



HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS FOR FREE ELECTIONS

Elections*2024. Analytical report on the results of monitoring the nomination and registration of candidates

*The expert election*¹2024 observation mission was organized by the Belarusian Helsinki Committee and the Viasna Human Rights Center as part of the "Human Rights Defenders for Free Elections" campaign. The mission collects and analyzes information about the election campaign based on open sources and messages from voters from Belarus.*

CONCLUSIONS

- the nomination and registration of candidates took place almost in the total absence of a political campaign as such: there was no information campaign from political parties, voters were not encouraged to sign up for candidates in the public space;

- the mass dissolution of civil society organizations, independent media, and the preservation of only 4 pro-government parties in the legal field after re-registration, i.e. the complete purge of public space, is not considered by the authorities as a sufficient guarantee against the expression of various political opinions: in the current election campaign, the number of places for collecting signatures has decreased, so that even in a purged political field it would not be possible to collect signatures in crowded and convenient places; at the same time, some privileged candidates, despite the prohibitions, violated them with impunity;

- the nomination of candidates by collecting signatures, unlike other methods, does not imply formal attachment to state or political structures, but even it is perceived as unsafe, since any alternative position will almost certainly lead to political persecution, which the authorities continue to actively use against dissenters. As a result of the climate of fear created by the authorities, independent candidates did not run even by collecting signatures; we know of one unsuccessful registration attempt by the leader of the dissolved Green party; nominations by collecting signatures of voters decreased almost three times in comparison with the previous elections to the House of Representatives; and by one and a half times in comparison with the previous local Councils of Deputies elections;

- almost all initiative groups were registered: at the level of elections* to the House of Representatives, only 2 applications were refused registration (one of them, judging by the available information, belonged to the only independent candidate, the leader of the dissolved Green party); at the level of elections* to local Councils, 8 applications were withdrawn, registration was denied to 19, and with respect to 1 application, a decision was made to cancel registration;

- pickets for collecting signatures were not very active, they were rather a formality, and in some cities they were not noticeable at all; a number of evidence and circumstances of signature collection indicate a high degree of administrative control, active use of administrative resources, which is rather aimed not at increasing voter engagement, but at imitating political activity and simplifying the work of initiative groups;

¹ The term "elections*" in relation to the 2024 election campaign is used with an asterisk by the "Human Rights Defenders for Free Elections" campaign to emphasize the perfunctory nature of this term, since any free and fair election campaign presupposes, first of all, conditions where rights and freedoms are fully realized, including freedom of speech, freedom of peaceful assembly and association, the right to take part in the conduct of public affairs, freedom from discrimination, which is currently practically absent in Belarus

- in the absence of independent observers in the election commissions, it is difficult to assess the process of collecting signatures; its media coverage was minimal; in general, the verification by most election commissions of voter signatures and data on candidates contained in questionnaires and declarations of income and property was opaque and secret;

- 18,999 contenders for deputy candidates to local Councils were nominated, which is significantly less compared to the last campaign, while compared to the 2018 elections, the number of candidates nominated by citizens by collecting signatures decreased by 15.7% and the number of candidates nominated by political parties increased by 19.48%;

- the nomination of candidates in general has significantly decreased; unlike in 2019, when 424 candidates were nominated by political parties including opposition parties, the absence of independent candidates is noticeable in this campaign, since all opposition parties have not been re-registered, and the number of registered independent candidates from parties or public organizations is zero;

- 265 candidates for deputies of the House of Representatives have been registered with the lowest percentage of refusals (8.4%), which indicates that the nomination processes are predetermined. Essentially, the logic is: "at least two persons on the ballot per district" in order to ensure formal competition;

- 18,802 candidates for deputies of local Councils have been registered, while maintaining the trend of past cycles with a low percentage of refusals (0.65%). The average number of registered candidates at the settlement level is equal to one candidate per seat and 1.2 candidates per district at the rural level, i. e. virtually uncontested elections*; it indicates a lack of political initiative, which is also a consequence of the climate of fear, and a very high degree of administrative control (pre-agreed lists of nominated candidates);

- the analysis of the lists of registered candidates allows us to state its downright establishment nature: most of the candidates occupy senior positions and there are almost no candidates with vocational occupations. Unlike previous election cycles, all candidates can be called pro-government; there is no political struggle between them;

- the share of registered women-candidates for deputies of the House of Representatives has increased to 34.7%, which is more than in 2019 (27%); the share of women-candidates for deputies of local Councils increased to 53.75%, which is also more than in 2018 (49.13%);

- there has been a sharp increase in party representation due to the establishment of the Belarusian party "Belaya Rus" in 2023: 42.3% of candidates for the House of Representatives and 27.6% of candidates for local Councils are its members, while the imitative nature of such a party is obvious from the presence of a significant number of districts where members of this party oppose each other;

- the share of re-elected incumbent deputies of local Councils decreased to 38.99% (in 2018 it was 46.73%); 20 deputies of the House of Representatives and 31 incumbent deputies of local Councils were registered for the House of Representatives, which is significantly less than in the last cycle (in 2019, it was 32 deputies of the House of Representatives and 66 deputies of local Councils). Thus, it can be stated that a significant number of new deputies will take office.

I. LEGAL FRAMEWORK

The nomination of candidates for deputies begins 70 days before and ends 40 days before the election and is held from December 17, 2023 to January 15, 2024 inclusive².

Recent changes to the electoral legislation have narrowed the circle of persons who can be nominated for deputies: citizens with citizenship of another state and (or) documents of foreign states granting the right to benefits and advantages in connection with political, religious views, or national affiliation are deprived of this right (except for citizens of the Russian Federation

² The Calendar Plan, <https://rec.gov.by/uploads/files/Calendar/calend-edg.pdf>

permanently residing in Belarus: they have the right to participate in the elections of deputies of local Councils)³. Besides:

- citizens in respect of whom there is a court conviction that has entered into force cannot be nominated for deputies of the House of Representatives,
- citizens who have an unexpunged or outstanding criminal record cannot be nominated for deputies of local Councils.

Labor collectives, political parties, and voters still have the right to nominate candidates⁴. The liquidation of all political parties with an agenda different from the pro-government one, repression against civil society, and the control of labor collectives actually do not leave independent candidates the possibility of nomination from these subjects⁵; their only option to exercise active suffrage is nomination from voters by collecting signatures.

Registration of initiative groups

To nominate a candidate, an initiative group of at least 10 persons is formed from voters (for nomination to deputies of the House of Representatives) or from 3 to 10 persons (for nomination to local Councils of Deputies). A person intending to be nominated as a deputy must provide the relevant election commission with the passport, a written application for registration of the initiative group, and a list of its members. The election commission considers the application within five days from the date of its receipt, registers the initiative group, and issues certificates and signature lists to its members to collect signatures of voters. Documents for registration of the initiative group must be submitted no later than 65 days before the election: no later than December 21, 2023.

An initiative group may be denied registration in case of violation of the requirements of the Electoral Code (hereinafter referred to as the EC). Based on the practice of previous election campaigns, insignificant, formal errors in the submitted documents become an excuse for refusal to register independent candidates.

The decision of the election commission can be appealed to a higher commission, then to the oblast or Minsk City Court. New developments in the EC give the relevant district or territorial election commission the right to cancel the decision on registration of an initiative group without prior warning in case of repeated violation by its members of the requirements of the EC, if a warning was issued earlier (Article 65). Such a decision can be appealed in the same way: to a higher commission and to a court.

Recent changes in the EC have affected the threshold for the number of signatures required for registration of candidates. Now, in order to nominate a candidate for local Councils of Deputies, a person must collect the signatures of at least **one percent of voters** living in the territory of this electoral district (but not less than 10).

Registration of a candidate for deputy of the House of Representatives still requires the signature of at least 1,000 voters.

Collecting signatures

In 2023–2024, the collection of signatures should be carried out from December 17 to January 15 inclusive. Signatures may be put by citizens of the Republic of Belarus residing in the territory of the relevant electoral district, who have the right to vote. Citizens of the Russian Federation permanently residing in Belarus can also support a candidate for local Councils of Deputies with their signatures.

3 <https://pravo.by/document/?guid=3871&p0=hk0000370>

4 <https://pravo.by/document/?guid=3871&p0=hk0000370>

5 <https://elections2024.spring96.org/be/news/113969>

Signatures are collected by registered initiative groups of persons proposed for nomination as candidates for deputies in the signature lists issued to them by the TEC or DEC⁶. The procedure for collecting signatures is regulated by a reference norm: Article 65 of the EC regulating the procedure for nomination to deputies refers⁷ to certain parts of Article 61 of the EC regulating the procedure for nominating presidential candidates.

The participation of the organization's administration in collecting signatures, coercion, and remuneration of voters for signatures are prohibited. Violation of these requirements may result in refusal to register a candidate or cancellation of the registration decision.

The Electoral Code does not name possible ways to collect signatures, only the collection of signatures through picketing is singled out⁸.

The electoral legislation is formulated in such a way that specific places for collecting signatures by picketing are not allocated, only places prohibited for such picketing are determined⁹. Local executive committees must identify prohibited places no later than December 10, 2023.¹⁰ At the same time, the legislation does not specify the criteria for determining such places, which would ensure that corresponding decisions comply with the requirements of clarity and predictability (so far, broad formulations are considered acceptable: *".. and in other places that pose threats to public safety, with a mass public gatherings"*¹¹, which do not allow candidates and their initiative groups to act without fear of violating a law that cannot be clearly interpreted), as well as the standards of the right to peaceful assembly. The practice of previous campaigns demonstrates the narrowing of real opportunities for picketing in locations popular with voters.

Registration of candidates

No later than January 15, 2024, signature lists with other documents listed in Article 66 of the EC are submitted to the relevant commission for verification of data and registration of the candidate. Registration begins 40 days before and ends 25 days before the election (in 2024, from January 16 to January 30 inclusive).

Verification of signatures of voters is carried out in accordance with the requirements of Articles 67, Parts 18, 19, 21 and 22 of Article 61 of the EC. The commissions are required to verify at least 20 percent of the signatures from the total number required for registration. The EC still does not regulate the possibility for observers to verify the objectivity of the commissions when they verify signatures and examine other documents provided for the registration of candidates.

II. REGISTRATION OF INITIATIVE GROUPS

Registration of initiative groups of candidates for deputies of the House of Representatives

According to the CEC¹², a total of 171 applications for registration of initiative groups were submitted, and only two of them were refused registration.

⁶ The Electoral Code of the Republic of Belarus, Part 5 of Article 65.

⁷ The Electoral Code of the Republic of Belarus, Part 14 of Article 65.

⁸ The Electoral Code of the Republic of Belarus, Part 14 of Article 61.

⁹ The Electoral Code of the Republic of Belarus, Part 14 of Article 65.

¹⁰ The Calendar Plan, <https://rec.gov.by/uploads/files/Calendar/calend-edg.pdf>.

¹¹ The decision of the Mahilioŭ Oblast Executive Committee dated 08.12.2023 No. 27-6 "On identifying places prohibited for picketing in order to collect signatures."

<http://mogilev.gov.by/downloads/vybory/2024/20231208-27-6.pdf>

¹² Information on the registration of citizens' initiative groups to collect signatures of voters in support of persons proposed for nomination as candidates for deputies of the House of Representatives:

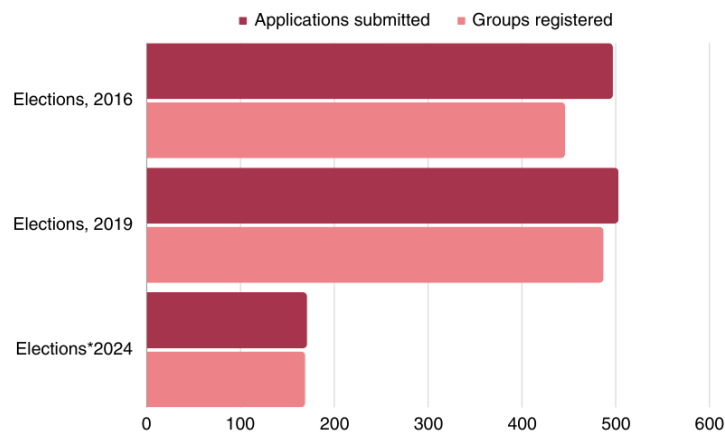
<https://rec.gov.by/uploads/files/Pdf/2024/stat19.pdf>

It is known that one of the refusals was received by independent candidate Dzmitry Kuchuk, who was the head of the dissolved Green party. The pretext for the refusal was a typo in the submitted documents¹³.

80 of the registered candidates nominated by collecting signatures are non-partisan, and 89 are members of political parties. Most of the party candidates are members of the Belarusian party "Belaya Rus" (60 registered candidates, i.e. 35.5%).

The activity of nominating by collecting signatures of voters has decreased by almost three times in comparison with the previous elections to the House of Representatives, which shows that political initiative is essentially absent and the election results are predetermined.

REGISTRATION OF INITIATIVE GROUPS FOR THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES



Registration of initiative groups of candidates for deputies of local Councils of Deputies

According to the CEC¹⁴, a total of 11,254 applications for registration of initiative groups were submitted, and 99.8% of them were registered. 8 applications were withdrawn, 19 were refused registration, and a decision was made to cancel registration with respect to one application.

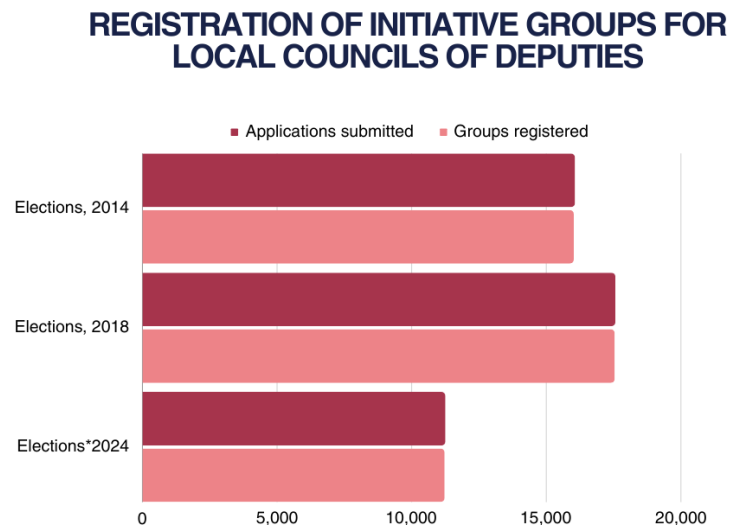
Of the 47 applications submitted for registration of initiative groups to the Mahilioŭ City Council of Deputies, the election commission rejected one candidate, Mikhail Hramyka, who intended to be nominated as a candidate for the Mahilioŭ City Council of Deputies in the Hrabianioŭski Electoral District No. 39. The reason for the refusal, based on known information, is a violation of the requirement of Article 65 of the Electoral Code for the minimum number of members of the initiative group (3 persons). The Election Commission claims that during the inspection it was discovered that among the members of Mikhail Hramyka's initiative group

¹³ A post on Dzmitry Kuchuk's personal Facebook page: https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=pfbid02dGE11sbGBgfY1i1pwZH9irAp5MfFAvJvgvA7TZAhSGMicSzFh85em3coUZGoDzrqI&id=100000743567727

¹⁴ Information on the registration of citizens' initiative groups to collect signatures of voters in support of persons proposed for nomination as candidates for deputies of the House of Representatives: <https://rec.gov.by/uploads/files/Pdf/2024/stat20-21.pdf>

(numbering the possible minimum of 3 persons) was the son of the candidate¹⁵ who did not know about it.

Compared to the elections to local Councils of Deputies of the 28th and 27th convocations, the number of registered initiative groups decreased by one and a half times. Together with a noticeable decrease in the number of nominated candidates, this is due, among other things, to the almost total absence of independent candidates and an increase in administrative control even at the level of preliminary lists of potential candidates.



Like candidates for deputies, including those who have been nominated by collecting signatures, initiative groups consist mainly of persons who work or belong to state-dependent structures: ideological workers, employees of local authorities, representatives of pro-government public organizations, etc.

Technically, nomination through collecting signatures with the help of initiative groups does not oblige potential candidates to be associated with government agencies or political parties, public organizations, labor collectives, all of which currently are pro-government. In reality, even this method is unsafe, since the expression of any alternative agenda will almost certainly attract political persecution. The elections in Belarus are taking place in conditions of incessant repression; effectively in the absence of freedom of expression, peaceful assembly, and association; in a climate of total fear and in a purged political field¹⁶. As a result, there is no political initiative or any activity, except for the imitation created by the authorities.

III. COLLECTING SIGNATURES

Although the Electoral Code explicitly names only picketing as a method of collecting signatures¹⁷, in practice, potential candidates for deputies use other methods that are not prohibited. For example, the chairman of the Minsk City Election Commission, Aliaksandr

¹⁵ Viasna Human Rights Center, "Only one initiative group was refused registration for the elections to the Mahilioŭ City Council": <https://spring96.org/ru/news/113815>

¹⁶ The situation before the elections*2024. The first report of the "Human Rights Defenders for Free Elections" campaign: <https://elections2024.spring96.org/ru/news/113484>

¹⁷ The Electoral Code of the Republic of Belarus, Part 14 of Article 61.

Shchakovich, said at a briefing that when collecting signatures for the nomination of candidates for deputies, the door-to-door canvassing provides the greatest coverage¹⁸.

In general, the collection of signatures for candidates for deputies of the House of Representatives and local Councils of Deputies in different regions of the country was quite passive and happened behind the scenes. The collection of signatures by picketing was practically not noticeable, which fits into the general logic of not attracting unnecessary attention to the electoral process. The main explanation for the absence of obstacles in collecting signatures in most cases is the pro-government position of candidates for deputies.

Required number of signatures

According to the EC, based on current data on the number of voters, the territorial commissions had to decide on the required number of signatures no later than 70 days before the elections (no later than December 16, 2023). On the whole, the threshold for registration has decreased: the number of signatures required for candidates for Councils of Deputies of *the primary level* is now predominantly 10 (with a lower threshold of 20 signatures in the previous version of the EC)¹⁹; it is slightly bigger for Councils of Deputies of *the basic level* (see the example of the Žodzina City Council (12–14 signatures), Maladzečna Region Council (35–40 signatures) at the previous threshold of 75 signatures²⁰. The threshold for individual Councils at the *oblast level*, on the contrary, has increased: for nomination to the Minsk Oblast Council of Deputies, depending on the electoral district, it is necessary to collect from 179 to 251 signatures²¹, which significantly increases the requirements of the previous version of the EC (at least 150 signatures), to the Hrodna Oblast Council — from 103 to 146 signatures, depending on the district²²).

At its meeting on December 14, 2023, the Minsk Oblast Election Commission determined the number of signatures of voters²³ required to register candidates for deputies of the Minsk Oblast Council of Deputies of the 29th convocation, however, on December 19, 2023, it was decided²⁴ to reduce the required number by several signatures in most electoral districts of the Minsk oblast. The explanation for such changes was not given either in the text of the decision itself or in the publication about its adoption on the website of the Minsk oblast

18 <https://elections2024.spring96.org/ru/news/113878>

19 Decision of the Hoža Rural Election Commission No. 1 dated 12.12.2023 "On the number of signatures of voters required for registration of candidates for deputies of the Hoža Rural Council of Deputies of the twenty-ninth convocation". <https://grodnorik.gov.by/uploads/files/materialy/vybory2024/resh-podp/goja.PDF>

20 Decision of the Žodzina City Election Commission No. 1 dated 12/14/2023 "On the number of signatures of voters required for registration of candidates for deputies of the Žodzina City Council of Deputies of the twenty-ninth convocation". <https://zhodino.gov.by/app/uploads/2023/12/reshenie-komissii.pdf>

21 <https://www.minsk-region.gov.by/welcome/god-mira-i-sozidaniya/>

22 Decision of the Hrodna Oblast Election Commission No. 8 dated 12.12.2023 "On the number of signatures of voters required for registration of candidates for deputies of the Hrodna Oblast Council of Deputies of the twenty-ninth convocation".

<https://schuchin.grodno-region.by/uploads/files/Vybory2024/Oblastnaja-izbiratel'naja-komissija.pdf>

23 Decision of the Minsk Oblast Election Commission No. 1 dated 12/14/2023 "On the number of signatures of voters required for registration of candidates for deputies of the Minsk Oblast Council of Deputies of the twenty-ninth convocation". https://www.dzerzhinsk.gov.by/images/4_kv_2023/0102.pdf

24 Decision of the Minsk Oblast Election Commission No. 4 dated 12/19/2023 "On amending the decision of the Minsk Oblast Election Commission No. 1 dated December 14, 2023".

<https://lyuban.gov.by/uploads/files/20-12-2023-004.pdf>

Executive Committee²⁵. The lack of information about the reasons for such changes negatively affects the transparency of the decision-making process.

Locations of signature collection pickets

According to the CEC approved Calendar Plan, the places prohibited for picketing in order to collect signatures should have been determined no later than December 10, 2023.²⁶ Initiative groups can hold pickets to collect signatures in all other places.

The Minsk City Executive Committee made the relevant decision only on December 14²⁷, i.e. 4 days later than the deadline. Compared with the 2020 presidential elections²⁸, the list of prohibited places has expanded: there is a ban on picketing near the editorial offices of television and radio companies and near a number of other places important in the life of the city (for example, shopping and entertainment centers Zamok and Galleria Minsk, the National Academy of Sciences, etc.). One of the changes was also the indication of certain streets of the city in the list of prohibited places. The ban still applies to all central squares of Minsk.

In almost all regions of the Minsk oblast, it is prohibited to picket in the central squares of the city, at public transport stops and bus stations, near the buildings of local executive and administrative bodies, courts, and the prosecutor's office²⁹. The ban on picketing in the central square of the city did not affect only the city of Krupki in the Minsk oblast³⁰. In some areas, it is also forbidden to collect signatures near canteens³¹, in parks³², as well as in housing cooperatives³³: the ban affected the suburbs of Minsk, i. e. the location of housing complexes Novaja Baravaja, Zialiony Bor, and others, which have become widely known for their protest activity in 2020.

Unlike the election campaigns of previous years, Saveckaja Street, the pedestrian center of Brest³⁴, which was massively used for these purposes before, was completely excluded from collecting signatures. More bans have been introduced in Hrodna compared to the election campaigns of 2019 and 2020³⁵.

25 Minsk Oblast Executive Committee, "Elections-2024", access date: 24.12.2023. <https://minsk-region.gov.by/welcome/vybory-2024/>

26 The Calendar Plan, <https://rec.gov.by/uploads/files/Calendar/calend-edg.pdf>.

27 Decision of the Minsk City Executive Committee No. 5105 dated 12/14/2023, Annex. https://minsk.gov.by/ru/freepage/other/edinyj_den_golosovaniya/reshenie_5105_pril.pdf

28 Decision of the Minsk City Executive Committee No. 1536 dated 05/15/2023. <https://insknnews.by/reshenie-mingorispolkoma-ot-15-maya-2020-goda-%E2%84%96-1536/>

29 <https://spring96.org/ru/news/113587> For example, the decision of the Valožyn District Executive Committee dated 05.12.2023 No. 2044. <https://volozhin.gov.by/images/2023/12/06-12-23-10.pdf>

30 Decision of the Krupki District Executive Committee No. 1719 dated 05.12.2023. <https://krupki.gov.by/images/07-12-2023-7.pdf>

31 Decision of the Vilejka District Executive Committee No. 1897 dated 05.12.2023. <https://vileyka.gov.by/images/0612202303.pdf>

32 The decision of the Barysaŭ District Executive Committee dated 07.12.2023 No. 3186. <https://borisov.gov.by/vybory-2024>

Decision of the Staryja Darohi District Executive Committee No. 1244 dated 05.12.2023. <https://staryedorogi.gov.by/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/07-12-23-12.pdf>

Decision of the Niasviž District Executive Committee No. 2665 dated 04.12.2023. <https://nesvizh.gov.by/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/ob-opredelenii-mest.pdf>

33 Decision of the Minsk District Executive Committee No. 13341 dated 04.12.2023. <https://www.mrik.gov.by/images/07-12-2023-1.pdf>

34 Decision of the Brest City Executive Committee No. 1791 dated 08.12.2023. <https://city-brest.gov.by/uploads/files/VYBORY-2024/Reshenija-BrGIK/Reshenie-08.12.2023.pdf>

35 The decision of the Hrodna City Executive Committee dated 07.12.2023 No. 906.

A record number of prohibited places have been identified in Mahilioŭ³⁶. In particular, subparagraph 1.13 of the decision refers to the prohibition of collecting signatures "*in other places that pose a threat to public safety, with a large number of citizens*", and these include squares, public gardens, parks, shopping malls, markets, hotels, educational institutions, and sports facilities³⁷. As a result, there are very few places to hold pickets in the city.

Such measures reflect the desire of local authorities to control the process of collecting signatures, as well as indicate their intention to limit the visibility of the election campaign and thereby reduce the overall level of voter participation in it.

Signature collection pickets

According to the publication *Flagshtok*, in Homieł on December 23, a picket to collect signatures for both Siarhei Khakhomau, rector of Homieł State University, deputy of the Oblast Council (nominated for deputy of the Homieł Oblast Council of Deputies), and Uladzimir Haurylovich, chairman of the pro-government Homieł oblast branch of the Union of Writers of Belarus (nominated for deputy of the House of Representatives) took place on the square in front of the Homieł Novy Univermag³⁸, despite the ban on holding pickets closer than 200 meters to a pedestrian tunnel and closer than 50 meters to banks³⁹.

It is also reported that in Pinsk, a picket to collect signatures for both the director general of JSC Stroytrest No. 2, Mikalai Kavalko (nominated for deputy of the Brest Oblast Council of Deputies) and the current deputy of the House of Representatives, Aliaksandr Amelyaniuk (again nominated for deputy of the House of Representatives), took place in the parking lot of the building of JSC Stroytrest No. 2⁴⁰, despite the ban to hold pickets near parking lots⁴¹. The appearance of pickets⁴² allows us to state that they were organized by one entity, when they have the same tables and the same design.

These examples also show that pickets to collect signatures in a number of cases were held both for a potential candidate for local deputies and for a potential candidate for deputies of the House of Representatives. At the same time, potential candidates for deputies are not members of one party: Mikalai Kavalko is a member of the "Belaya Rus" party, and Aliaksandr Amelyaniuk is from LDPB⁴³; Siarhei Khakhomau is non-partisan, and Uladzimir Haurylovich is a member of the "Belaya Rus" party⁴⁴.

36 <https://elections2024.spring96.org/ru/news/113657>

37 Decision of the Mahilioŭ City Executive Committee No. 27-6 dated 08.12.2023.

<http://mogilev.gov.by/downloads/vybory/2024/20231208-27-6.pdf>

38 <https://d1j52mw0aso44.cloudfront.net/by/naviny/predstaviteli-provlastnoj-partii-narushili-zakon-v-pervyj-den-sbora-podpisej.html>

39 Decision of the Homieł City Executive Committee No. 1050 dated 07.12.2023. <http://pinsk.brest-region.gov.by/ru/2023-10-17-ru/view/reshenie-pinskogo-rajonnogo-ispolnitelnogo-komiteta-ot-4-dekabrya-2023-g-1654-ob-opredelenii-mest-2000003979>

40 <https://elections2024.spring96.org/ru/news/113894>

41 Decision of the Pinsk District Executive Committee dated 07.12.2023 No. 1932.

https://pinsk.gov.by/files/Vybory_2024/DECISION_1932_of_07.12.23.pdf

42 https://p-v.by/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/img_3834.jpg?v=1704873345

43 Information about candidates for deputies of the House of Representatives of the National Assembly of the Republic of Belarus of the eighth convocation (Brest oblast).

<https://rec.gov.by/uploads/files/Pdf/2024/kand-pp-1.pdf>

Information about candidates for deputies of the Brest Oblast Council of Deputies of the twenty-ninth convocation. <https://rec.gov.by/uploads/files/Pdf/2024/kand-ms-1.pdf>

44 Information about candidates for deputies of the House of Representatives of the National Assembly of the Republic of Belarus of the eighth convocation (Homieł oblast).

<https://rec.gov.by/uploads/files/Pdf/2024/kand-pp-3.pdf>

The process of collecting signatures for potential candidates for deputies of local Councils of Deputies in a number of pickets covered by pro-government media is obviously staged. Thus, a pro-government publication *Svobodnoye Slovo* illustrated an article about the picket in Rahačoŭ with staged photos⁴⁵. According to *Nasha Niva*, employees of a Kiraŭsk publication *Kirovsk.by* took photos of persons allegedly putting signatures at a picket site, however, it is noted that none of the signers took out their passport to write down passport data into the signature list⁴⁶. This indicates the measures taken by the authorities to simulate the activity of voters and support pro-government candidates.

Violations of the procedure for collecting signatures

The candidate for deputy of the House of Representatives, Artsiom Aliaksandravich Dubinin, said that his initiative group was not allowed to collect signatures in one of the military units because a military unit is a high-security facility; at the same time, as he reports, another candidate for deputy was allowed to collect signatures on the territory of a military unit⁴⁷. Apart from the initiative group of Artsiom Dubinin, in district No. 63, only the initiative group of Ruslan Kasyhin was registered: Kasyhin is a retired Major General, former chief of the Main Intelligence Directorate of the General Staff of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Belarus.

In general, it is reported that the pickets for collecting signatures were not very active, they were held rather for reporting purposes, they were not intended for mass inclusion of voters, and in some cities they were not noticeable at all.

Imitation of political activity

In the Čyhunaczny district of Homieĺ, the initiative group of district branch of the pro-government NGO Belarusian Women's Union, used the organization's symbols to hold a picket to collect signatures⁴⁸. At the same time, Alena Uladzimirauna Klichkouskaya, who is the chairwoman of the Homieĺ oblast branch of the Belarusian Women's Union, is nominated as a candidate for deputy of the Homieĺ Oblast Council of Deputies⁴⁹.

In some cases, the candidate's subordinates and persons dependent on the candidate participate in collecting signatures as part of an initiative group or independently. So, on December 28 in Horki, deputy dean Volha Leukina, lecturer Viachaslau Matsiuk, and student of the department Anhelina Shauchenka participated in collecting signatures for the dean of the Department of Business and Law of the Belarusian State Agricultural Academy Natallia Hlushakova⁵⁰. A picket to collect signatures for the head of the regional organization of the Voluntary Society for Cooperation with the Army, Aviation, and Navy of the Republic of Belarus Stanislau Karaban (nominated for deputy to the House of Representatives) was held on January 11 in Lida with the involvement of students from the Lida State College of Music, and the symbols of a single voting day were also used⁵¹.

Information about candidates for deputies of the Homieĺ Oblast Council of Deputies of the twenty-ninth convocation. <https://rec.gov.by/uploads/files/Pdf/2024/kand-ms-3.pdf>

45 <https://www.slova.by/vlast/155-vybory-2024/32350-v-rogacheve-sobirayut-podpisi-v-podderzhku-kandidatov-v-deputaty>

46 <https://d1a9nmcvk9pjz.cloudfront.net/332976>

47 TikTok, @ruporzdravomisliya,

<https://www.tiktok.com/@ruporzdravomisliya/video/7324995615870536965>

48 <https://newsgomel.by/news/edinyy-den-golosovaniya/pikety-po-sboru-podpisey-prokhodyat-v-gomele-167026.html>

49 The members of the Presidium of an NGO Belarusian Women's Union: <http://oobsg.by/список-членов-президиума-оо-белорус>

50 <https://elections2024.spring96.org/ru/news/113879>

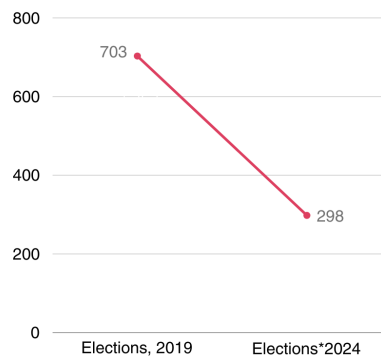
51 <https://elections2024.spring96.org/ru/news/113936>

Thus, a number of evidences and circumstances of signature collection indicate a high degree of administrative control, the use of administrative resources, which is rather aimed not at attracting voters, but at imitating political activity and simplifying the work of initiative groups.

IV. NOMINATION OF CANDIDATES

According to the results of the nomination of candidates for deputies to the House of Representatives of the National Assembly of the Republic of Belarus of the eighth convocation published by the CEC, 298⁵² candidates for deputies to the House of Representatives were nominated by citizens, labor collectives, and political parties by collecting signatures, which is significantly less than the indicator of the previous election campaign (703⁵³).

THE NUMBER OF NOMINATED CANDIDATES FOR DEPUTIES OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES



The reasons for the sharp reduction in the number of persons nominated for candidacy are multilayered:

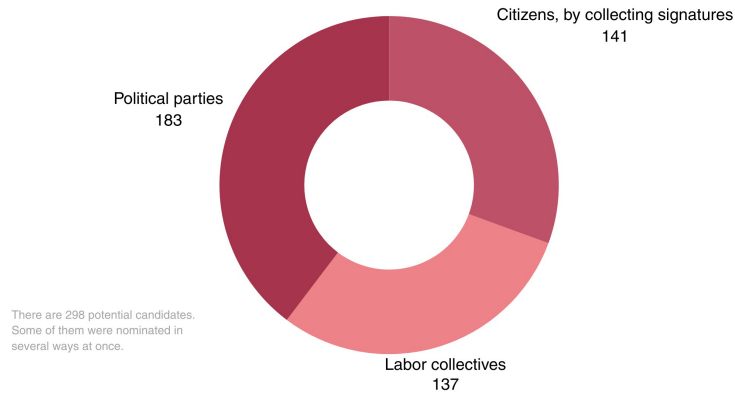
- the strengthening of administrative control, i.e. the authorities, apparently, approve candidates at the level of preliminary lists and do not want an uncontrolled initiative;
- the absence of opposition parties, which put forward a significant number of candidates in the last elections;
- a general climate of repression affects independent activists who could try their hand at politics, but are intimidated.

Among the candidates, the most nominations are from political parties: 183 (424 in 2019) and the least from labor collectives: 137 (128 in 2019). 141 candidates were nominated by citizens by collecting signatures (272 in 2019).

⁵² Information on the nomination of candidates for deputies of the House of Representatives of the National Assembly of the Republic of Belarus of the eighth convocation: <https://rec.gov.by/uploads/files/Pdf/2024/stat9.pdf>

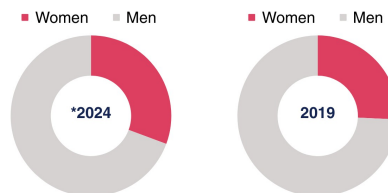
⁵³ Information on the nomination of candidates for deputies of the House of Representatives of the National Assembly of the Republic of Belarus of the seventh convocation: <https://rec.gov.by/uploads/files/Calendar/stat11.pdf>

WHO NOMINATED POTENTIAL CANDIDATES FOR DEPUTIES OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES



The share of women among the nominated candidates increased by 6.9%: from 25.7% (181 persons) in 2019 to 32.6% (97 persons) in 2024.

WOMEN AMONG THE NOMINATED CANDIDATES FOR PARLIAMENT



The parties nominated 183 persons as candidates for deputies of the House of Representatives (39.7% of the total number nominated), which is significantly less than the corresponding figure in the 2019 campaign (424 persons or 51.5% of the total number nominated):

- Belarusian party "Belaya Rus" — 71;
- Liberal Democratic Party of Belarus — 54;
- Communist Party of Belarus — 37;
- Republican Party of Labor and Justice — 21.

The number of the nominated candidates by profession

By profession, the largest number of nominated candidates are from the public sector: science, education, health, culture, sports – 86 persons or 28.9% of the total number of those nominated. None of the unemployed citizens were nominated. In 2019, they accounted for 32 persons or 4.6% of the total number of nominees.

The number of nominated candidates from law enforcement agencies, military service, and emergency management agencies increased from 8 persons, or 1.1% of the total number nominated in 2019, to 15 persons (5%) in 2024.

Industry, transport, construction — 54 (18.1%)

Government agencies — 52 (17.4%)

Other professions — 42 (14.1%)

Trade, consumer services, housing and communal services — 25 (8.4%)

Entrepreneurs – 10 (3.4%)

Agriculture – 7 (2.3%)

Senior citizens – 7 (2.3%)

The results of the nomination of candidates for deputies to the local Councils of Deputies of the twenty-ninth convocation

According to the CEC⁵⁴, a total of 18,999 persons were nominated as candidates for deputies of local Councils of Deputies of the twenty-ninth convocation, which is 3,714 nominated candidates less than during the last campaign for elections to local Councils of Deputies (22,713 in 2018).

The most candidates were nominated by citizens by collecting signatures: 11,014, which is 52.9% (16,535 or 68.60% of the total number of candidates nominated in ⁵⁵2018) of the total number of those nominated. Political parties are in second place: 4,925 or 23.6%, which is significantly bigger than the corresponding figure in the 2018 campaign (994 or 4.12% of the total number nominated in 2018). Labor collectives nominated 4,900 persons or 23.5% (6,575 or 27.28% of the total number nominated in 2018).

Compared with the elections to local Councils of Deputies in 2018, the number of candidates nominated by citizens by collecting signatures decreased by 15.7%. At the same time, the number of candidates nominated by political parties increased by 19.48%:

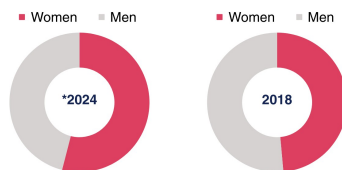
- Belarusian party "Belaya Rus" — 3,686 (17.7%);
- Communist Party of Belarus — 609 (2.9%);
- Republican Party of Labor and Justice — 421 (2%);
- Liberal Democratic Party of Belarus — 209 (1%).

The number of women among the nominated candidates increased by 5.44%, from 48.56% (11,030 persons) in 2018 to 54% (10,260 persons) in 2024.

⁵⁴ Information on the nomination of candidates for deputies of local Councils of Deputies of the twenty-ninth convocation: <https://rec.gov.by/uploads/files/Pdf/2024/stat10-11.pdf>

⁵⁵ Information on the nomination of candidates for deputies of local Councils of Deputies of the twenty-eighth convocation: <https://rec.gov.by/uploads/files/Calendar/elections-ms28-elect-22-23.pdf>

WOMEN AMONG THE NOMINATED CANDIDATES FOR LOCAL COUNCILS



V. REGISTRATION OF CANDIDATES

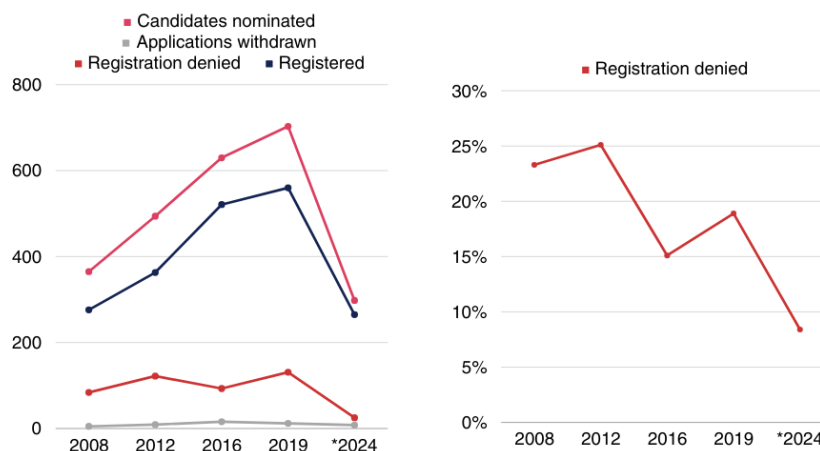
Due to the absence of independent observers, there is no information on the process of verification of documents, including signatures of voters. The principle of transparency and openness of the preparation and conduct of elections, enshrined in Article 13 of the Electoral Code, implies that the election commissions inform about all stages, including such an important procedure, on the results of which the registration of a candidate for deputy depends. On the websites of the executive bodies, there was only information that signatures and documents would be checked according to the dates of the Calendar Plan, but how it was carried out is unknown. Among the reasons for registration refusals, as far as is known, there are inaccuracies in the declaration of income and assets and a lack of signatures. In general, the majority of election commissions verified signatures of voters and data on candidates contained in questionnaires and declarations of income and assets in an opaque and secret manner.

Results of registration of candidates for deputies of the House of Representatives

According to the CEC⁵⁶, out of 298 persons who submitted documents (which is the absolute minimum among the last 5 election cycles), 265 candidates were registered. The lowest rejection rate (8.4%) indicates a predetermined nomination process. Essentially, a logic can be traced: "at least two persons are on the ballot for the district" and resembles the previous statistics of pro-government parties: in 2019, 204 candidates from pro-government parties were registered out of 227 nominated, or 90% of the total number nominated by pro-government parties; 86% in the 2016 elections.

⁵⁶ Information on registration of candidates for deputies of the House of Representatives: <https://rec.gov.by/uploads/files/Pdf/2024/stat30.pdf>

DYNAMICS OF THE REGISTRATION OF CANDIDATES IN PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS

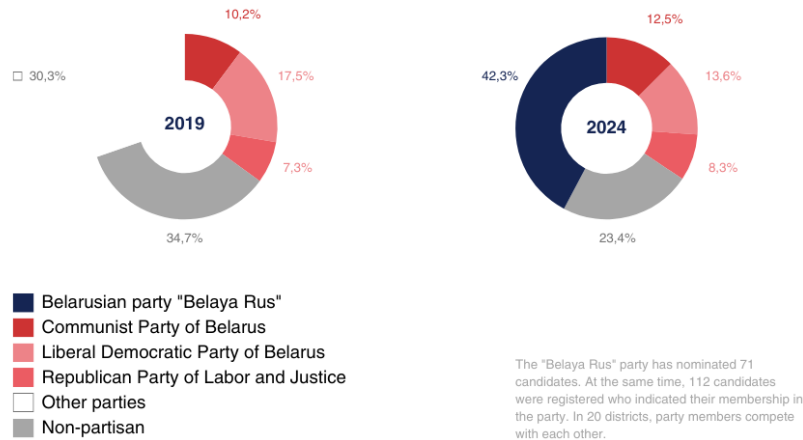


In terms of the way of nomination, the registered candidates were nominated in the three main ways in almost equal shares. It can be assumed that the efforts to "administratively formalize" the support of the nominated candidates were evenly distributed among political parties (158), labor collectives (136), and citizens by collecting signatures (133). The amount exceeds 265, as many candidates were nominated by two and three subjects.

The party membership⁵⁷ of registered candidates for deputies of the House of Representatives is characterized by an increase in the number of party members, primarily due to the newly created "Belaya Rus" party.

⁵⁷ The CEC data indicates 36 members of the LDPB <https://rec.gov.by/uploads/files/Pdf/2024/stat30.pdf> however, counting the members of the Liberal Democratic Party of Belarus in the lists of registered candidates in all oblasts nominated by the party gives a figure of 37 (there are 8 LDPB members in the Viciebsk oblast).

PARTY MEMBERS AND NON-PARTY MEMBERS AMONG REGISTERED PARLIAMENTARY CANDIDATES

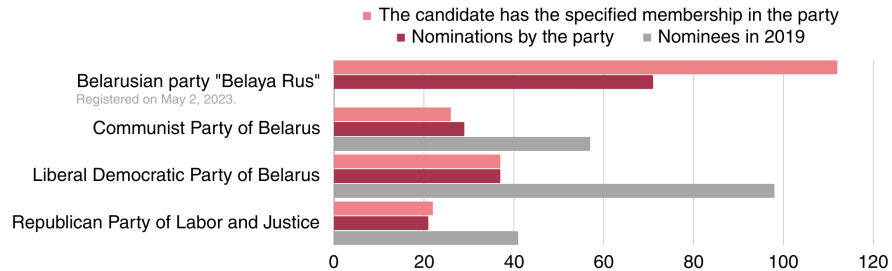


The Communist Party did not participate in the nomination of its members in the following districts: Homieł — Čyhunaczny No. 32 Kanapatski Aliaksandr Mikalayevich (nominated by citizens by collecting signatures and by a labor collective); Pukhavičy Election District No. 65 Saskavets Siarhei Stanislavavich (nominated by citizens by collecting signatures).

There are quite a few districts where, as a result, 2 candidates represent the same party. So, in the Salihorsk City Electoral District No. 68, only two candidates are registered, both from the Republican Party of Labor and Justice, and one of them is nominated by the party, and the second by a labor collective. Members of the Belarusian "Belaya Rus" Party compete with each other (occasionally with the participation of third candidates) in 20 districts⁵⁸, in which one candidate is nominated by the party (sometimes with the participation of other subjects), while the other is nominated either by a labor collective, or by citizens, or both. Such an "administrative" approach, unthinkable for a normal political process, indicates both the imitation of the party affiliation of the members of "Belaya Rus" and the complete lack of understanding of generally accepted democratic institutions that exclude such conflicts between party members.

⁵⁸ Brest — Uschodni No. 3; Baranavičy — Zachodni No. 5; Baranavičy — Uschodni No. 6; Baranavičy rural No. 7; Belavežski No. 8; Kobryn No. 12; Pinsk rural No. 15; Homieł — Navabelicki No. 36; Buda-Kašalioŭ No. 38; Žlobin No. 40; Vaŭkavysk No. 48; Hrodna — Leninski No. 51; Hrodna — Paŭnočny No. 52; Iŭje No. 54; Smarhon No. 59; Biarezinski No. 61; Barysaŭ No. 63; Maladžečna No. 73; Škloŭ No. 90; Partyzanski Electoral District No. 110, Minsk

THE PARTY MEMBERSHIP OF REGISTERED PARLIAMENTARY CANDIDATES AND THE SUPPORT BY THEIR OWN PARTY

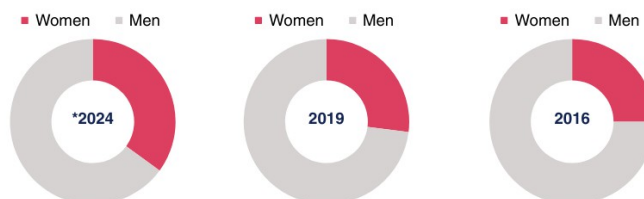


There is a tendency of decrease in the representation of incumbent deputies of the House of Representatives of the National Assembly and representatives of local authorities. Of the 22 re-nominated incumbent deputies of the House of Representatives, 20 persons and 31 incumbent deputies of local Councils were registered, which is significantly less than in the last cycle (2019 — 32 deputies of the House of Representatives; 66 deputies of local Councils). Thus, it can be stated that a significant number of new deputies will take office. Perhaps this is also evidence of administrative control in the form of fulfilling the "wishes" of A. Lukashenka, whose rhetoric changed from continuity in the form of a third of re-elections in 2008 to 20–25% in 2012⁵⁹.

92 women-candidates were registered (34.7%), which is more than in previous cycles.

⁵⁹ <https://sharkovshchina.vitebsk-region.gov.by/special/ru/republic-ru/view/alukashenko-v-beloruskom-parlamente-novogo-sozyva-dolzha-byt-soxranena-preemstvennost-9325/>

WOMEN AMONG REGISTERED PARLIAMENTARY CANDIDATES



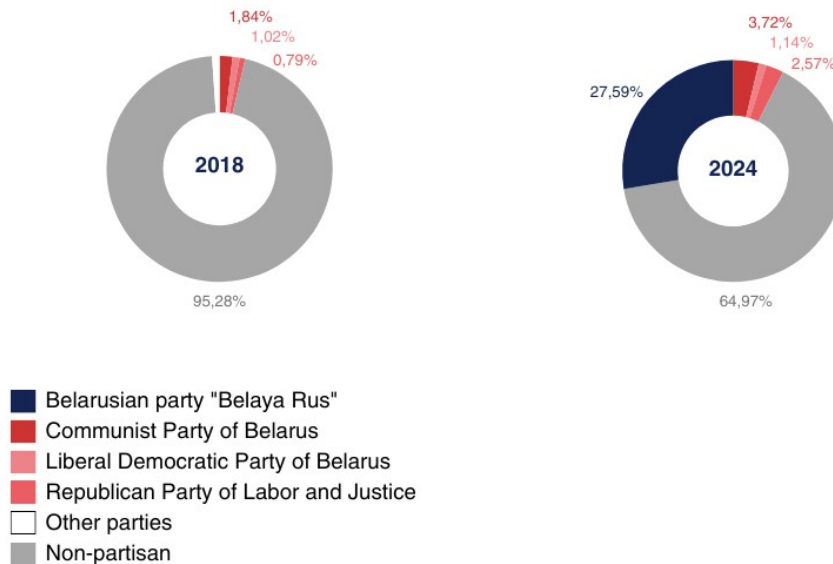
Results of registration of candidates for deputies of local Councils of the twenty-ninth convocation

According to the CEC⁶⁰, out of 18,999 persons who submitted documents, 18,802 candidates (98.96%) were registered. The trend of past cycles continues (98.09% in 2018) and the rejection rate remains low (0.65%). The average number of registered candidates at the settlement level is equal to one candidate per seat and 1.2 candidates per district at the rural level, i. e. virtually uncontested elections*, indicates a lack of political initiative and a very high degree of administrative control (pre-agreed lists of nominated candidates).

From the point of view of party affiliation, there is a noteworthy sharp increase in the share of party candidates among those registered due to members of the recently created "Belaya Rus" party:

⁶⁰ <https://rec.gov.by/uploads/files/Pdf/2024/stat31-32.pdf>

PARTY MEMBERS AND NON-PARTY MEMBERS AMONG THE REGISTERED CANDIDATES FOR LOCAL COUNCILS



The share of women among registered candidates for deputies of local Councils is 53.75%, which is more than in 2018 (49.13%). The share of incumbent deputies of local Councils decreased to 38.99% (in 2018 — 46.73%).

Appeal

It is reported⁶¹ that two refusals to register have been appealed to the Homiel Oblast Election Commission. The refusal of the regional election commission to register as a candidate for deputy to the regional Council, since the procedure for submitting an income declaration was violated, was recognized as legitimate. There is no information about further appeal of the decision of the oblast election commission in court. The appeal of the refusal of a rural election commission to register a candidate for deputy of the village Council due to the presence of more than 15% of unreliable signatures in the nomination lists was left without consideration. The oblast election commission decided that the appeal is within the competence of the regional election commission, which is superior to the rural commission.

⁶¹ <https://gp.by/novosti/obshchestvo/news281561.html>