

In search of equality

1948–2018. Seventy years of elections in Italy: how are women faring in terms of power?

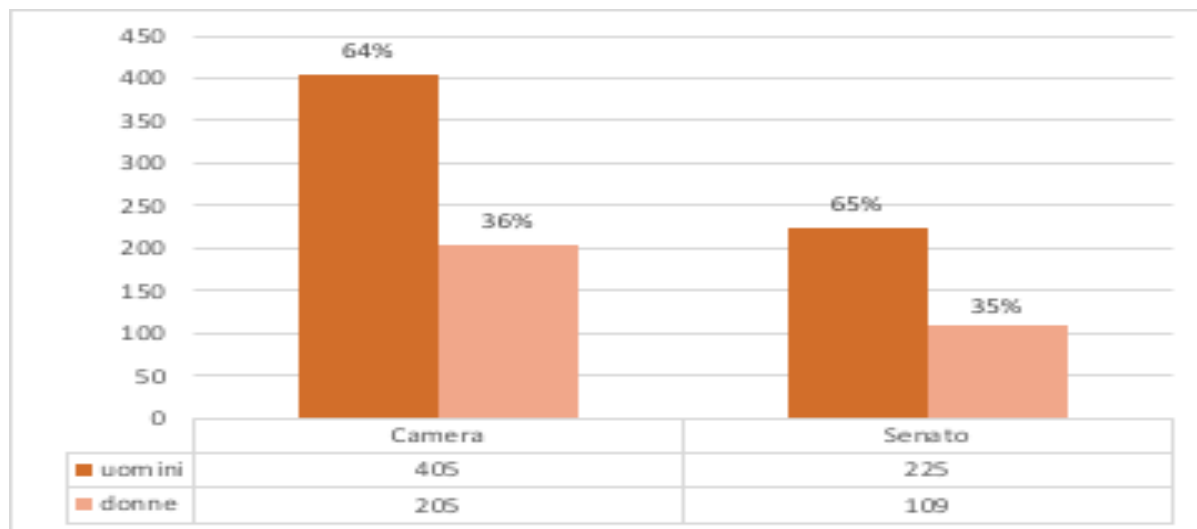
July 2018

The first general election in Republican Italy was held on 18 April 1948. In the first Parliament there were only 49 women, accounting for 5%. Almost 30 years went by before Italy had more than 50 women in Parliament: it happened in 1976. It then took another 30 years to top the threshold of 150 women MPs, in 2006. In 2018, more than 300 women were elected for the first time: with 4,327 women running for election out of 9,529 candidates (almost half), 334 women were elected. Currently, one MP in three is a woman and, for the first time in the Republic's history, the second office of the State – the president of the Senate – is a woman.

And what about the government? No woman has ever been appointed President of the Council of Ministers. Over 1,500 ministers have been appointed in 65 different cabinets, with women appointed ministers only 83 times (5 in the current government) – 41 times as ministers without portfolio. The path to equality is still long, even on a local level: only two Region Presidents out of 20 are women and every 100 mayors, 87 are men.

The starting point

The Italian Constitution acknowledges, under article 3, the principle of gender equality, which was further strengthened in 2003 following an amendment to article 51: “*the Republic promotes, with specific provisions, equal opportunities for women and men*”. The electoral reform of 2017, law no. 165, introduced several measures to rebalance representation. Further rules are set forth under the election laws for the European Parliament, regional and local bodies.

Figure 1. 18th Parliament. The elected MPs for the Chamber of Deputies and for the Senate

Dark: men – Light: women
Source: UVI-processed data

Analysis

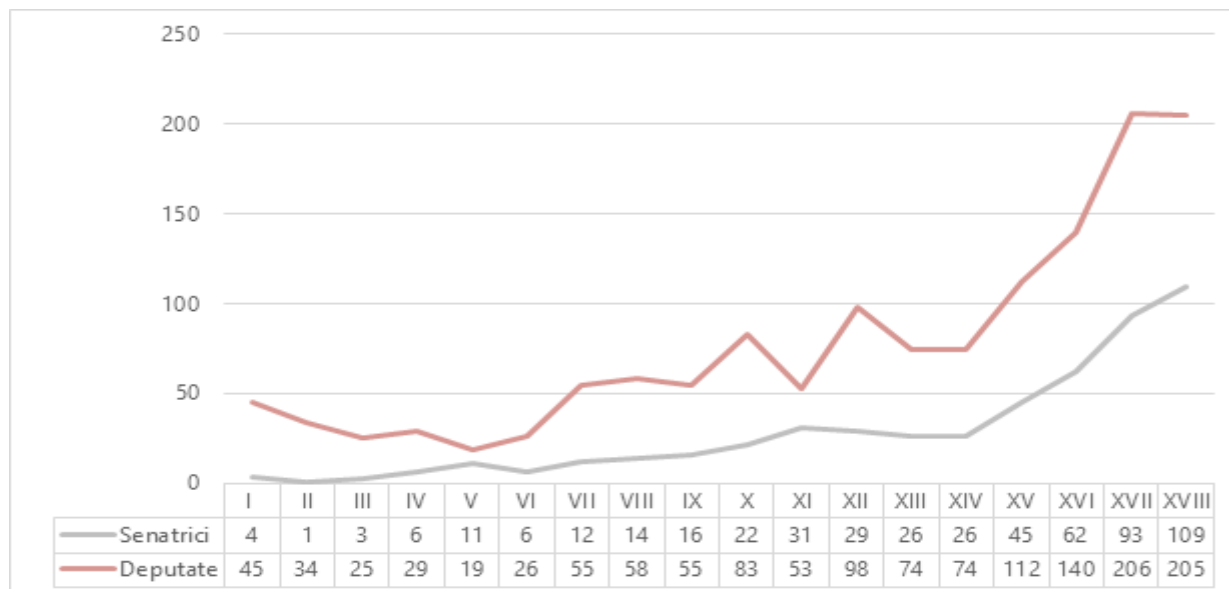
In the first Parliament, elected on 14 April 1948, there were 49 women MPs out of 982, that's 5%: 45 deputies out of 613 in the Chamber of Deputies (7%) and 4 senators out of 369 in the Senate (1%).

In the 18th Parliament, which took office on 23 March 2018, 334 women were elected: 35% (205 deputies and 109 senators). It is the Parliament featuring the largest share of women in the Republic's history.

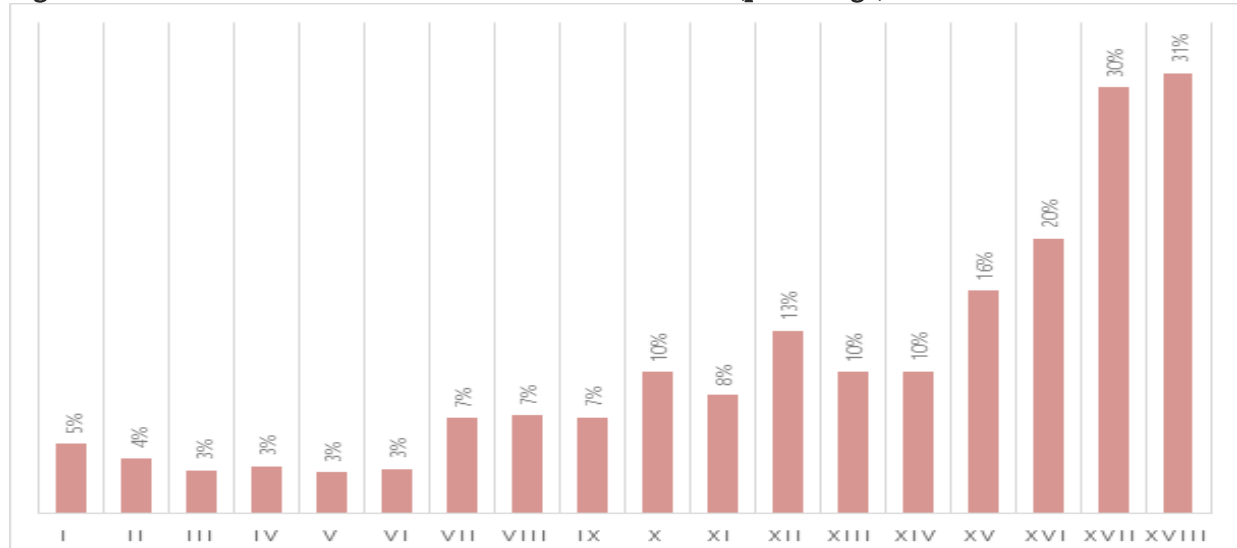
A good 30 years and seven parliaments went by before we had more than 50 women in Parliament: it happened in 1976. The 100 MP threshold was topped in 1987 and 150 in 2006.

The leap we witnessed between the 16th Parliament (202 MPs, 19.5%) and the 17th Parliament (299 MPs, 30.1%) was particularly relevant.

More than 45% of the 9,529 candidates running for the 2018 general election were women.

Figure 2. Women MPs, from the 1st Parliament to the 17th Parliament (Chamber of Deputies and Senate)

Source: UVI-processed data. For Parliament 18 the figures refer to the day the Parliament took office (23 March). For the other Parliaments, all MPs have been taken into consideration, including the ones whose term was terminated, the relevant substitutes, senators for life and senators by right. The presence of women was calculated in terms of percentage vis-à-vis the overall number of MPs in each Parliament.

Figure 3. Women MPs from the 1st to the 18th Parliament (percentage)

Source: UVI-processed data. For Parliament 18 the figures refer to the day the Parliament took office (23 March). For the other Parliaments, all MPs have been taken into consideration, including the ones whose term was terminated, the relevant substitutes, senators for life and senators by right. The presence of women was calculated in terms of percentage vis-à-vis the overall number of MPs in each Parliament.

A closer look. Women and Parliament

A woman has been appointed President of the Chamber of Deputies in 5 Parliaments out of 17: 8th, 9th and 10th (Nilde Iotti, of the Italian Communist Party), XII (Irene Pivetti of the Northern League) and XVII (Laura Boldrini, of the SEL party).

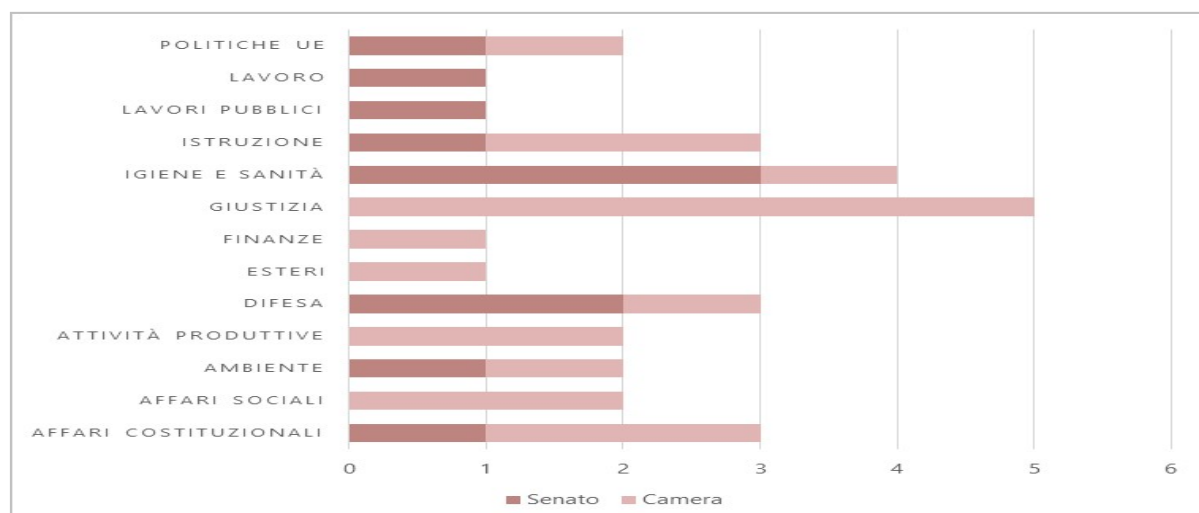
The Senate has elected its first woman President in the 18th Parliament, Maria Elisabetta Alberti Casellati (Forza Italia).

The first woman deputy President of the Chamber of Deputies was appointed in 1963 (Maria Lisa Cinciari Rodano), and the first deputy President of the Senate in 1972 (Tullia Romagnoli Caretoni). Overall, the Chamber of Deputies has had 8 women deputy President and the Senate 9.

In 70 years, the permanent Parliament Committees chaired by a woman have been 30 (out of a total of 450), 8 of which (out of 28) in the 18th Parliament: 3 at the Senate, 5 at the Chamber of Deputies.

Women have usually chaired committees dealing with constitutional matters, justice, healthcare and education. No woman has ever chaired the Budget Committee.

In the 18th Parliament, women were appointed for the first time as chairs of the Foreign Affairs Committee and of the Finance Committee (at the Chamber of Deputies) and as chair of the Labour Committee (at the Senate).

Figure 4. Permanent Committees chaired by women: subject matters (Parliaments 7-18)

Source: UVI-processed data. T-B: EU Policies, Labour, Public Works, Education, Healthcare and Sanitation, Justice, Finance, Foreign Affairs, Defence, Productive Activities, Environment, Social Affairs, Constitutional Affairs.

Parliament Investigation Committees: from the 1st to the 17th Parliament

With reference to parliament **investigation** committees – both joint committees and monocameral committees – out of a total of 99 chairpersons, only 11 were women. **Women have chaired only five of the 51 joint committees (10%).**

- The first one was Tina Anselmi, who chaired the P2 Committee
- Two Anti-Mafia Committees have been chaired by women, out of a total of 15 chairpersons
- Four men and one woman have chaired the Waste Disposal Committee

At the head of **control, orientation and monitoring committees:**

- Rosa Russo Jervolino, in the 9th Parliament, was the only woman to chair the RAI watchdog committee, which has been chaired by men 13 times, including the 18th Parliament
- Two out of seven Schengen committees were chaired by a woman
- The Managing Agencies Committee was chaired by a woman only once, while men chaired it eight times
- No woman has ever chaired the *Copasir* (Committee for the security of the Republic). It has been chaired by a man five times (including the 18th Parliament)
- The only committee that showed a different trend was the Childhood committee, chaired five times by women and never by a man.

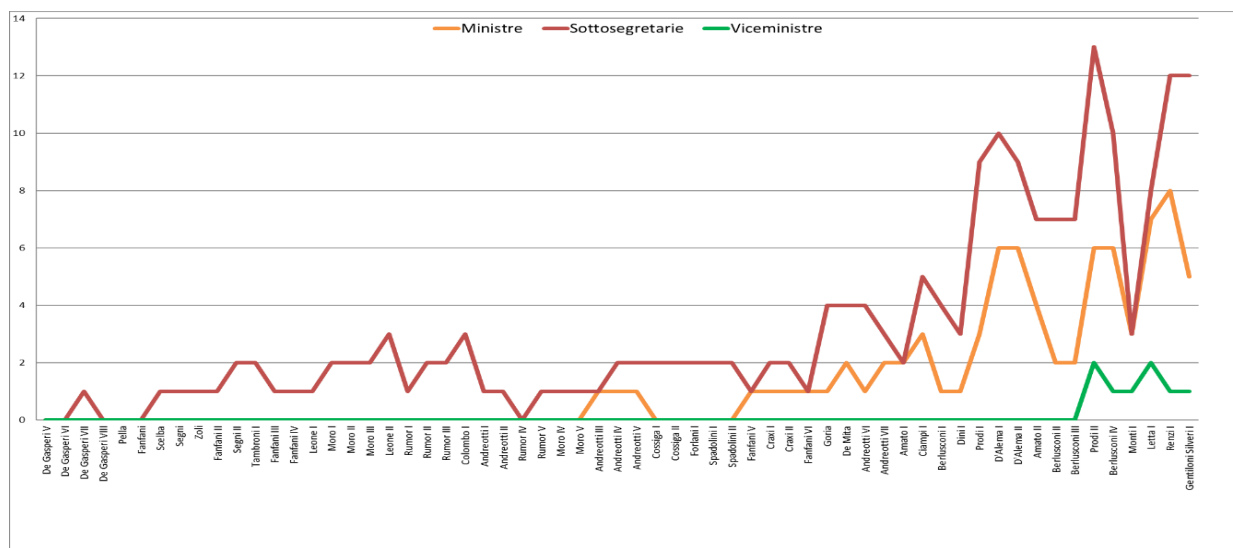
A closer look. Women in government

From 1948 to 2018 Italy has had 65 governments, led by 29 different Presidents of the Council of Ministers. No woman has ever been appointed President of the Council of Ministers.

The first woman to be appointed undersecretary (for industry and trade) was Angela Maria Guidi Cingolani, in the 7th De Gasperi Cabinet (1951), while the first woman to be appointed minister was Tina Anselmi in 1976: minister of labour and social protection under the 3rd Andreotti Cabinet.

Thirteen cabinets were formed exclusively by men. Starting in 1983, under the Fanfani V Cabinet, the presence of women ministers has become constant. In 1996, under the 1st Prodi Cabinet, a record 12 women were appointed (three ministers and nine undersecretaries). **The highest number of women in a Cabinet (ministers, deputy-ministers and undersecretaries) was recorded as of 2006, under the 2nd Prodi Cabinet, the 4th Berlusconi Cabinet, the Letta, Renzi and Gentiloni Silveri Cabinets.**

Figure 5. Ministers, Deputy-Ministers, Undersecretaries, from the 1st to the 17th Parliament



Source: UVI-processed data. Ministers: orange. Deputy-ministers: green. Undersecretaries: red.

The percentage of women ministers when a cabinet takes office is not always the same as it is when the cabinet is dissolved or terminates its mandate. The percentage of women in fourth Berlusconi Cabinet was initially 19%, but it had soared to 27% when it left office (from 4 to 6 ministers); percentage in the Gentiloni Cabinet rose too, from 24% to 29% (the four women remain unchanged but there was a drop in men). The opposite happened under the Letta Cabinet, as percentage dropped from 33% to 26% (from 7 to 5 ministers) and under the Renzi Cabinet, from 50% to 31% (from 8 to 5 women ministers).

Table 1. The ten governments featuring the highest number of women ministers: figures at beginning and end of term

Cabinets	Ministers				Ministers without portfolio				% of women	
	Beginning of term		End of term		Beginning of term		End of term		Beginning	End
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F		
Prodi 1	16	1	16	1	1	2	2	2	15%	14%
D'Alema 1	15	3	15	3	4	3	4	3	24%	24%
D'Alema 2	16	2	16	2	3	4	3	4	24%	24%
Prodi 2	16	2	16	2	3	5	3	5	27%	27%
Berlusconi 4	10	2	10	2	7	2	6	4	19%	27%
Monti	9	3	9	3	6	0	6	0	17%	17%
Letta	8	5	8	4	6	2	6	1	33%	26%
Renzi	8	5	10	3	0	3	1	2	50%	31%
Gentiloni	10	2	10	3	3	2	2	2	24%	29%
Conte	10	2	-	-	3	3	-	-	28%	-

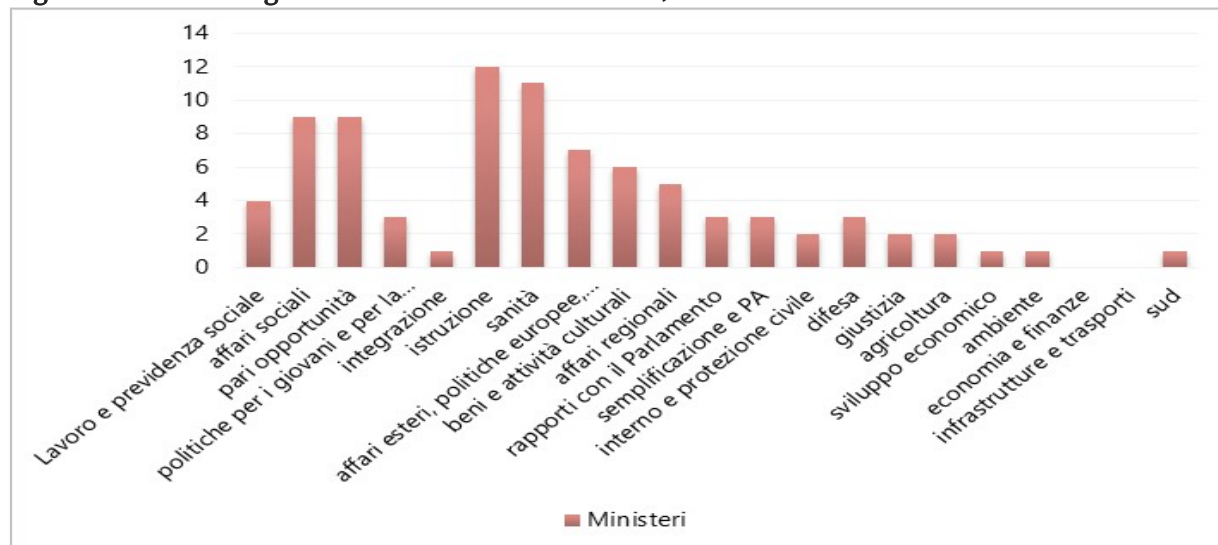
Source: UVI-processed data

More than 1,500 ministers have been appointed in 70 years of Republican history: women have been appointed ministers 83 times (plus two temporary appointments): 41 times as ministers without portfolio. Women were mainly appointed at the head of ministries dealing with **social affairs, healthcare and education: a good 49 times out of 85** (including the two temporary offices).

The Conte Cabinet is an exception: of the five women ministers, only one heads a ministry that falls within such fields (healthcare).

No woman, from the fifth De Gasperi Cabinet (1949) to the Conte Cabinet (2018) has led the Ministry of Economy and Finance, nor the Ministry of Transport and Infrastructure.

26 women ministers were given power of attorney for social affairs (4 for labour and social protection, nine for social affairs/solidarity, nine for equal opportunities, 3 for youth and family policies, 1 for integration). **Twelve were given powers for education and eleven for healthcare.**

Figure 6. Women in government: lots of social affairs, healthcare and education

L-R: Labour and social protection; Social affairs; Equal opportunities; Youth and Integration policies; Education; Healthcare; Foreign Affairs, European Policies; Cultural Heritage; Relations with the Parliament; Simplification and Public Administration; Domestic Affairs and Civil Defence; Defence; Justice; Agriculture; Economic Development; Environment; Economy and Finance; Infrastructure and Transport; Southern Italy. Source: UVI-processed data

4 March 2018. Men and women in the new election law

Gender rebalancing in political representation was debated during the latest election law reform. **Law no. 165 of 2017 therefore introduced** some new provisions, such as:

- **the alternation of men and women** in the list sequence
- **gender quotas in single-member constituencies**
- **gender quotas for top candidates in multi-member constituencies**

Going further into detail, the new election law envisages that:

- in the internal succession of the lists for multi-member constituencies, candidates must be listed following a man-woman alternation
- no party or coalition, on a national level (regional level for the Senate), shall feature a preponderance of either gender in any measure exceeding 60% in single-member constituencies
- no party, on a national level (regional level for the Senate), shall feature a preponderance of either gender in any measure exceeding 60% as top candidates in multi-member constituencies

Region Presidents. A breakdown

Currently, only two Regions have a woman as their President: Umbria and Valle d'Aosta.

Out of a total of 277 Region Presidents so far elected in the 20 Italian regions, **ten were women** (plus two acting): that's less than 4%. Umbria and Friuli-Venezia Giulia both elected two women as Region President, followed by Abruzzo, Lazio, Lombardy, Piedmont and Trentino-Alto Adige and Valle d'Aosta with one. **Twelve regions have always been governed by men.**

Table 2. Women holding top positions in regional governments

	Presidents	Ministers	of which, women	% of women
Abruzzo	-	7	1	14%
Basilicata	-	5	1	20%
Bolzano (Province)	-	7	2	29%
Calabria	-	7	3	43%
Campania	-	8	6	75%
Emilia Romagna	-	10	5	50%
Friuli Venezia Giulia	-	10	3	30%
Lazio	-	10	4	40%
Liguria	-	7	2	29%
Lombardy	-	16	5	31%
Marches	-	6	3	50%
Molise	-	5	0	0%-
Piedmont	-	11	4	36%
Apulia	-	10	2	20%
Sardinia	-	12	4	33%
Sicily	-	12	4	33%
Tuscany	-	8	4	50%
Trentino Alto Adige	-	4	1	25%
Trento (Province)	-	7	1	14%
Umbria	1	5	1	20%
Valle D'Aosta	1	6	1	17%
Veneto	-	10	3	30%
Total	2	183	60	33%

Source: UVI-processed data proceeding from the Conference of the Regions and of Autonomous Provinces

Starting from the early 2000s, almost every Region has introduced rules aimed at promoting “equal access, for men and women, to elective offices”. In the latest regional elections (Lazio, Lombardy, Molise, Friuli-Venezia Giulia and Valle d’Aosta) the number of women has slightly increased. Here is a breakdown:

- in 20 regional councils and 2 provincial councils, the presence of women was about 20% overall (versus 19% in 2017)
- one regional council (the Basilicata one) is entirely formed by men
- **three women are assembly presidents** (in Campania, Emilia Romagna and Umbria);
- **women account for roughly 33% of regional ministers**, reaching peaks of **75%** in Campania and 50% in Emilia Romagna and the Marches
- **the Regional Cabinet of Molise has no women members**
- the percentage of women in the cabinets of

Abruzzo and of the autonomous province of Trento does not exceed 14%.

Women mayors. A closer look.

In 1946, once held the many local elections, **ten women were mayors** and about 2,000 were municipal councillors. Forty years later, **in 1986**, the number of women mayors had risen to 145.

Between 1986 and 2016 the figure increased more than sevenfold, soaring from 145 to 1,097. Even the number of women regional ministers increased, from 1,459 in 1986 to 6,834 in 2016 (39.5%), while the percentage of women city councillors reached 28.8%

Women mayors in office at 4 June 2018, according to the Interior Ministry’s register of local administrators, **were 1,079 (997 of whom at the head of municipalities with less than 15,000 in-**

habitants). **Every 100 mayors, 13 are women.** The percentage

- is highest in Emilia Romagna (21%)
- drops slightly in Veneto (19 %)
- stands between 17% and 18% in Umbria, Piedmont, Friuli-Venezia Giulia and Lombardy
- is lowest in Campania (5.26 %) and Sicily (6.53%).

Paving the way for equality

1993. Reform of the system for electing the mayor and the provincial council president (law no. 81, 25 March 1993): no party or coalition shall feature a preponderance of either gender in any measure exceeding two thirds of their total candidates.

1993. Rules taking cue from the same purpose are set out for the general election: for the Chamber of Deputies (law no. 277, 4 August 1993: party lists in the proportional representation must alternate men and women) and, for the Senate (law no. 276, 4 August 1993: the election system must favour “*a balanced representation of men and women*”).

1995. The Constitutional Court – through ruling no. 422 of 1995 – declares the constitutional illegitimacy of the aforesaid laws, when establishing given quotas for genders in the lists of candidates.

2001. Constitutional law no. 3 rephrases article 117, paragraph seven, of the Constitution: the regional laws “*promote equal access for men and women to elective offices*”.

2003. Constitutional law no. 1 amends article 51 of the Constitution: the first paragraph - “*All citizens, of either sex, may access public offices and elective offices under conditions of equality, abiding by the prerequisites set forth by the law*” is now followed by “*To this end, the Republic promotes, through specific measures, equal opportunities for women and men*”.

2004. Law no. 90 introduces, for the European elections of 2004 and 2009, temporary measures promoting women’s participation through gender quotas for candidates. The law is updated in 2014 with law no. 65, which:

- establishes a minimum gender quota equal to half the number of candidates
- alternates genders for the first two candidates of the list
- envisages the expression of two preferences, one for a woman, one for a man (double gender preference)

2012. Law no. 215 is approved, with the goal of promoting a rebalancing between genders in local and regional councils and assemblies. Subsequently, in Parliament XVII, law no. 20 is approved to deal with regional councils.

2015. The so-called *Italicum* law – valid for the Chambers of Deputies only and declared non constitutional in 2017 – introduces the obligation of equal representation of the two genders in the overall district candidates of each party. It also envisages an alternate order of genders in the lists and sets, for the top candidates, a cap of 60% for candidates of a specific gender. It also introduces the double gender preference.

2017. Law no. 165 introduces

- alternate genders in the party list sequence
- gender quotas for single-member constituencies
- gender quotas for top candidates in multi-member constituencies

Conclusions

Italian Parliament. Until the mid two thousands (13th and 14th Parliaments), the number of elected women accounted for about 11% in the Chamber of Deputies and 8% in the Senate. The percentage rose in the 15th Parliament (2006-2008: about 17% in the Chamber of Deputies, almost 14% in the Senate), further still in the 16th Parliament (2008-2013: about 21% in the Chamber of Deputies, 18% in the Senate) and increased further still in the 17th Parliament (31% Chamber of Deputies, almost 29% in the Senate). **In the 18th Parliament (2018), as law no. 165 – which introduced specific gender-balancing measures – came into force, the percentage of elected women reached 35%.** The largest presence of women was to be seen in single-member constituencies (39%).

European Parliament (first elected by direct universal suffrage in 1979). The percentage of Ital-

ian women has been rather low in the first five parliaments (accounting for less than 15% of Italian European MPs). In 2004, with the introduction of list gender quotas, the number of women increased remarkably, almost doubling in number in 2014, with the introduction of the double or triple gender preference. With 29 women out of 73 elected members (39.7%), Italy tops the European Parliament average (37%).

Regions. Here too, **the introduction of list gender quotas affected gender rebalancing in elective bodies.** The presence of women in regional cabinets is greater compared to women holding elective offices in the councils, whereas very few women actually govern the regional cabinet: only two regions (Umbria and Valle d'Aosta) have women presidents in office. As for regional ministers, women account for about 33%, reaching peaks of 75% or 50% in Campania, Emilia Romagna and in the Marches. At the bottom of the list we find Molise, with no women at all.

Municipalities. The national law regulates the enforcement of the **gender rebalancing principle** when forming elective bodies and appointed bodies. The fact that the vast majority of mayors, following the local elections of 2018, are still men

(86.92%, versus 13.08% for women) confirms **the persistent tendency towards a vertical marginalisation:** the offices that are politically more relevant are still mainly held by men.

The study was conducted by

CARMEN ANDREUCCIOLI

LUCA BORSI

MARIA FRATI

Senate of the Republic

LAURA MARAGNANI

Impact Assessment Office

Focus by

UVI - UFFICIO VALUTAZIONE IMPATTO

Senate of the Republic

uvi@senato.it



Quest'opera è distribuita con Licenza Creative Commons Attribuzione - Non commerciale - Non opere derivate 4.0 Internazionale