

Breaking Barriers: Equality in Leadership

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Chair of Governance



Breaking Barriers: Equality in Leadership

Main objectives

- Presentation of collected facts and knowledge
- Gather data through interactive feedback
- Goal: better future planning and decision making

Disclaimer

- Not an expert
- My own views

Equality in
Leadership

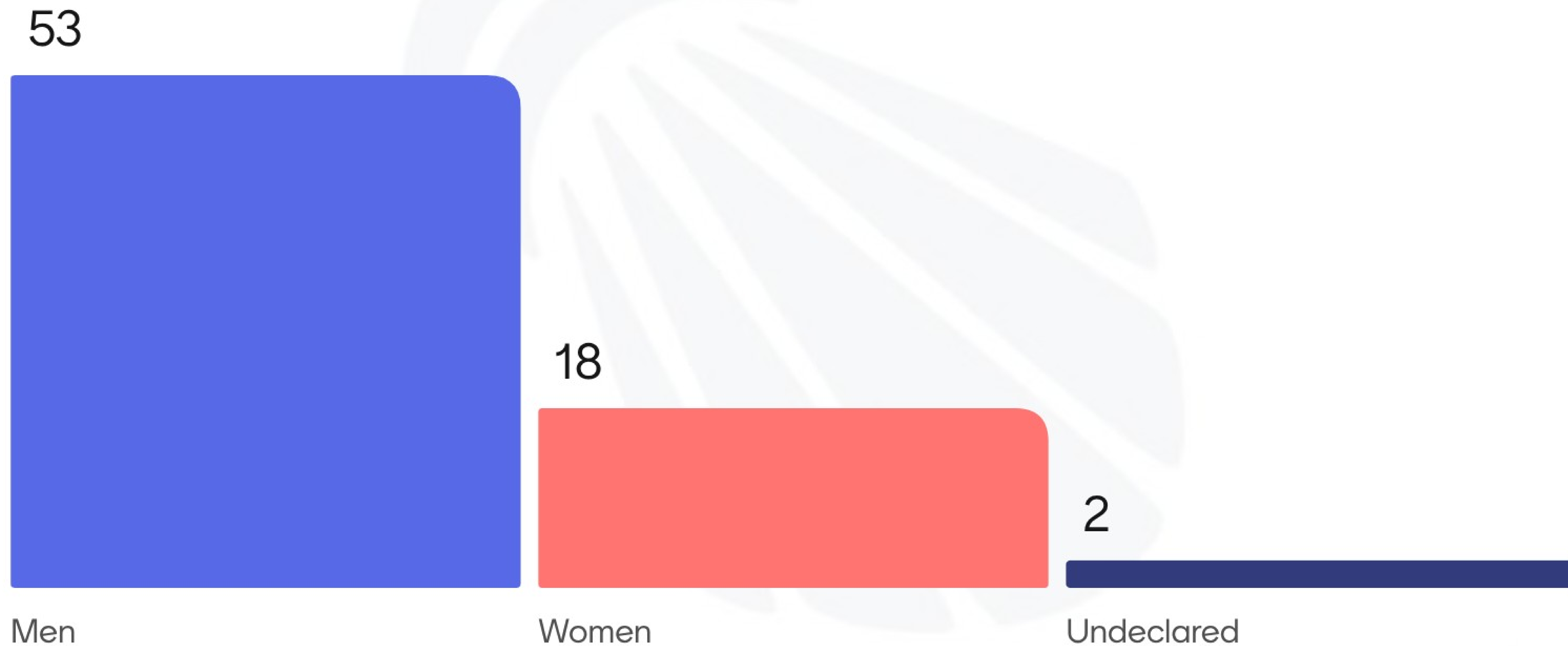
Poll #1 – Participation count

How many people are participating in this session?

- Men
- Women
- X / Undeclared

Equality in
Leadership

How many people are participating in this session?



Equality in
Leadership

Sex ratio facts

The World Factbook (2020 estimates)

- The human sex ratio is the comparative number of males with respect to each female in a population.
- The natural sex ratio at birth is estimated to be within a narrow range of 1.07 to 1.03 males/female.

Eurostat (1 January 2021)

- Almost 5 % more women than men in the EU
- 229 million women and 219 million men in the EU
- This corresponds to a ratio of 104.6 women per 100 men

**Equality in
Leadership**

Leadership ratio facts

UN Women (1 January 2025)

- 25 countries where 28 women serve as Heads of State and/or Government (13%). At the current rate, gender equality in the highest positions of power will not be reached for another 130 years.
- Women represent 22.9% of Cabinet members heading Ministries
- Only 27.2% of parliamentarians in single or lower houses are women, up from 11 % in 1995

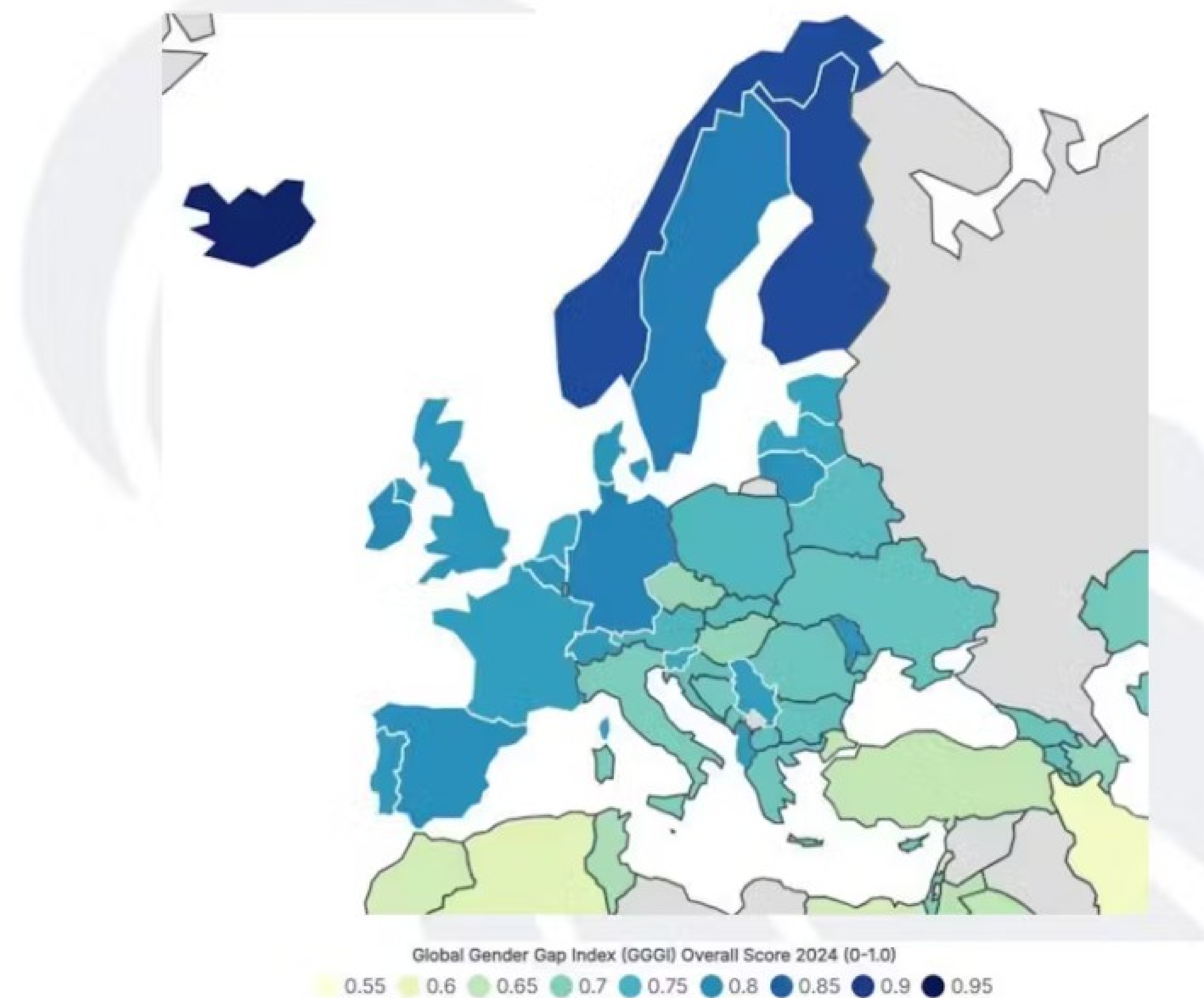
Gender Balance on Corporate Boards Directive*

- Women's equal participation and leadership in political and public life are essential to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDG).
- By 30 June 2026, large EU-listed companies are expected to achieve 40% representation of the underrepresented sex among non-executive directors or 33% across all board positions.

* Directive (EU) 2022/2381 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 November 2022.

**Equality in
Leadership**

Gender Equality by Country 2025*



 Iceland
0.935

 Finland
0.875

 Norway
0.875

 New Zealand
0.835

 Sweden
0.816

* World Population Review (2025).

**Equality in
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Poll #2 – Quiz

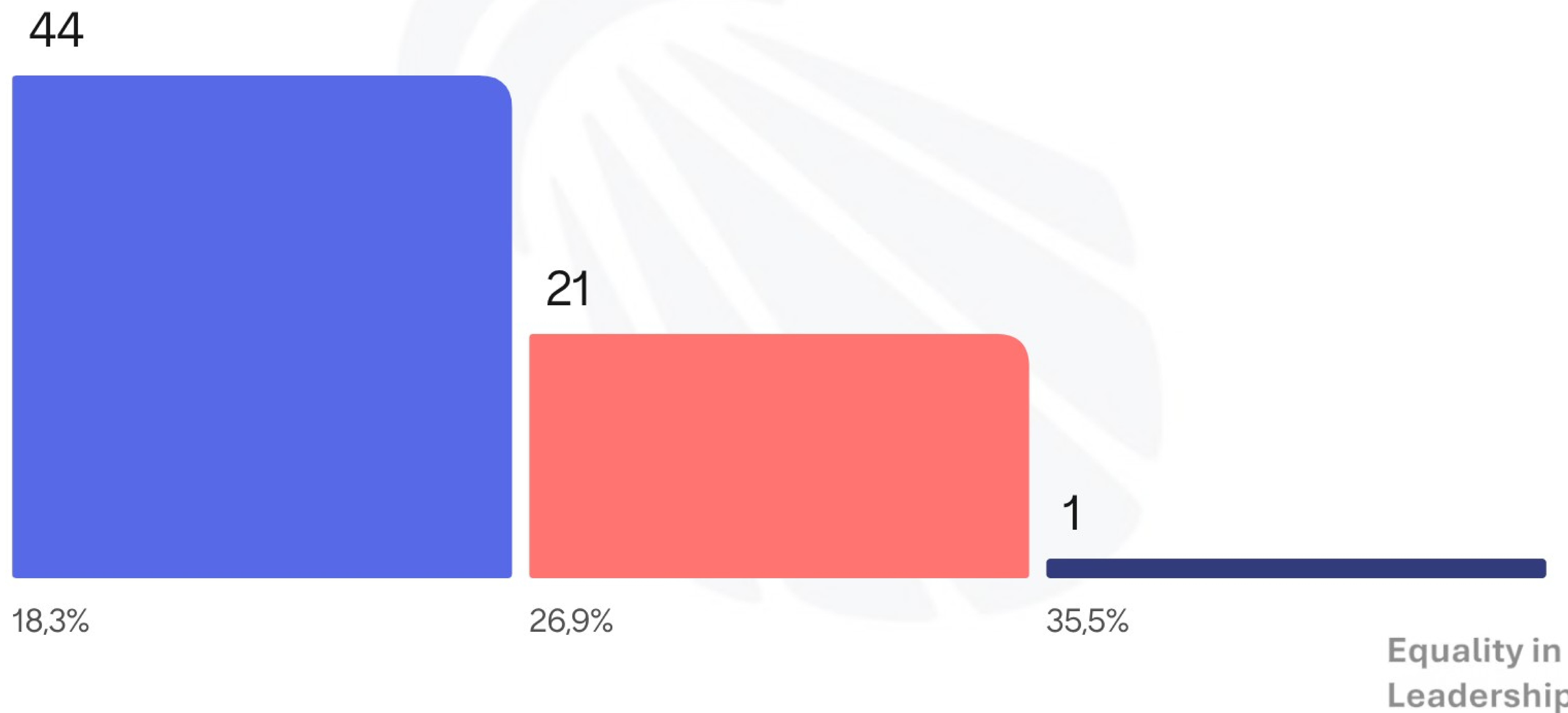
What is the % of executive positions held by women in international sports federations?*

- 18,3%
- 26,9%
- 35,5%

* According to the Sport Integrity Global Alliance's (SIGA) survey in March 2023.

**Equality in
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What is the % of executive positions held by women in international sports federations?



SIGA Survey March 2023*



* From SIGA survey in March 2023; <https://siga-sport.com/press-releases/women-remain-underrepresented-in-sports-leadership-despite-some-progress-siga-survey/>.

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Poll #3 – Quiz

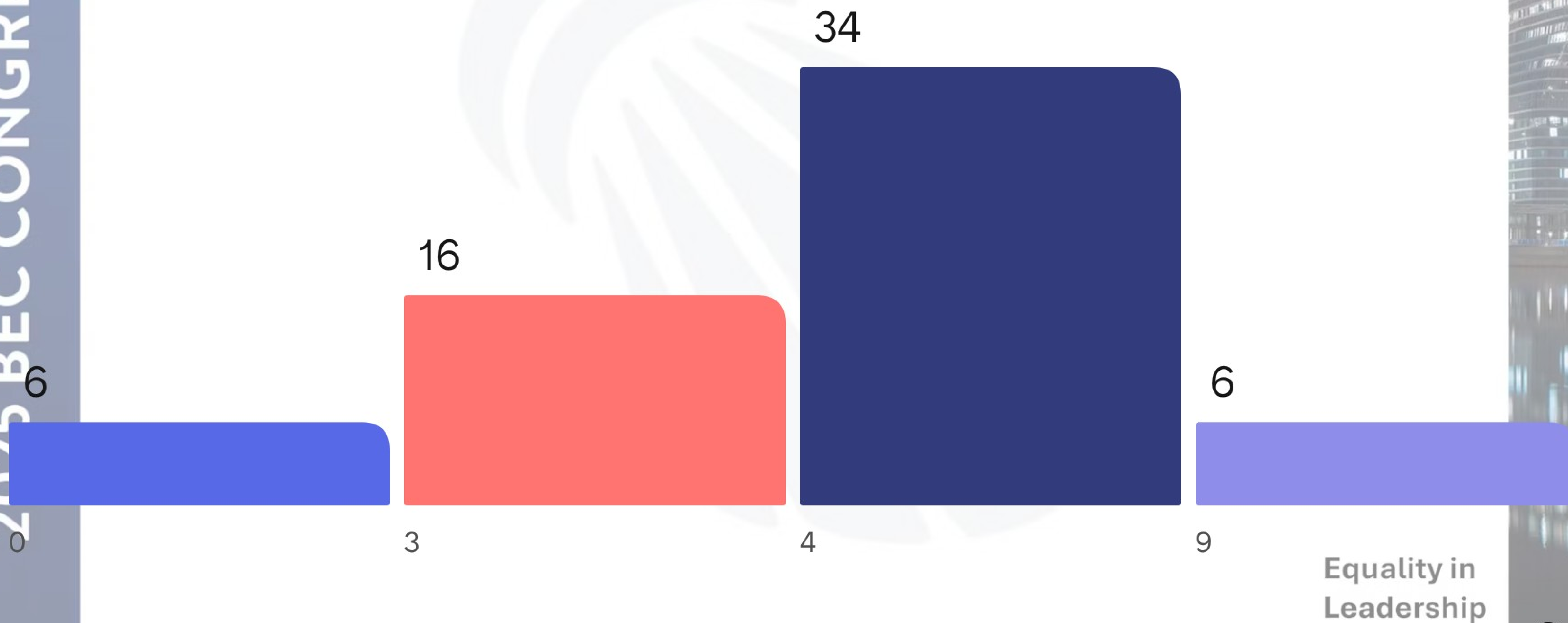
What is the Number of International Federations (out of 31) chaired by women?*

- 0
- 3
- 4
- 9

* According to the Sport Integrity Global Alliance's (SIGA) survey in March 2023.

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What is the Number of International Federations (out of 31) chaired by women?



SIGA Survey March 2023*



* From SIGA survey in March 2023; <https://siga-sport.com/press-releases/women-remain-underrepresented-in-sports-leadership-despite-some-progress-siga-survey/>.

**Equality in
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Gender Equality in Sport

The European Commission's Proposal for Strategic Actions in Gender Equality in Sport (2014-2020)*

- Recommendation to achieve the following targets by 2020:
 - A minimum of 40% of women and men in executive boards and committees of national sport governing bodies and
 - A minimum of 30% in international sports organisations located in Europe
 - A minimum of 40% of women and men in the management of professional sport administrations and governmental bodies.

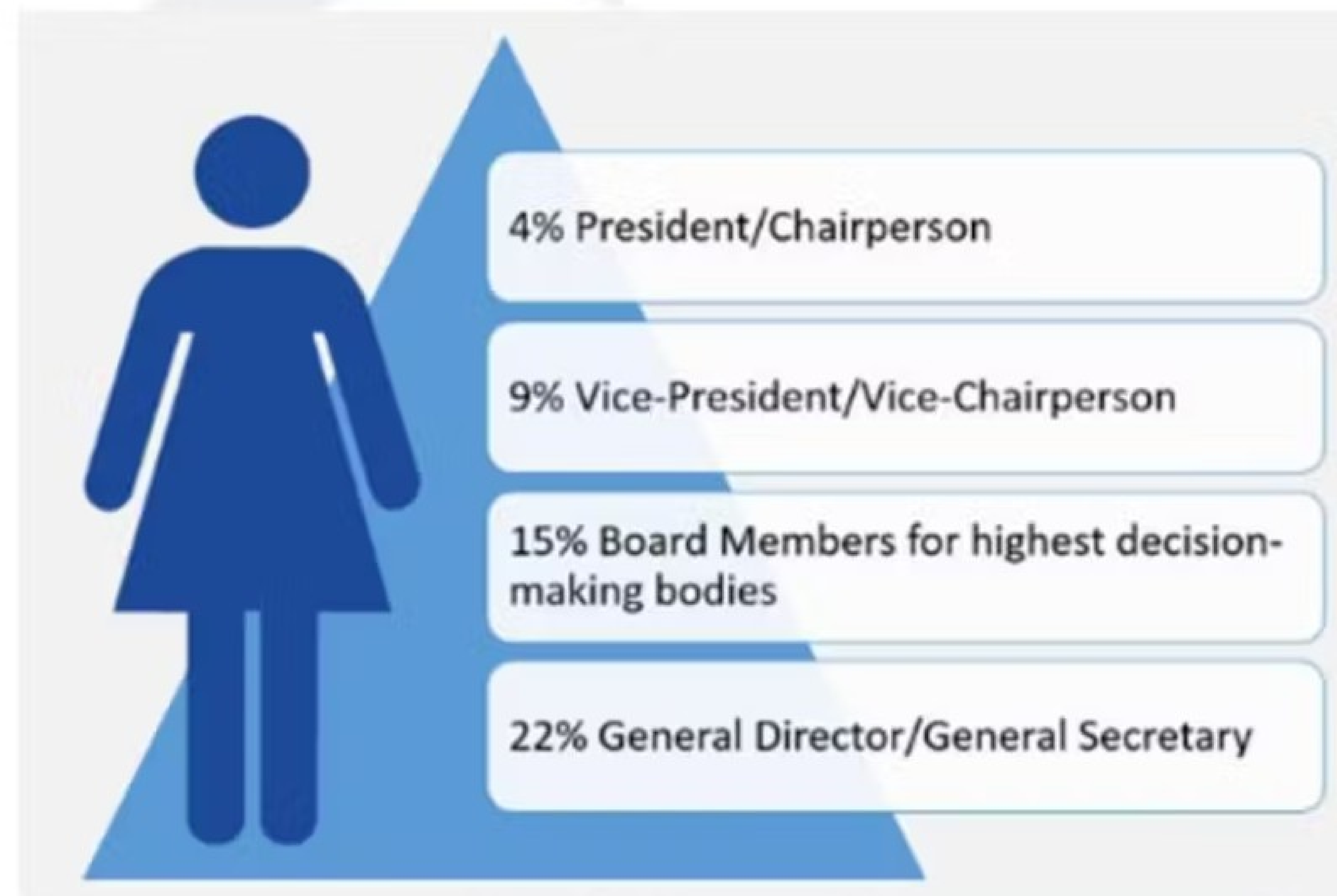
11 sport federations in continental Europe** decided to implement gender quotas to contribute to a balanced representation of women and men for their highest decision-making bodies.

* February 2014

** European Institute for Gender Equality (2015)

**Equality in
Leadership**

Gender Equality in Sport

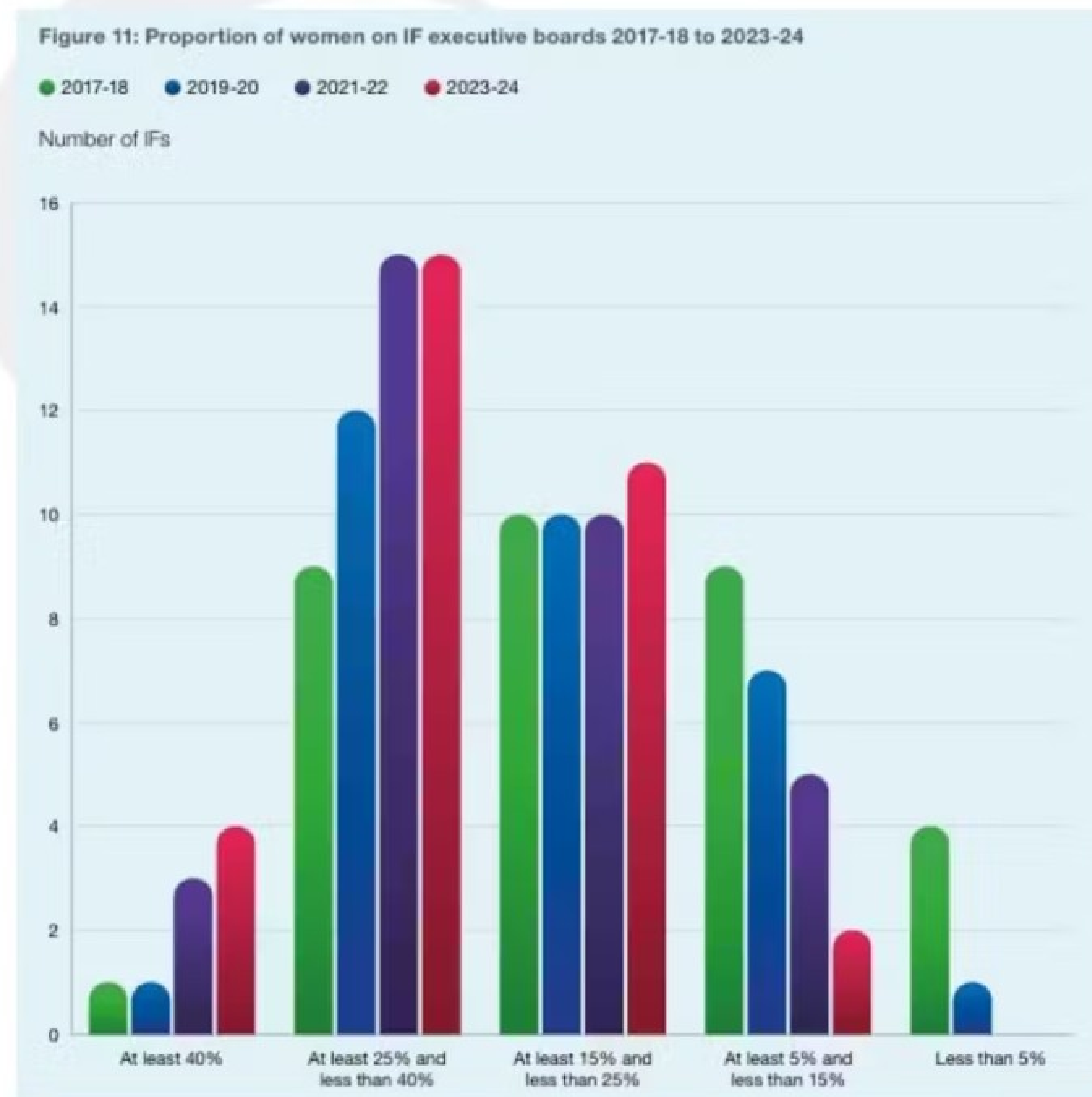


The percentage of women in different positions in the continental confederations of Olympic sports in Europe.*

* Council of Europe: Balance in Sport – factsheet, October 2016.

**Equality in
Leadership**

Gender Equality in Sport



* Association of Summer Olympic International Federations (ASOIF): Progressing towards better international federation governance, Fifth Review of International Federation Governance, June 2024.

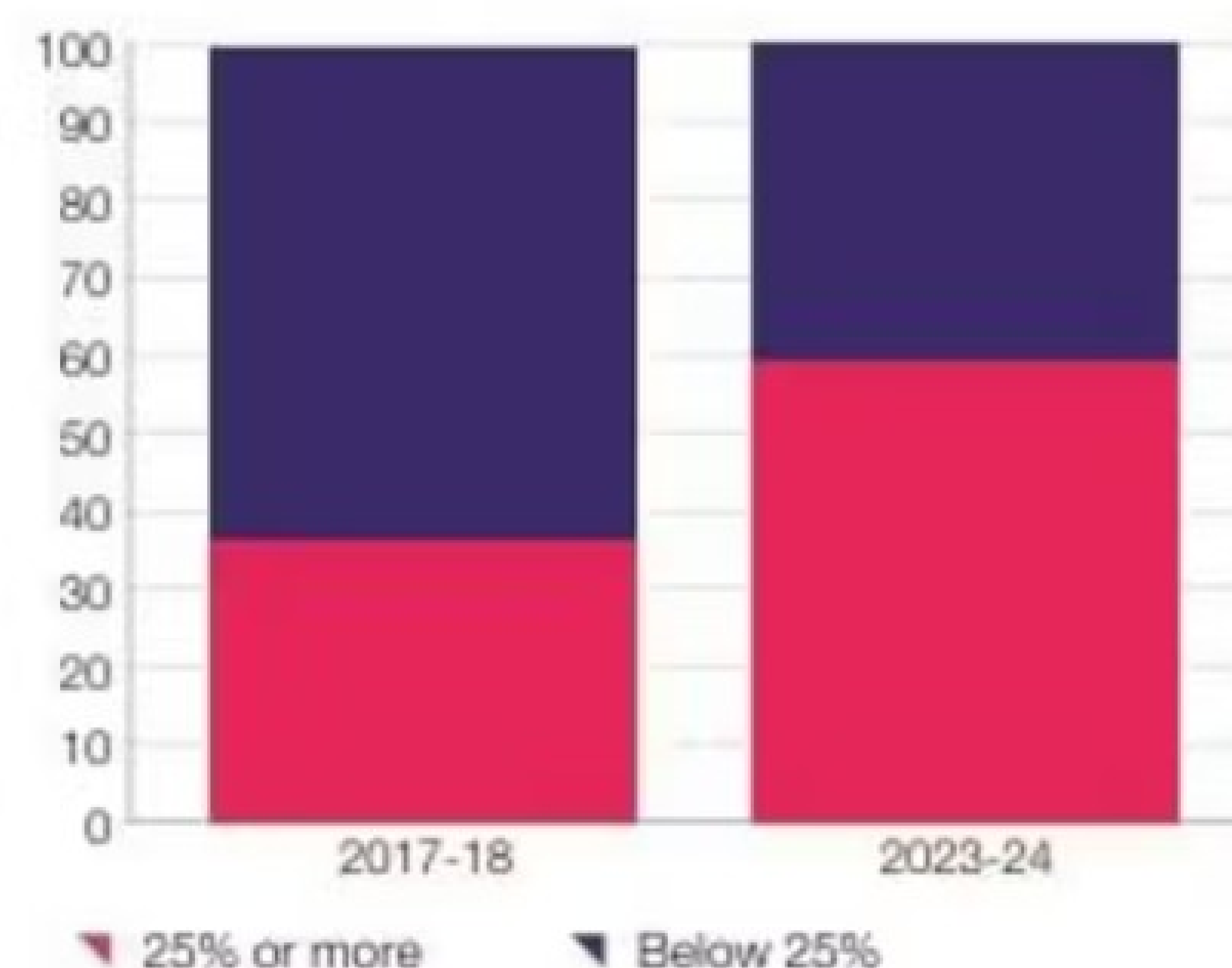
**Equality in
Leadership**

Gender Equality in Sport

Table 24: Proportion of women on IF executive boards 2017-18 to 2023-24

Proportion of women among the executive board members	2017-18 (33 IFs)	2019-20 (31 IFs)	2021-22 (33 IFs)	2023-24 (32 IFs)
At least 40%	1	1	3	4
At least 25% and less than 40%	9	12	15	15
At least 15% and less than 25%	10	10	10	11
At least 5% and less than 15%	9	7	5	2
Less than 5%	4	1	0	0

Figure 12: Increase in proportion of IFs with at least 25% of board composed of women



* Association of Summer Olympic International Federations (ASOIF): Progressing towards better international federation governance, Fifth Review of International Federation Governance, June 2024.

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Polls #4 & #5 – 1 person/MA answering

How many women on national board level (% women ratio)?

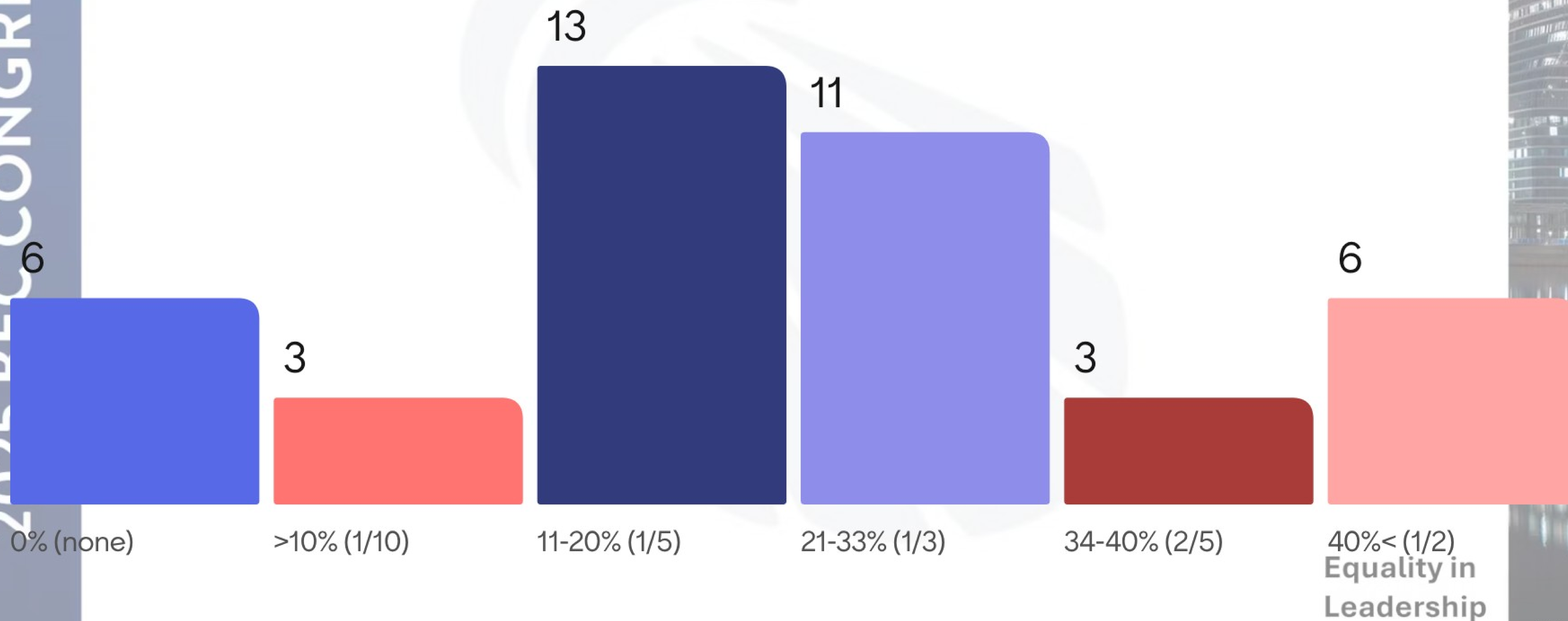
- 0% (none)
- >10% (1/10)
- 11% - 20% (1/5)
- 21% - 33% (1/3)
- 34% - 40% (2/5)
- >40% (1/2)

How many women on top level positions (% women ratio)?

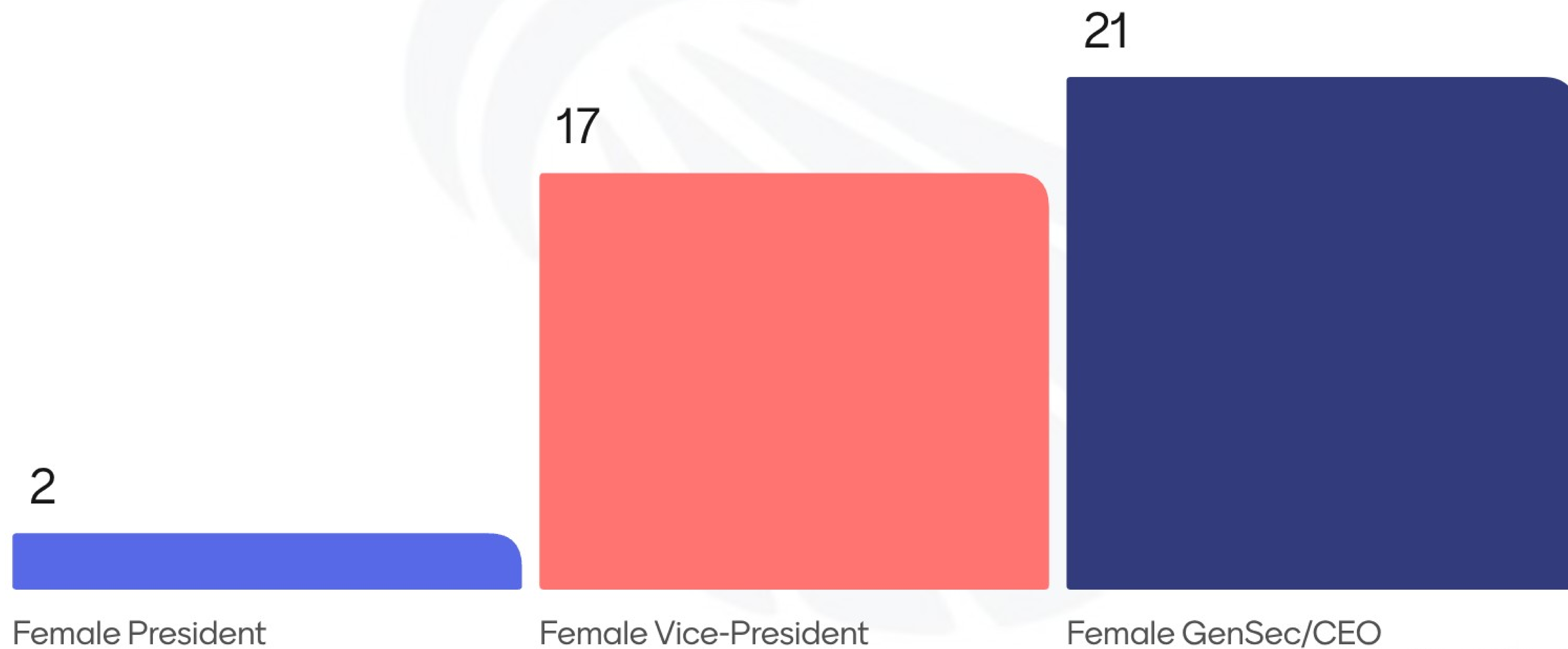
- Number of MAs with a woman President
- Number of MAs with a woman Vice President
- Number of MAs with a woman General Secretary (Office CEO)

Equality in
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How many women on national board level (% women ratio)?



How many women on top level positions (% women ratio)?



Equality in
Leadership

Gender Equality in Badminton

Badminton Europe

- 2/12 Board of Directors members (2025) – 17%
- 2/5 Committee Chairs (2025) – 40%
- 0/2 President, Vice-President – 0 %
- 9/23 Office Staff members (throughout 2024) – 39%
- 4/17 Office Staff members (March 2025) – 24%

Badminton World Federation

- 30% quota on 27/30 Council positions
- 10/30 Council members (2024) – 33%
- 1/8 Committee Chairs (2024) – 13%
- 1/8 President, Deputy President, Vice President – 13%
- 25/57 Office Staff members (March 2025) – 44%

Equality in
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2025 BWF Elections

Candidates

- 34 candidates for 28 positions (121%)
- 13/34 women candidates (38%)

Number of women candidates in relation to quotas

- Asia: 4 candidates / 3 quota places (133%; +1)
- Europe: 3 candidates* / 3 quota places (100%; 0)
- Panam: 1 candidate / 1 quota place (100%; 0)
- Africa: 3 candidates / 1 quota place (300%; +2)
- Oceania: 2 candidates / 1 quota place (200%; +1)
- Total: 13 candidates / 9 quota places (144%; +4)

* In alphabetical order by last name: Jo 'Anne Cassar (MLT), Charlotte Dew-Hattens (DEN), Nora Perry (ENG).

**Equality in
Leadership**

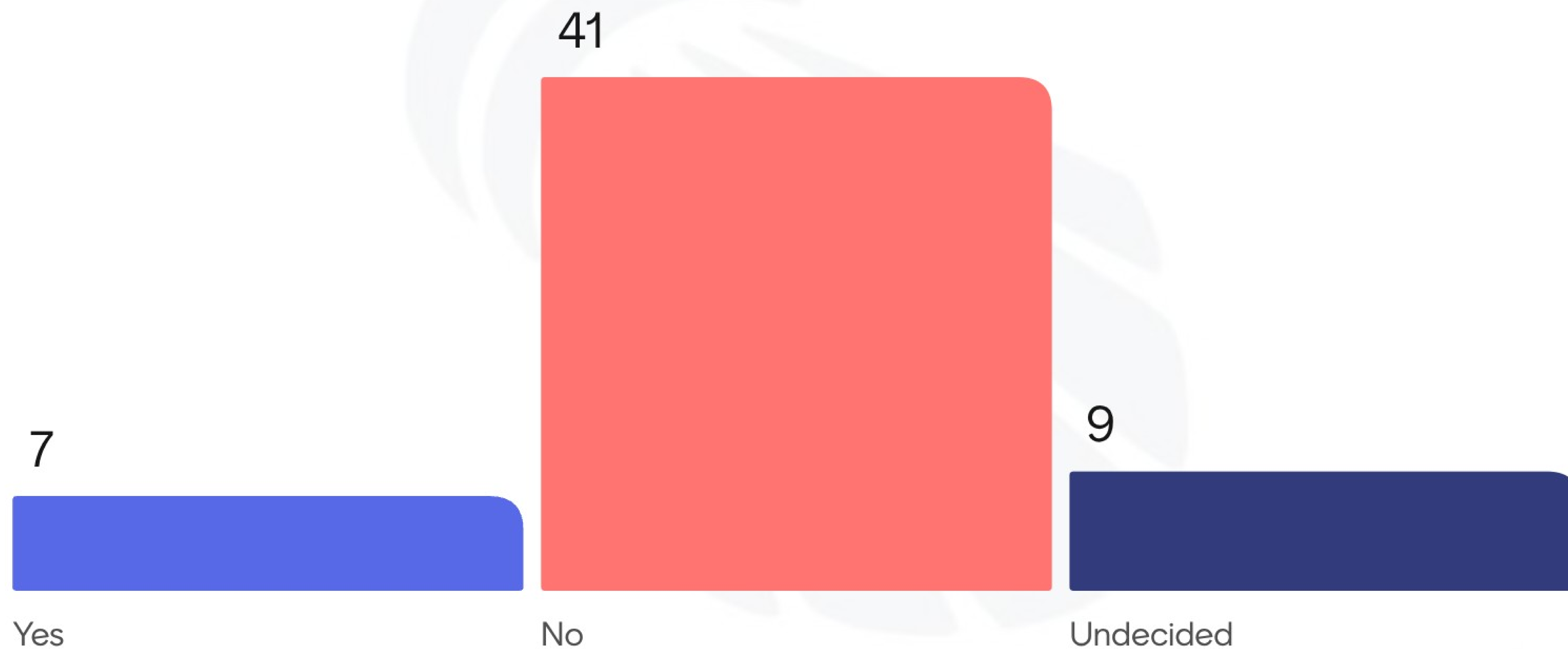
Poll #6 – Opinion

Is BEC discriminatory in not providing equal opportunities for women?

- Yes
- No
- Undecided

**Equality in
Leadership**

Is BEC discriminatory in not providing equal opportunities for women?



Equality in
Leadership

BEC Gender Equality Commitments

BEC Rules – Principles*

- The Confederation and its Members are fully committed to the principles of the equality of opportunity and the Confederation is responsible for ensuring that no job applicant, employee, volunteer of the Confederation, Member or participant (including players) in a Confederation's event receive less favourable treatment on grounds such as age, gender, colour, disability, ethnic minority, parental or marital status, nationality, religious belief, social status or sexual preference.
- Badminton has equal representation of women and men on the field of play. The Confederation supports the active participation of women in Badminton at all levels and the representation of both men and women in the affairs of the Confederation beyond the field of play.

* BEC Rules, Subsection Principles, Articles 3.1 and 3.2.

**Equality in
Leadership**

BEC Gender Equality Commitments

BEC Strategic Plan 2025-2028*

- Primary focus: Ensure that BEC has a solid governance framework hereunder that relevant policies are in place and adhered to.
- Strategies to achieve the KPI's: Ensure best practice democratic processes and transparent election procedures that promotes and leads to gender balance, appropriate skills and diversity within BEC and across the badminton community.

BEC Strategic Implementation Plan

- Ensure equal opportunity for all, irrespective of gender.
- Provide financial and administrative support to areas where representation of one gender renders severely unbalanced.

* Section 9 – Governance.

**Equality in
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BEC players participation

BWF*	Players	Ratio
MS	1924	100%
WS	1283	67%
MX	1535	80%
MD	1458	100%
WD	1106	76%

BEC**	Players	Ratio
MS	588	100%
WS	411	70%
MX	538	91%
MD	478	100%
WD	390	82%

* BWF World Rankings – Week 12 (18th March 2025).

** Based on the above.

Equality in
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BEC Athletes' Commission Election 2025*

	Athletes	Para	Total
Positions	3	1	4
Candidates	7	1	8
Men	3	1	4
Women	4	0	4
Ratio	133%	0%	100%

* To be held in April 2025.

Equality in
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BEC Activities towards Gender Equality – Snapshot

Strategic Plan 2016-2020	Women Working Group	Gender Equity Commission	Gender Equity Ambassadors	Badminton for Women Award
Women in the Spotlight articles series	30% minimum Women represented on Commissions	Women in Badminton Scholarships for female Coaches, Congress participants, Para badminton players events and Umpires	Topics at BEC Forum	Focus areas in Members' Surveys
Minimum representation at Development Activities	Representation considered in Technical Officials selections	Strategic Plan 2020-2024	Strategic Plan 2025-2028	Promotion of International Women's Day

**Equality in
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What are we doing wrong?

- ✓ **Mixed Doubles** – One of a few sports where women and man can equally and simultaneously compete together on the same team, fostering collaboration and equality
- ✓ **Equal Prize Money** – at all events
- ✓ **Inclusive Tournaments** – Tournaments with all (5) events being held simultaneously
- ✓ **Same Rules & Equipment** – badminton follows the same rules and equipment for all
- ✓ **No Extreme Physical Advantages** – While strength, stamina and speed matters, skill, psychology and strategy are equally important, making it an inclusive sport for both genders
- ✓ **Strong Female Representation** – Many countries have top female badminton stars, making it a sport where women can excel and inspire the next generation
- ✓ **Sport for Life** – One of a few sports where women and men can compete whole life

Equality in
Leadership

Quotas or Targets

Target = optional

Temporary mandatory quotas

Quota = mandatory

Gender quotas are a controversial policy. The main argument in favor of the adoption of gender quotas is their effectiveness as a means to equalize opportunity in specific areas where women face systematic barriers due to discrimination or persistent stereotypes.*

Quotas have been overturned by the US Supreme Court as unconstitutionally discriminatory in and of themselves for operating on the basis of a suspect factor like race.**

The European Court of Justice ("ECJ") has issued mixed rulings on gender quotas but has upheld them when narrowly justified by the goal of addressing women's disadvantage. Quotas are more likely to be upheld when women's underrepresentation in certain positions results from prejudice, stereotypes, or other exclusionary practices historically limiting their participation in the workforce.

The European Court of Human Rights ruled that quotas (election party lists) helped ensure democratic legitimacy and were compatible with the European Convention on Human Rights.***

* Holzer, H. J., and Neumark, D. (2006) Affirmative action: What do we know?, The Journal of Policy Analysis and Management 26(2): 463-490.

** Tracy A. Thomas (2016) Reconsidering the Remedy of Gender Quotas, Harvard Journal of Law & Gender

*** ECHR Zevnik and Others v. Slovenia (application no. 54893/18).

**Equality in
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Success of Qoutas

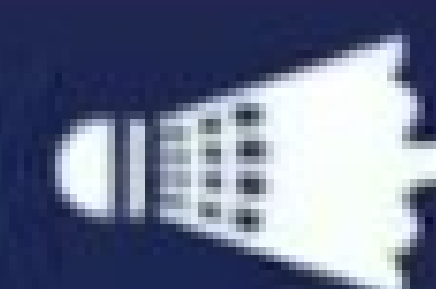
In late 2003, Norway passed a law mandating 40 percent representation of each gender on the board of publicly limited liability companies.

In 2017, at the annual meeting of the Swedish Sports Confederation (SSC), the statute of the SSC was modified. The change implies that the boards in the 71 national Specialised Sports Federations (SSFs) should have a gender balance in which no gender is represented by less than 40%.

The findings suggest that gender quotas improved board quality without imposing economic costs on firms. The positive market response to board elections supports the idea that quotas led to beneficial board restructuring rather than merely fulfilling a legal requirement.*

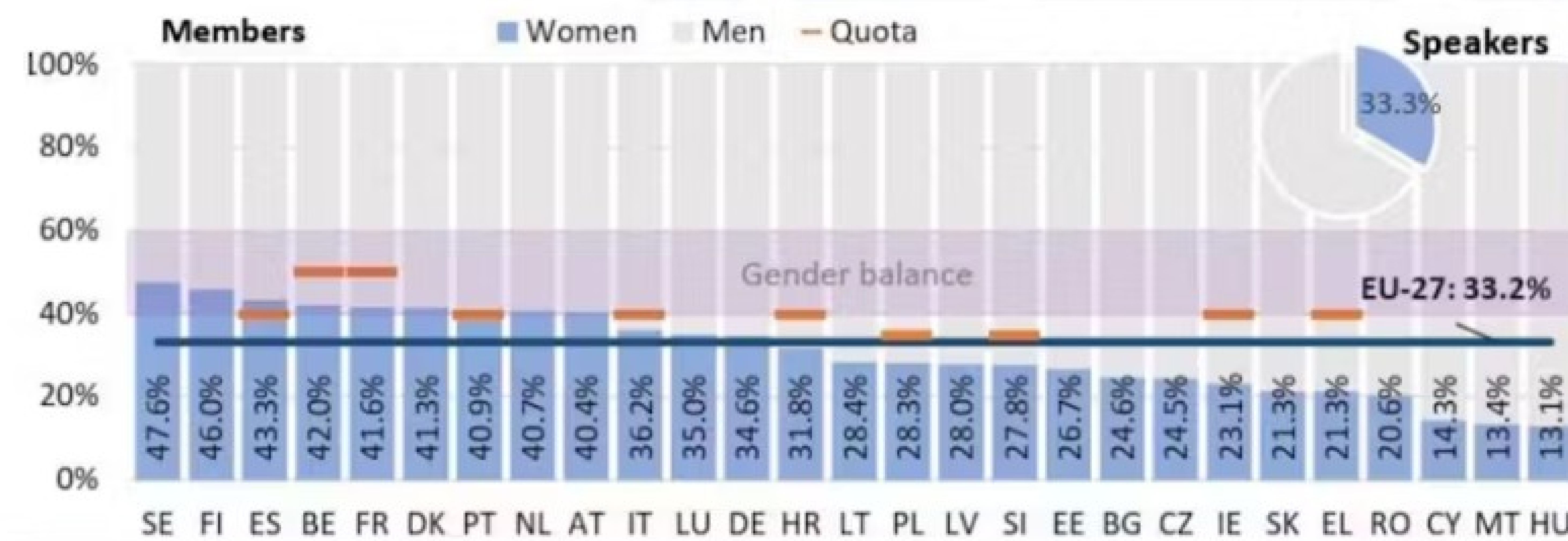
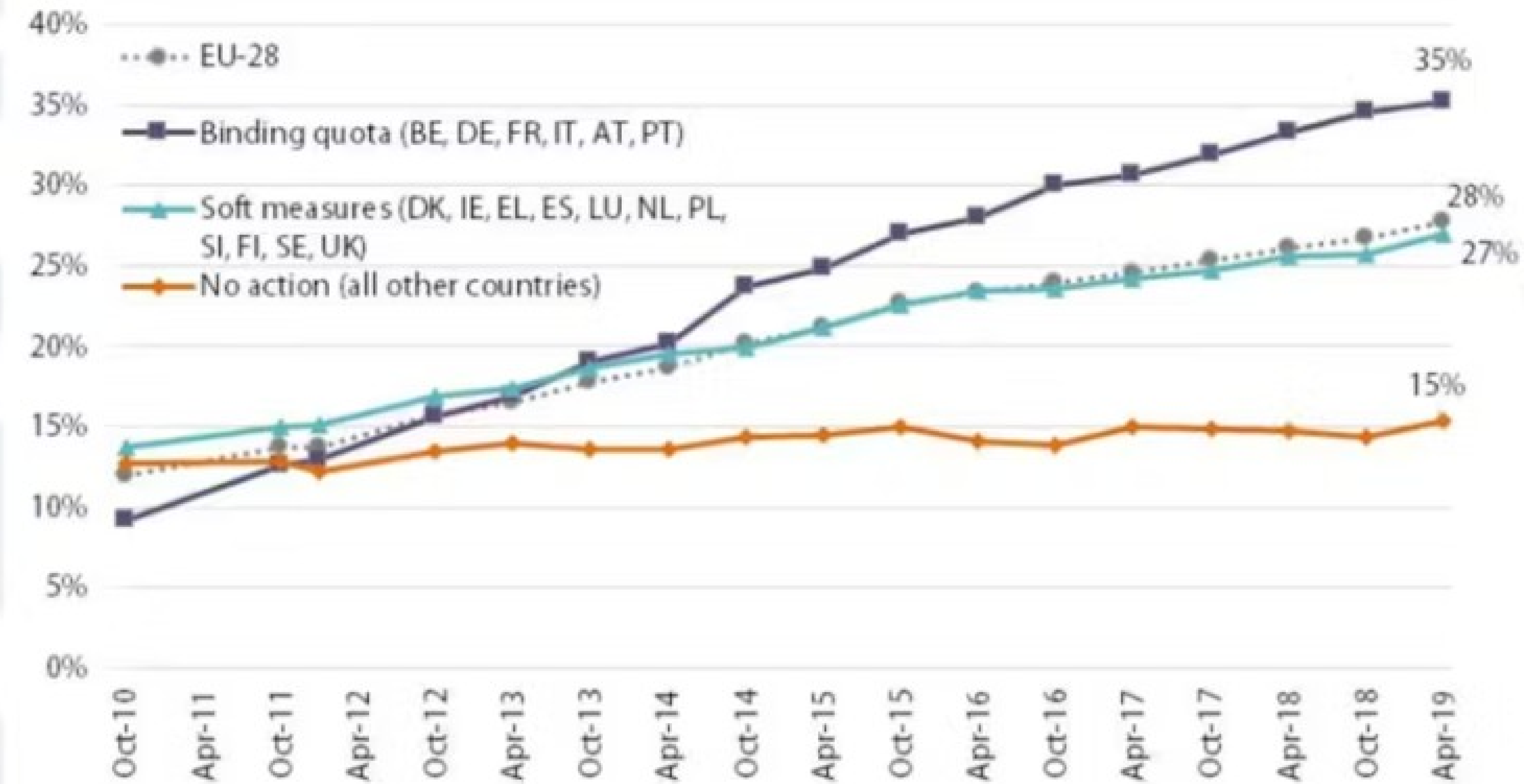
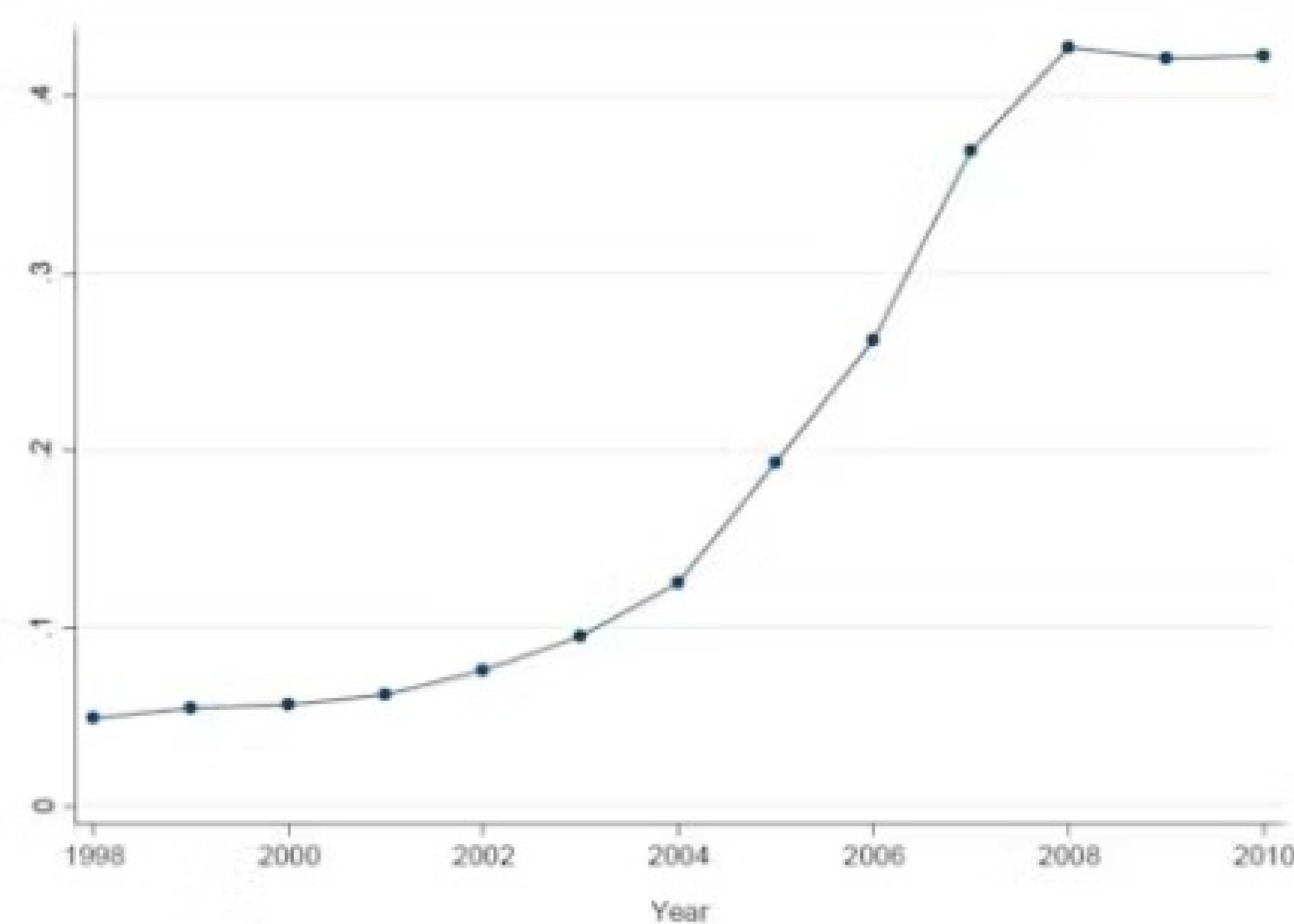
* Giulia Ferrari et al. (2018) Do Board Gender Quotas Matter? Selection, Performance and Stock Market Effects; IZA – Institute of Labor Economics

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Success of Qoutas

Figure 1: Percentage Female Directors in ASA Firms, 1998 to 2010



* (1) Norway public companies; (2) EU women on boards, (3) Women in EU parliaments (Nov 2021); source: EIGE.

Equality in
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Gender over Merit?

Am I in a position because I am competent or because I am a Quota number?

Women quotas may have negative consequences for women. Experimental research found that women who were associated with preferential treatment perceived themselves as less competent compared to women selected only based on merit. They were also perceived as less competent and effective by others.*

These concerns were not relevant in practice. The average observable qualifications of the women appointed to the boards of publicly limited companies significantly improved after the reform.**

* Miriam K. Zehnter and Erich Kirchler (2020) Women Quotas vs. Men Quotas in Academia: Students Perceive Favoring Women as Less Fair Than Favoring Men; Frontiers in Psychology (11:700).

** Marianne Bertrand et al. (2014) Breaking the Glass Ceiling? The Effect of Board Quotas on Female Labor Market Outcomes in Norway; Norwegian School of Economics - SAM 28 2014.

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Quotas - PROS

- ✓ **Increases Representation** – Ensures that women have a seat at the table, helping to address historical imbalances.
- ✓ **Enhances Decision-Making** – Diverse boards benefit from different perspectives, leading to better governance and strategic decisions.
- ✓ **Role Model Effect** – Encourages more women to pursue leadership roles in sports.
- ✓ **Accountability & Structural Change** – Forces organisations to actively seek and develop female leaders rather than relying on existing (male-dominated) networks.
- ✓ **Proven in Corporate Settings** – Research shows that gender-diverse boards improve organisational performance.

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Quotas - CONS

- ✗ **Risk of Tokenism** – Women may be seen as filling quotas rather than being appointed based on merit.
- ✗ **Meritocracy Argument** – Critics argue that appointments should be based on skill and experience, not gender.
- ✗ **Resistance from Male Leadership** – Some male-dominated organisations may see quotas as forced regulation rather than a positive change.
- ✗ **Limited Long-Term Impact** – Without cultural change, quotas alone may not lead to meaningful shifts in power and influence.
- ✗ **Potential Backlash** – Quotas can create resentment and the perception of unfair advantage, which may undermine team cohesion.

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Quotas – some considerations

While successfully eliminating underrepresentation with respect to one attribute, quotas typically ignore changes in the representation with respect to other attributes. This can lead to unintended consequences and can even decrease the representation of already underrepresented groups.* (e.g. representation of older women is further decreased – „the debiasing paradox“)

There is little evidence that the reform affected the decisions of women more generally.**

Women focus on sabotaging each other in the gender quota tournament, while men sabotage men and women equally.***

Quotas alone do not guarantee gender equality.

Top to bottom approach not always successful (change of mindset „starts at home“).

Support of men required.

* Ivan Smirnov et al. (2020) Quota-based debiasing can decrease representation of already underrepresented groups; Royal Society Open Science (2021).

** An Marianne Bertrand et al. (2014) Breaking the Glass Ceiling? The Effect of Board Quotas on Female Labor Market Outcomes in Norway; Norwegian School of Economics - SAM 28 2014.

*** Andreas Leibbrandt et al. (2015) Gender Quotas, Competitions, and Peer Review: Experimental Evidence on the Backlash Against Women; Management Science, Vol.64, No.8, August 2018.

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Polls #7 & #8 – 1 person/MA answering

Does your MA use a quota system?

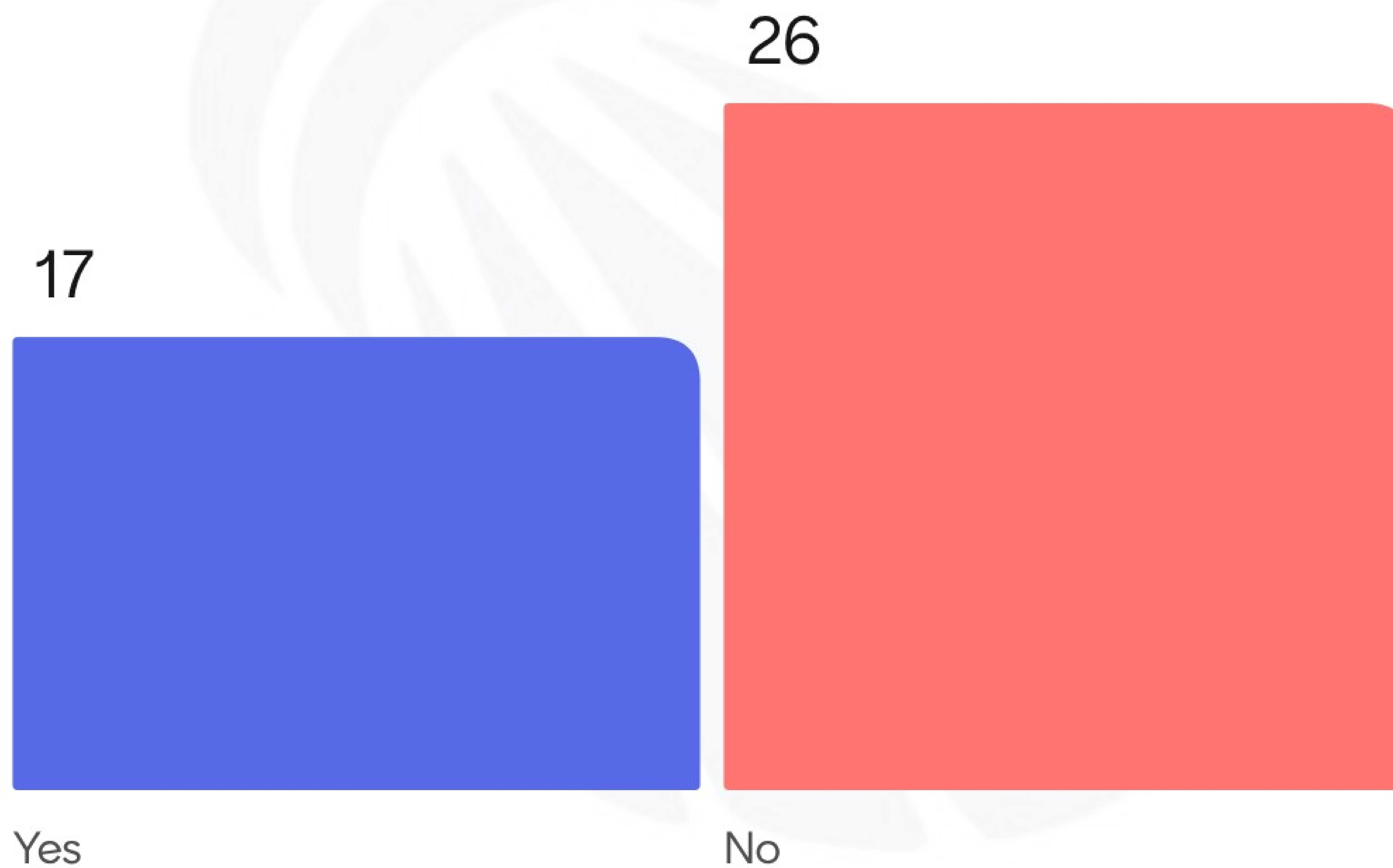
- Yes
- No

Are there any legal requirements to use any quota system in your country?

- Yes
- No

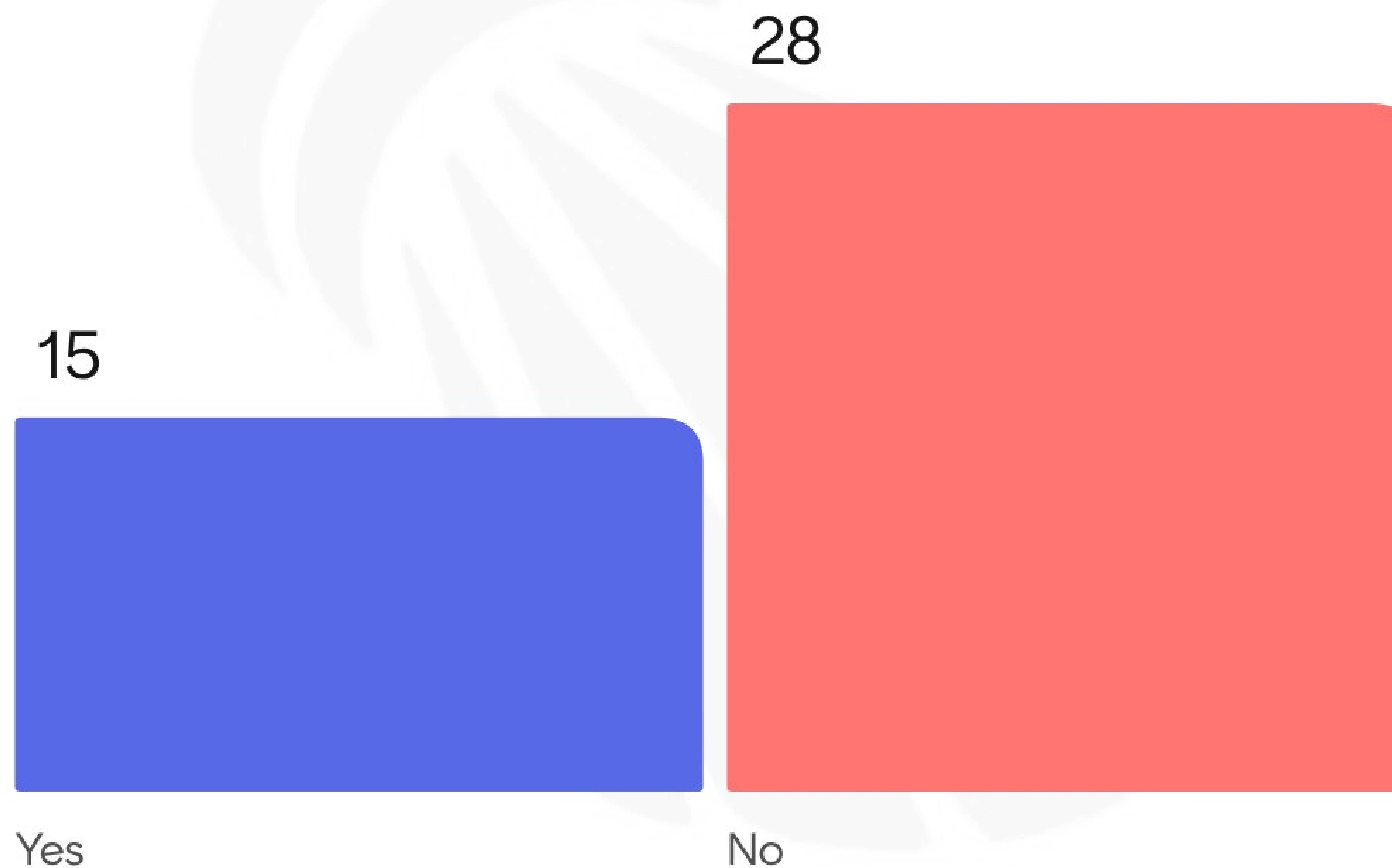
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Does your MA use a quota system?



Equality in
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Are there any legal requirements to use any quota system in your country?



Equality in
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Quotas – Slovak proposal

Incompatibility with the Staggered Election System

- BWF = New Council every 4 years
- BEC = ¼ of BoD elected annually

Risk of Unfilled Positions and Election Disruptions

- Vacancies undermine the principle of open and democratic elections
- Risk of disrupting the BoD's composition and fair representation across all positions

Ambiguity

- Unclear wording; does not account for all potential scenarios
- Athlete's Representative excluded despite being an equal BoD member

Need for Integrated Approach

- Gender Balance,
- Term Limits,
- BoD remuneration,
- BoD size and required skill sets.

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Quotas – Slovak proposal

BEC BoD Opinion on Proposal

- premature,
- incomplete and inconsistent,
- lacking in a fully integrated perspective.

BEC BoD Recommendation on Proposal

- Proposal rejection despite positive intentions

BEC BoD Response

- Need for consistent and inclusive proposal to ADM

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Poll #9 – How to continue

Main reasons for lack of women leading in badminton:

- ... (Word cloud)

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Main reasons for lack of women leading in badminton:



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Discussion / Questions

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Thank you!

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