

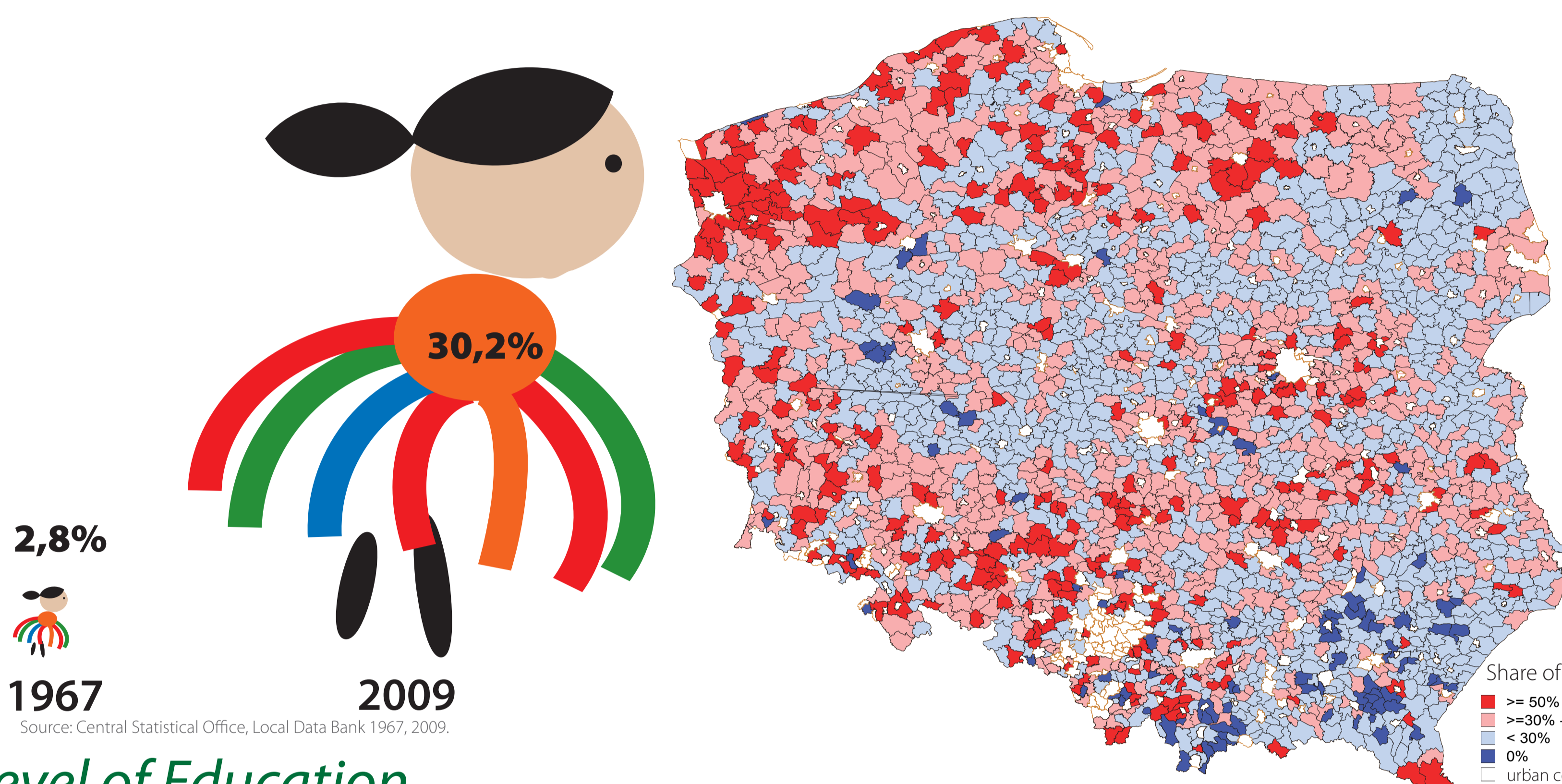
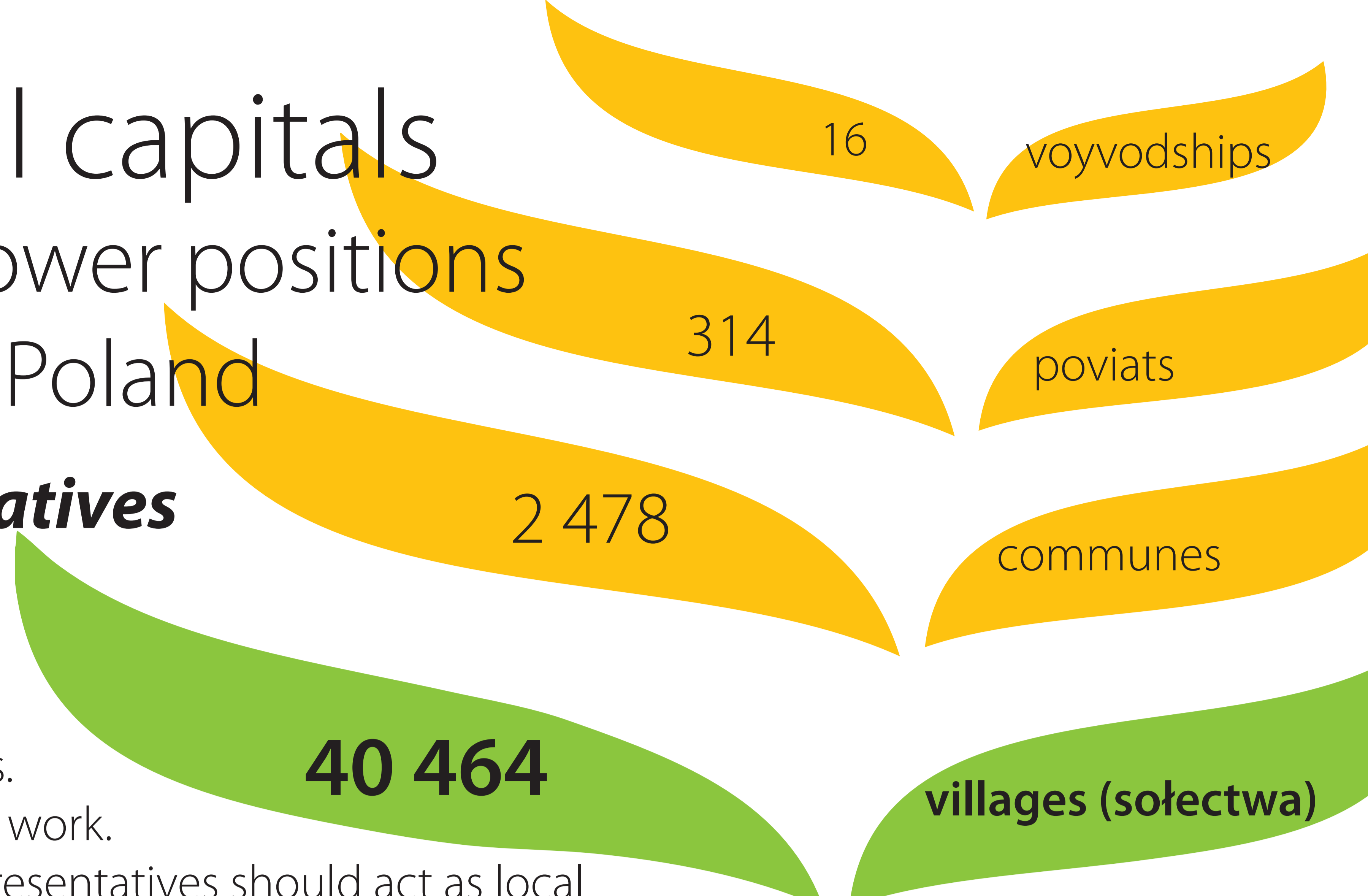
Cultural and social capitals of women getting to power positions in rural communities in Poland

The case of village representatives

Elected village representatives are liaisons between the residents of rural communities and local authorities at the level of communes. They receive only small remuneration for their work.

There is a general expectation that village representatives should act as local leaders and take responsibility for grass-root activity of village residents. At the same time, this function is perceived as marginalized and powerless. It requires hard work but provides no benefits.

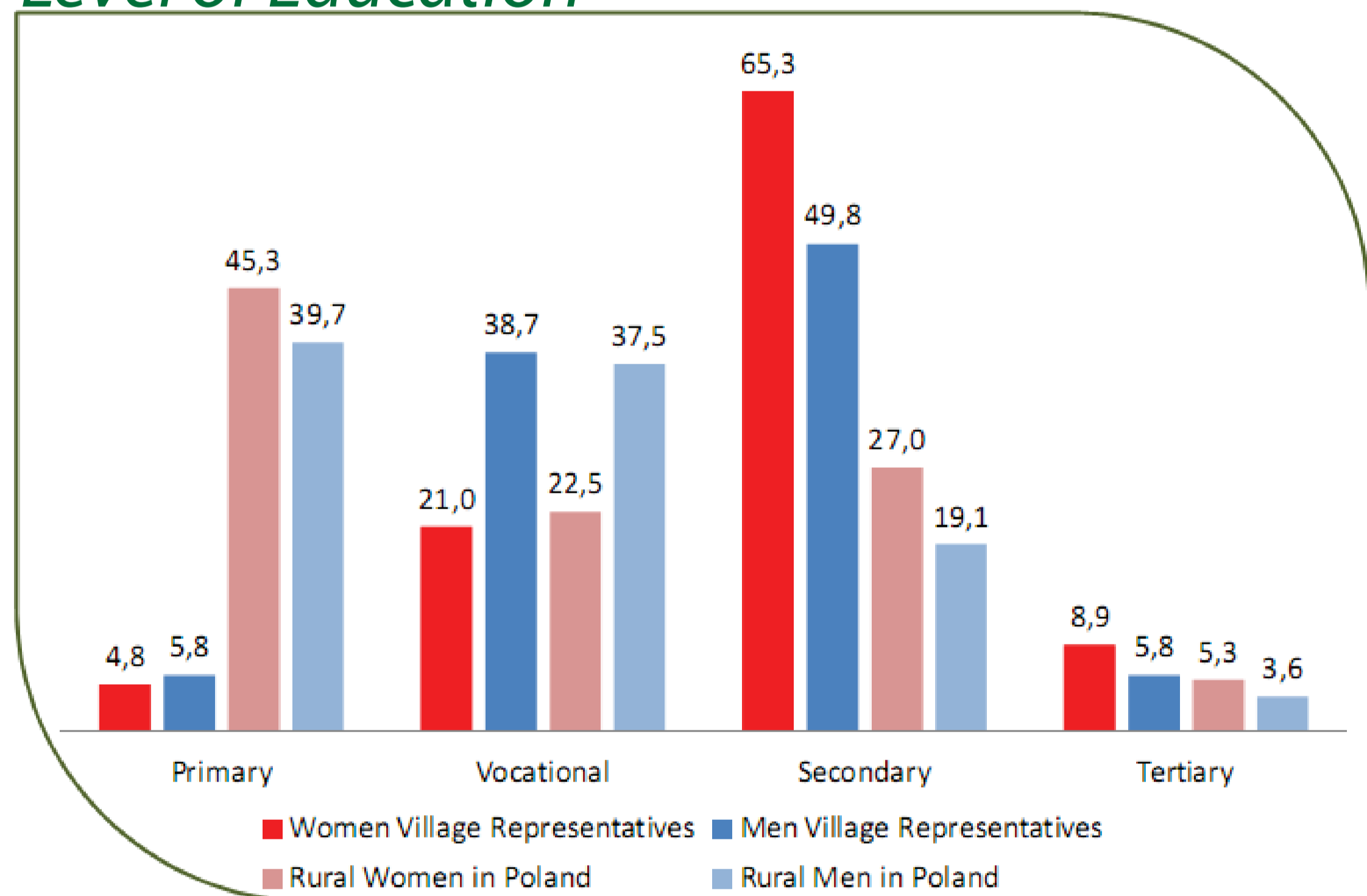
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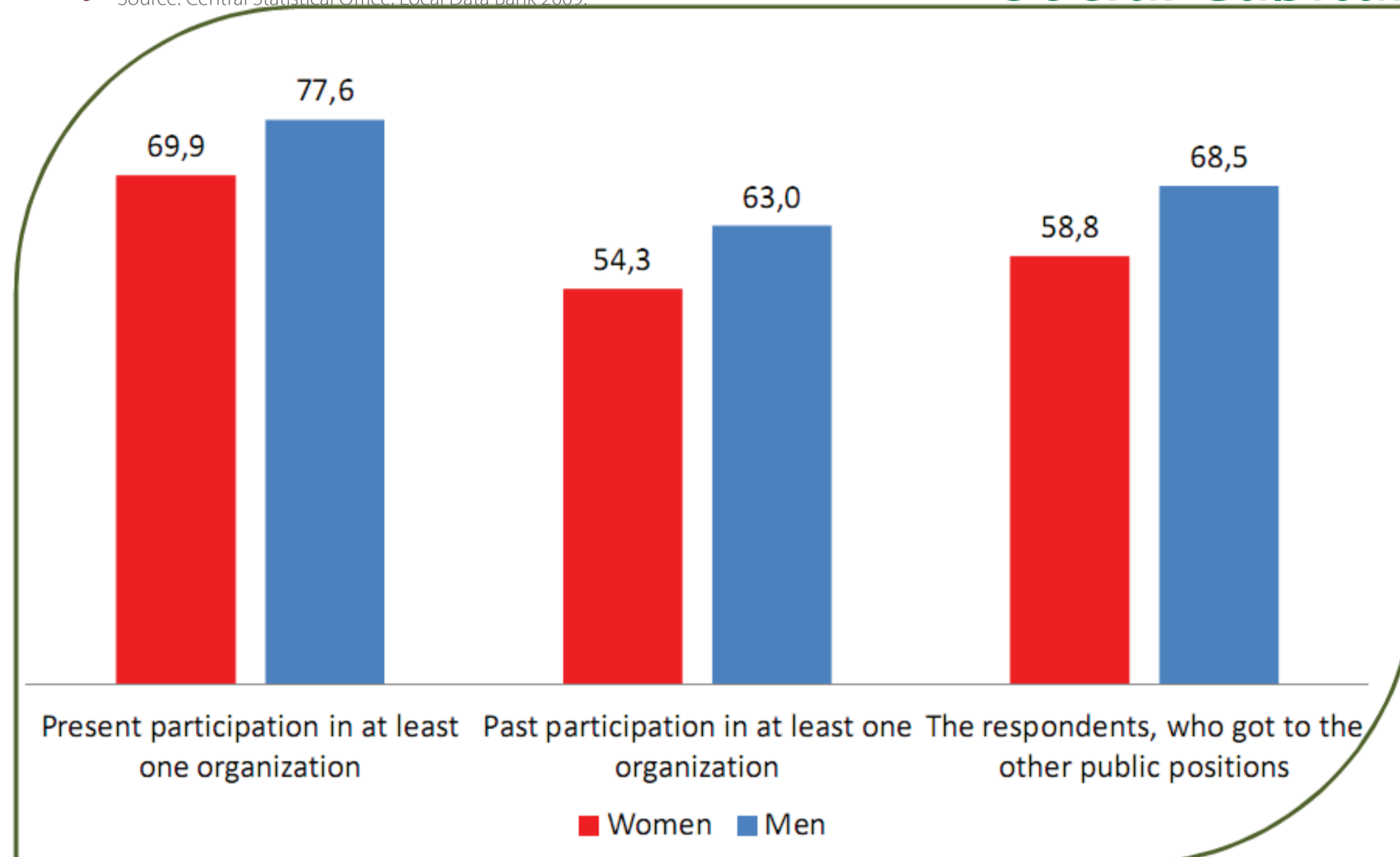
The share of women village representatives

The rivalry for the function of village representative: 49% of women and 33% of men competed against only one opponent.

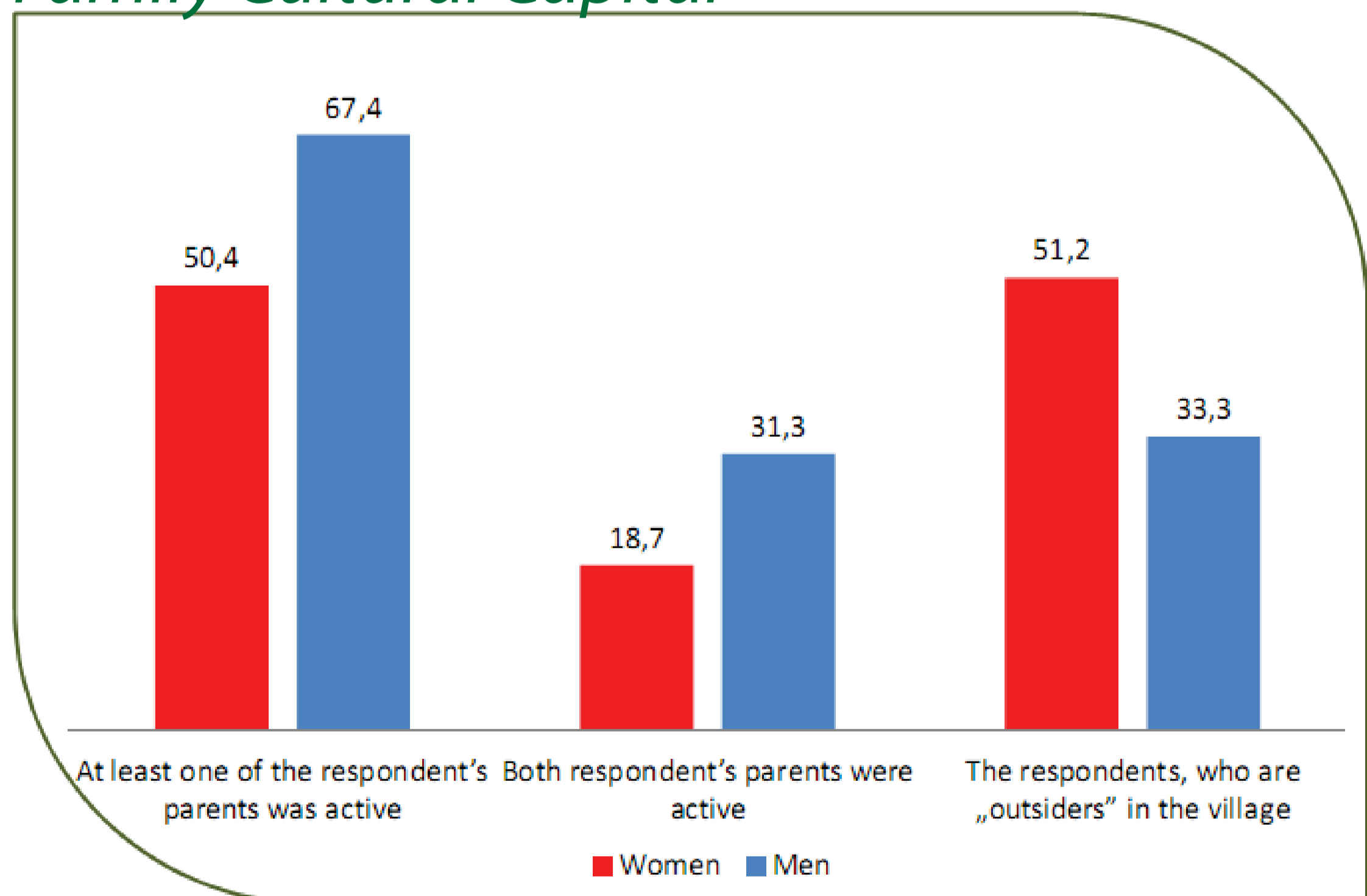
Level of Education



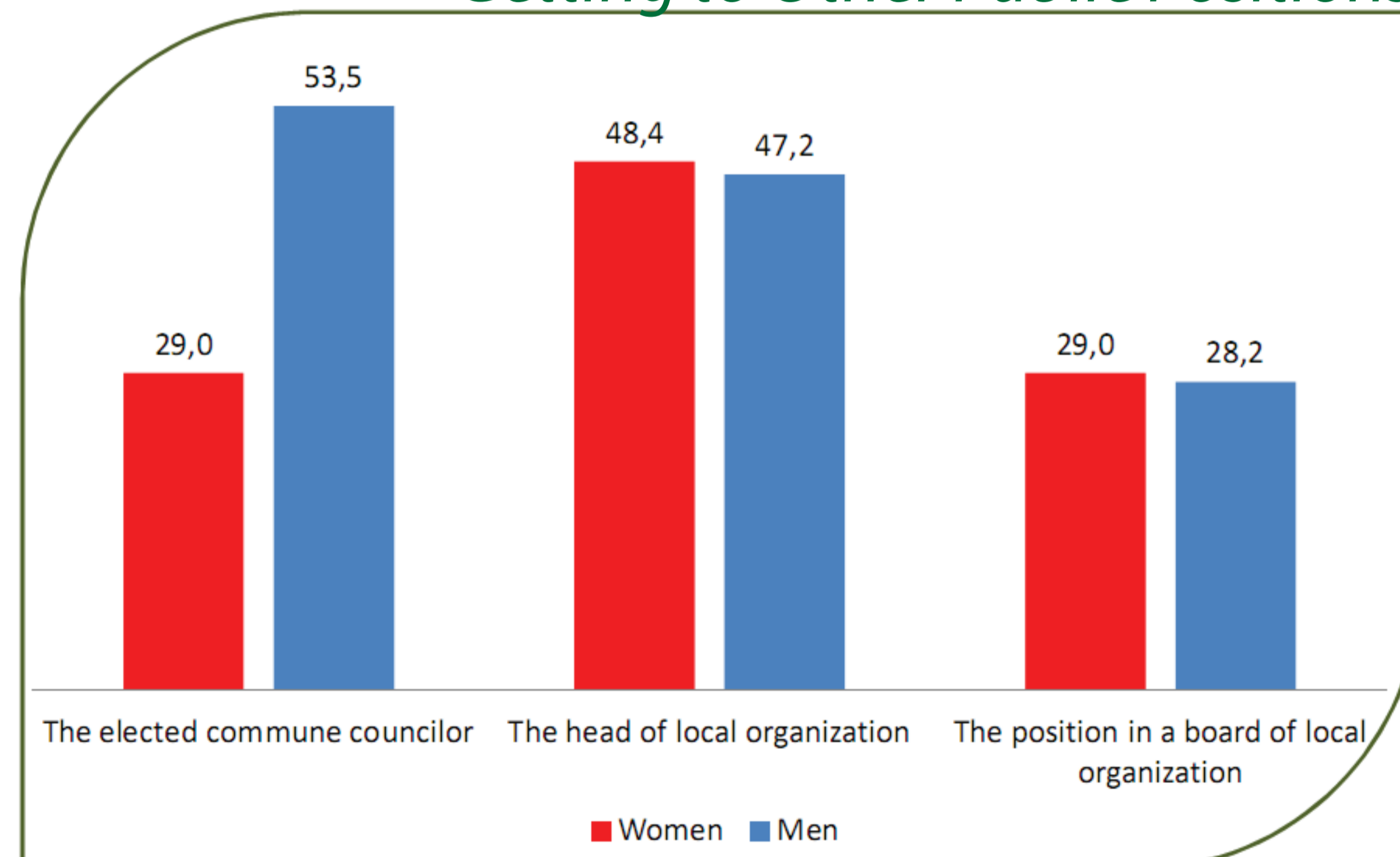
Social Capital



Family Cultural Capital



Getting to Other Public Positions



Gender affects the sources and structure of village representatives' social capital. Women's social networks are frequently based on previous involvement in local youth organizations and, later, typically feminine ones, i.e. parents' committees and boards at schools or Rural Women's Circles. Male village representatives used to be active in such organizations as Volunteer Fire Brigades, sport clubs and the institutions of local self-government. In comparison with men, feminine social networks are less formalized and women themselves are also less rooted in the local networks of cooperation. Apart from that, women village representatives were not as much capable as men to strengthen their social capital and get to other public positions in local government.

Interestingly, the ability of women village representatives to cooperate successfully with significant local actors is comparable to men's.



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Source: The author's own research, conducted in the frame of the PhD dissertation 'The role of village representatives in contemporary rural communities. Gender as a factor influencing differences in social capital'. Sample size N=381, including women N=129 and men N=252. The data was collected among village representatives from Świętokrzyskie, Wielkopolskie, Małopolskie and Podkarpackie Voivodships and the delegates to the national board of the National Association of Village Representatives in Poland. The presented outcomes were based only on valid answers and don't include missing data.

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