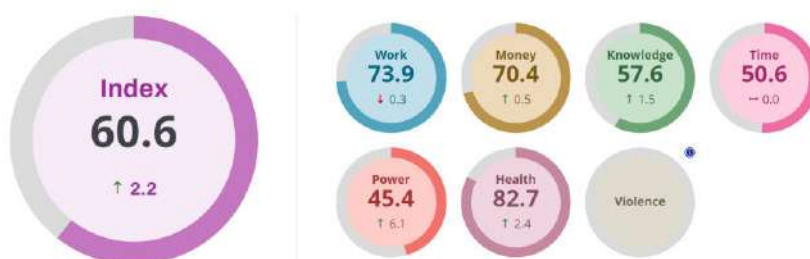
Lithuania's ranking is the highest (11th among all Member States) in the domain of work in which it scores 73.9 points. Within this domain, the country performs best in the sub-domain of participation at work, ranking 2nd with a score of 90.8 points (+ 4.8 points since 2010).

Gender inequalities are strongly pronounced in the domain of money (70.4 points) in which Lithuania's ranking remains consistently low (24th among all Member States) and progress has stalled (only + 0.5 points since 2019). Lithuania has the most room for improvement in the sub-domain of economic situation in which it scores 80.4 points and ranks 25th (dropping one place since 2019).

Although Lithuania's highest score is in the domain of health (82.7 points), it still ranks low (24th) among all Member States.

Since 2010, Lithuania's score has worsened in the domain of time (-1.6 points). Consequently, its ranking has dropped from the 20th to the 22nd place. The change is driven by higher levels of gender inequality in social and care activities (- 1.7 and - 1.4 points, respectively).

Lithuanian's performance in the Gender Equality Index for 2022



For more information on the different EIGE indicators for Lithuania, visit: <https://eige.europa.eu/gender-equality-index/2022/country/LT>

The domain of **power** measures gender equality in decision-making positions across the political, economic and social spheres. With 45.4 points, Lithuania's score has also improved in the domain of power (+ 6.1 points), in which it ranks 18th. This is the best improvement among EU Member States in this domain since 2019. Advancements in economic decision-making (+ 9.7 points since 2019) have powered this change, followed by improvements in political decision-making (+ 6.2 points since 2019).

The sub-domain of **political power** examines the representation of women and men in national parliaments, government and regional/local assemblies.

In political power in 2022 Lithuania scored 54.7. Women represented 42.2% of ministers, exceeding the EU average of 33.4%. Only 28.4% of members of parliament were women, lower than the EU average of 33%. In regional assemblies women made up 30.2% of members, the EU average is 29.4%.

Political

Country	Share of ministers (%)		Share of members of parliament (%)		Share of members of regional assemblies (%)	
	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men
LT	42.2	57.8	28.4	71.6	30.2	69.8
EU	33.4	66.6	33	67	29.4	70.6

<https://eige.europa.eu/gender-equality-index/2022/domain/power/LT>

In the sub-domain of **economic power**, Lithuania scored 34.2. Women held only 23.2% of board positions in the largest quoted companies, considerable lower compared to an EU average of 31.6%. The share of women board members in the central bank was 25%, the EU average was 26.4%.

In the sub-domain of **social power**, Lithuania scored 50. Women represented 33.3% of board members in research funding organizations, significantly lower than the EU average of 40.3%. Women also held 25% of board positions in publicly owned broadcasting organizations, a significantly lower than the EU average of 36.5%. However, in the national Olympic sport organizations, women made up only 18.7 % of members of the highest decision-making body, which is again above the EU average of 20.2%.

4. FOCUS GROUP TO EXPLORE BARRIERS AND STRATEGIES REGARDING THE POLITICAL PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN

4.1. Objectives of the focus group

Based on partner knowledge and initial desk research, the FEM-ABLE project identified a set of obstacles and barriers that might explain the reasons why women participate less in politics, and when they do, why they are chosen less than men candidates. Namely:

1. **Gender bias:** there may be conscious or unconscious bias against women in politics and leadership roles, making it more difficult for them to be taken seriously or gain access to opportunities.
2. **Stereotyping:** women may be stereotyped as being less competent or less ambitious than men, which can discourage them from pursuing leadership roles.
3. **Lack of role models:** when there are few women in leadership positions, it can be difficult for other women to envision themselves in those roles.
4. **Double standards:** women may face higher expectations and scrutiny than men when it comes to their behaviour and performance in leadership roles.
5. **Work-life balance:** women may feel that the demands of political or leadership roles would make it difficult to balance their work and family responsibilities
6. **Glass ceiling and wage gap in political careers of women:** systemic barriers that prevent women from reaching higher positions and receiving equal pay as their men counterparts in the political field, such as preferential treatment, sexism, harassment and hostile work environment, limited networking opportunities (as many times these happen “after-hours”), lack of family-friendly policies, and lack of adequate promotion policies.
7. **Traditional assignment of administrative role to women within political organisations:** given the pervasiveness of gender roles within political organisations, women tend to take on tasks more related to administration, logistics, resource and team management, rather than more visible and directive roles focused on decision-making and on informing such decisions to staff and voter base.

Ultimately, the reasons why women are underrepresented in politics and leadership roles are complex and multifaceted. By hosting a focus group with women who have experience in political and leadership positions,

we wish to explore the challenges that women face when attempting to break through these barriers and succeed in the traditionally men-dominated field of politics.

As such, ***the objective of the focus group was to validate the above barriers, identify additional barriers and identify strategies to address these barriers for Lithuania, based on the voice and experience of women who have faced leadership challenges and opportunities in their professional careers in the Lithuanian context.***

4.2. Participants and structure of the focus group

The focus group in Lithuania was held during a three hour session on the 21th of April 2023 in Kaunas. The session was structured as follows:

- Welcome with signing of all consent forms and authorizations
- Presentation of the project and the aims of the focus group and participants
- Discussion focused on barriers for the participation of women in politics
- Discussion focused on strategies for the participation of women in politics
- Closing of the session

The session was attended by 19 participants with experience in politics at national and regional levels, including political party members, community leaders and activists.

4.3. Results of the focus group: barriers, experiences faced by women leaders and suggested strategies to overcome barriers

4.3.1. Barriers and experiences faced by women leaders

4.3.1.1 Gender bias and stereotypes

The participants of the focus group agreed that gender bias and stereotypes impact the political careers and aspirations of women.

They expressed different opinions on the ways it affects women:

- The stereotypes prevail that “a man will do better”, that “a man in politics is better” - these are very ingrained things.
- The problem was highlighted that women themselves do not vote for women: “women make up about 54% of our society and we could certainly have more women politicians, but women themselves do not vote for women”.

There were provided some examples: for example, in this election in particular, many women entered politics, but after the rankings, women ended up at the bottom and again the large percentage of men entered politics. Another example from the politician was provided: “We had five men and five women on our list, and after the ranking all women fell to the lower positions.” Stereotypes that women politicians have noticed during her political agitation: “well, what are you going to do when you get there, what are you going to do, you are not going to do anything”.

- Participants think that stereotypical attitudes held by women themselves not only create a demotivating system within themselves, but also raise the question “why do I have to go there?”. Therefore, it is important to encourage women to participate in politics. The conditions must be in place for this.
- As well there were the examples from the experience presented that women, seeing that the work in politics is hard and very time-consuming are reluctant to go.

Example was provided: “I have participated in the elections for mayor and came second. I am the chairwoman of a political party branch and I have motivated the women a lot. When women saw that the work is hard and very time-consuming, they did not want to go. They were telling me - “how much you give - you don't have weekends, nothing”.

- There was the opinion expressed that women themselves need to take more initiative.

For example, during the last elections, in one municipality, after many years, the previous mayor lost and a woman became mayor. Therefore, it is possible, but women need to take more initiative by themselves.

4.3.1.2. Importance of role models in politics

Answering the question “How do you think the presence or absence of women role models in politics influences the career choices or motivations of women interested in pursuing a political career?” participants expressed the opinion that this has a big impact. Practical examples of a woman who has already made it in politics are always considered very positive.

There are now many good examples of women who are ministers or former presidents, who are what we call “role models”, women who are leaders, who perform well, who make competent decisions.

Nowadays, when women in politics have baby, it certainly motivates many women with children that it is not necessary to postpone it, but that you can go and you can certainly manage, because a man can also go on Parental leave, which was not possible and not popular earlier.

4.3.1.3. Double standards and scrutiny

Answering the question “Do you believe that women in politics are held to different standards or face more scrutiny than their men counterparts? If so, can you provide examples or share your observations?” participants stated that people are very critical, and the price of publicity is high.

If we take the data from the various studies as a whole, in most cases women are considered to be limited by the glass ceiling. Invisible things, where a woman politician is either seen through a magnifying glass or the observations are not necessarily objective, where more is demanded of a woman. It is not necessarily about voters, but it can also be about journalists, the media, who may see a woman differently.

For example, when it comes to quotas, the first question is "what does gender have to do with it, competence is important". And it is immediately attributed: women are incompetent, men are competent.

4.3.1.4. Challenges related to work-life balance

Expressing their opinion and experience on the work-life balance issues and answering the question: “What challenges do you think women might face in balancing work and family responsibilities while pursuing a political career?” participating women stated that:

- Women have little political participation because they are overwhelmed by household chores and work/career commitments.

"If you are in politics, you don't have weekends, you don't have anything - you have to dedicate a lot of time".

- There are challenges for the woman herself (participation in politics) - first of all, she needs family support.

“The woman who goes into politics has to be very strong and have a very strong support from environment. Have to have a wish to work there and to love that job as well.”

- Participants agreed that: “although it is difficult to reconcile work and family responsibilities, it is possible, it is purely a matter of family agreement”.

"I can talk about my own example - my husband just understood that if I will not fulfil myself professionally (do not work in politics), I will be constantly unhappy."

- It's a challenge for family members (publicity).
- For a woman going into politics, balancing family and work responsibilities is a big challenge.
- In the case when woman who is raising children alone, the main obstacle will, of course, be the balancing of family and work commitments. (Picking up children from kindergarten, dropping off to kindergarten, other).
- Women are still associated more with the family than with the public sphere - this should also change a little.

4.3.1.5. Administrative vs. decision-making roles

Participants agreed that in political organizations women are more likely to take on administrative or supportive roles instead of decision-making positions and it impacts women's representation in higher positions in the politics. And this is demotivating for women. Example was provided: "In a political party, I am the chairwoman, I have male deputies, but it is a woman who takes the minutes".

The strategies to address these barriers were suggested during the focus group.

Quotas are in place in some parties (One party has one, but even that does not work everywhere). In addition, the example of the good practice was provided – "in our political party at least one man is now being put in the secretariat: previously it used to be all women, and there was no doubt that the chairman of the meeting was usually a man and the secretary a woman. Now, if there are two, it is one man and one woman, and if there are three, there is always at least one man".

4.3.1.6. Specific challenges or barriers

Participants of the focus group identified some specific challenges or barriers that some of women have faced in their political career. These were:

- There's also the attitude of the close environment, which matters to a woman: "how will the family feel about it?", "how will the neighbours feel about it?", "how will the neighbourhood feel about it?" - It is particularly noticeable in local elections.
- There is a difference between a woman going into politics in a small town and a woman going into politics in a region - they are completely different things. We are very far away from gender equality in towns. Starting with journalists - In a newspaper there will never be quoted a woman politician, instead will quote what the "party representatives said", but if a man said something, he will be mentioned by name and surname.
- Another aspect that was not mentioned before is when gender and disability collide. People have many stereotypes related to physical disability. "I have to work four times harder to prove my competence".

4.3.1.7. Societal attitudes and cultural norms

The participants agreed that the societal attitudes and cultural norms in our country impact women's participation in politics. Societal attitudes, so-called cultural attitudes, have a negative impact.

Trust in a female politician is a little different from that in a male politician, as it is still ingrained in the society: 'it's up to the man to decide', 'it's up to the man to govern', "what those women can do'.

Here it comes from the tradition that the woman immediately recognises the authority of the man.

4.3.1.8. Media influence

Discussing what role the media play in shaping the public's perception of women in leadership positions focus group participants agreed that the role of the media in shaping public perceptions of women in politics is very significant.

The media ratings are very high in Lithuania - the media is trusted; and that means that the media is very much a factor in shaping public opinion.

"For the media to properly position women and men, let's say there's an election campaign going on - it's about how much airtime is given to female candidates, how much - to male candidates; how many publications there are about female candidates, how many publications there are about male candidates".

Talking about the strategies to overcome this barrier, we have to admit that the media have indeed already received quite a lot of training (maybe not every journalist), but in order to be able to explain to the media about how to cover women and men in an unbiased way, even during the same election campaigns, but not necessarily just that, it would be a very good thing for our universities that train journalists if they had a separate programme on gender equality.

In that case, the additional qualification courses would only help and contribute to the media's objective and impartial coverage of the same women politicians or women in leadership positions.

4.3.1.9. Access to Funding and Resources

Participants discussed and identified several systemic barriers which might limit the career progression of women in politics. These are:

- Men have more wealth and income. Finances limit women's participation in politics.
- Men occupy significantly more public positions in all areas. Being famous always makes it easier to start in politics.

On another hand, there was pointed out that purely from a legal perspective, there is certainly no preference in any way for women or men candidates to receive funding for political campaigns, and

there cannot be any preference for women or men candidates to receive funding for their political campaigns, as this would be direct discrimination.

4.3.2 The strategies to address barriers hindering women's participation in politics

4.3.2.1. Measures or initiatives that can help challenge gender bias and stereotypes in politics

There was agreed between participants that some effective measures or initiatives that can help challenge gender bias and stereotypes in politics are:

- “Women's organisations, no matter what area they work in (violence, health, etc.), should also work on the additional issue of women's solidarity. Each women organisation should talk about that it is important to vote for women.”
- Lots of communication is needed: A creative, clear communication campaign with very clear messages to fight stereotypes.
- Leadership training would be needed; Young women should be encouraged through development of leadership.
- Women's organisations should do more to disseminate their activities, results reached and impact.

4.3.2.2. Political Party Support and Promotion

- Include equal opportunities into the programmes of political parties.
- Quotas. In a number of EU countries, including Lithuania, some parties (not all) apply voluntary quotas. A voluntary quota is a certain percentage of women decided by the parties to be included on political electoral lists.

If we want these quotas, which are freely decided and applied by the parties themselves, to be effective, the so-called "zipper" principle - where every second person has to be of the opposite sex, or every third person is of the opposite sex - has worked in EU countries.

- There is the need to work with voters in parallel (we can see from the local elections how the rankings were).

4.3.2.3. Training, mentorship, and support programs

Each of these is valuable - training, mentorship, and support programs:

1. Training is needed firstly for the potential politician herself, and secondly for her environment.
 - The content of the trainings and the barriers identified should be linked: stereotypes, gender bias, examples of good practice.
 - Training should be with good examples “to inspire you to go further” (Role models). It is important to show good examples to young women politicians.
 - Trainings on the topics of communication and public relations.
2. Mentoring programmes – are effective and have worked in a number of EU countries, especially when mentoring programmes are run by experienced women politicians from different political parties.
3. Role models. At national level we see great women - the Prime Minister, the Speaker of Parliament - who are certainly very often seen in the media. We see women party leaders, we see them quite often in the media and they are visible. These examples of good practice show the public that it is not only men who can be leaders, but women leaders can also do very well. That impact on society opinion has an effect at the elections.
4. Support programmes. For example, there are incentive programmes (Germany):
 - Women's networks of local politicians win a prize depending on the results of certain actions. For example, if I am a female politician and certain actions are mainly related to mentoring, participation in networks, active assistance to potential candidates, etc., the annual prize that is awarded to an expert local politician can be further used by her to implement her specific mentoring programme.
 - An award for the municipality that achieves the highest possible gender balance after the municipal elections - in terms of the number of people elected to the council - that municipality is rewarded with a targeted prize, which could for example be provided by our Equal Opportunities Ombudsperson. It is a specific prize that is used to further promote gender equality in that particular municipality and to reduce barriers.

4.3.2.4. Inclusive and supportive environments

A political organisation - is the workplace. The question is to what extent that organisation is gender-friendly.

If we want to create an inclusive and gender-friendly environment, let's follow the provision in the Labour Code that obliges us to have equal opportunities plans. Let's try to put such plans into practice.

If a political party is motivated by gender equality, and is, among other things, bound by the law, because parties are also organisations subject to the law, the principles of non-discrimination de jure. Let us try to put this into practice.

4.3.2.5. Involvement of men in gender equality

The importance of men is very high - not just women to stand in solidarity, but men to take on other responsibilities equally.

Supporting women's participation in politics: support (moral support, encouragement is very important), help; get involved in childcare and housework.

4.4. Summary of key strategies proposed by focus group participants

The strategies to address these barriers were suggested during the focus group.

Participants think that these are some effective measures or initiatives that can help challenge gender bias:

1. Mentoring programmes – are effective and have worked in a number of EU countries, especially when mentoring programmes are run by experienced women politicians from different political parties.
2. Support programmes for women's leaders.
3. Awareness-raising campaigns - to help the society understand that a female political leader is no worse than a male political leader: like TV reportages, radio broadcasts, podcasts, articles in the media, social media campaigns.
4. Good practice examples of successful women politicians who have achieved a lot, not only at national level but also at local level.
5. Legislation that legally ensures equal opportunities throughout the electoral process. However, we need to clarify what other inequalities exist. We have to recognise that the number of women in the Parliament of the Republic of Lithuania (Seimas) is still below 30%, whereas the EU average is already much higher. This means that inequalities still exist. The one of possibility – to legislate quotas, as temporary special measure.
6. Flexible and good-quality nursery access, comprehensive services for elderly family members. Women can then devote more time to their political careers.
7. Friendly environment - creating a non-discriminatory environment. It is very good that we have already introduced a prohibition of psychological violence at workplace into the Labour Code. The way in which women politicians can be affected in certain cases is the sexist language. So, the measure we have in the Labour Code is to ban psychological violence at work and to take initiatives to put this into de facto in practice. It is a measure and an initiative that goes a long way towards eliminating that gender bias. This is a work in progress, it is a process.

5. RESULTS OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE “PERCEPTIONS AND ATTITUDES ON WOMEN'S POLITICAL PARTICIPATION”

5.1. Structure of the questionnaire and its analysis

As part of the research to further study the barriers and strategies underlying the political participation of women in Lithuania, we conducted a questionnaire on “Perceptions and attitudes on women's political participation”. The questionnaire was released during April 2023 through mailings and social networks, and was answered anonymously. In this section we present the results of the questionnaire, aimed at understanding voters' perceptions about the participation of women in politics and leadership positions. The study was designed to shed light on the respondents' attitudes towards various aspects of gender equality in the political sphere, including gender bias, role models, work-life balance, and strategies to enhance female representation.

A total of 80 individuals participated in the survey, including a mix of men and women from diverse age groups, educational backgrounds, and political affiliations. The survey comprised a series of 38 questions, where respondents were asked to express their agreement or disagreement on a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), as follows:

1. Totally disagree
2. Disagree
3. I am not sure
4. Agree
5. Totally agree

We analysed results based on two focuses:

- By overall responses regarding the different barriers and strategies:

- Bias and stereotypes (Q1, Q2, Q3, Q4, Q5, Q6, Q7, Q8, Q9)
- Role models (Q10, Q11, Q12, Q13)
- Double standards and scrutiny (Q14, Q15, Q16, Q17)
- Work-life Balance (Q18, Q19, Q20, Q21)
- Other barriers (hostile work environments, media portrayals, cultural norms, etc.) (Q22, Q23, Q24, Q25, Q26, Q27, Q28, Q29, Q30, Q31, Q32, Q33, Q34)
- Strategies (Q35, Q36, Q37, Q38)
- By demographic characteristics of the respondents:
 - All respondents
 - By gender (men / women)
 - By age (under 40 / 40 and over)
 - By education level (non-tertiary education / university degree or higher)
 - By political affiliation (left / non-disclosure or other)

In the analysis by demographic group, questions were grouped into four categories:

- 22 questions with a negative correlation to gender equality (a high score means less gender equality)
- 11 questions with a positive correlation to gender equality (a high score means more gender equality)
- 1 question on perception on leadership style differences between men and women
- 4 questions related to strategies to overcome gender inequality in politics.

At the end of the questionnaire, respondents were asked open ended questions about additional barriers and strategies, which were also analysed to identify additional information relevant to our research.

5.2. Demographics of respondents

The demographic characteristics of the respondents were as follows:

- Total Respondents: 80 individuals

- Place of residence: all respondents resided in Lithuania (44 in Kaunas, 11 in Vilnius, 25 in other areas of Lithuania (Jonava, Alytus, Klaipeda, Marijampolė, etc.).
- Gender:
 - Men: 9 respondents, making up approximately 11.25% of the total participants.
 - Women: 70 respondents, constituting approximately 87.5% of the total participants.
 - Non-binary: 1 respondent.

Age:

- The average age of respondents was 47 years.
- The youngest respondent was 19 years old and the oldest was 83 years old.
- The median age of respondents was 48 years.

Education:

- Primary Education: 2 respondents (~2.5% of the total participants)
- Secondary Education: 12 respondents (~15% of the total participants)
- Post-secondary education (non-tertiary): 7 respondents (~8.8% of the total participants)
- Bachelor's Degree or Equivalent: 19 respondents (~23.7% of the total participants)
- Master's Degree or Equivalent: 32 respondents (~40% of the total participants)
- Doctoral Degree or Equivalent: 8 respondents (~10% of the total participants)

Political Affiliation:

- Did not respond: 54 respondents (~67.5% of the total participants)
- Left: 14 respondents (~17.5% of the total participants)
- Right: 3 respondents (~3.75% of the total participants)
- Other: 9 respondents (~11.25% of the total participants)

It should be noted that the political affiliation question was optional, and therefore, a significant number of respondents (67.5% of the total participants) chose not to disclose their political leanings. The majority of those who did disclose their political affiliations leaned towards the left.

5.3. Overall results regarding barriers and strategies

5.3.1. Interpretation of results by barrier

Based on the average responses to the questions by all respondents, the following interpretations can be made:

Bias and stereotypes (Q1, Q2, Q3, Q4, Q5, Q6, Q7, Q8, Q9). On average, respondents seem to recognize that gender bias and stereotypes negatively impact women in politics, with an agreement that stereotypes about women's abilities (Q1: 3.6) hinder their progress in politics. The average answers to the questions related to perception of women as emotional decision-makers (Q2: 2.8), and the need for women to downplay their femininity (Q3: 3.1) show the diversity of answers resulting on average meaning. The respondents expressed an agreement and strong agreement that women are as capable as men in political leadership roles (Q4: 4.5), and that diverse representation in leadership positions is important (Q6: 4.2). The respondents disagreed with the statement that men candidates are usually better qualified (Q5: 1.7). Witnessing or experiencing gender bias or discrimination in politics (Q7: 2.8) and feeling discouraged from pursuing a leadership role because of gender (Q8: 2.6) show the diversity of answers resulting close to an average meaning.

Role models (Q10, Q11, Q12, Q13). The presence of women in political leadership roles as a source of inspiration for other women to pursue political careers received strong agreement (Q10: 4.3). Respondents agreed with the availability of women political role models in their country (Q11: 4.2) and somewhat agreed with the having had a female role model or mentor in a leadership position (Q12: 3.4). The statement that women frequently occupy leadership positions in their workplace or community (Q13: 3.9) received agreement.

Double standards and scrutiny (Q14, Q15, Q16, Q17). Respondents agreed that women in politics are judged more harshly for their appearance than men (Q14: 4.0), and that they are more likely to be criticized for their personal life choices compared to men (Q15: 4.0). The respondents also agreed that women are held to higher standards or face more scrutiny than men in leadership roles (Q16: 3.9), and that women in leadership face a "double bind" where they are expected to be both assertive and nurturing (Q17: 3.9).

Work-life balance (Q18, Q19, Q20, Q21). There's a moderate agreement that it's challenging for women in politics to maintain a healthy work-life balance in relation to other career choices (Q18: 3.3), and in comparison to their male counterparts (Q19: 3.5). There's strong support for the implementation of family-friendly policies in political organizations (Q20: 4.0), and answers resulting in average meaning that respondents have felt they had to choose between family responsibilities and pursuing a leadership role (Q21: 3.0).

Other Barriers (Q22, Q23, Q24, Q25, Q26, Q27, Q28, Q29, Q30, Q31, Q32, Q33, Q34). On average, the respondents agree that wage disparities exist between men and women politicians (Q22: 3.4) and that women in politics face more hostile work environments, including sexism and discrimination, than their male counterparts (Q23: 3.8). Respondents more disagree than agree about witnessing or experiencing sexual harassment in the workplace or politics (Q24: 2.7). There is substantial agreement that women are less likely to be promoted to leadership positions compared to men with similar qualifications and experience (Q25: 3.8) and agreement that women in political organizations are often limited to administrative roles instead of decision-making positions (Q26: 3.6). The highest level of agreement is seen regarding the need for political organizations to actively promote women to decision-making roles to achieve gender equality (Q27: 4.2). Respondents tend more to agree than to disagree that they have seen women being talked over or interrupted in meetings or discussions more frequently than their male counterparts (Q28: 3.3), and that societal norms and expectations limit women's political aspirations and opportunities (Q29: 3.6). Traditional gender roles and expectations discouraging women from pursuing political careers also got agreement (Q30: 3.6). On the other hand, the answers that the cultural norms in the country support women's participation in politics result in average meaning (Q31: 3.1), and there's agreement that there are equal opportunities for women and men to pursue leadership roles in their community (Q32: 3.5). The value of the answers is average (Q33: 3.0) that the media in the country portrays women politicians fairly and accurately, and they moderately agree that media coverage of women in politics often focuses on their appearance rather than their achievements and qualifications (Q34: 3.3).

5.3.2. Interpretation of results by strategy

The strategies suggested (Q35, Q36, Q37, Q38) to increase the representation of women in leadership positions were highly rated by respondents, showing a strong consensus on the need for proactive measures:

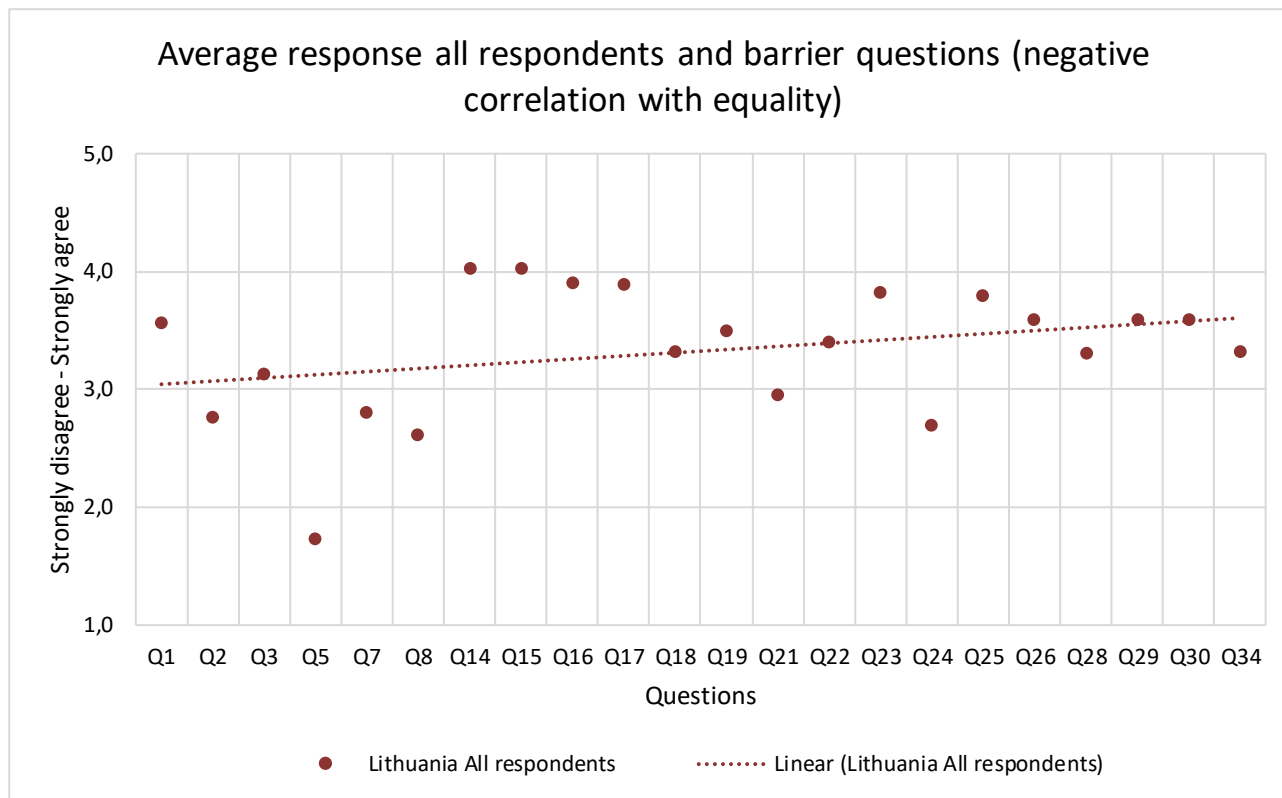
- **Encourage women to pursue leadership roles from a young age (Q35):** This question received one of the highest ratings in the survey with an average rating of 4.3, meaning that respondents showed strong agreement on the importance of encouraging women from a young age to consider leadership roles. This could potentially counteract societal norms and stereotypes that discourage women from seeing themselves as leaders.
- **Implement diversity and inclusion policies in the workplace and in politics (Q36):** an average of answers 4.2, suggesting a strong consensus among respondents on the need for policy interventions to promote diversity and inclusion. Such policies could include gender quotas, affirmative action, and measures to ensure a safe and supportive work environment.
- **Provide mentorship and support for women in leadership positions (Q37):** With an average rating of 4.3, respondents agreed on the importance of mentorship and support systems for women in leadership. This highlights the need for networking opportunities, training programs, and other forms of support that could help women build confidence, acquire necessary skills, and navigate the challenges they may face as leaders.

- **Engage in awareness raising campaigns (Q38):** The average rating of 4.2 indicates that respondents believe in the effectiveness of awareness-raising campaigns in changing perceptions and attitudes towards women in politics and leadership. This could include campaigns to highlight the achievements of women leaders, challenge gender stereotypes, and promote the benefits of diversity in leadership.

Overall, the data suggests that respondents recognize the existence of gender inequality in politics and leadership and believe in the need for proactive strategies to address this issue. They strongly agree on the importance of early encouragement, policy interventions, mentorship and support, and awareness-raising as effective strategies to increase women's representation in leadership positions.

5.4. Results by demographic groups

5.4.1. Interpretation of results for all respondents

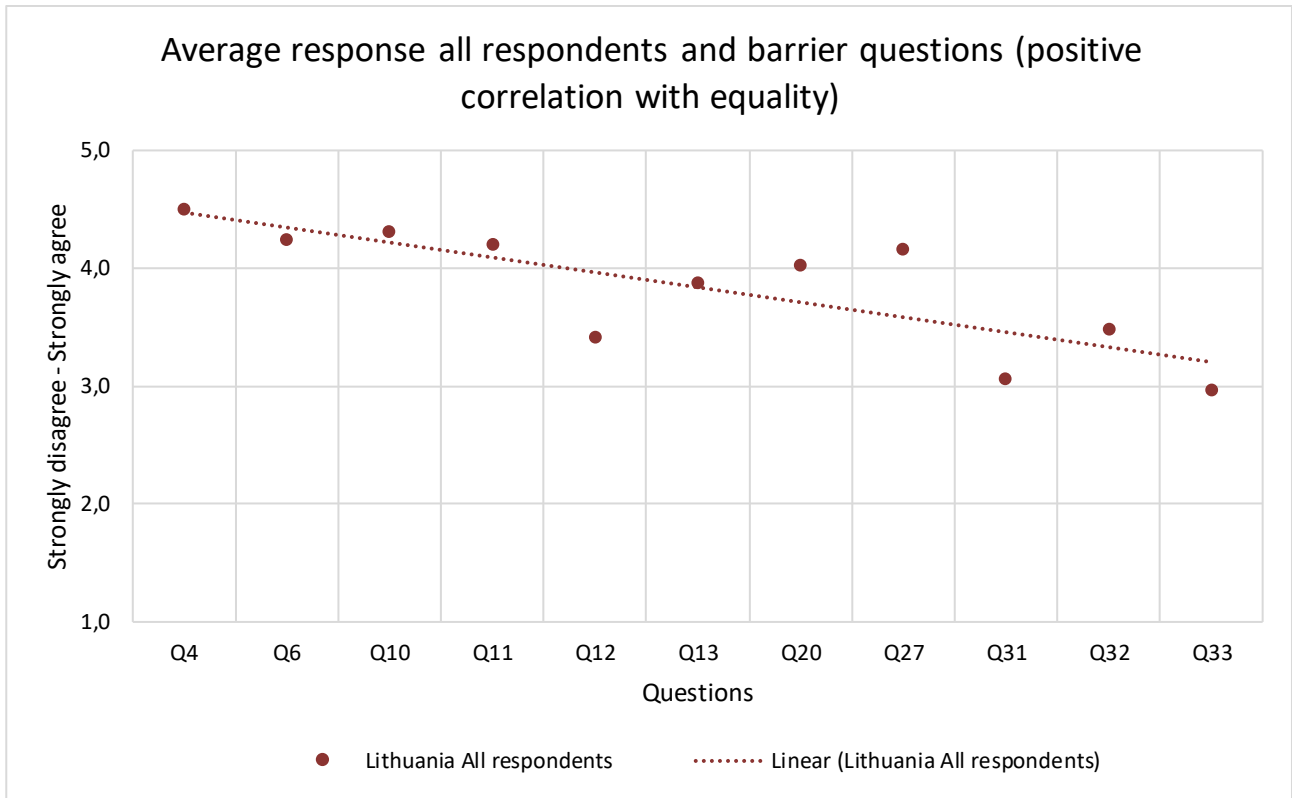


Respondents answers to barrier-related questions with a negative correlation with equality (Q1, Q2, Q3, Q5, Q7, Q8, Q14, Q15, Q16, Q17, Q18, Q19, Q21, Q22, Q23, Q24, Q25, Q26, Q28, Q29, Q30, and Q34). The average responses to these questions suggest that the respondents generally recognize and acknowledge the existence of gender bias and inequality in politics. For instance, they agree that stereotypes about women's abilities hinder their progress in politics (Q1: 3.6), societal norms and expectations limit women's political aspirations and opportunities (Q29: 3.6), traditional gender roles and expectations discourage women from pursuing political careers (Q30: 3.6) and women in political organizations are often limited to administrative roles instead of decision-making positions (Q26: 3.6).

Women in politics are judged more harshly for their appearance than men (Q14: 4.0), women politicians are often criticized for their personal life choices compared to men (Q15: 4.0), women are held to higher standards or face more scrutiny than men in leadership roles (Q16: 3.9) and that women in leadership face a "double bind" where they are expected to be both assertive and nurturing (Q17: 3.9).

The respondents generally recognize and acknowledge that women in politics face more hostile work environments, including sexism and discrimination, than their men counterparts (Q23: 3.8) and that women are less likely to be promoted to leadership positions compared to men with similar qualifications and experience (Q25: 3.8).

However, it's important to note that not all respondents appear to have personally experienced or witnessed these biases. For example, the responses to Q8 suggest that most respondents have not felt discouraged from pursuing a leadership role because of their gender (Q8: 2.6) and the majority have not witnessed or experienced gender bias or discrimination in politics (Q7: 2.6).

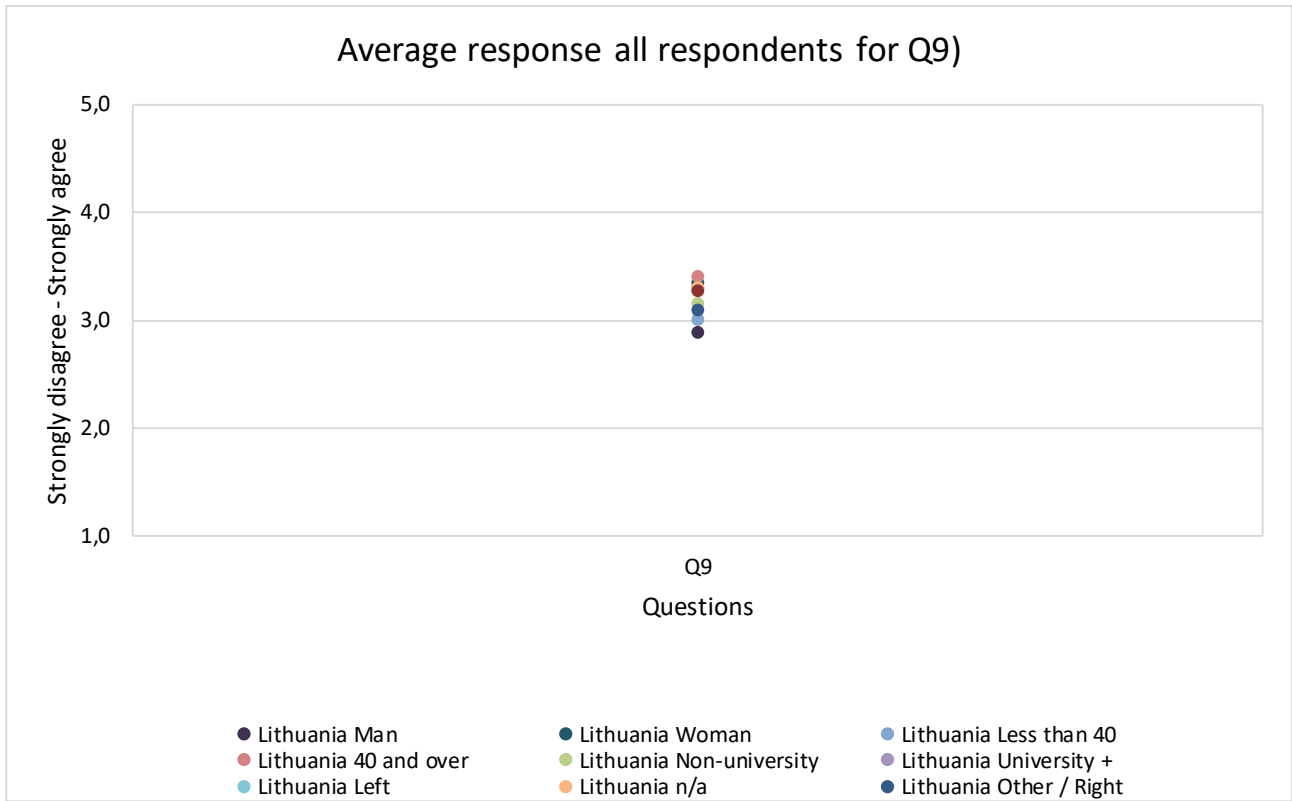


Respondents answers to barrier-related questions with a positive correlation with equality (Q4, Q6, Q10, Q11, Q12, Q13, Q20, Q27, Q31, Q32, and Q33). The responses to these questions show a generally positive attitude towards women in politics and leadership roles. Respondents agree that women are as capable as men in political leadership roles (Q4: 4.5), and that having diverse representation in leadership positions is important (Q6: 4.2). They also generally agree with the notion that more women in political leadership positions would inspire other women to pursue political careers (Q10: 4.3). Respondent can easily identify women political role models in their country (Q11: 4.2).

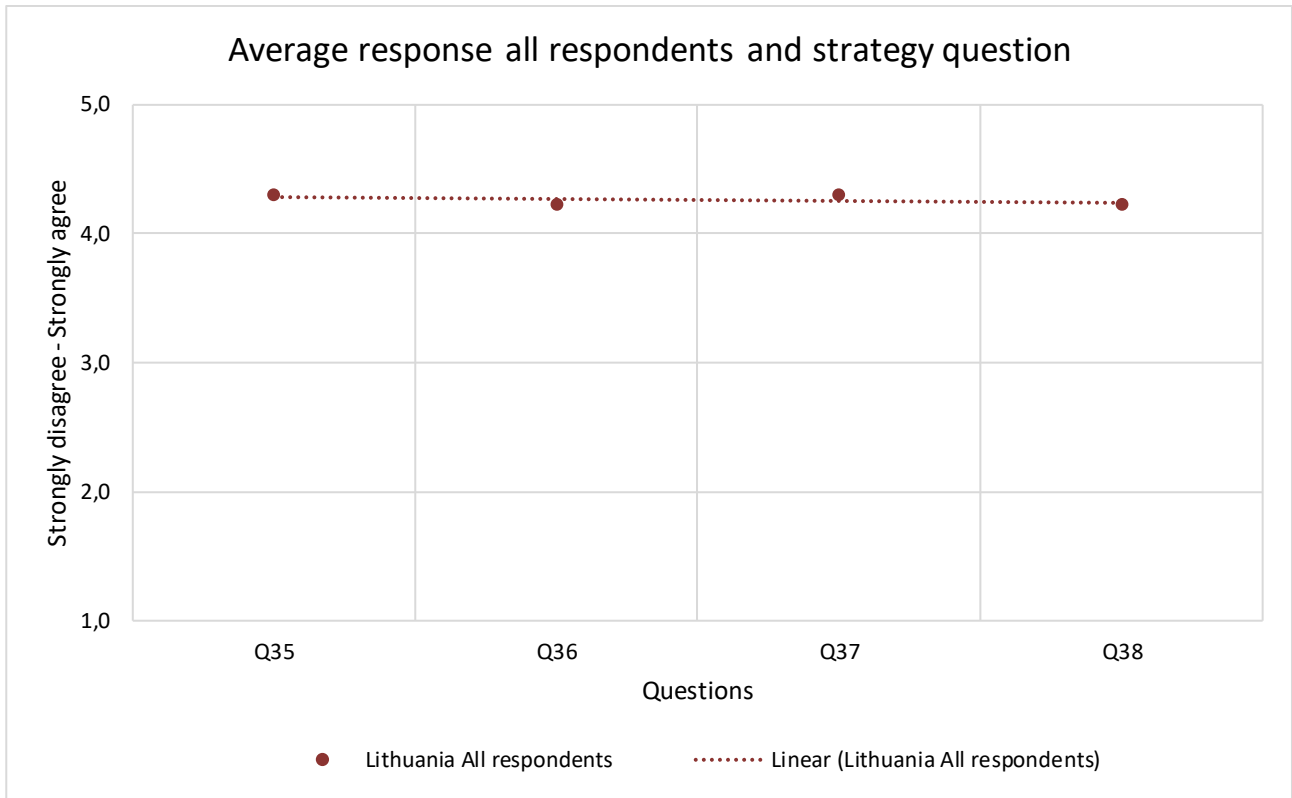
Respondent agree that political organizations should actively promote women to decision-making roles to achieve gender equality (Q27: 4.2) and that political organizations should implement family-friendly policies to support women's participation (Q20: 4.0).

The respondents more agree when disagree with the statement that there are equal opportunities for women and men to pursue leadership roles in their community (Q32: 3.5).

However, the average or the answers show that respondents are somewhat uncertain or divided about whether the cultural norms in the country support women's participation in politics (Q31:3.1) and whether the media in their country portrays women politicians fairly and accurately (Q33: 3.0).



Respondents answers to Q9. The response to Q9, which states that men and women have different leadership styles, is somewhat neutral (3.3). This suggests that respondents are somewhat uncertain or divided about whether gender influences leadership style.



Respondents answers to questions related to strategies (Q35, Q36, Q37, Q38). The responses to these questions suggest that respondents strongly support measures aimed at increasing the representation of women in leadership positions. These include encouraging women to pursue leadership roles from a young age (Q35: 4.3), implementing diversity and inclusion policies in the workplace and politics (Q36: 4.2), providing mentorship and support for women in leadership positions (Q37: 4.3), and engaging in awareness-raising campaigns (Q38: 4.2).

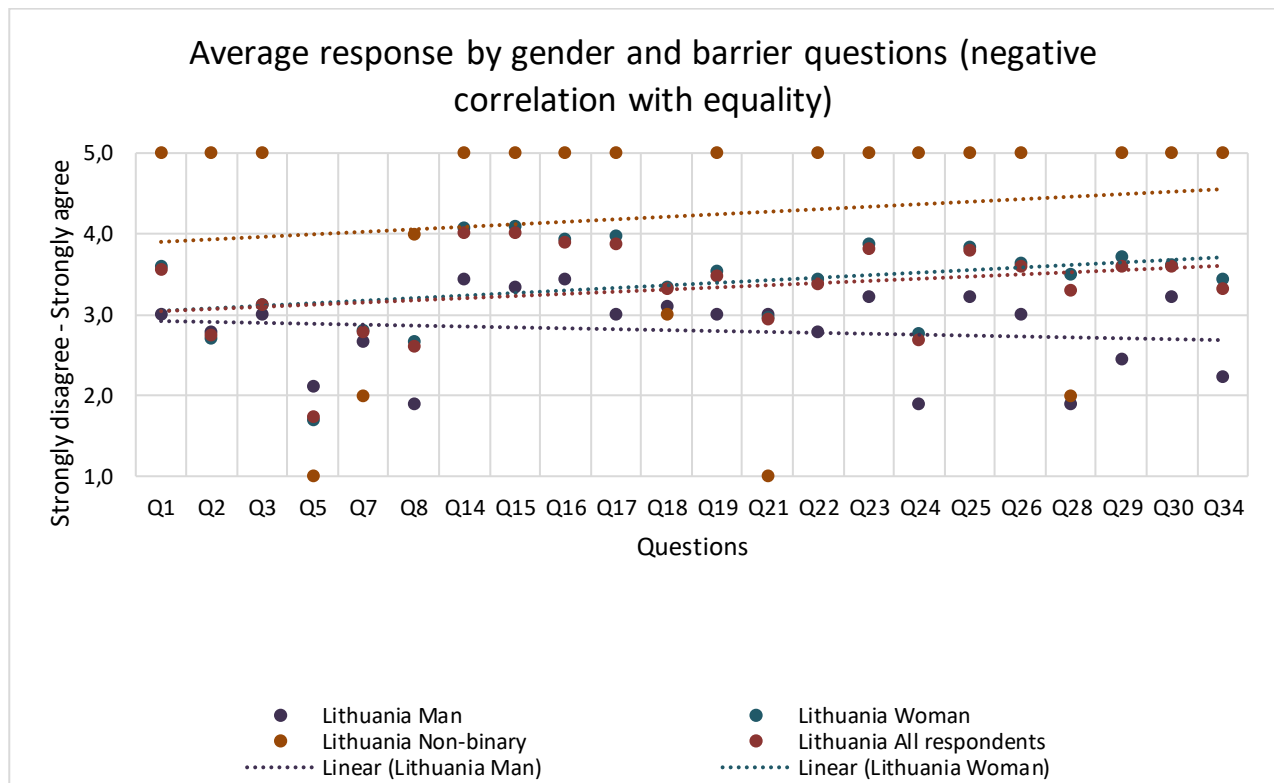
Overall, the survey results suggest a recognition of gender inequality in politics and support for measures to increase women's representation in leadership roles. However, they also highlight perceived barriers and challenges, such as (those got higher scores of agreement) that women in politics are judged more harshly for their appearance than men, that women politicians are often criticized for their personal life choices compared to men, women are held to higher standards or face more scrutiny than men in leadership roles and that women in leadership face a "double bind" where they are expected to be both assertive and nurturing.

The respondents generally recognize and acknowledge that women in politics face more hostile work environments, including sexism and discrimination, and that women are less likely to be promoted to leadership positions compared to men with similar qualifications and experience.

5.4.2. Interpretation of results by gender

From the demographic characteristics of the respondents we know that there were 80 respondents in total, including 70 respondents women, constituting approximately 87.5% of the total participants, 9 respondents men, making up approximately 11.25% of the total participants, non-binary 1 respondent, constituting approximately 1.25% of the total participants.

As there can be seen the difference between the number of respondents by gender is numerous therefore it would not be reasonable to compare the data, but we might look the opinion reflected by these respondents.



Barrier-related questions with a negative correlation with equality: For questions relating to barriers and biases that hinder gender equality (Q1, Q2, Q3, Q5, Q7, Q8, Q14, Q15, Q16, Q17, Q18, Q19, Q21, Q22, Q23, Q24, Q25, Q26, Q28, Q29, Q30, and Q34), women generally expressed higher levels of agreement than men. **This could suggest that women are more aware of, or have experienced more, the gender biases and stereotypes prevalent in the political sphere.**

Notably, the widest gender discrepancies were observed in:

Q28 (seen women being talked over or interrupted in meetings or discussions: men 1.9, women 3.5);

Q29 (Societal norms and expectations limit women's political aspirations and opportunities): men 2.4, women 3.7);

Q34 (Media coverage of women in politics often focuses on their appearance rather than their achievements and qualifications: men 2.2, women 3.4).

Q24 (witnessed/experienced sexual harassment: men 1.9, women 2.8).

Q8 (I have felt discouraged from pursuing a leadership role because of my gender: men 1.9, women 2.7).

Q15 (Women politicians are more likely to be criticized for their personal life choices compared to men: men 3.3, women 4.1).

Q14 (Women in politics are judged more harshly for their appearance than men: men 2.8, women 3.4).

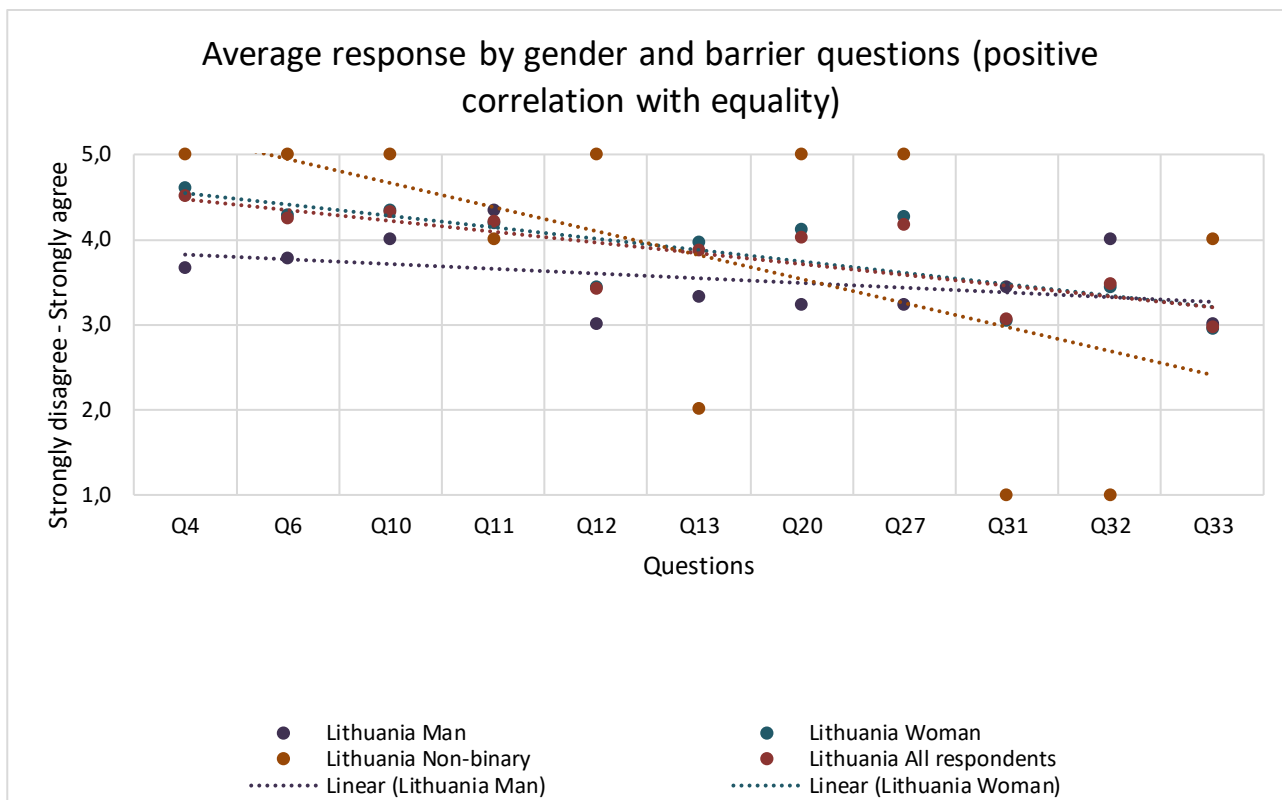
Q23 (Women in politics face more hostile work environments, including sexism and discrimination, than their men counterparts: men 3.2, women 3.9).

Q1 (Stereotypes about women's abilities hinder their progress in politics: men 3.2, women 3.9).

Q25 (Women are less likely to be promoted to leadership positions compared to men with similar qualifications and experience: men 3.2, women 3.8).

This divergence might indicate that women perceive these specific issues as more significant barriers than men do.

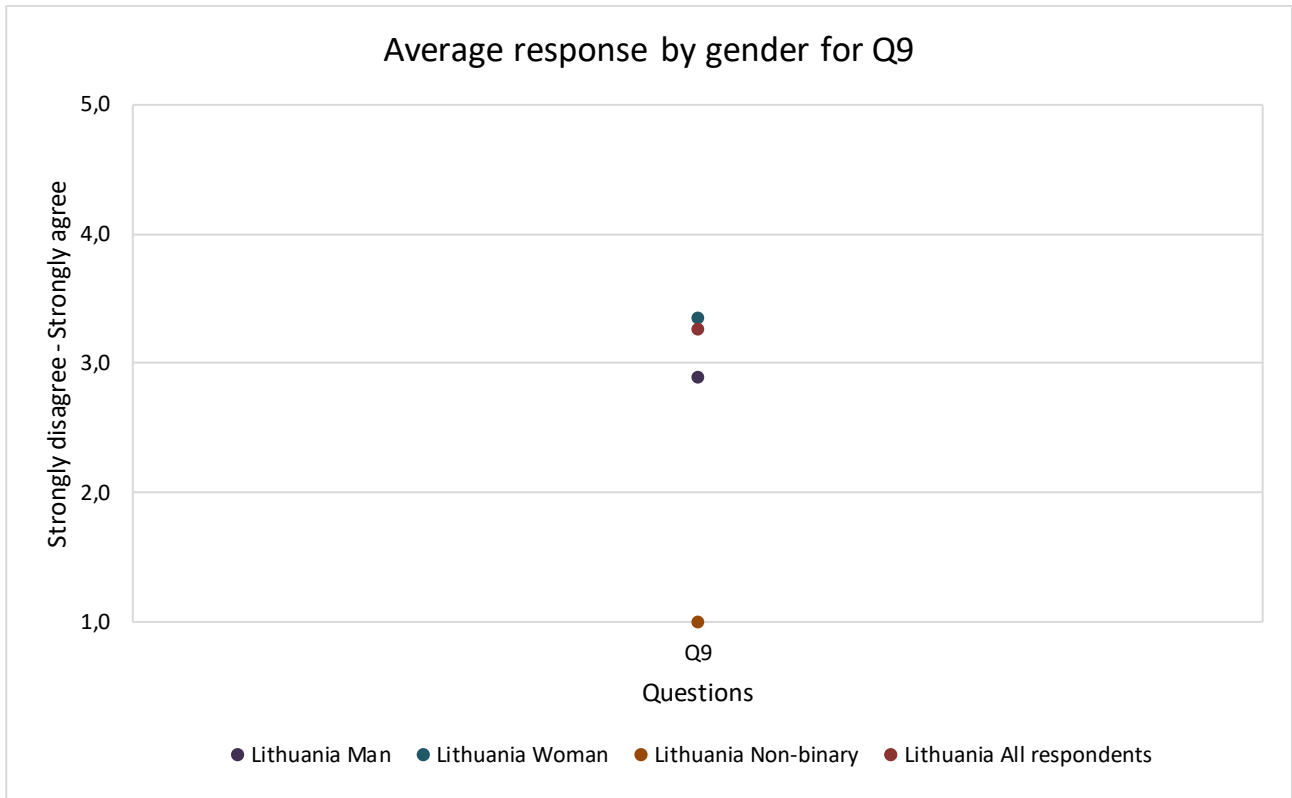
These differences in the scores of the answers of the respondent's men and women suggest the conclusion that men tend to less recognise the discrimination faced and indicated by women (see the averages of the answers provided by gender).



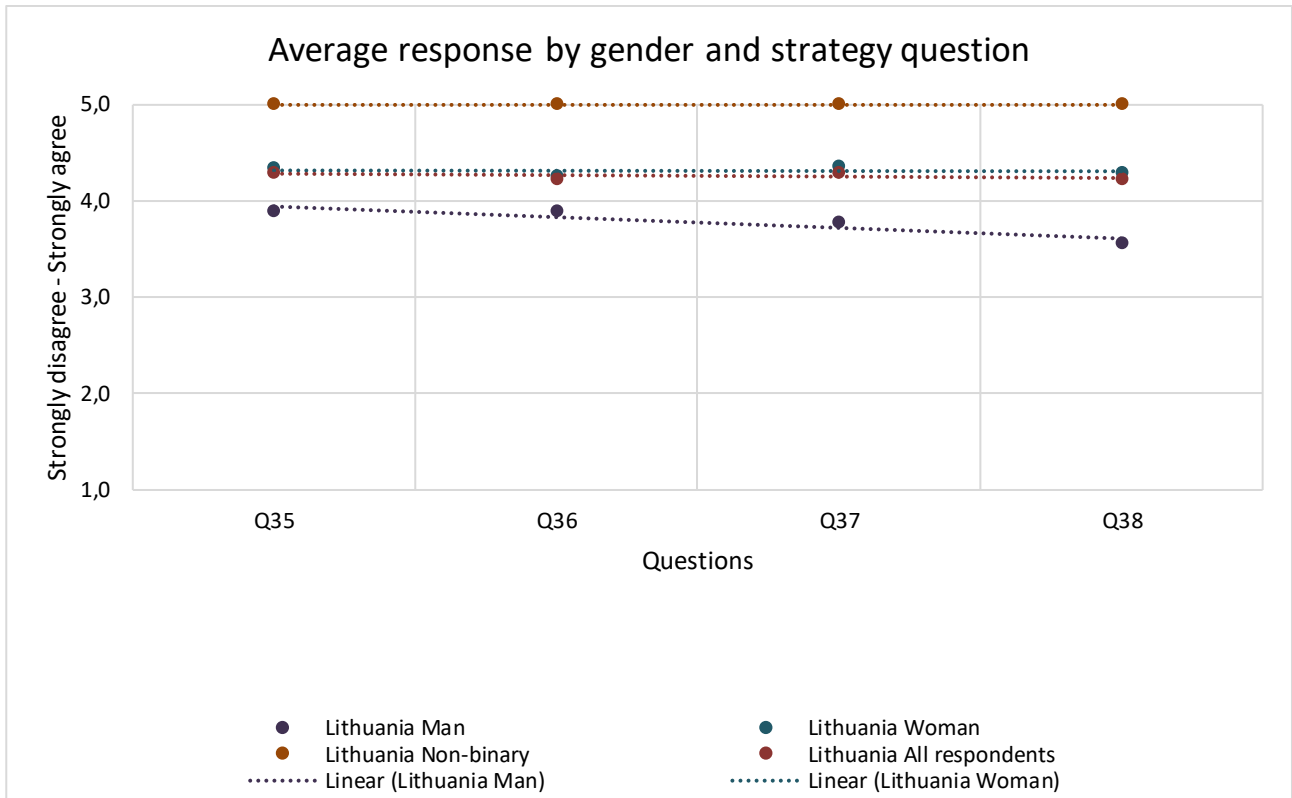
Barrier-related questions with a positive correlation with equality. For questions highlighting positive aspects or advancements toward gender equality (Q4, Q6, Q10, Q11, Q12, Q13, Q20, Q27, Q31, Q32, and Q33), both genders generally exhibited high levels of agreement to the questions: Q4, Q6, Q10, Q11, although women’s agreement to the question that women are as capable as men in political leadership roles (Q4: men 3.7, women 4.6) and that having diverse representation in leadership positions is important (Q6: men 3.8, women 4.3) are relatively higher.

Women expressed stronger agreement that political organizations should implement family-friendly policies to support women's participation (Q20: men 3.2, women 4.1) and that political organizations should actively promote women to decision-making roles to achieve gender equality (Q27: men 3.2, women 4.3) **showing that work-file balance issues are more actual for women.**

Interestingly, men appeared more optimistic about the cultural norms in the country supporting women's participation in politics (Q31: men 3.4, women 3.0) and that there are equal opportunities for women and men to pursue leadership roles in their community (Q32: men 4.0, women 3.4). This could imply that women have faced the obstacles related to the cultural norms in the country and pursue leadership roles in the community, but man are not very conscious about it/ does not recognise the existing discrimination.



Perception of leadership styles (Q9). When asked whether men and women have different leadership styles (Q9), women (3.3) agreed more than men (2.9). This suggests that women may perceive more gender-based differences in leadership styles compared to men.



Strategies to overcome inequality. In response to strategies for overcoming gender inequality (Q35, Q36, Q37, Q38), although both genders demonstrated an agreement, women agreed more than men. As the averages of women responses are higher, indicating the more supportive approach and understanding of the need for active measures to improve female representation in political leadership.

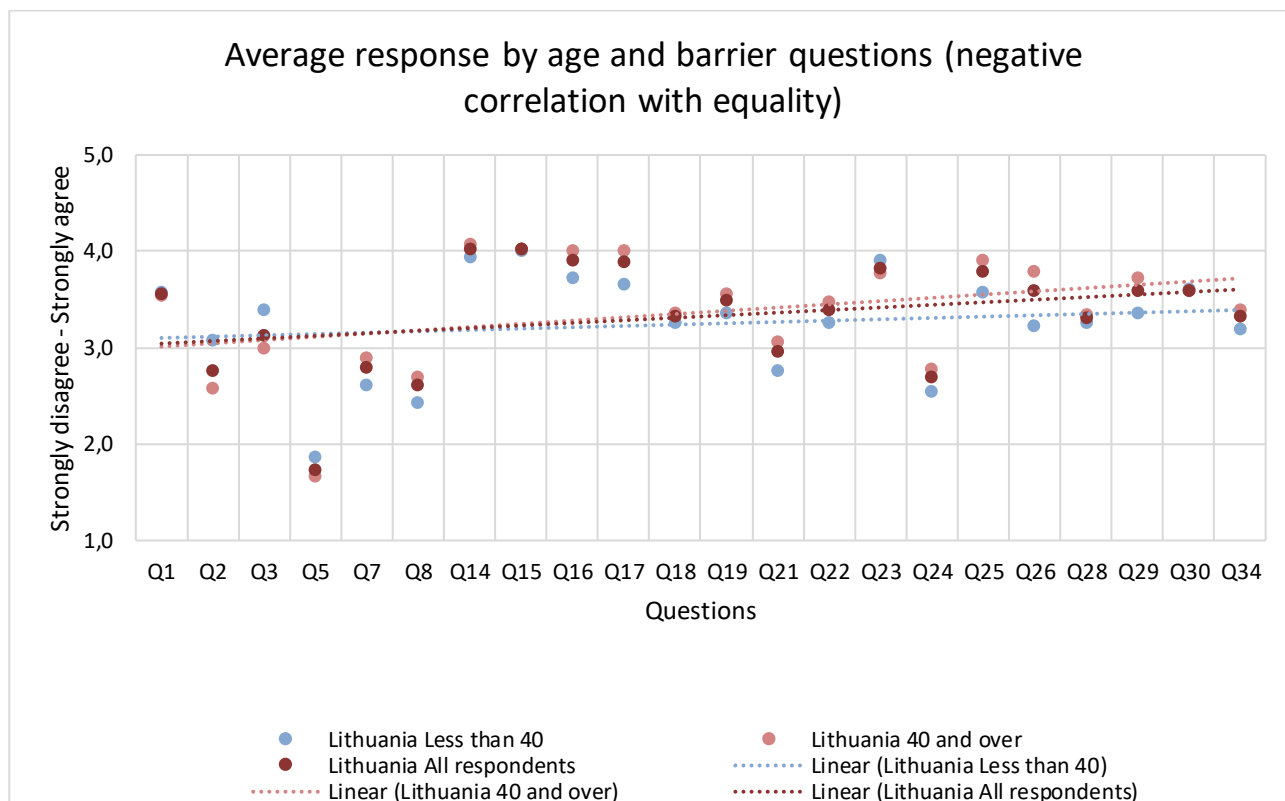
Overall difference in responses by gender

Overall, women scored much higher in recognizing barriers to equality than men. This could reflect their personal experiences or heightened awareness of gender biases.

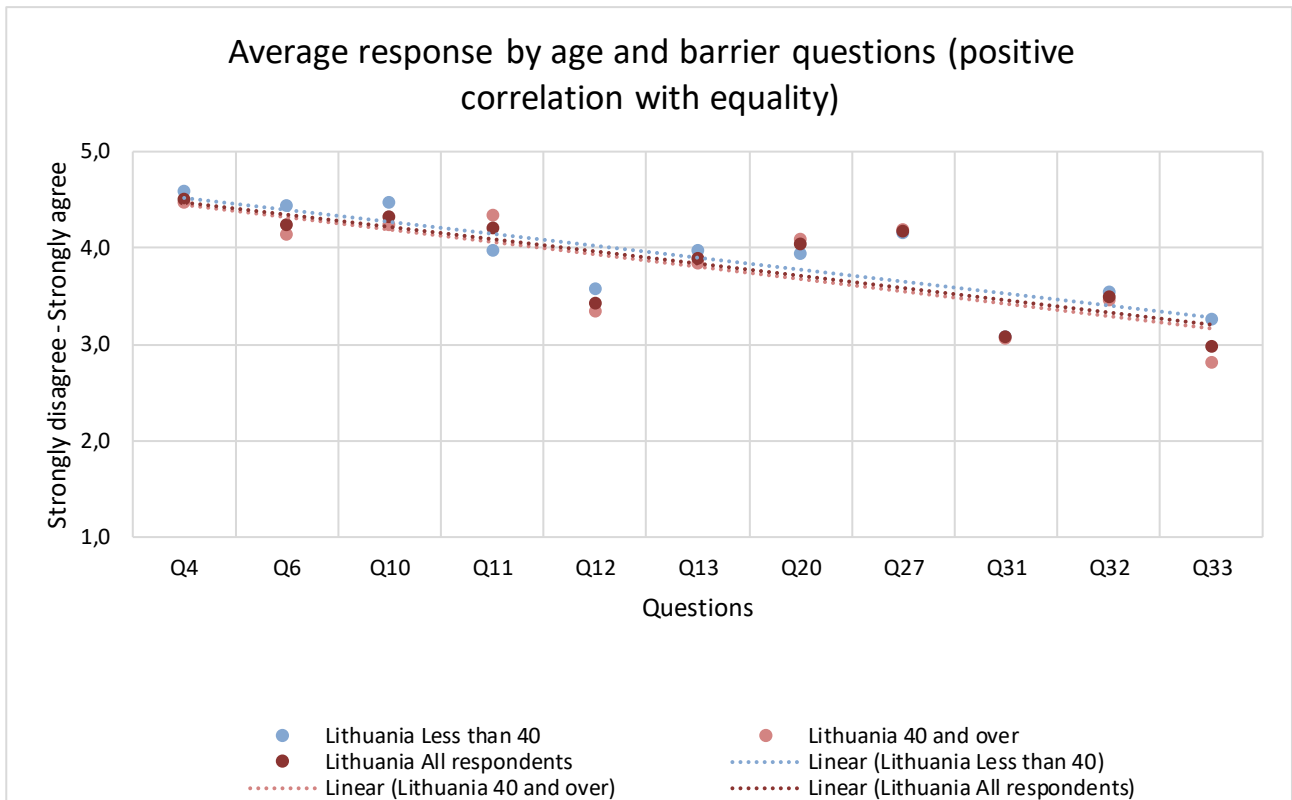
The results suggest that men tend much less to recognise the discrimination faced and indicated by women.

As well women expressed more supportive approach and understanding of the need for active measures to improve female representation in political leadership.

5.4.3. Interpretation of results by age

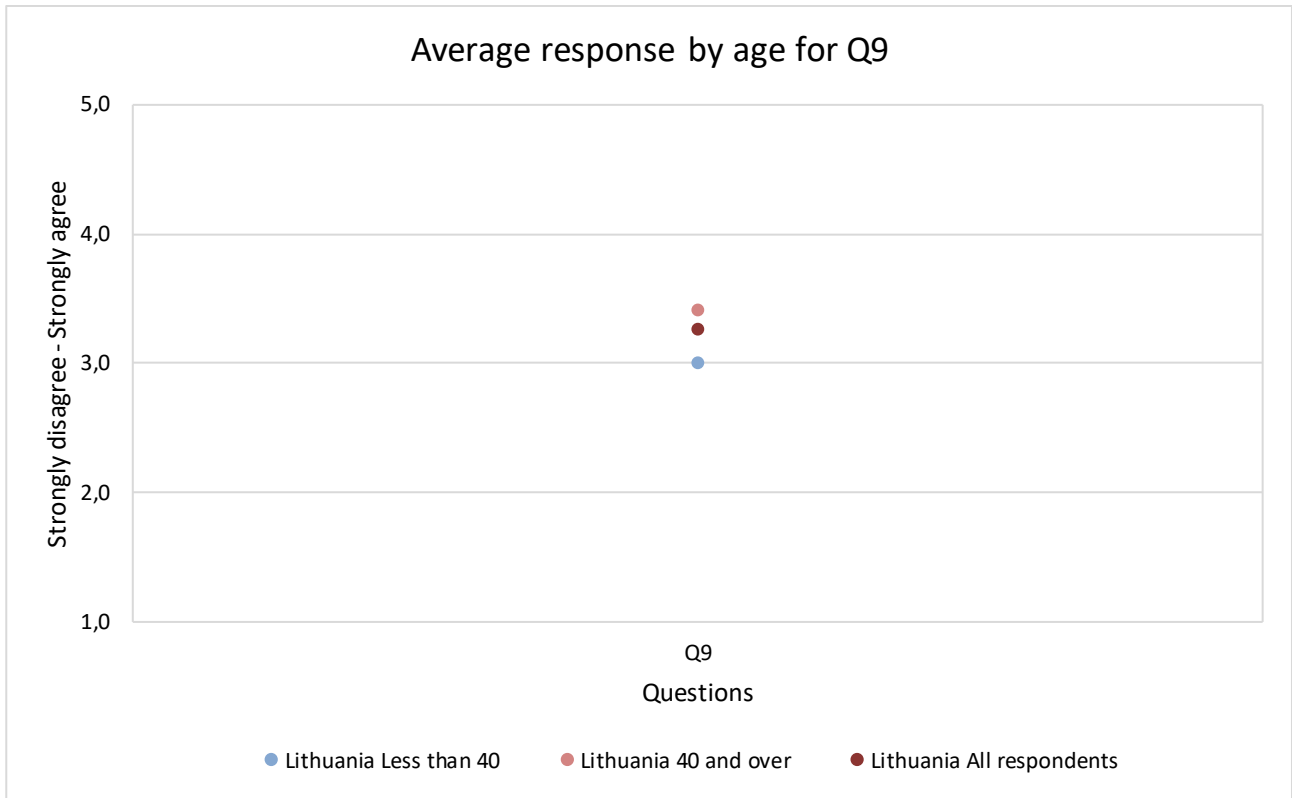


Barrier-related questions with a negative correlation with equality (Q1, Q2, Q3, Q5, Q7, Q8, Q14, Q15, Q16, Q17, Q18, Q19, Q21, Q22, Q23, Q24, Q25, Q26, Q28, Q29, Q30, and Q34). In generally, there was not a significant difference between the two age groups' responses to these questions. In more questions, respondents over 40 agreed more strongly with these statements, implying they **perceive more gender-based bias and inequality in the political field**. This could be reflection of the experience being more aware of gender bias and inequalities.

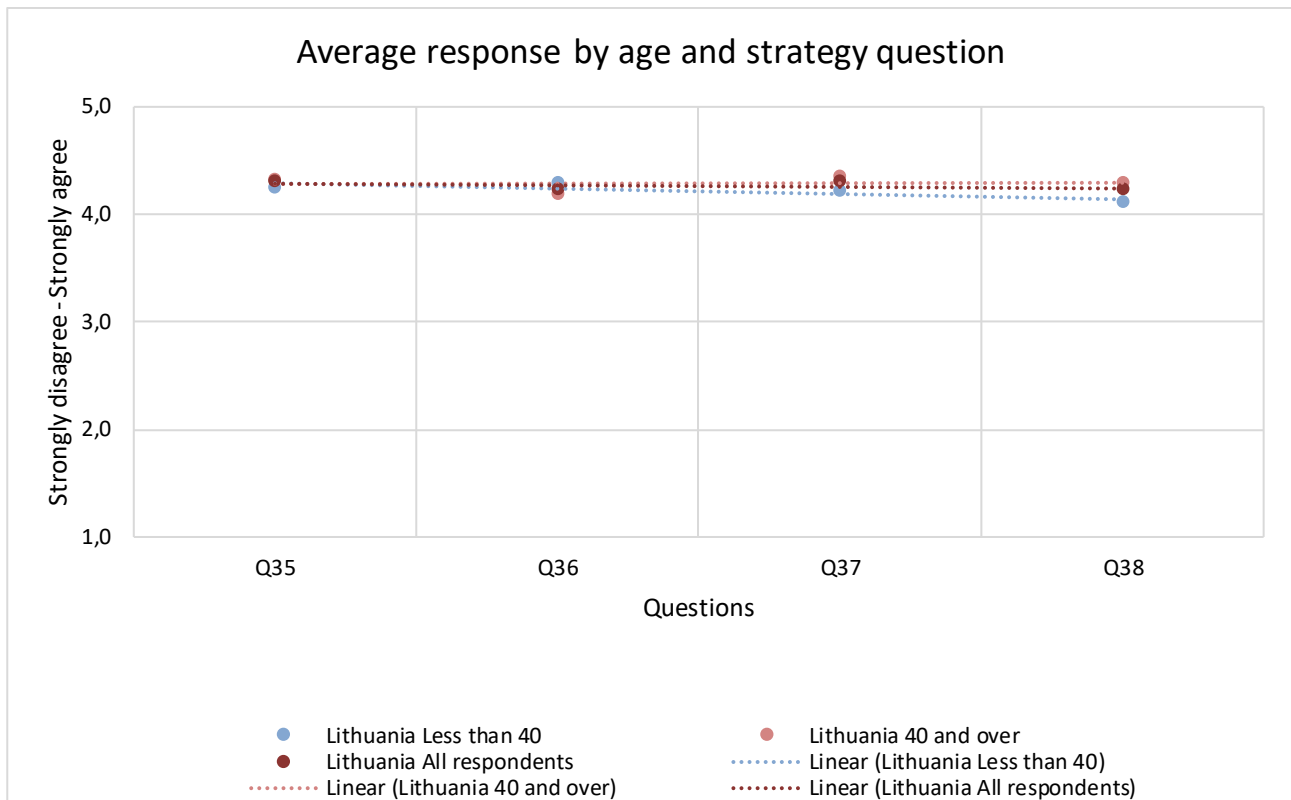


Barrier-related questions with a positive correlation with equality (Q4, Q6, Q10, Q11, Q12, Q13, Q20, Q27, Q31, Q32, and Q33). In contrast to the previous set of questions, respondents **under 40 agreed more strongly with statements positively correlated with gender equality**. They showed stronger belief in the importance of diverse representation (Q6), the inspiring effect of women in politics (Q10), and more agreed that they have had a women role model or mentor in a leadership position who inspired or supported (Q12). As well they agreed stronger that the media in the country portrays women politicians fairly and accurately (Q33). The answers in the group of 40 and over to this question show more doubt on it.

This suggests a more optimistic understanding of the situation among younger respondents indicating a higher belief in gender equality and the importance of women's participation in politics.



Respondents' answers to Q9. There was not a big difference between the two age groups' responses to Q9. The older group slightly agreed that men and women have different leadership styles and the average answer of the younger respondents result in neutral position.



Respondents' answers to questions related to strategies (Q35, Q36, Q37, Q38) are almost identical. 40+ respondents generally agreed slightly strongly with the proposed strategies to increase women's representation in leadership positions. This suggests that the perception of the importance of implementations of the strategies to achieve the gender equality is not strongly influenced by age.

Overall difference in responses by age:

Generally, there was not a significant difference between the two age groups' responses to the barrier-related questions. Summarising, the results suggest that respondents over 40 indicate more gender-based bias and inequality in the political field.

Younger respondents (less than 40 years old) demonstrated more optimistic understanding of the situation indicating a higher belief in gender equality and the importance of women's participation in politics.

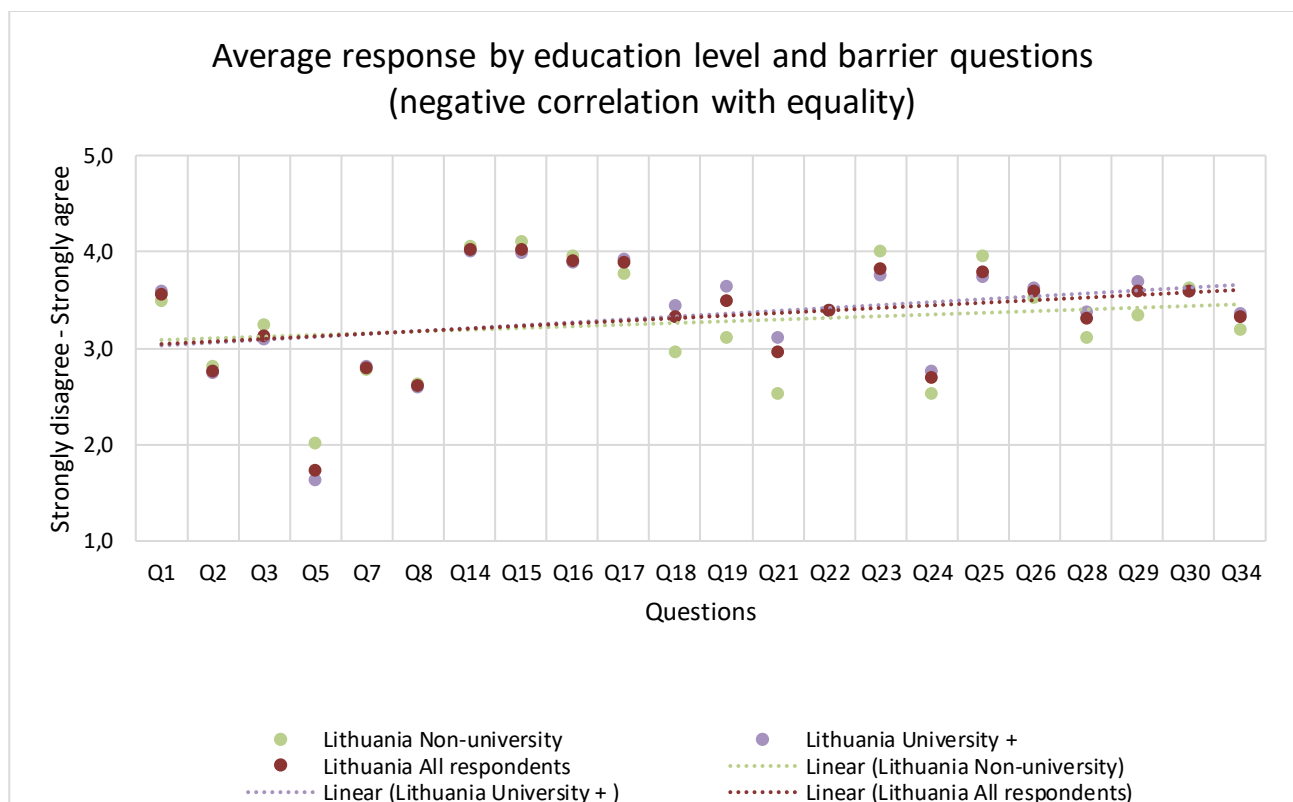
The results suggest that the perception of the importance of implementations of the strategies to achieve the gender equality is not strongly influenced by age.

5.4.4. Interpretation of results by educational level

If we look again at the demographical data of the respondents, we can see that the majority (59) of the respondents have university degrees. This represents ~73,8% of the total participants.

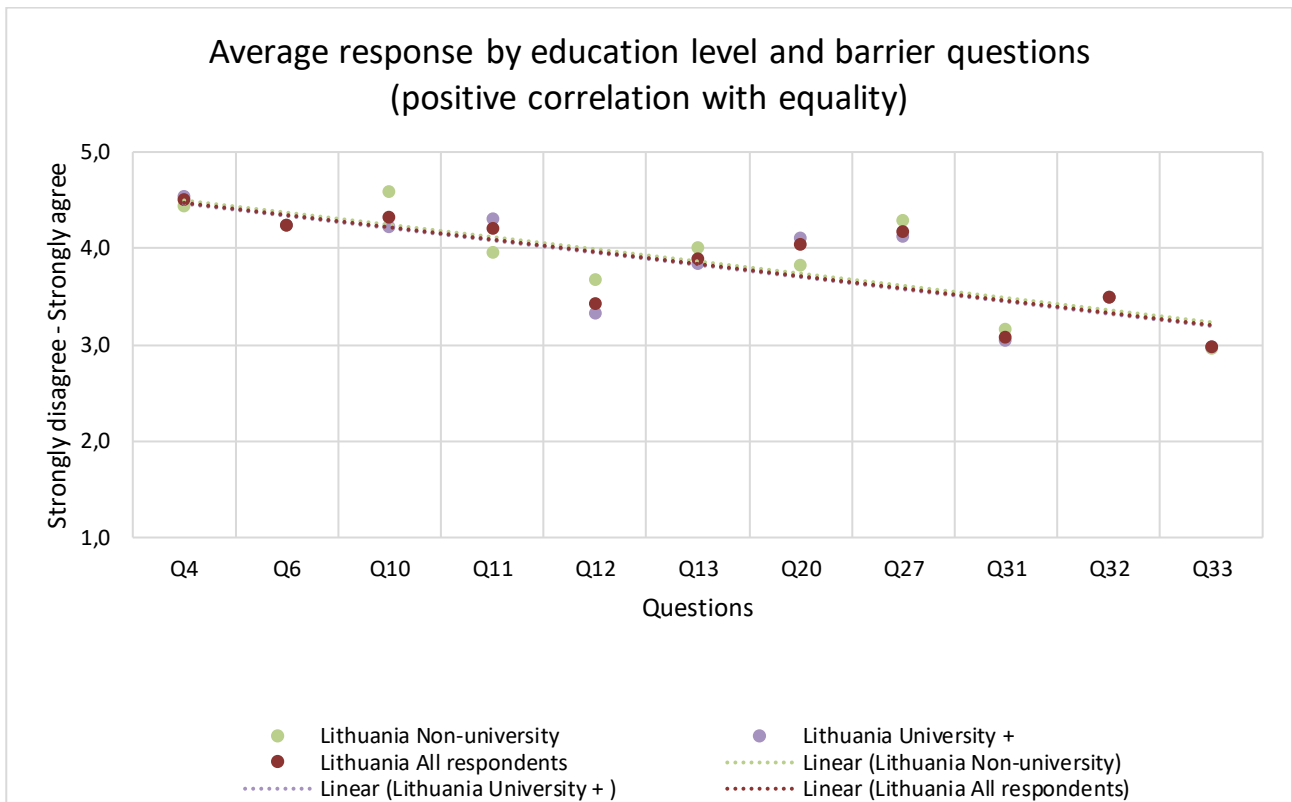
Education:

- Primary Education: 2 respondents (~2.5% of the total participants)
- Secondary Education: 12 respondents (~15% of the total participants)
- Post-secondary education (non-tertiary): 7 respondents (~8.8% of the total participants)
- Bachelor's Degree or Equivalent: 19 respondents (~23.7% of the total participants)
- Master's Degree or Equivalent: 32 respondents (~40% of the total participants)
- Doctoral Degree or Equivalent: 8 respondents (~10% of the total participants)

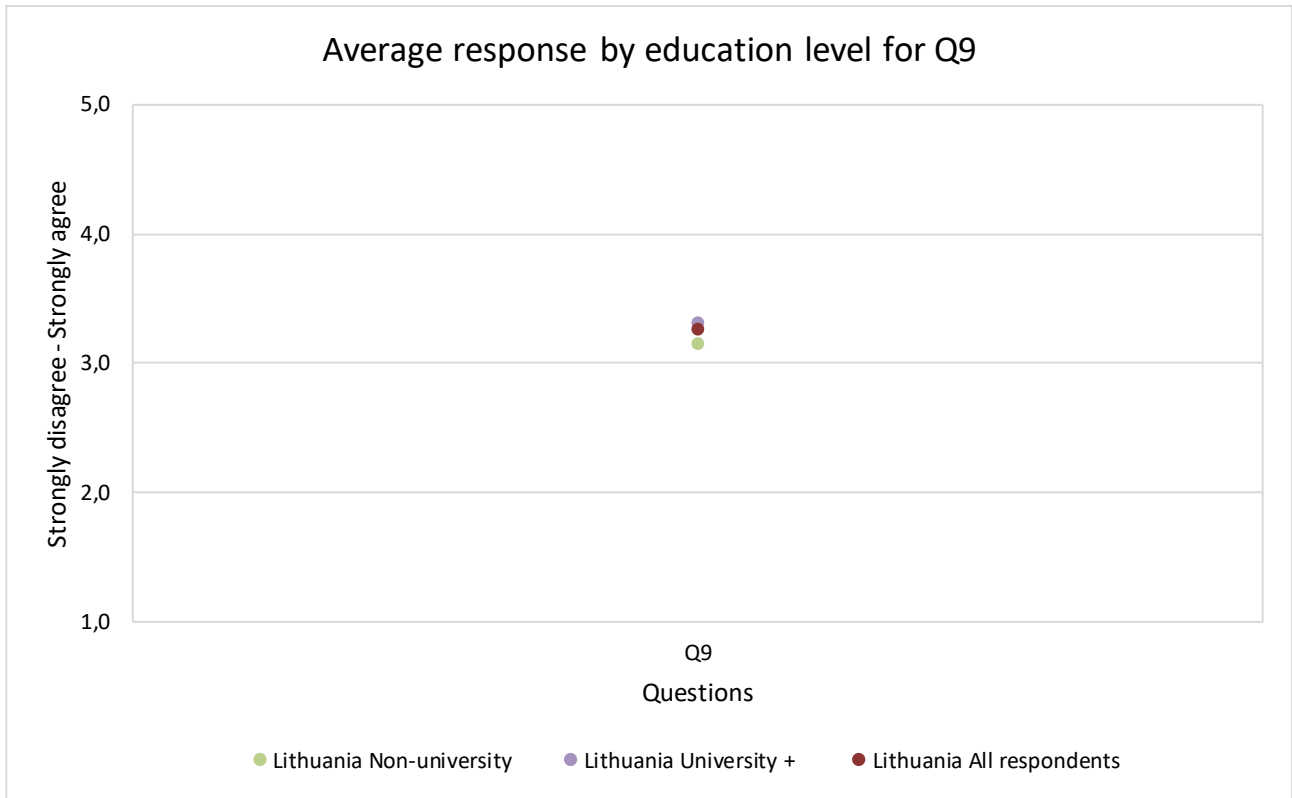


Respondents answers to barrier-related questions with a negative correlation with equality (Q1, Q2, Q3, Q5, Q7, Q8, Q14, Q15, Q16, Q17, Q18, Q19, Q21, Q22, Q23, Q24, Q25, Q26, Q28, Q29, Q30, and Q34). The answers are very similar and do not have very significant differences in relation to the educational level of the respondents (for example, five answers gained the same scores, 7 answers differ only in the 0,1 point). The more significant difference we can see in the answers to these questions:

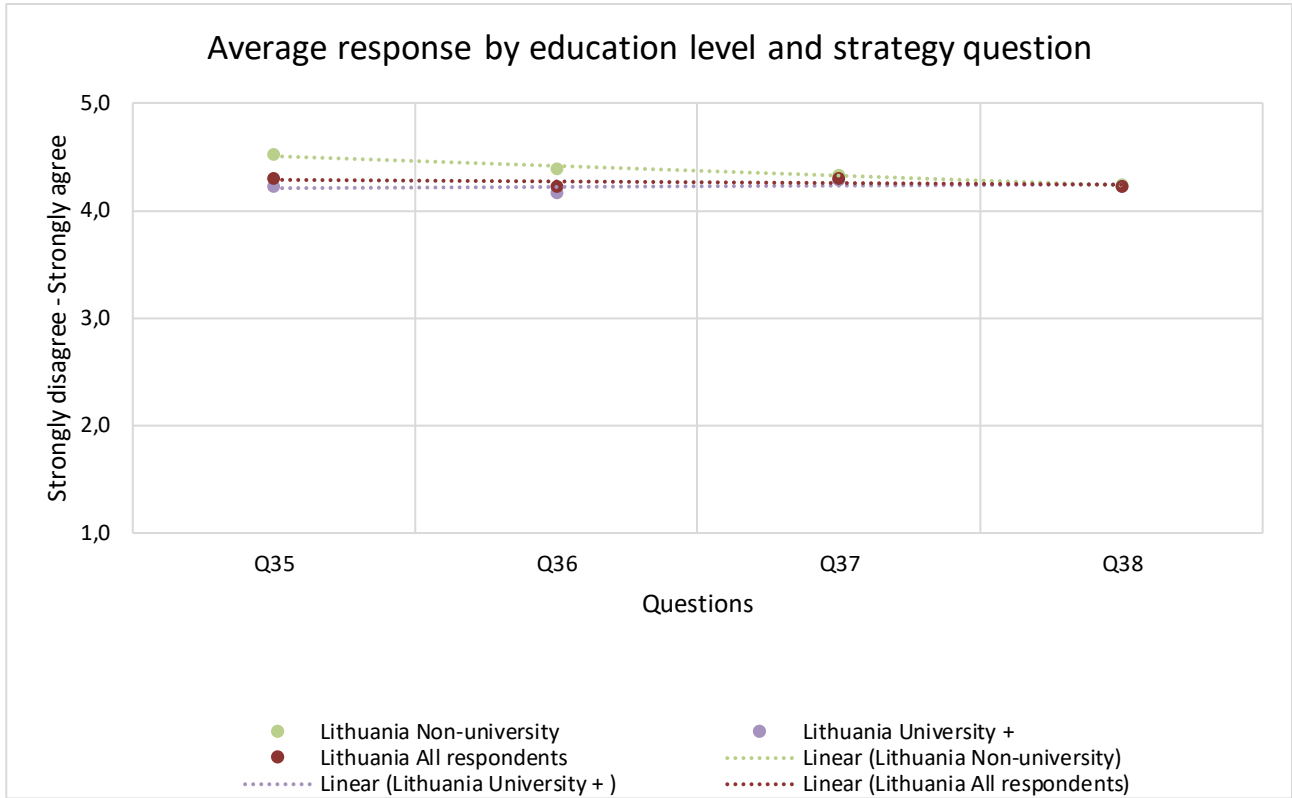
- respondents with university education and above (UNI+) tend more to disagree with the statement that men candidates are better qualified than those with non-university education (Q5: UNI+ 1.6; non-uni 2.0), although all respondent groups disagree on this statement.
- respondents with university education and above (UNI+) tend more to agree that it is more challenging for women in politics to maintain a healthy work-life balance in relation to other career choices (Q18: UNI+ 3.4; non-uni 3.0) and in relation to their men counterparts (Q19: UNI+ 3.6; non-uni 3.1), and that societal norms and expectations limit women's political aspirations and opportunities (Q29: UNI+ 3.7; non-uni 3.3), and that they have seen women being talked over or interrupted in meetings or discussions (Q28: UNI+ 3.4; non-uni 3.1), and that media coverage of women in politics often focuses on their appearance rather than their achievements and qualifications (Q34: UNI+ 3.4; non-uni 3.2).
- Also they agree more that they have felt that they had to choose between family responsibilities and pursuing a leadership role, than respondents with non-university education (Q21: UNI+ 3.1; non-uni 2.5).
- On the contrary, respondents with non-university education (Q23: UNI+ 3.7; non-uni 4.0) agree more that women in politics face more hostile work environments, including sexism and discrimination, than their men counterparts and that women are less likely to be promoted to leadership positions compared to men with similar qualifications and experience (Q25: UNI+ 3.7; non-uni 4.0).



Respondents answers to barrier-related questions with a positive correlation with equality (Q4, Q6, Q10, Q11, Q12, Q13, Q20, Q27, Q31, Q32, and Q33). In general, the non-uni group agreed more strongly with these positively correlated statements then UNI+ group but the difference in the scores of the answers is not high or sometimes even identical. This could suggest that the education has not a big impact.



Respondents answers to Q9. Q9 (Men and women have different leadership styles) received similar scores from both the non-UNI (3.1) and UNI+ (3.3) groups and both scores are slightly above average. This suggests that both groups tend more to agree that men and women slightly exhibit different leadership styles.



Respondents' answers to questions related to strategies (Q35, Q36, Q37, Q38). Both groups agreed fairly strongly with the strategies proposed to increase representation of women in leadership positions. However, the non-UNI group generally agreed more strongly. For example, on Q36 (implement diversity and inclusion policies in the workplace and in politics), the non-UNI group scored an average of 4.4 compared to 4.2 from the UNI+ group. This may suggest a slightly stronger belief in proactive measures to promote gender equality among the non-UNI group. And on Q35 (In order to increase the representation of women in leadership positions, we should encourage women to pursue leadership roles from a young age.), the non-UNI group scored an average of 4.5 compared to 4.2 from the UNI+ group.

Overall, we might see that there was not significant influence by the educational level to the answers to barrier-related questions with a negative and positive correlation with equality and the scores are very similar between both groups. Both groups as well agreed fairly strongly with the strategies proposed to increase representation of women in leadership positions.

5.4.5. Interpretation of results by political inclination

From 80 respondents in total, there is such distribution of respondents according to the political affiliation:

- Did not respond: 54 respondents (~67.5% of the total participants)
- Left: 14 respondents (~17.5% of the total participants)
- Right: 3 respondents (~3.75% of the total participants)
- Other: 9 respondents (~11.25% of the total participants)

From these data we might see that the interpretation of results is not possible as the majority of the respondents (54) have not indicated their political affiliation (this was optional question).

The other groups are rather small.

5.4.6. Results of open-ended questions

I. When asked "Are there any other barriers or challenges that you believe hinder women's participation and election in politics? Please explain." The **respondents** mentioned a variety of challenges that impede women's participation in politics. Below are provided all answers from respondents:

Societal views

- "Gender inequality"
- "Discrimination against women from childhood."
- "The stereotype that politics is a man's or single woman's business."
- "The still strong male perception that women cannot be politicians just because they are women. You can still hear men saying that women are 'only in the kitchen' because they cannot take important decisions, they cannot lead, they are not smart enough, they do not have consistency and they do not have a common understanding, even though we all know very well that this is not the case, that this is just an old and stupid belief that we should have changed a long time ago. "
- "I do not see this in my own environment, but I have seen examples of women being 'beaten down' just because of their gender."
- "Stereotypes in society."
- "Gender inequality in general in our country, women's own self-presentation"

Women's behavior

- "The lack of self-confidence of women themselves."
- "Women may shy away from political office for fear of publicity and negative perceptions of their work."
- "Women themselves should be more in solidarity."

Lack of support

- "Childcare/ Care of sick relatives more often falls to women. A developed system and availability of such services would be a major help."
- "Lack of kindergartens, expensive babysitting services."
- "Husband and children. Difficult to reconcile working hours. Difficult to allocate time between politics and family, someone has to suffer, get less attention."

- “Lack of access to pre-school and similar services, which often forces women to take career breaks or to be at a severe disadvantage in terms of having children, raising them, etc.”
- Lack of finances of women candidates.

Formation of political lists

- Politics/trend of formation of political lists when there are many women on the lists but only few in the top ten.

There are respondents who indicated that they think there are no barriers

- “In my opinion, Lithuania is a matriarchal country, we have probably the most popular president who is a woman, and now we have a lot of women in the government, so I think there are no barriers for women to get into a leadership position. Also, men are getting weaker as the years go by, so women feel more obliged to go into leadership positions because men just don't take care of them as they used to, but that's a philosophical question.”

II. Responses about what can be done to address barriers and promote gender equality in politics were as follows. Below are provided all answers from respondents:

Promotion of equality between women and men

- “Promote gender equality in all spheres of life.”
- “Promote equality between women and men in all spheres, talk about the role of women in the public and private sectors, and the importance of their dignity as women in their lives.”
- “I think that, firstly, equal pay should be introduced for women and men in the same positions, and, secondly, women should be encouraged to be more assertive and not to give in to the abuse of men.”
- “Women's positions must be in line with their education, their personal abilities, and not with whether they are women or not.”
- “Introduce quotas.”
- “Gender quotas.”
- “Possibly through quotas, strong national and local gender equality policies (with budget), active, normalised inclusion of equal opportunities issues in the education system.”

Public services

- “Moving in that direction. First of all, the development of care services. “

- “More family services. More involvement of the elderly e.g. living in the same area, house, staircase. This would also solve problems of loneliness, cooperation between generations, etc.”
- “Education.”
- “Public education, which starts at school.”
- “We are not going to change the education system, which is already poor, any time soon.”
- “Encourage kindergartens and kindergarten teachers not to distinguish between boys and girls in activities or sports matches.”

Awareness raising

- “Talk more about this, raise problematic issues, give examples of good practice.”
- “Positivity, media attention for young female politicians who are able to combine family and work.”
- It all depends on the attitude towards women in our society. We need more dissemination of women's achievements, initiatives in the public space. Also educational activities for young people/school students.”

Role models

- “Motivate women, provide examples and success stories.”
- “Using examples of women from foreign countries.”

5.4.7. Conclusions regarding questionnaire results

Overall, the survey results show a recognition by respondents of gender inequality in politics and support for measures to increase women's representation in leadership roles.

However, they also highlight perceived barriers and challenges, such as (those got higher scores of agreement) that women in politics are judged more harshly for their appearance than men, that women politicians are often criticized for their personal life choices compared to men, women are held to higher standards or face more scrutiny than men in leadership roles and that women in leadership face a "double bind" where they are expected to be both assertive and nurturing. The respondents generally recognize and acknowledge that women in politics face more hostile work environments, including sexism and discrimination, and that women are less likely to be promoted to leadership positions compared to men with similar qualifications and experience.

Respondents agree that women are as capable as men in political leadership roles, and that having diverse representation in leadership positions is important. They also generally agree with the notion that more women in political leadership positions would inspire other women to pursue political careers. Respondent can easily identify women political role models in their country.

Respondents strongly support measures aimed at increasing the representation of women in leadership positions. These include encouraging women to pursue leadership roles from a young age, implementing diversity and inclusion policies in the workplace and politics, providing mentorship and support for women in leadership positions, and engaging in awareness-raising campaigns.

Respondent agree that political organizations should actively promote women to decision-making roles to achieve gender equality and that political organizations should implement family-friendly policies to support women's participation.

During the survey there was made an analysis exploring how perspectives differ across demographics, including gender, age, and educational level (there was not enough data for the political affiliation).

Women generally expressed higher levels of agreement to questions relating to barriers and biases that hinder gender equality than men. This could suggest that women are more aware of, or have experienced more, the gender biases and stereotypes prevalent in the political sphere and that women perceive these specific issues as more significant barriers than men do. The results suggest that men tend much less to recognise the discrimination faced and indicated by women. As well women expressed more supportive approach and understanding of the need for active measures to improve female representation in political leadership.

The results suggest that respondents over 40 indicate more gender-based bias and inequality in the political field. Younger respondents (less than 40 years old) demonstrated more optimistic understanding of the situation indicating a higher belief in gender equality and the importance of women's participation in politics. The perception of the importance of implementations of the strategies to achieve the gender equality is not strongly influenced by age.

Overall, we might see that there was not significant influence by the educational level to the answers to barrier-related questions with a negative and positive correlation with equality and the scores are

very similar between both groups. Both groups as well agreed fairly strongly with the strategies proposed to increase representation of women in leadership positions.

In conclusion, although the survey respondents generally acknowledged the presence of gender bias and disparity in politics and expressed robust support for measures aimed at elevating women's representation in leadership positions, the data underscores an urgent demand for persistent actions to confront the obstacles women encounter. Attaining gender equality in politics requires sustained, collaborative efforts within society.

6. SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS AND NATIONAL-SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS

Promoting women's participation in the political domain is essential for ensuring gender equality and diverse representation in Lithuania's political landscape. Here are some national-specific recommendations for Lithuania:

1. Promotion and usage of temporary special measures to increase the number of women in politics and assist the Government in the implementation of the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women's Recommendations 19 and 29 to Lithuania on increasing gender balance in politics and the use of temporary special measures. Temporary special measures – as electoral quotas - help achieve gender balance in political decision-making more quickly. They are time-limited, i.e. they have to be withdrawn once de facto equality between women and men is established. In order the temporary special measures could be applied, the improvements of the legislation are needed. It is important to consider implementing gender quotas for candidate lists or electoral districts to ensure a minimum representation of women in the Parliament of the Republic of Lithuania (Seimas) and local government bodies.

2. Improvements of the Legislation. Proposals for legislative changes:

- Suggested amendments to the **Law on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men**: to add a separate article on gender balance in decision-making to this law.
- Suggested amendments to the **Electoral Code**: to introduce a gender balance requirement in the lists of candidates of political parties. Each list of candidates of political parties for any election must have at least 40% of persons of one sex.
- Suggested amendments to the **Law on Political Organisations**: Ensure that the internal statutes of political parties and organisations include internal rules on gender balance and that information on gender balance is made public. In order to provide the funding to political parties it is subject to proof that internal rules on gender balance are enforced and that information on the gender distribution of election candidates is made public.

3. Education and Training. Based on the results of the analytical activities, develop and implement data and evidence-based educational measures to empower women to participate more actively in politics:

- Develop and implement training programs and workshops for women interested in entering politics, covering topics like campaign strategy, public speaking, and policy development.

- Promote gender-sensitive education in schools and universities to foster a culture of gender equality and political engagement from a young age.

4. Public Awareness. Increase women's participation in politics by educating the public and thereby shaping public discourse that promotes the consolidation of gender-parity democracy.

- Launch awareness campaigns that highlight the importance of women's participation in politics and showcase the achievements of women in leadership roles. As the examples suggested: An awareness campaign "For a gender-equal future for young people", based on interactive educational sessions about the gender perspective in politics, the labour market and the family, its causes and consequences, and possible measures to overcome inequalities.
- Encourage the media to give balanced coverage to male and female candidates and politicians.
- Organize civic actions to support women's in elections, for example: "Women votes for women"; "Green light for women in politics" in order to make influence on political decisions in gender equality sphere; "FOR: Building the future now" - training to prepare representatives of youth organisations for discussions with politicians; Round table discussions, national conferences like "50/50"; "LT Parliament in Different Way" with press conference to raise awareness; "Training on civic actions for equality between women and men".

5. Supportive Policies.

- Implement family-friendly policies, such as affordable childcare and parental leave, to ease the burden on women who wish to pursue political careers while raising a family.
- Ensure that women have equal access to funding and resources for their political campaigns, addressing financial barriers they may face.

6. Data Collection and Monitoring.

- Establish mechanisms to collect and analyse data on the participation of women in politics and regularly publish reports to monitor progress.
- Conduct research and studies to identify and address specific challenges and barriers faced by women in Lithuanian politics.

7. Peer Mentoring and Networking:

Mentoring for gender equality in politics. Aimed at engaging young active women in political life and in gender equality policy.

- Facilitate networking opportunities and peer mentoring programs to connect aspiring female politicians with experienced women in politics.
- Continue activities of the women's clubs' MILDA - uniting women from the different political parties, created across all Lithuania. In these clubs women-politicians discuss how to strengthen women's positions in politics.

8. Civil Society and NGOs:

- Collaborate with women's organizations and NGOs to promote women's political participation, provide support, and advocate for gender equality in politics.

9. International Collaboration:

- Exchange best practices and lessons learned with other countries and international organizations that have successfully promoted women's political participation.

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8. ANNEX 1: QUESTIONNAIRE ITEMS

Q1 Regarding gender bias and stereotypes faced by women in politics, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements: [Stereotypes about women's abilities hinder their progress in politics.]

Q2 Regarding gender bias and stereotypes faced by women in politics, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements: [Women in politics are often perceived as emotional rather than rational decision-makers.]

Q3 Regarding gender bias and stereotypes faced by women in politics, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements: [Women often feel the need to downplay their femininity or adopt more masculine traits to be taken seriously as leaders.]

Q4 Regarding gender bias and stereotypes faced by women in politics, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements: [Women are as capable as men in political leadership roles.]

Q5 Regarding gender bias and stereotypes faced by women in politics, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements: [I usually feel men candidates are better qualified.]

Q6 Regarding gender bias and stereotypes faced by women in politics, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements: [Having diverse representation in leadership positions is important.]

Q7 Regarding gender bias and stereotypes faced by women in politics, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements: [I have witnessed or experienced gender bias or discrimination in politics.]

Q8 Regarding gender bias and stereotypes faced by women in politics, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements: [I have felt discouraged from pursuing a leadership role because of my gender.]

Q9 Regarding gender bias and stereotypes faced by women in politics, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements: [Men and women have different leadership styles.]

Q10 Regarding role models of women in politics, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements: [The presence of more women in political leadership positions would inspire other women to pursue political careers.]

Q11 Regarding role models of women in politics, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements: [I can easily identify women political role models in my country.]

Q12 Regarding role models of women in politics, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements: [I have had a women role model or mentor in a leadership position who inspired or supported me.]

Q13 Regarding role models of women in politics, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements: [Women frequently occupy leadership positions in my workplace or community.]

Q14 Regarding double standards and scrutiny faced by women in politics, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements: [Women in politics are judged more harshly for their appearance than men.]

Q15 Regarding double standards and scrutiny faced by women in politics, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements: [Women politicians are more likely to be criticized for their personal life choices compared to men.]

Q16 Regarding double standards and scrutiny faced by women in politics, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements: [Women are held to higher standards or face more scrutiny than men in leadership roles.]

Q17 Regarding double standards and scrutiny faced by women in politics, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements: [Women in leadership face a "double bind" where they are expected to be both assertive and nurturing.]

Q18 Regarding work-life balance experienced by women in politics, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements: [It is more challenging for women in politics to maintain a healthy work-life balance in relation to other career choices.]

Q19 Regarding work-life balance experienced by women in politics, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements: [It is more challenging for women in politics to maintain a healthy work-life balance in relation to their men counterparts.]

Q20 Regarding work-life balance experienced by women in politics, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements: [Political organizations should implement family-friendly policies to support women's participation.]

Q21 Regarding work-life balance experienced by women in politics, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements: [I have felt that I had to choose between family responsibilities and pursuing a leadership role.]

Q22 Regarding other barriers experienced by women in politics, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements: [Wage disparities between men and women politicians exist in my country.]

Q23 Regarding other barriers experienced by women in politics, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements: [Women in politics face more hostile work environments, including sexism and discrimination, than their men counterparts.]

Q24 Regarding other barriers experienced by women in politics, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements: [I have witnessed or experienced sexual harassment in the workplace or in politics.]

Q25 Regarding other barriers experienced by women in politics, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements: [Women are less likely to be promoted to leadership positions compared to men with similar qualifications and experience.]

Q26 Regarding other barriers experienced by women in politics, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements: [Women in political organizations are often limited to administrative roles instead of decision-making positions.]

Q27 Regarding other barriers experienced by women in politics, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements: [Political organizations should actively promote women to decision-making roles to achieve gender equality.]

Q28 Regarding other barriers experienced by women in politics, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements: [I have seen women being talked over or interrupted in meetings or discussions more frequently than their men counterparts.]

Q29 Regarding other barriers experienced by women in politics, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements: [Societal norms and expectations limit women's political aspirations and opportunities.]

Q30 Regarding other barriers experienced by women in politics, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements: [Traditional gender roles and expectations discourage women from pursuing political careers.]

Q31 Regarding other barriers experienced by women in politics, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements: [The cultural norms in my country support women's participation in politics.]

Q32 Regarding other barriers experienced by women in politics, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements: [There are equal opportunities for women and men to pursue leadership roles in my community.]

Q33 Regarding other barriers experienced by women in politics, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements: [The media in my country portrays women politicians fairly and accurately.]

Q34 Regarding other barriers experienced by women in politics, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements: [Media coverage of women in politics often focuses on their appearance rather than their achievements and qualifications.]

Q35 In order to increase the representation of women in leadership positions, we should... [...encourage women to pursue leadership roles from a young age.]

Q36 In order to increase the representation of women in leadership positions, we should... [...implement diversity and inclusion policies in the workplace and in politics.]

Q37 In order to increase the representation of women in leadership positions, we should... [...provide mentorship and support for women in leadership positions.]

Q38 In order to increase the representation of women in leadership positions, we should... [...engage in awareness raising campaigns.]

Open-ended question: Are there any other barriers or challenges that you believe hinder women's participation and election in politics? Please explain.

Open-ended question: In your opinion, what can be done to address these barriers and promote gender equality in politics? Please share your ideas or suggestions.

9. ANNEX 2: FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

Questions to validate hypothesis (suggested time allocation: 60 minutes):

- In what ways do you think gender bias or stereotypes might impact the political careers or aspirations of women?
- How do you think the presence or absence of women role models in politics influences the career choices or motivations of women interested in pursuing a political career?
- Do you believe that women in politics are held to different standards or face more scrutiny than their men counterparts? If so, can you provide examples or share your observations?
- What challenges do you think women might face in balancing work and family responsibilities while pursuing a political career?
- Can you discuss any systemic barriers, such as preferential treatment, hostile work environments (sexism, discrimination, etc.), or wage differences for similar responsibilities, which might limit the career progression of women in politics?
- In political organizations, do you think women are more likely to take on administrative or supportive roles instead of decision-making positions? If so, how do you think this impacts women's overall representation in politics?

Questions for the focus group to identify additional barriers (suggested time allocation: 30 minutes):

- Are there any specific challenges or barriers you have faced in your political career that we have not discussed yet and that you would like to share?
- How do you think societal attitudes or cultural norms in your country impact women's participation in politics?
- In your opinion, what role does the media play in shaping the public's perception of women in leadership positions?
- In your experience, how does access to funding or resources for political campaigns differ between men and women candidates?

Questions to identify strategies to address barriers hindering women's participation in politics (suggested time allocation: 30 minutes):

- In your opinion, what are some effective measures or initiatives that can help challenge gender bias and stereotypes in politics?
- How can political parties or organizations better support and promote women into leadership positions and decision-making roles?
- What type of training, mentorship, or support programs would you find valuable in overcoming the identified barriers in your political career?
- How can we create a more inclusive and supportive environment within political organizations that fosters gender equality and encourages women's participation?
- What role do you think men can play in promoting gender equality in politics and supporting women's political participation?

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