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IN THE WORLD**

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**Women's suffrage in the world:
Before women's participation in elections - gender census
and its historical and global perspective**

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Abstract

The aim of the paper is to synthesize the process of granting women electoral/voting rights in the world in historical terms. The cultural and political context of the gender census is presented and interpreted. The beginnings (the first wave of feminisation) - the first postulates justifying the granting of electoral rights for women are analysed, then the specificity of the process of granting women the right to vote and right to stand in an election in the world have been investigated. Then, in chronological terms, this process was considered in the context of continents (Europe, North America, Latin America, Asia and Oceania). The common features and exceptions of this process on each continent are presented. There have also been comments on the modern situation of women's electoral rights.

Keywords

electoral/voting rights, gender census, women's participation in election, women's suffrage

Today, standards that give voting rights to almost the entire adult population are treated as something completely normal and are included in the catalogue of natural rights. In the past, however, political rights, including electoral rights, were restricted by numerous censuses. Nowadays, the term census (Latin *evaluation, census*) is connected with the limitation of electoral rights of the voters, and in particular the principle of universality in the subject matter of the electoral law¹.

One of the longest-standing electoral censuses was the gender census. The first modern democracies were exclusively 'male' democracies. It should also be remembered that at first only a small number of men had electoral rights in connection with the censuses in force, mainly property ones. In addition, the granting of electoral rights to women was enacted by parliaments that were composed exclusively of men.

The exclusion of women from participation in elections was primarily culturally motivated. For centuries, Western civilisation and others had a tradition and moral norms that placed women outside political rights². They were only for the head of the family, i.e. for the man. The role of women was limited to procreative functions, raising offspring and running the home. In the German Empire slogan: *Kinder, Küche, Kirche* or the 3 Ks, (children, kitchen, church) described a woman's role in society. The status of a woman was determined by her husband's position. Psychological barriers were not without significance.

In addition, demographic and political aspects were initially important. Women generally made up just over half of the adult citizens of the country. Therefore, as a new group of voters, they were seen as a 'critical mass' that could make a fundamental shift on the political scene³.

It was believed that "women as submissive to feelings rather than minds, would pursue a shaky and extreme policy that finally this policy would rarely be independent, as the woman is usually under the influence of a stranger whether it be a husband, a father, a guardian or, as in Catholic countries, a parish priest; if women voted differently from their fathers and brothers, this would bring the ferment of political struggle to the family, which should be an environment that gives a break from the storm of political life"⁴.

1 K. Skotnicki, *Zasada powszechności w prawie wyborczym* (The principle of universality in electoral law), Łódź 2000, passim.

2 *Different Voices, Different Roles: Women and Politics in the United States and Europe*, ed. by P. Norris, M. Githens, J. Lovenduski, New York 1994, passim.

3 R. Dahlerup, *The Story of the Theory of Critical Mass*, "Politics and Gender" 2006, Vol. 2, No. 4, pp. 511-522.

4 J. Makowski, *Zarys prawa wyborczego* (Outline of the electoral law), Warszawa 1918, p. 10.

It was only in the second half of the 19th century and at the turn of the 20th century that women slowly gained access to education and professional work in some countries, among other things as a result of the activities of suffragists (from Latin *suffragium*, i.e. electoral vote/electoral law) and other women's organisations.

Not without significance was the theoretical foundation of movements fighting for women's electoral rights, especially by men - great thinkers, including Jean Antoine Nicolas Caritat, Marquis de Condorcet (1743-1794) and especially John Stuart Mill (1806-1873).

J. de Condorcet was one of the first to demand that women be given the right to vote, and for this reason he is considered a precursor of the so-called "first wave" of feminism (the years 1840-1920). He expressed his credo in an article entitled "De l'admission des femmes au droit de cite" (On granting women civil rights) published in 1790.

In turn, J. S. Mill, the founder of liberalism, was the opposite of his father James Stuart Mill (1773-1836), who claimed that since women do not have separate interests, they should be represented by their fathers or husbands without the requirement of authorisation. John Stuart Mill was repeatedly involved in actions to grant women electoral rights. He was chairman of the association for women's electoral rights called "Women's Suffrage Society". In his works, he proclaimed equality between men and women, fought against negative stereotypes towards women and demanded their participation in elections⁵. In 1867 he was the first parliamentarian in the history of the House of Commons to submit a bill granting women the right to vote.

Among the feminist movements, the works of Marie Olympe Aubry de Gouges, Marry Wollstonecraft and Sarah Stickney Eblis are worthy to mention⁶. Polish women also have merit in promoting granting voting rights to women (e.g. Zofia Daszyńska-Golińska, Paulina Kuczalska-Reinschmit, Walentyna Najdus)⁷.

5 J.S. Mill, *On Liberty*, London 1859; J.S. Mill, *The Subjection of Women*, London 1869. The Polish translation entitled *Poddaństwo kobiet* (Women's serfdom) was published in Krakow as early as 1887).

6 M.O.A. de Gouges, *Les Droits de la Femme*, Paris 1791; M. Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Women: with Strictures on Political and Moral Subjects*, London 1792; M.S. Ellis, *The Women of England. Their Social Duties and Domestic Habits*, London 1839.

7 Z. Daszyńska-Golińska, *Prawo wyborcze kobiet* (Women's electoral rights), Warszawa 1918; P. Kuczalska-Reinschmit, *Wyborcze prawa kobiet* (Women's electoral rights), Warszawa 1908, in: *Chcemy całego życia. Antologia polskich tekstów feministycznych z lat 1870-1939* (We want a lifetime. An anthology of Polish feminist texts from 1870-1939), ed. A. Górnicka-Boratyńska, Warszawa 1999; W. Najdus, *O prawa dla kobiet w zaborze austriackim* (For women's rights

In addition, the socialist parties have been the main proponents of granting women the right to vote. In the United Kingdom, in addition to the Labour Party established in 1900, such demands were already made by the Chartism movement in the 1840s.

As a rule, and especially initially, the granting of women's electoral rights was a process that was stretched over time, not a one-off act. Women were first granted the right to vote and then the right to stand as candidates. The exception was the granting of rights in reverse order (e.g. some states in the US, Norway and the Netherlands). An important factor in the acquisition of these rights by women was age, marital status and education, as well as wealth. In Belgium, exceptions were made for female heads of family and women with higher education. In the UK, initially, married women, householders and university graduates aged 30 and over were eligible to vote. In 1918, women over the age of 30 had the right to vote, and in 1928 this was reduced to 21.

As Julian Makowski, a Polish famous lawyer, wrote in 1918 "the vast majority of constitutions completely remove women from participation in elections"⁸. He argued, however, that "(...) practice has proven that where women are allowed to elections, party fights lose their sharpness; besides, women are most often a conservative element, effectively resisting any demagogic agitation"⁹. In the context of the right to stand for election, he stated that women are still greater restrictions than with the right to vote, and he considered that "these should be recognised here as more legitimate"¹⁰.

The process of granting voting rights to women was differentiated according to the level of elections, first local elections and then national elections. In Turkey, in addition to the Constitution of 8 April 1928, women were given the right to vote in three stages: in 1930 to city councils, in 1933 to senior councils and in 1934, active and passive voting rights in parliamentary elections, in the National Assembly. In a similar way, this process took place in the United States, and it started much earlier. In the so-called "pioneering period" women were the easiest to obtain electoral rights at the lowest level of elections. Later on, active and passive voting rights were granted to women simultaneously.

in the Austrian partition), in: *Kobieta i świat polityki. Polska na tle porównawczym w XIX i w początkach XX wieku. Zbiór studiów* (Woman and the political world. Poland against a comparative background in the 19th and early 20th century. Collection of studies), ed. A. Żarnowska, A. Szwarec, Warszawa 1994.

8 J. Makowski, op. cit., p. 10.

9 Ibidem, p. 11.

10 Ibidem, p. 17.

The vast majority of studies state that the first country to grant voting rights to women was New Zealand. At the national level, women were given the right to vote there in 1893, but it was only in 1919 that they could stand as candidates. In the then protectorate of New Zealand's Cook Islands, women were also given the right to vote in 1893, but elections were held there earlier than in New Zealand. Before 1983, women could only vote and stand as candidates in a few territories. Women, descendants of rebels from the ship "Bounty", had the right to vote on Pitcairn Island (1838) and Norfolk Island (1856). In Sweden women already had partial voting rights in 1862. On the Isle of Man, a territory dependent on the British Crown, women were able to vote there from 1893, and from 1881, women with property were entitled to vote.

Before the First World War, only four countries in the world granted women voting rights at the national level (New Zealand, Australia, Finland and Norway). A fundamental change in awareness in this respect took place during this war. At that time, women performed many social and professional functions, reserved for men in the peacetime, as in the typical immigration countries of the time (such as New Zealand, Australia) and in Scandinavia. The positive assessment of women's activity by the then 'male' political elite resulted in the partial granting of political rights after the end of the First World War, including electoral rights in several countries, primarily European. The Polish Constitution of March 1921, and earlier the electoral law of 1918, were among the first in the world to sanction this state of affairs – "The voter for the Sejm [Polish Parliament – A.Ż.] shall be every citizen of a country without distinction of sex [...] (Article 1) and that, "Elected to the Sejm are all nationals (men and women) of the State exercising their right to vote [...]" (Article 7)¹¹.

It was not until after the Second World War, however, that women gained more and more widespread access to participate in elections. Immediately after the Second World War, the number of such countries rose to 83. Another wave of granting voting rights to women was linked to decolonisation processes, mainly in Africa and Asia, and also in Oceania. In 1970, the number of such countries was 171. However, in around 20 countries, these rights were still granted in the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s. This process was sporadic at the beginning of the 21st century.

Due to geographical diversity, it is stressed that women were the earliest to acquire electoral rights in Europe, the first to do so being Finland (then an autonomous country within Russia). The Scandinavian countries were the leaders in this process.

11 L. Nowodworski, *O ordynacji wyborczej do pierwszego Sejmu polskiego. Wyjaśnienia i wskazówki praktyczne* (O ordinance on the election to the first Polish Sejm. Explanations and practical guidelines), Warszawa 1918, p. 8, 10.

The granting of electoral rights to women in Europe was as follows (in the chronological order of granting these rights): Finland - 1906 year of granting the right to vote, 1906 year of granting the right to stand for election; Norway - 1913, 1907; Denmark - 1915, 1915; Iceland - 1915/1920*, 1915; Austria - 1918, 1918; Estonia - 1918, 1918; Germany - 1918, 1918; Ireland - 1918/1922 (1928*), 1918/1922; Latvia - 1918, 1918; Poland - 1918, 1918; Soviet Union - 1918, 1918; United Kingdom - 1918 (1928*), 1918; Belgium - 1919 (1948*), 1921; Luxemburg - 1919, 1919; The Netherlands - 1919, 1917; Sweden - 1919, 1919; Hungary - 1918/1920, 1920; Portugal - 1931/1974 (1976*), 1931; Spain - 1931, 1931; France - 1944, 1944; Bulgaria - 1945, 1945; Italy - 1945, 1945; Albania - 1946, 1946; Yugoslavia - 1946, 1946; Romania - 1946, 1946; Malta - 1947, 1947; Greece - 1952, 1952; San Marino - 1959, 1973; Cyprus - 1960, 1960; Monaco - 1962, 1962; Andorra - 1970, 1973; Switzerland - 1971, 1971; Liechtenstein - 1984, 1984.

* Lifting all restrictions on women both on the right to vote and to stand as a candidate.

Source: Own study based, *inter alia*, on: <http://www.ipu.org> (download: 15 May 2019); *Suffrage and Beyond: International Feminist Perspectives*, eds. C. Daley, M. Nolan, Auckland 1994.

In Norway, when women were granted the right to stand for election in 1907, a property census was in force (payment of income tax of 400 kroner in cities and 300 kroner in the countryside - men were not required to do so), and since 1901, women had limited active voting rights in local elections. In Iceland, women had full electoral rights since 1920. Since 1915, women who were 40 years old or older were eligible to vote.

In Belgium, since 1920, the right to vote has been acquired by mothers and widows of soldiers who died during the First World War.

In Hungary, the voting rights granted to women in 1918 were limited.

In Bulgaria, the universality of women's voting rights was formally introduced in 1944, and these rights were confirmed by the constitution of 1947.

The relatively late granting of full voting rights in southern European countries with deeply traditional social systems and authoritarian and totalitarian systems is worth emphasizing. In Portugal, since 1933, only women with secondary and higher education had the right to vote, and in 1946, these rights were extended to household heads and married women paying taxes. It was only since the 'Carnation' Revolution that all women were granted voting rights (1974). In Spain, on the other hand, after General Francisco Franco came to power in 1936, women could not vote until 1976.

In Switzerland, a country where general elections were held since 1848, women were not granted the right to vote at the federal level until 1971 (in two half-cantons, women were still deprived of the right to stand and vote in elections to the Council of Cantons and in cantonal elections and votes).

Among Western European countries, late voting rights were granted to women in the smallest countries: San Marino, Monaco, Andorra, and at the latest in Liechtenstein in 1984.

On the American continent, women were relatively quickly granted voting rights in the northern part of the continent, in individual US states, and at the national level in Canada in 1920, with women of British and French origin having obtained these rights two years earlier. Even earlier, women had been granted voting rights in individual states: Alberta, Manitoba and Saskatchewan (1916), British Columbia, Ontario (1917), New Brunswick, New Scotland (1918). In addition, already in 1917, the women of European origin who served in the armed forces or were close relatives of soldiers acquired voting rights.

The process of granting voting rights to women in the United States was very diverse¹². These rights were granted to women first at the local state level and then only in federal elections. Sometimes these rights were periodic, as in the State of New Jersey, for example, women who owned property were able to vote between 1776 and 1807. Incidentally, they lost their voting rights there when they were granted to all men. Until 1899, women were able to vote in school council elections in about 20 states and only in 4 states were able to elect their authorities - Wyoming (1869), Utah (1870), Washington (1883) and Montana (1887), i.e. they had the same voting rights as men. It is worth mentioning that in the state of Washington, the Supreme Court in 1887 declared granting voting rights to women as unconstitutional. Until 1910, only 5 states guaranteed women the right to vote in all levels of elections - Wyoming (1890), Colorado (1893), Utah (1896), Idaho (1896) and Washington (1910). In the following years, successive states granted full or partial voting rights to women: California (1911); Arizona, Kansas, Oregon (1912); Alaska, Illinois (1913); Montana, Nevada (1914); Arkansas, Indiana, Michigan, Nebraska, New York, Ohio, Rhode Island, North Dakota (1917). It was only in 1920, however, that the 19th amendment to the US Constitution finally guaranteed women's electoral rights ("The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall

12 The United States Constitution (1787), the first democratic basic law in the world, granted voting rights only to white men who had property and paid taxes, https://constitutioncenter.org/the-constitution/full-text?gclid=Cj0KCQjwqtqgBhDFARIsABcDjOfMn5sEKk7JbEG6M9NUNobxKdLSSSNHoucVdtOnwCbtKorrsgdT2AwaAoyDEALw_wcB (download: 15 May 2019).

not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex. Congress shall have the power to enforce this article by appropriate legislation”)¹³.

In Latin America, the process of granting women's electoral rights accelerated after the Second World War. Although the origins are in the 1930s and 1940s: Brazil (1932/1934), Uruguay (1932), Cuba (1934), El Salvador (1939), Dominican Republic (1942), Jamaica (1944), Guatemala, Panama, Trinidad Tobago (1945), Argentina, Venezuela (1947), Chile (1949), Costa Rica (1949), Haiti (1950). In 1951, this process included the dumps in the Caribbean although it was only later that they received internal autonomy and then independence: Antigua, Barbados, Dominica, Grenada, Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. In fact, in the 1950s, in all independent Latin American countries, women had the right to vote: Bolivia (1952), Mexico (1953), Belize (1954), and independence was achieved in 1981, in Honduras, Nicaragua, Peru (1955), Honduras (1956/1957), Colombia (1957). The exception is Ecuador, where women only obtained full voting rights in 1967, although limited voting rights for women were introduced there already in 1929.

In Asia, women first obtained voting rights in the Asian republics of the Soviet Union (1921-1927) and also in communist Mongolia (1924). It is even reported that in Uzbekistan, as a Soviet republic, women were not granted voting rights until 1938. In the 1930s, only a few countries allowed women to participate in elections: Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) (1931), Thailand (1932), Turkey (1934), and the Philippines (1937). In India, although women were granted electoral rights in 1935, they depended on censorship of education and property - full-time participation when they became independent in 1949. After the Second World War, in most cases, women acquired voting rights or these periods were almost coinciding with independence, e.g. Malaysia (1955) and independence (1957); Singapore (1957) and autonomy (1959). There have been cases where these periods have been longer, including Lebanon (independence 1943) and electoral rights (1952/1953). In Afghanistan, women have been able to vote since 1965, but gender censorship was in place there under the Taliban regime (1996-2002), and women were only able to vote after their overthrow in the May 2004 presidential elections.

A particular exception in Asia was the Arab states, where granting rights to women was a lengthy process and not yet completed: Iran (1963), Jordan (1974) - women first took part in parliamentary elections in 1989, Iraq (1980). A specific situation existed and exists in some Gulf states. Even at the beginning of the 21st century, women cannot exercise their voting rights everywhere. In Kuwait, women finally secured their electoral rights in May 2005.

13 *Women's Suffrage Rights Nineteenth Amendment*, <https://www.law.cornell.edu/constitution-conan/amendment-19#> (download: 6 May 2019).

In Africa, it was correct that, with independence, women were granted full voting rights. Namibia (1989) was the last country to achieve independence and thus grant women the right to vote. Exceptions include the Central African Republic, which gained its independence in 1958, and full voting rights for women were only guaranteed in 1986. In Morocco, the difference was smaller, it gained independence in 1956, and in 1963 women were given the right to vote, while in Mauritania the period was five years.

The situation in Nigeria was quite specific. The granting of electoral rights was linked to the division of the country into an eastern and a western part. In eastern Nigeria, these rights were acquired by women in 1954, and in western Nigeria a year later, with only women who paid taxes.

Previously, in four independent African countries - Egypt, Ethiopia, Liberia and the Union of South Africa - the situation was as follows: In Egypt, women did not have the right to vote; in Liberia and Ethiopia, they were granted voting rights in 1946 (property censuses) and 1955 respectively. It is reported that in Liberia, women only obtained full voting rights in 1984. Earlier only Americo women had voting rights since 1946 and indigenous women were not enfranchised until 1951. In the Union of South Africa, only white women have had electoral rights since 1930 (on the same basis as white men). In the Republic of South Africa (formerly the Union of South Africa), black women, like black men, obtained electoral rights at the national level in 1994. In addition, in some French colonies - Cameroon, Senegal and Togo - women obtained voting rights as early as 1945-1946. In Somalia, too, women obtained voting rights earlier (1956) than independence was declared (1960). The same regularity applied: The Golden Coast (Ghana) voting rights (1954), independence (1957) and Sierra Leone voting rights (1951), and independence 10 years later.

However, it is rarely mentioned that on the African continent, limited electoral rights were granted to women as early as 1919 in Rhodesia - active and passive electoral rights based on the financial resources of the husband, provided the woman was not in a polygamous marriage. All women were granted the right to vote there in 1957 and the right to stand for election in 1978, which was linked to the independence of Zimbabwe.

In Oceania, Australia has been leading the way in granting voting rights to women at both national and state levels, in addition to the aforementioned New Zealand. At the federal level, this took place in 1902 (except for Aboriginal women) (white women - racial census), and earlier in South Australia in 1894 and Western Australia in 1899. In other states, on the other hand, the process was somewhat delayed: in Tasmania in 1903, in Queensland in 1905, and in Victoria in 1908.

Dependent territories in Oceania, as in Africa, granted women the right to vote when they gained independence. These rights were last acquired by women in Samoa in 1990, although independence was granted in 1962.

* * *

Attention should also be paid to the time extension in granting voting rights to men and women. In the Scandinavian countries, the difference was small, while in Switzerland it was 92 years.

Today, there is a widespread belief that gender has no connection with electoral rights. Voting rights for women have become the norm, not only in democracies but also in authoritarian and totalitarian systems¹⁴. Among the countries where women were the most recently granted, voting rights at the national level are: Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Oman and the United Arab Emirates. In Bahrain it was only in 2002 that women were granted electoral rights, in Qatar and Oman in 2003, in Kuwait in 2005 and in the United Arab Emirates since 2006¹⁵. Women in Saudi Arabia have cast their first votes in municipal elections in 2015 (elections take place only at the local level)¹⁶.

It should be stressed that in the rest of the world women enjoy the right to vote without any obstacles. Although in Bhutan until 2008 only one person from a family running an independent household was entitled to vote, which in practice meant that the vast majority of women there are deprived of these rights¹⁷. For example, in Lebanon, not so long ago, a woman had to be at least primary educated to vote.

It should be stressed that in the rest of the world women benefit unhindered by the right to vote. Although the electoral laws of individual countries contain there are provisions which differentiate between the voters on the basis of gender, for

14 See more: R. Inglehart, P. Norris, *Rising Tide. Gender Equality and Cultural Change around the World*, Cambridge 2003; P. Norris, *Women's Representation*, in: P. Norris, *Electoral Engineering. Voting Rules and Political Behavior*, Cambridge 2004, pp. 179-208.

15 E. Al Kitbi, *Women's Political Status in the GCC States*, <http://www.carnegieendowment.org/publications/index.cfm?fa=view&id=1589#gender> (download: 16 May 2019); *Kuwait's Thaw*, "Newsweek", <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/13594699/site/newsweek/page/1/> (download: 22 May 2019).

16 *Saudi Arabia's women vote in election for first time*, "BBC News" 12 December 2015, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-35075702> (download: 15 May 2019).

17 *Election Act of the Kingdom of Bhutan 2008*, (Chapter 6), <https://www.ecb.bt/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/ElectionActEnglish.pdf> (download: 25 May 2019).

example with regard to the compulsory voting¹⁸. In Belgium, compulsory voting for all men has been in force since 1919, and for women since 1949. In Egypt, however, compulsory voting only applies to men. In Lebanon, on the other hand, this obligation is imposed only on men over 21 years old. It may also be the case that the criterion combines age and marital status. In the case of Bolivia, the vote is compulsory for citizens aged 18 and over if they are married and if they are singles this obligation is imposed on citizens over 21 years of age.

18 A. Żukowski, *Przymus wyborczy – istota, przesłanki i implikacje* (Compulsory voting: essence, premises and implications), „Prawo i Polityka” („Law and Policy”) 2009, No. 1, pp. 109-124.

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