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## "Glass Ceilings" in the System of Public Administration in the Russian Federation



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### ABSTRACT

*The system of public administration in the Russian Federation is predominantly "female" in nature, women dominate as a part of civil servants. But does this fact mean that there are no "glass ceilings" in the public administration system that hinder the advancement of women to senior positions and the realization of their opportunities as managers? Based on the analysis of statistical data, we identified a significant gender asymmetry in the distribution of women and men by main job categories and groups, which indicates the presence of significant gender gaps in the public administration system. "Glass ceilings" appear in the structures of state power and administration at several critical points, which could be called as a kind of boundaries beyond which the representation of women in the system of government drops significantly. "Glass ceilings" are formed both at the local level (in certain job positions) and at the system level (when moving to higher positions in job categories or from civil service positions to public positions), which indicates the institutional nature of the "glass ceilings".*

**KEY WORDS:** *State civil servants, public positions, gender asymmetry, gender gaps, "glass ceiling"*

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## **Introduction**

Achieving gender equality in public authorities has become one of the political tasks for most modern states. Without trying to assess the political and social consequences of achieving this goal, we will focus on the phenomenon of "glass ceilings" within the framework of the civil service of the Russian Federation. Gender inequality in the power structures of the Russian Federation has been recorded by international organizations (Aivazova, 2009; Krasnov, 2019; Ovcharova, 2019; Rodionova, 2020). Russian researchers have repeatedly drawn attention to the existence of gender inequality in power structures. So, G.F. Belyaeva stated that "Russia lags far behind many countries of the world in promoting women to power and the economy" (Belyaeva, 2008, p. 147). It should be noted that some researchers focused their attention on inequality in exactly government bodies (Kondrashova, 2020). Much less attention was paid to the problem of inequality in public administration (Korostyleva, 2014, 2015). And this is far from accidental, since women predominate in the civil service of the Russian Federation. They perform numerous important functions and, as can be seen in practice, these are mainly executive functions. The paradox of the situation lies in the fact that the majority of managerial positions in the system of public administration in the Russian Federation are occupied by women, but advancement to higher positions for women is associated with the need to overcome managerial "glass ceilings".

## **Problem Discussion**

In post-Soviet Russia, multilevel "glass ceilings" have formed, which is later understood as informal filters in career advancement in the public administration system based on gender stereotypes of both the male part of the administrative apparatus and, in part, women themselves. "Glass ceilings" appear in the structures of state power and administration at several critical points, which are a kind of boundaries beyond which the representation of women in the system of government drops significantly. The search for these critical points, which, in fact, have become "glass ceilings" in the public civil service, will be given special attention in this paper.

It is obvious that "glass ceilings" in the civil service do not appear spontaneously, they are evidence of a certain social order: the idea that all

key decisions should be made by men, and women should only implement those fundamental decisions that are developed by men, have been "conditioned". "Masculinity" (Zdravomyslova & Temkina, 2018; Radović Marković & Avolio Allechi, 2013.) of the management culture is largely based on the tradition of ideas about the role of women in the life of society. In this sense, we can say that "post-Soviet politics retains some features of the gender ideology of the past, due to which the political leadership of women is either subordinated to the principle of "not standing out" in its decisions, and, accordingly, in positioning, or is focused on the "political unisex" behavior model" (Ovcharova, 2017, p. 147).

In the post-Soviet period, there was an archaization of gender roles in the systems of power and administration, which was expressed, first of all, in a decrease in the proportion of women in government bodies at all its levels. While during the Soviet period a purposeful policy was carried out to involve women in government and administration bodies (through actual quotas for their representation), then in the post-Soviet period, when Soviet restrictions disappeared, market mechanisms led to the "washing out" of women from power structures. As M.K. Gorshkov noted "in post-reform Russia, gender stereotypes "permeate" all social relations (employment, politics, family relations, etc.). In a sense, gender inequality is even "justified" by the traditional view of Russian society: sexism, which recognizes the superiority of men over women" (Gorshkov, 2016, p. 704). T.B. Ryabova and O.G. Ovcharova, analyzing research in the field of gender political science, note that "gender stereotypes (and political culture in general) ... act as a factor supporting gender asymmetry of power" (Ryabova & Ovcharova, 2016: 10).

The dominance of men in the highest echelons of public administration bodies has a variety of reasons. But, as S.G. Aivazova rightly noted, there are "gender gaps in the behavior and beliefs of our fellow citizens ...", which are a reflection of "... unequal integration of men and women into various spheres of society, including the spheres of political and civic activity" behind this dominance (Aivazova, 2012, p. 4).

The need to promote women to leadership positions in the management system is determined by objective circumstances. Among them, we single out the factor of utilitarianism: women better understand and resolve social issues. According to M.A. Kashina, "ensuring gender parity (representation of at least 30% of persons of the same sex) in key positions in all branches and at all levels of government is one of the affordable and low-cost ways to

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improve the social orientation of public administration” (Kashina, 2013, p. 129).

However, there is another argument: women can offer solutions that are in a different than masculine logic. As it was noted by G.F. Belyaeva “the point is not who is better at performing the work of a parliamentarian or a leader of any level - a man or a woman. The fact is that men and women act on the basis of different cultural principles, so they see problems and approach their solution in different ways” (Belyaeva, 2008, p. 148).

Finally, the problem of gender equality is a problem of political modernization of society, the solution of which is intended to increase the number of political actors and increase the role of women in politics and social relations (Vostryakov & Kashina, 2017, p. 12).

Following the point of view given by O.G. Ovcharova, by gender asymmetry we mean the characterization of “inequality of socio-political positions and statuses of men and women in the political sphere” (Ovcharova, Gender asymmetry of Russian politics ...). Gender asymmetry exists at all levels of public administration in the Russian Federation, although it often takes on bizarre forms.

Further analysis of gender asymmetry was carried out on the basis of data on the civil service (hereinafter referred to as the civil service)<sup>2</sup>, the statistics of which are contained in the Handbook of employees holding public positions and state civil servants, by gender and age as dated 1<sup>st</sup> of October, 2019 (Handbook on the composition of employees, 2020).

## Results

Gender asymmetry in the system of state civil administration is manifested in the following main forms.

1) In the Russian Federation there is a traditional distribution of women in the civil service of the Russian Federation for recent decades: on the 1<sup>st</sup> of October, 2019, 73.9% of civil servants were women, and it is important to note that at the federal level of the civil service and in the civil service of the constituent entities of the Russian Federation, the percentage of women is

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<sup>2</sup> According to the Federal Law of the Russian Federation No. 58 of May 27, 2003 "On the system of public service of the Russian Federation", the system of public service in the Russian Federation includes: public civil service, military service, public service of other types

approximately the same (at the level of constituent entities of the Russian Federation it is equal to 74.7%). On average, women dominate in the civil service. The expression “service matriarchy” could have been used if it were not for a number of significant details that can change the perception of the real distribution of gender roles in the civil service.

As it is known, at present, the structure of positions in the civil service includes 4 categories of positions (managers, assistants, specialists, supporting specialists) and 5 groups of positions (highest, chief, leading, senior, junior), which in various combinations determine the structure of the apparatus public administration (On the state civil service ...). Within the framework of this system, the highest position will be the positions of the highest group in the category of “managers”, and the lowest one - the positions of the junior group in the category of “supporting specialists”.

In general, for all categories of civil servants at government bodies in the Russian Federation, we see the unconditional domination of women (supporting specialists - 86.8%, specialists 73.6%, assistants - 80.3%, managers - 64.3%), however, the distribution by groups of civil service positions show a steady trend towards male dominance.

2) Further analysis reveals a tendency: the higher the role of the civil service position in the structure of government bodies is, the lower the proportion of women is (see Table 1).

*Table 1: The proportion of women serving in public offices of the Russian Federation, by groups of positions (on the 1<sup>st</sup> of October, 2019)*

<b>Groups of positions</b>	<b>Job categories</b>	<b>% of women</b>
junior group <sup>3</sup>	supporting specialists	86,9%
senior group	supporting specialists	88,1%
	specialists	74,9%
leading group	supporting specialists	79,1%
	specialists	72,4%
	assistants	83,1%
	managers	68,7%
chief group	supporting specialists	73,0%
	specialists	62,6%
	assistants	56,3%
	managers	68,7%

<sup>3</sup> There are no positions of civil servants in other categories of the junior group

<b>Groups of positions</b>	<b>Job categories</b>	<b>% of women</b>
highest group	specialists	46,8%
	assistants	37,7%
	managers	42,9%

*Source: compiled by the author*

Hence it follows that the proportion of men in the corresponding group of positions rises: in the senior group of positions more than twice, in the leading group of positions twice, in the main group of positions - 1.5 times, in the highest group of positions - in 1.07 times.

The main positions from which the dominance of men in the structure of public administration begins to occur are the highest groups of positions among specialists, assistants and managers.

3) The intra-gender distribution by position category looks even more revealing. Of all men in the civil service, their number among supporting specialists is 6.5%; among specialists - 65.5; among assistants - 3.8%; among managers - 24.2%. For women, the situation is somewhat different: 14.9%; 64.3% 5.4%; 15.4% respectively. In fact, men are 3.8 times more likely to climb to the top of the civil service (the highest group of executive positions) than women.

4) Gender asymmetry manifests itself as an unequally proportional distribution of men and women by job group: there are 1.3 times less men in the “younger” group of positions than in the higher groups, which clearly indicates non-career advancement to the top groups of positions.

Among women, we see the opposite picture: in the junior group, there are 6.7 times more women positions than in the higher groups of positions, which most likely indicates a competitive situation among women.

5) Gender asymmetry is manifested in a significant difference between male and female representation in the civil service, depending on the place in the system of separation of powers. The general pattern is as follows: the higher the status of a position and the more resources state bodies have at their disposal and the more resources they directly distribute, the greater the proportion of men there.

The results of the combined structural analysis of the proportion of women among civil servants of state bodies of the Russian Federation (as of October 1, 2019) are presented in Table 2.

*Table 2: The proportion of women in the civil servants of state bodies of the Russian Federation (% of women)*

<b>Job groups</b>	<b>Executive authorities</b>	<b>Legislative authorities</b>	<b>The judiciary and the prosecutor's office</b>
civil servants	72,0	70,5	85,9
the managers	64,2	59,9	66,9
<i>the highest group of positions among managers</i>	42,6	51,6	29,0
assistants	53,8	60,4	85,0
<i>the highest group of positions among assistants</i>	37,6	45,9	28,2
specialists	71,7	74,5	90,2
<i>the highest group of positions among specialists</i>	50,3	66,0	43,8

*Source: compiled by the author*

In the executive branch, the gender distribution is closest to the average data for all civil servants (72%) since they employ 81.4% of all civil servants. In the legislature, we see a similar situation.

If we take the gender distribution by position group in the proportion of the size of the gender cohort, we can see the usual male dominance: in the highest group of positions among the leaders, the proportion of representatives of the male cohort of the total number of men employed in the civil service in the legislative branch, is 2.2 times higher than the same indicator for women, and two times lower for the junior group of positions.

The gender asymmetry is most clearly manifested in the judiciary and the prosecutor's office. In general, if civil servants employed in the judiciary and the prosecutor's office, the proportion of women is 85.9%, then among the highest group of positions in the category "managers" there are only 29% of them, in the category "assistants" - 28.2%, in the category "Specialists" - 43.8%.

6) Gender asymmetry arises especially clearly at the level of public positions, which are divided into two groups: public positions in the Russian Federation and public positions in the constituent entities of the Russian Federation. Public positions of the Russian Federation and public positions

of the constituent entities of the Russian Federation are, in accordance with Part 1 of Article 1 of the Federal law No. 79 "On State Civil Service in the Russian Federation", are determined as the positions established by the Constitution of the Russian Federation, federal laws for the direct execution of the powers of federal state bodies, and positions, established by the constitutions (charters), laws of the constituent entities of the Russian Federation for the direct execution of the powers of state bodies of the constituent entities of the Russian Federation. At its core, government positions are political and imperious positions; they are designed to exercise power, while civil service positions are designed to fulfill the will of those holding public office.

The gender structure of government positions underlines a general pattern: the proportion of women depends very much on the branch of government in which they are concentrated (see Table 3).

*Table 3: Gender structure of government positions in the Russian Federation and the constituent entities of the Russian Federation (on the 1<sup>st</sup> of October, 2019)*

<b>Government positions</b>	<b>Total government positions</b>	<b>% women</b>
State positions of the Russian Federation and the subjects of the Russian Federation, total	38399	59,9
Including: in executive authorities	1763	22,6
In legislative authorities	1871	18,8
In the judiciary and the prosecutor's office	33202	64,5
In other state bodies of the Russian Federation	1562	52,2

*Source: compiled by the author*

As you can see from the table 3, the absolute majority of government positions were held by the judiciary and the prosecutor's office - 33,202 government positions, among which the proportion of women was equal to 64.5%. It was in the judicial authorities and procurators in government positions that 93.2% of all women in government positions in the Russian Federation and the constituent entities of the Russian Federation were.

In the legislative branch, the proportion of women in government positions is only 18.8%; in executive authorities - 22.6%. At the same time,



in other government bodies, the proportion of women in government positions at all levels is 52.2%.

In total, the proportion of persons holding government positions is 5.0% of all persons employed in government bodies of the Russian Federation. Moreover, 7.5% of all men who served in state bodies of the Russian Federation, and 4.1% of women, were in government positions, and if we do not take into account the courts and prosecutors, the proportion of women decreases to 0.35%.

7) The largest gender gap occurs in the transition from civil service positions to government positions. While 72.0% of women were in the positions of the civil service in the executive branch, only 22.6% were in government positions in the Russian Federation and the constituent entities of the Russian Federation.

A similar picture is observed in the legislative branch: 70.5% of women occupies civil service positions, and 18.8% are in government positions.

In the judiciary and the prosecutor's office, the picture was different: in civil service positions - 85.9% of women, and in government positions - 64.5% of women (primarily at the expense of the judiciary office).

This means that as part of the transition from management functions to functions of power, the proportion of men disproportionately increases, the role of women in the formation of the cadre is reduced, power becomes "masculine", and managerial functions acquire a "female" character. There is a "gender gap" at this line of duty: the proportion of women in government positions is lower than in the highest group of civil service positions in the category "leaders" by 20% in executive power bodies and by 32.8% in legislative bodies. Only in the judiciary and the prosecutor's office is the situation different - in government positions the proportion of women reached 64.5%, while in the highest group of positions in the category of "managers" - only 29.0%. In fact, this situation can be characterized as a "glass ceiling", and one of the most severe. Power is becoming the dominant of men, they control both the legislative and executive power of the Russian Federation, leaving women to solve legal problems within the framework that they have also established.

8) Among the cadres of civil servants of the constituent entities of the Russian Federation, the gender situation is the same. We can only note a slightly higher level of women in the respective job groups: for example, the proportion of women among the positions of the state civil service of the constituent entities of the Russian Federation is 73.3%, in legislative bodies

- 70.5%, in executive bodies - 72.0%, in the judiciary and the prosecutor's office - 85.9%.

9) At the level of the executive branch, where the majority of civil servants is employed, an interesting regularity can be noticed: among supporting specialists, the role of women in the transition from one position group to another one (from the younger to the main one) changes gradually from 86.3% to 74, 9% (only by 12%); among specialists, when moving from one position group to another (from senior to higher ones), "career stages" begin to form. So, if in the senior and main group of positions the share of women is approximately equal to 72%, then in the main group of positions it is already 62.6%, in the highest - 50.3%. It can be seen that the proportion of women begins to decrease by 8-10% when moving to a higher position group.

In the category of "assistants", career stages look even clearer: when moving from one position group to another (from leading to higher ones), the proportion of women begins to decline by 11-13% at each stage.

In the category of "managers", the career stages seem to have already taken their shape: when moving from one position group to another (from leading to the highest one), the proportion of women decreases by 11-14% at each stage.

In fact, these trends indicate that the top executives are rapidly recruiting at the expense of male leaders who find themselves in leadership positions both as a result of career growth and as a result of "lateral entrances", political appointments and other factors.

"Career steps", in view of their clear expression, quite logically lead to "glass ceilings", beyond which it is difficult for women to break through, although it is possible. However, the percentage of "gender losses" during the transition from one career stage to another is growing both in the absolute number of female employees and in their share.

Let us analyze the gender distribution among the "managers" category in the executive authorities. 115,534 people are employed in this category, of which 64.2% are women, which formally testifies to female dominance. However, with the transition from the leading group of positions to the highest one within this category, there is a disproportionate increase in men in higher positions. Thus, of the number of men serving in the category of managers, 14.4% were in the highest group of positions, and among women leaders this figure is equal to 5.9%. In fact, the chances of men within this

category of employees to occupy top positions were 2.4 times higher than those of women.

Among the “assistants” category, a total of 3810 people are employed, but here the situation is close to the “managers” category: 30.3% of men employed in this category and 15.5% of women were in the highest group of positions.

Among professionals and providing professionals, men were about twice as likely to reach the top group of positions in their category as women.

We also note that in the categories of supporting specialists and specialists, the proportion by position groups among men and women remained approximately the same up to the highest positions, in which a kind of inversion took place, in which the chances of men to occupy the highest positions became maximum. In the “assistants” category, the similarity in the distribution of positions by group of positions between men and women is violated: among men, the representation in more status groups of positions is growing.

## **Conclusion**

Summarizing a brief analysis of gender distribution in government bodies, one can see that there are invisible official boundaries, the crossing of which changes the gender content of power and management potential. In management bodies, these are, as a rule, the highest groups of positions among the categories of specialists, assistants and managers. It is from these positions that the unconditional dominance of men begins, which grows as the official status rises.

Within each group of positions in the executive authorities of the Russian Federation, there is an increase in gender imbalance: even with the formal domination of women in a certain category of positions among men, as the status of the job group increases, an increase in the number of positions is observed. chances of taking a higher position. On average, these chances for each job category are about 2-2.5 times higher for men. "Glass ceilings" are formed both at the local level (at individual positions) and at the system level (when moving to higher positions in job categories, when moving from government positions to government positions), which indicates the institutional nature of "glass ceilings" ...

The institutional nature of "glass ceilings" in the civil service system is determined by the specific social order that has developed in post-Soviet society and requires additional research. Probably, here we see a combination of many reasons, including existing gender stereotypes, intra-gender prejudices, political practices, etc. However, the time has come to destroy the "glass ceilings", the solution of this problem must be translated into practical problems.

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