

Equal gender representation?

Audit of local government

Salga conducted an audit to determine the extent to which women are represented and participate in local government. It focused on two areas: the elected representatives (i.e. councillors) and the officials employed in municipalities. The purpose of the audit was to determine if women's representation has decreased or increased since 2000.

Electoral systems

The two electoral systems used in electing councillors were analysed, along with how they enhance gender representativity within local government. These

systems are the ward-based system, better known as the 'winner takes all' system, and the proportional representation system, known as the 'PR' system, wherein voters cast their votes for specific parties.

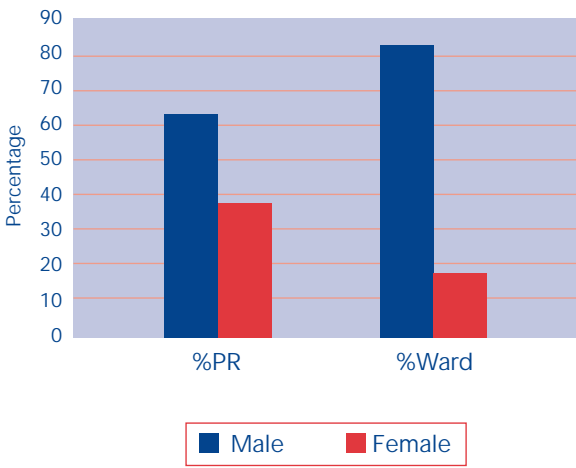
It was found that the PR system is more conducive to women's representation, as shown in graph 1 on page 2.

Women in leadership

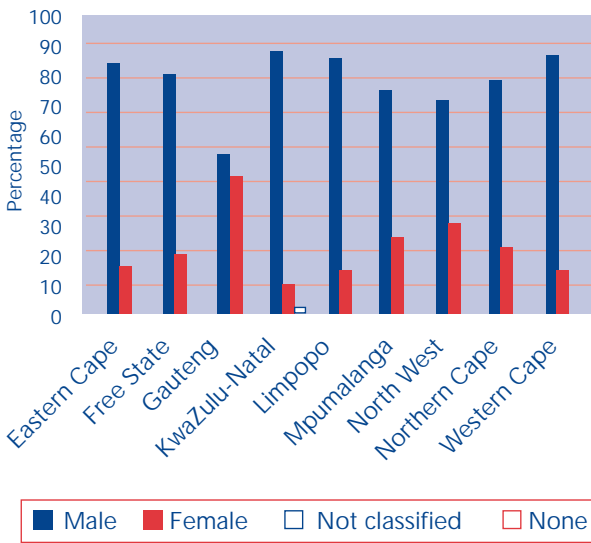
As far as women mayors are concerned, Gauteng is the only province where there is (near) equal representation. (See graph 2 on page 2.)

Women seem to fare much better when it comes to the position of speakers. In the Limpopo Province, they are in the majority at 68%. (See graph 3 on page 3.)





Graph 1:
Election type: Councillor representation

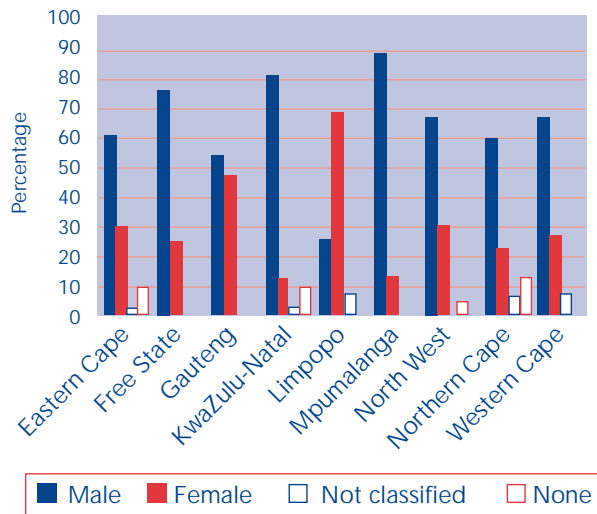


Graph 2: Mayors

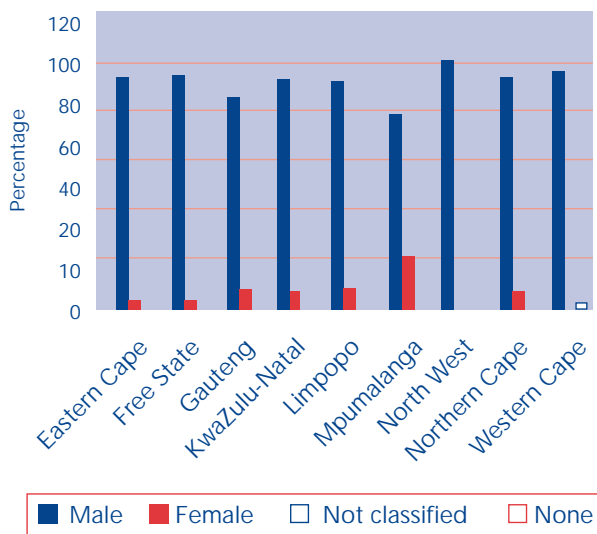
Though women in positions of governance are important, equally important are the people who prepare and implementing the policies decided on by politicians, namely the municipal managers and senior management. With regard to municipal managers, the Western Cape and the North-West Province were unable to produce a single female municipal manager. This position has historically been viewed as a 'man's job' and the statistics tell the same story: there are only 18 women municipal managers in 284 municipalities. This clearly shows how much work still needs to be done to create an equitable

key points

- 29% of councillors in local government are women.
- Women are still under-represented as mayors and municipal managers.



Graph 3: Speakers



Graph 4: Municipal managers

environment in management. (See graph 4 above.)

In relation to senior managers (section 57 appointees), women were better represented in deputy positions.

Comment

Although equal representativity is important, equal participation is just as important. This means that capacity building programmes for women are crucial to achieve their proper participation in governance. Capacity building

should focus on public speaking, media relations and assertiveness training. Along with capacity building, legislative measures, such as the introduction of mandatory quotas, should enhance women's representation and participation in local government and achieve an environment in which men and women are more equally represented.

With regard to management, the focus should be on mainstreaming gender in all activities. Proper mentoring for women, along with training to sensitise male colleagues on including women in all activities, are essential to create a more equitable workplace. Underlying workplace practices need to be addressed, as do inappropriate cultural norms that lead to women's marginalisation. The implementation of legislation such as the Employment Equity Act must be closely monitored. Equity plans need to be scrutinised to ensure gender equality. Currently only 29% of councillors are women. This is a far cry from the equitable society that the Constitution aspires to.

We can never be a true democracy until we address the under-representation of women in government and management.

Geraldine Mettler
Transformation Manager
Drakenstein Municipality

The full report on the Salga audit is available at www.salga.net