

Women in government

Women in government in the modern era are under-represented in most countries worldwide. Women have inadequate opportunities in social participation, especially in striving for political rights and power in the government and different institutions.^[1] Social status of women is relatively compared to men in different countries around the world, that generating the atmosphere of inferiority of women in the society. This tendency is still persistent, although women are increasingly being politically elected to be heads of state and government^[2] As of January 2017, the global participation rate of women in national-level parliaments is 23.3%.^[3] A number of countries are exploring measures that may increase women's participation in government at all levels, from the local to the national.



A collage of muslim women voters in the 2010s from different countries such as Algeria, Syria, Pakistan, Jordan, Egypt and Iran.

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Importance

Increasing women's representation in the government can empower women^[4] and is necessary to achieve gender parity.^[5] This notion of women's empowerment is rooted in the human capabilities approach, in which individuals are empowered to choose the functioning that they deem valuable.^[6]

Women, as the conventional primary caretakers of children, often have a more prominent role than men in advocating for children, resulting in a "double dividend" in terms of the benefits of women's representation.^[4] Female representatives not only advance women's rights, but also advance the rights of children. In national legislatures, there is a notable trend of women advancing gender and family-friendly legislation. This advocacy has been seen in countries ranging from France, Sweden and the Netherlands, to South Africa, Rwanda, and Egypt. Furthermore, a number of studies from both industrialized and developed countries indicate that women in local government tend to advance social issues.^[4] In India, for instance, greater women's representation has corresponded with a more equitable distribution of community resources, including more gender-sensitive spending on programs related to health, nutrition, and education.

In 1954, the United Nations Convention on the Political Rights of Women went into force, enshrining women's equal rights to vote, hold office, and access public services as provided for male citizens within national laws.

Worldwide status of women's representation in government

As of October 25, 2013, the global average of women in national assemblies is 21.5%.^[7] At the same time, large differences exist between countries, e.g. Sri Lanka has quite low female participation rates in parliament compared with Denmark, Sweden and Norway, where female representation rates are among the highest.^[2]

Women in national parliaments

Out of 189 countries, listed in descending order by the percentage of women in the lower or single house, the top 10 countries with the greatest representation of women in national parliaments are (figures reflect information as of July 1, 2017; a - represents a unicameral legislature with no upper house).^[8]

Rank	Country	Lower or Single House	Upper House or Senate
1	Rwanda	61.3%	38.5%
2	Bolivia	53.1%	47.2%
3	Cuba	48.9%	—
4	Iceland	47.6%	—
5	Nicaragua	45.7%	—
6	Sweden	43.6%	—
7	Senegal	42.7%	—
8	Mexico	42.6%	36.9%
9	Finland	42.0%	—
10	South Africa	41.8%	35.2%



World's first female Secretary of State Lala Shevket at the office of Azerbaijan Liberal Party

New figures are available for up to February 2014 from International IDEA, Stockholm University and Inter-Parliamentary Union. (2014) at <http://www.quotaproject.org/quotas.cfm>

Although over 60% of countries have reached at least 10% women in their national legislature, far fewer have crossed the 20% and 30% barriers. By February 2006, only about 10% of sovereign nations had more than 30% women in parliament.^[9] The major English-speaking democracies are placed mostly in the top 40% of the ranked countries. New Zealand ranks at position 27 with women comprising 32.2% of its parliament. Australia (24.7% in the lower house, 38.2% in the upper house) and Canada (24.7% lower house, 37.9% upper house) rank at position 46 out of 189 countries. The United Kingdom is ranked at 58 (22.5% lower house, 22.6% upper house), while the United States ranks 78 (17.8% in the lower house, 20.0% in the upper house).^[8] It should be noted that not all of these lower and/or upper houses in national parliaments are democratically elected; for example, in Canada members of the upper house (the Senate) are appointed.

Paxton describes three factors that are the basis for why national level representation has become much larger over the past several decades. The first is the changing structural and economic conditions of nations, which says that educational advancements along with an increase in women's participation in the labor force encourages representation.^[10] The second is the political factor; representation of women in office being based on a proportionality system. Some voting systems are built so that a party that gains 25% of the votes gains 25% of the seats. In these processes, a political party feels obligated to balance the representation within their votes between genders, increasing women's activity in political standing. A plurality-majority system, such as the one the United States, United Kingdom, and India has, only allows single candidate elections, and thus allows political parties to entirely dictate regions' representatives even if they only control a small majority of the vote. Last, there is the ideological disposition of a country; the concept that the cultural aspects of women's roles or positions in the places they live dictate where they stand in that society, ultimately either helping or handicapping those women from entering political positions.^[10]

Challenges faced by women

Women face numerous obstacles in achieving representation in governance.^[4] Their participation has been limited by the assumption that women's proper sphere is the "private" sphere. Whereas the "public" domain is one of political authority and contestation, the "private" realm is associated with the family and the home.^[6] By relegating women to the private sphere, their ability to enter the political arena is curtailed.

Gender inequality within families, inequitable division of labor within households, and cultural attitudes about gender roles further subjugate women and serve to limit their representation in public life.^[4] Societies that are highly patriarchal often have local power structures that make it difficult for women to combat.^[11] Thus, their interests are often not represented or underrepresented.

There have been many arguments saying the plurality-majority voting system is a disadvantage to the chance that women get into office. Andrew Reynolds brings forth one of these arguments by stating: "Plurality-majority single-member-district systems, whether of the Anglo-American first-past-the-post (FPTP) variety, the Australian preference ballot alternative vote (AV), or the French two-round system (TRS), are deemed to be particularly unfavorable to women's chances of being elected to office".^[12] Andrew believes that the best systems are list-proportional systems "In these systems of high proportionality between seats won and votes cast, small parties are able to gain representation and parties have an incentive to broaden their overall electoral appeal by making their candidate lists as diverse as possible".^[12]

Even once elected, women tend to hold lesser valued cabinet ministries or similar positions.^[6] These are sometimes described as "soft industries" and include health, education, and welfare. Far less often do women hold executive decision-making authority in more powerful domains or those that are associated with traditional notions of masculinity (such as finance and the military). Typically, the more powerful the institution, the less likely it is that women's interests will be represented. Additionally, in more autocratic nations, women are less likely to have their interests represented.^[11] Many women attain political standing due to kinship ties, as they have male family members who are involved in politics.^[6] These women tend to be from higher income, higher status families and thus may not be as focused on the issues faced by lower income families. In The United States, the lower end of the professional ladder contains a higher proportion of women while the upper level contains a higher proportion of men. Research shows that women are underrepresented in head positions in state agencies making up only 18% of congress and 15% of corporate board positions. When women do gain any level of representation it is in the fields of health, welfare, and labor. They are seen to be addressing issues labeled as feminine.^[13]

Additionally, women running for public office typically gain additional, unnecessary scrutiny on their private lives. For instance, fashion choices of politically active women are often picked apart by the media. In these "analyses" women rarely gain approval from those in the media, who usually say they either they show too much skin or too little, or perhaps that they either look too feminine or too masculine. Sylvia Bashevkin also notes that their romantic lives are often subject of much interest to the general population, perhaps more so than their political agenda or stances on issues.^[14] She points out that those who "appear to be sexually active outside a monogamous heterosexual marriage run into particular difficulties, since they tend to be portrayed as vexatious vixens"^[15] who are more interested in their private romantic lives than in their public responsibilities.^[14] If they are in a monogamous, married relationship but have children, then their fitness for office becomes a question of how they manage being a politician while taking care of their children, something that a male politician would rarely, if ever, be asked about.

A 2017 study found that female Republican candidates fare worse in elections than Republican men and Democratic women.^[16]

Challenges within political parties

In Canada, there is evidence that female politicians face gender stigma from male members of the political parties to which they belong which can undermine the ability of women to reach or maintain leadership roles. Pauline Marois, leader of the Parti Québécois (PQ) and the official opposition of the National Assembly of Quebec, was the subject of a claim by Claude Pinard, a PQ "backbencher", that many Quebecers do not support a female politician: "I believe that one of her serious handicaps is the fact she's a woman [...] I sincerely believe that a good segment of the population won't support her because she's a woman".^[17] A 2000 study that analyzed 1993 election results in Canada found that among "similarly situated women and men candidates", women actually had a small vote advantage. The study showed that neither voter turnout nor urban/rural constituencies were factors that help or hurt a female candidate, but "office-holding experience in non-political organizations made a modest contribution to women's electoral advantage".^[18]

Bruce M. Hicks, an electoral studies researcher at Université de Montréal, states that evidence shows that female candidates begin with a head start in voters' eyes of as much as 10 per cent, and that female candidates are often more favorably associated by voters with issues like health care and education.^[17] The electorate's perception that female candidates have more proficiency with traditional women's spheres such as education and health care presents a possibility that gender stereotypes can work in a female candidate's favor; at least among the electorate. In politics, however, Hicks points out that sexism is nothing new:

(Marois' issue) does reflect what has been going on for some time now: women in positions of authority have problems in terms of the way they manage authority [...] The problem isn't them, it's the men under them who resent taking direction from strong women. And the backroom dirty dialogue can come into the public eye.^[17]

Within Quebec itself, Don McPherson pointed out that Pinard himself has enjoyed greater electoral success with Pauline Marois as party leader than under a previous male party leader, when Pinard failed to be elected in his riding. Demographically, Pinard's electoral riding is rural, with "relatively olderless-well educated voters":^[19]

Women's suffrage movement



Suffragette demonstration, 1913, Washington, D.C.

Women's suffrage is the right of women to vote in elections. Most countries enacted women's suffrage in the first half of the 20th century. In Europe, the last countries to enact it were Switzerland and Liechtenstein. In Switzerland, women gained the right to vote in federal elections in 1971;^[20] but in the canton of Appenzell Innerrhoden women obtained the right to vote on local issues only in 1991, when the canton was forced to do so by the Federal Supreme Court of Switzerland.^[21] In Liechtenstein, women were given the right to vote by the women's suffrage referendum of 1984. Three prior referendums held in 1968, 1971 and 1973 had failed to secure women's right to vote.

After Saudi Arabia granted women the same voting rights as men have in December 2015, Vatican City became the only country in the world where women are fully and exclusively denied the right to vote.^{[22][23]}

Mirror representation

Women's participation in formal politics is lower than men's throughout the world.^[24] The argument put forth by scholars Jacquette Newman and Linda White is that women's participation in the realm of high politics is crucial if the goal is to affect the quality of public policy. As such, the concept of *mirror representation* aims to achieve gender parity in public office. In other words, mirror representation says that the proportion of women in leadership should match the proportion of women in the population that they govern. Mirror representation is premised on the assumption that elected officials of a particular gender would likely support policies that seek to benefit constituents of the same gender

Effects of mirror representation on public policy

A key critique is that mirror representation assumes that all members of a particular sex operate under the rubric of a shared identity, without taking into consideration other factors such as age, education, culture, or socioeconomic status.^[25] However, proponents of mirror representation argue that women have a different relationship with government institutions and public policy than that of men, and therefore merit equal representation on this facet alone. This feature is based on the historical reality that women, regardless of background, have largely been excluded from influential legislative and leadership positions. As Sylvia Bashevkin notes, "representative democracy seems impaired, partial, and unjust when women, as a majority of citizens, fail to see themselves reflected in the leadership of their polity."^[26] In fact, the issue of participation of Women in politics is of such importance that the United Nations has identified gender equality in representation (i.e. mirror representation) as a goal in the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the Beijing Platform for Action.^[27] Besides seeking equality, the goal of mirror representation is also to recognize the significance of women's involvement in politics, which subsequently legitimizes said involvement.

There have been differing results between studies that looked at the significance of women's representation on actual policy outcomes. Though women in the United States are more likely to identify as feminists,^[28] a 2014 study looking in the United States finds "no effect of gender of the mayor on policy outcomes."^[29] A 2012 study finds mixed evidence that the share of female

councilors in Sweden affected conditions for women citizens, such as women's income, unemployment, health, and parental leave.^[30] A 2015 study in Sweden said that: "The findings show that female legislators defend feminist interests more than their male colleagues but that they only marginally respond to women's electoral preferences."^[31] A 2016 study looking at African politicians finds "gender differences in policy priorities [to be] quite small on average, vary across policy domains and countries"^[32]

Social and cultural barriers to mirror representation

Mirror representation stems from the barriers female political candidates often face, these include: sex stereotyping, political socialization, lack of preparation for political activity, and balancing work and family. In the media, women are often asked how they would balance the responsibilities of elected office with those to their families, something men are never asked.^[33]

Sex stereotyping Sex stereotyping assumes that masculine and feminine traits are intertwined with leadership. Hence, the bias leveled against women stems from the perception that femininity inherently produces weak leadership.^[34] Due to the aggressive and competitive nature of politics, many insist that participation in elected office requires masculine traits.^[35] Sex stereotyping is far from being a historical narrative. The pressure is on female candidates (and not male ones) to enhance their masculine traits in order to garner support from voters who identify with socially constructed gender roles.

Political socialization Political socialization is the idea that, during childhood, people are indoctrinated into socially constructed norms of politics. In the case of women's representation in government, it says that sex stereotyping begins at an early age and affects the public's disposition on which genders are fit for public office. Socialization agents can include family, school, higher education, mass media, and religion.^[36] Each of these agents plays a pivotal role in either fostering a desire to enter politics, or dissuading one to do so.

Generally, girls tend to see politics as a "male domain".^[37] Newman and White suggest that women who run for political office have been "socialized toward an interest in and life in politics" and that "many female politicians report being born into political families with weak genderrole norms."^[38]

Lack of preparation for political activity. An aftereffect of political socialization is that it determines how inclined women are to pursue careers that may be compatible with formal politics. Careers in law, business, education, and government, professions in which women happen to be minorities, are common occupations for those that later decide to enter public life.^[38]

Balancing work and family. The work life balance is invariably more difficult for women, because they are generally expected by society to act as the primary caregivers for children and maintainers of the home. Due to these demands, it is assumed that women would choose to delay political aspirations until their children are older. Also, a women's desire for a career in politics along with the extent that the respondent feels her family duties might inhibit her ability to be an elected official.^[39] Research has shown that new female politicians in Canada and the U.S. are older than their male counterparts.^[40] Conversely, a woman may be pushed to remain childless in order to seek political office.

Institutional barriers may also pose as a hindrance for balancing a political career and family. For instance, in Canada, Members of Parliament do not contribute to Employment Insurance; therefore, they are not entitled to paternity benefits.^[41] Such lack of parental leave would undoubtedly be a reason for women to delay seeking electoral office. Furthermore, mobility plays a crucial role in the work-family dynamic. Elected officials are usually required to commute long distances to and from their respective capital cities, which can be a deterrent for women seeking political office.



Khadija Arib at the Dutch Parliament

Policies to increase women's participation

The United Nations has identified six avenues by which female participation in politics and government may be strengthened. These avenues are: equalization of educational opportunities, quotas for female participation in governing bodies, legislative reform to increase focus on issues concerning women and children, financing gender-responsive budgets to equally take into account the needs of men and women, increasing the presence of sex-disaggregated statistics in national research/data, and furthering the presence and agency of grassroots women's empowerment movements.^[4]

Education

Women with formal education (at any level) are more likely to delay marriage and subsequent childbirth, be better informed about infant and child nutrition, and ensure childhood immunization. Children of mothers with formal education are better nourished and have higher survival rates.^[4] Education is a vital tool for any person in society to better themselves in their career path, and equalization of educational opportunities for boys and girls may take the form of several initiatives:

- abolishment of educational fees which would require parents to consider financial issues when deciding which of their children to educate. Poor children in rural areas are particularly ~~acted~~ affected by inequality resulting from educational fees.^[42]
- encouragement of parents and communities to institute gender-equal educational agendas. Perceived opportunity cost of educating girls may be addressed through a conditional cash transfer program which financially reward families who educate their daughters (thus removing the financial barrier that results from girls substituting school attendance for work in the family labor force).^[43]
- creation of "girl-friendly" schools to minimize bias and create a safe school environment for girls and young women. Currently, a barrier to female school attendance is the risk of sexual violence en route to school.^[44] A "safe school environment" is one in which the school is located to minimize such violence, in addition to providing girls with educational opportunities (as opposed to using female students to perform janitorial work or other menial labor).^[44]

Mark P. Jones, in reference to Norris's Legislative Recruitment, states that: "Unlike other factors that have been identified as influencing the level of women's legislative representation, such as a country's political culture and level of economic development, institutional rules are relatively easy to change".^[45]

In an article about the exclusion of Women from politics in southern Africa, Amanda Gouws said "The biggest hurdles to overcome for women are still on the local level where both men and women are often recruited from the communities and have limited political skills".^[46] The level of education in these local governments or, for that matter, the people in those positions of power, are substandard.

One example of the hurdles women face in receiving good education comes from Beijing. "Most women who attended the NGO Forums accompanying the UN conferences, which are for government delegations (though increasingly many governments include activists and NGO members among their official delegates), were middle-class educated women from INGOS, donors, academics, and activists".^[47] Lydia Kompe, a well-known South African activist, was one of these rural women. She noted that she felt overwhelmed and completely disempowered. In the beginning, she did not think she could finish her term of office because of her lack of education.^[46] Manisha Desai explains that: "There is an inequality simply around the fact that the UN system and its locations say a lot about the current focus of those systems, such positions being in the US and Western Europe allow easier access to those women in the area."^[47] It is also important to note that institutions affect the cultural propensity to elect women candidates in different ways in different parts of the world.^[12]

The study of the history of women's representation has been a major contribution in helping scholars view such concepts. Andrew Reynolds states: "historical experience often leads to gender advancement, and political liberalization enables women to mobilize within the public sphere".^[12] He argues that we will see a larger number of women in higher office positions in established democracy than in democracies that are developing, and "the more illiberal a state is, the fewer women will be in positions of power".^[12] As countries open education systems to women, and more women participate in historically male dominated fields, it is possible to see a shift in political views regarding women in government.

Quotas

Quotas are explicit requirements on the number of women in political positions.^[44] "Gender quotas for the election of legislators have been used since the late 1970s by a few political parties (via the party charter) in a small number of advanced industrial democracies; such examples would be like Germany and Norway".^[45] Andrew Reynolds says there is "an increasing practice in legislatures for the state, or the parties themselves, to utilize formal or informal quota mechanisms to promote women as candidates and MPs".^[12] The statistics surrounding quota systems have been examined thoroughly by academia.



Example of a TRS ballot papers

Types of quotas include:^[44]

- Sex quota systems: institute a "critical value" below which is deemed an imbalanced government. Examples of such critical values include 20% of legislators, 50% of politicians, etc.
- Legal quota systems regulate the governance of political parties and bodies. Such quotas may be mandated by electoral law (as the Argentine quota law for example) or may be constitutionally required (as in Nepal).
- Voluntary party quota systems may be used by political parties at will, yet are not mandated by electoral law or by a country's constitution. If a country's leading or majority political party engages in a voluntary party quota system, the effect may "trickle down" to minority political parties in the country (as in the case of the African National Congress in South Africa).

Quotas may be utilized during different stages of the political nomination/selection process to address different junctures at which women may be inherently disadvantaged.^[44]

- Potential candidacy: sex quota systems can mandate that from the pool of aspirants, a certain percentage of them must be female.
- Nomination: legal or voluntary quotas are enforced upon this stage, during which a certain portion of nominated candidates on the party's ballot must be female.
- Election: "reserved seats" may be filled only by women.

Quota usage can have marked effects on female representation in governance. In 1995, Rwanda ranked 24th in terms of female representation, and jumped to 1st in 2003 after quotas were introduced. Similar effects can be seen in Argentina, Iraq, Burundi, Mozambique, and South Africa, for example.^[44] Of the top-ranked 20 countries in terms of female representation in government, 17 of these countries utilize some sort of quota system to ensure female inclusion. Though such inclusion is mainly instituted at the national level, there have been efforts in India to address female inclusion at the subnational level, through quotas for parliamentary positions.^[48]

With quotas drastically changing the number of female representatives in political power, a bigger picture unravels. Though countries are entitled to regulate their own laws, the quota system helps explain social and cultural institutions and their understandings and overall view of women in general. "At first glance, these shifts seem to coincide with the adoption of candidate gender quotas around the globe as quotas have appeared in countries in all major world regions with a broad range of institutional, social, economic and cultural characteristics".^[49]

Quotas have been quite useful in allowing women to gain support and opportunities when attempting to achieve seats of power, but some see this as a wrongdoing. Drude Dahlerup and Lenita Freidenvall argue this in their article "Quotas as a 'Fast Track' to Equal Representation for Women" by stating: "From a liberal perspective, quotas as a specific group right conflict with the principle of equal opportunity for all. Explicitly favoring certain groups of citizens, i.e. women, means that not all citizens (men) are given an equal chance to attain a political career".^[50] Dahlerup and Freidenvall claim that even though quotas create theoretical imbalance in opportunity for men and that they necessarily break the concept of "classical liberal notion of equality",^[50] quotas are almost required to bring the relation of women in politics to a higher state, whether that is through equal opportunity or just equal results.^[50] "According to this understanding of women's under-representation, mandated quotas for the recruitment and election of female candidates, possibly also including time-limit provisions, are needed".^[60]

The introduction of gender quotas in the electoral process has spurred controversy from male politicians, resulting in resistance to the acceptance of quotas in the political realm.^[51] The mobilization of women in politics has been hindered by means of preserving male political survival, and to avoid political interference with male power and domination.^[51] Moreover, the implementation of gender quotas has caused the male candidate population to decrease in order for their female counterparts to participate, and this is

commonly referred to as the “negative sum,” and this can result in a more qualified male being rejected to allow a female politician to participate.^[51] Furthermore, in the case of Argentina, which is currently mandated for a 30% female party at each level of government, saw the introduction of the ‘quota women’; females that were less experienced, and only elected due to the legal requirement of quotas.^[52] The introduction of the ‘quota women’ has triggered what political scientists refer to as a ‘mandate effect,’ where quota women feel obligated to represent solely the interests of the female public.^[52] Moreover, in order to preserve male political survival, “domination techniques” have been utilized to both exclude and delegitimize female representation in politics, and this can be depicted in the case of Argentina, where it took several elections to gain 35% of female representatives.^[52] With the increase of female representation in Argentina, issues that were rarely discussed before became paramount in debates, such as “penal laws, sexual assault laws, and laws on maternity leave and pregnancy... sexual education, [and] emergency contraceptive.”

Substantive representation contains two distinct parts: both the process and outcome of having female politicians.^[52] Substantive representation based on the process is concerned with the gendered perspective, themes that female representatives discuss in political debates, and the impact they have on the creation of bills.^[52] Likewise, this process also includes the networking between women in government and female organizations.^[52] Substantive representation by outcome relates to the success of passing legislation that enables gender equality to both public and private issues.^[52] Moreover, substantive representation as process does not always result in substantive representation by outcome; the implementation of gender quotas and female representation does not directly instigate an influx in legislation.^[52]

Critical mass theory has correlations with both substantive representation as process and substantive representation as outcome. Critical mass theory suggests that once a certain percentage of women representatives has been reached, that female legislators will be able to create and enable transformative policies, and this has the potential to place pressure on quota women to act on behalf of all women.^[52] One paramount criticism of critical mass theory is its attention to numbers, and the understanding that quota women are to represent women collectively.^[52] Furthermore, the representation of women as a collective group remains controversial, as “[if] she is a white straight, middle-class mother, she cannot speak for African-American women, or poor women, or lesbian women on the basis of her own experience anymore than men can speak for women merely on the basis of theirs.”^[52]

Legislation

There have been numerous occasions where equal legislation has benefited the overall progression of women equality on a global scale. Though women have entered legislation, the overall representation within higher ranks of government is not being established. “Looking at ministerial positions broken down by portfolio allocation, one sees a worldwide tendency to place women in the softer sociocultural ministerial positions rather than in the harder and politically more prestigious positions of economic planning, national security, and foreign affairs, which are often seen as stepping-stones to national leadership.”^[12]

Legislative agendas, some pushed by female political figures, may focus on several key issues to address ongoing gender disparities:

- Reducing domestic and gender-based violence. The Convention on the Rights of the Child, published by the United Nations in 1989, addressed home violence and its effects on children. The Convention stipulates that children are holders of human rights, and authorizes the State to 1) prevent all forms of violence, and 2) respond to past violence effectively.^[53] Gender-based violence, such as the use of rape as a tool of warfare, was addressed in Resolution 1325 of the UN Security Council in 2000. It calls for “all parties of armed conflict to take special measures to protect women and girls from gender-based violence.”^[64]
- Reducing in-home discrimination through equalizing property and inheritance rights. National legislation can supersede traditionally male-dominated inheritance models. Such legislation has been proven effective in countries like Colombia, where 60% of land is held in joint titles between men and women (compared to 18% before the passage of joint titling legislation in 1996).^[55]

Financing

Sex-responsive budgets address the needs and interests of different individuals and social groups, maintaining awareness of sexual equality issues within the formation of policies and budgets. Such budgets are not necessarily a 50–50 male-female split, but accurately reflect the needs of each sex (such as increased allocation for women’s reproductive health).^[56] Benefits of gender-responsive budgets include:

- Improved budget efficiency by ensuring that funds are allocated where they are needed most
- Strengthened government position by advocating for needs of all, including the poor and the underrepresented right:
- Increased information flow surrounding needs of those who are usually discriminated against

A sex-responsive budget may also work to address issues of unpaid care work and caring labor gaps.^[56]

Research/data improvements

Current research which uses sex-aggregated statistics may underplay or minimize the quantitative presentation of issues such as maternal mortality, violence against women, and girls' school attendance.^[4] Sex-disaggregated statistics are lacking in the assessment of maternal mortality rates, for example. Prior to UNICEF and UNIFEM efforts to gather more accurate and comprehensive data, 62 countries had no recent national data available regarding maternal mortality rates.^[57] Only 38 countries have sex-disaggregated statistics available to report frequency of violence against women.^[57] 41 countries collect sex-disaggregated data on school attendance, while 52 countries assess sex-disaggregated wage statistics.^[57]

Though the representation has become a much larger picture, it is important to notice the inclination of political activity emphasizing women over the years in different countries. "Although women's representation in Latin America, Africa, and the West progressed slowly until 1995, in the most recent decade, these regions show substantial growth, doubling their previous percentage^[9].

Researching politics on a global scale does not just reinvent ideas of politics, especially towards women, but brings about numerous concepts. Sheri Kunovich and Pamela Paxton research method, for example, took a different path by studying "cross-national" implications to politics, taking numerous countries into consideration. This approach helps identify research beforehand that could be helpful in figuring out commodities within countries and bringing about those important factors when considering the overall representation of women. "At the same time, we include information about the inclusion of women in the political parties of each country".^[10] Research within gender and politics has taken a major step towards a better understanding of what needs to be better studied. Dr. Mona L. Krook states: These kinds of studies help establish that generalizing countries together is far too limiting to the overall case that we see across countries and that we can take the information we gain from these studies that look at countries separately and pose new theories as to why countries have the concepts they do; this helps open new reasons and thus confirms that studies need to be performed over a much larger group of factors.^[58] Authors and researchers such as Mala Htun and Laurel Weldon also state that single comparisons of established and developed countries is simply not enough but is also surprisingly hurtful to the progress of this research, they argue that focusing on a specific country "tends to duplicate rather than interrogate" the overall accusations and concepts we understand when comparing political fields.^[59] They continue by explaining that comparative politics has not established sex equality as a major topic of discussion among countries.^[59] This research challenges the current standings as to what needs to be the major focus in order to understand gender in politics.

Grassroots women's empowerment movements

Women's informal collectives are crucial to improving the standard of living for women worldwide. Collectives can address such issues as nutrition, education, shelter, food distribution, and generally improved standard of living.^[60] Empowering such collectives can increase their reach to the women most in need of support and empowerment. Though women's movements have a very successful outcome with the emphasis on gaining equality towards women, other movements are taking different approaches to the issue. Women in certain countries, instead of approaching the demands as representation of women as "a particular interest group", have approached the issue on the basis of the universality of sex differences and the relation to the nation".^[59] Htun and Weldon also bring up the point of democracy and its effects on the level of equality it brings. In their article, they explain that a democratic country is more likely to listen to "autonomous organizing" within the government. Women's movements would benefit from this the most or has had great influence and impact because of democracy, though it can become a very complex system.^[59] When it comes to local government issues, political



The lady in the case, an example of how some have interpreted women's involvement in government

standings for women are not necessarily looked upon as a major issue. "Even civil society organizations left women's issues off the agenda. At this level, traditional leaders also have a vested interest that generally opposes women's interests".^[46] Theorists believe that having a setback in government policies would be seen as catastrophic to the overall progress of women in government. Amanda Gouws says that "The instability of democratic or nominally democratic regimes makes women's political gains very vulnerable because these gains can be easily rolled back when regimes change. The failure to make the private sphere part of political contestation diminishes the power of formal democratic rights and limits solutions to gender inequality^[46]."

Case studies

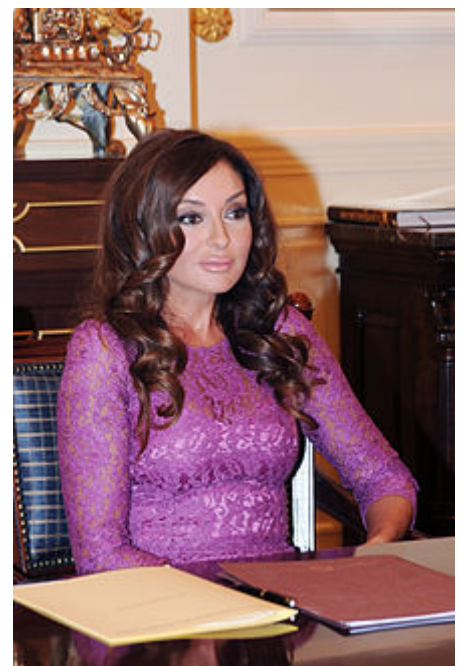
Azerbaijan

In Azerbaijan, placing women in government has progressed better than in other Islamic countries. Universal suffrage was introduced in Azerbaijan in 1918 by the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic, thus making Azerbaijan the first Muslim-majority countries and Turk-majority countries ever to enfranchise women. Now, 28 women are members in the Azerbaijan Parliament(Milli Məclis). As of 2015, there were 21 women in the 125-seat parliament. The percentage of female members of parliament increased from 11 to 17 percent between 2005 and 2015. Traditional social norms and lagging economic development in the country's rural regions continued to restrict the role of women in the economy, and there were reports that women had difficulty exercising their legal rights due to gender discrimination. As of May 2009, women held the positions of Deputy Chairman of the Constitutional Court, Deputy Chairman of the Nakhchivan AR Cabinet of Ministers, four Deputy Ministers, an Ambassador, and Ombudsmen of Azerbaijan and Nakhchivan AR. Women constituted 4 of the 16 members of the Central Election Commission and chaired 3 of the 125 district election commissions. Some famous female managers in historical Azerbaijan territories mentioned below:



Tomyris, leader of Scythians

- Tomyris – antic women leader of Scythians, was born in near of Araks River
- Amytis of Media– the daughter Median king Cyaxares, and the wife of Nebuchadnezzar II
- Sparama – most important person of Caucasian Albania(for 9th century)
- Abish Khatun– governor of Fars from 1283 to 1287 (Salghurids or Atabegs of Turk)
- Sara Khatun – a first female politicians in Islamic World, shahbanu of Ak Koyunlu Empire
- Tajlu Khanum – was a Turcoman princess, politicians and warrior of Safavid Empire
- Raziya Khatun– Shah (Emperor) of Safavid Empire (during 1736-1749)
- Elena Stasova – World's first communist female president (chairman) during 1 week
- Zuleykha Seyidmammadova– was a Minister of Social Security and first military Azerbaijan women pilot.
- Ayna Sultanova– the first Azerbaijani female cabinet minister (People's Commissar of Justice).
- Sima Eyvazova– was first non-Russian diplomat of USSR, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Azerbaijan, members of United Nations
- Sakina Aliyeva– the first Azerbaijani female head of parliament.
- Tahira Tahirova – Minister of Foreign Affairs of Azerbaijan
- Elmira Gafarova– was a Speaker of the National Assembly of Azerbaijan, and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Azerbaijan



Mehriban Aliyeva, 5th First Lady of Azerbaijan

- Lydia Rasulova – was a Minister of Social Security(1988-1992), Minister of Education (1993-1997).
- Leyla Yunus – Chairman of Information and Analysis Center of Ministry of Defence.
- Lala Shevket – is an Azerbaijan politician, world's first female Secretary of State between 1993 and 1994.
- Sudaba Hasanova – was a Minister of Justice
- Mehriban Aliyeva – Vice President, the head of Heydar Aliyev Foundation.
- Maleyka Abbaszadeh – the chair of the State Students Admission Commission.
- Hijran Huseynova – is chairwomen of the State Committee for Family Women and Children Affairs.
- Elmira Suleymanova – is first Ombudsman
- Ganira Pashayeva – is a Member of the National Assembly of Azerbaijan
- Havva Mammadova – Diplomat, Member of National Assembly of Azerbaijan.
- Leyla Aliyeva – Director of International Dialogue for Environmental Action
- Govhar Bakhshaliyeva – is the director of the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences



Zuleykha Seyidmammadova

Brazil

A 1995 Brazilian gender quota was extended first to city councilor positions in 1996, then extended to candidates of all political legislative positions by 1998.^[61] By 1998, 30% of political candidates had to be women, with varied results in terms of the gender balance of the officials ultimately elected. Though the percentage of national legislature seats occupied by women dropped in the initial years following the passage of the quota law, the percentage has since risen (from 6.2% pre-quota, to 5.7% in 1998, to 8.9% in 2006). However, Brazil has struggled with the quota law in several respects:

- Though the quota law mandates a certain percentage of candidate spots be reserved for women, it is not compulsory that those spots be filled by women.
- The quota law also allowed political parties to increase the number of candidates, further increasing electoral competition and having a negligible impact on the actual number of women elected.

China

China's stipulation for gender equality in the political sphere started on as early as recorded in its 1954 Constitution, in which the PRC government stated that men and women enjoy equal rights in the aspects of political, economic, cultural, social and family dimensions, especially highlighting legitimate voting right and the right to be elected.^[62] Another State document – Law of the People's Republic of China on the Protection of Rights and Interests of Woman – also outlined an official requirement of 'appropriate number of women deputies', combined with the State's obligations to 'gradually increase the proportion of the women deputies' and 'actively trains and selects female cadres' in fundamental national institutions and political organizations.^[63] For decades that follow China has been making revision to its constitutional laws and State announcements to give recognition to women's role in the domain of governance. An example of which is the proclamation issued on the 5th meeting session of the 10th National People's Congress (NPC) necessitating that 'the proportion of women delegates to be elected to the 11th People's Congress should be no less than 20%'.

However, regardless of the proper representation of women's political eligibility across multiple government declarations, the political system in China remains overwhelmingly male-dominated which in turns drives the low engagement rate of women delegates. Despite the new 13th NPC lineup with a composition of 742 women out of 2,980 representatives, which amounts to 24.9% penetration with 1.5 points increase as opposed to the former term,^[64] there is mere presence of women in the central power structure in major government organs and their political influences are vastly diminished as they climb up the political ladder. Justifications of the above statement include the fact that only 33 women (9%) are recorded to have a seat at the table of Central Committee for the election of members into the Politburo, a key cornerstone for the approval all national affairs.^[65] In fact, except for the two consecutive office in 1973 and 1977, the Central Committee has never witnessed over 10% of women engagement in the organization.^[66] Associated with the above figure is the decline in the 25-member Politburo from two women down to one. In

addition, the recent reappointment of Xi Jinping, General Secretary of the Chinese Communist Party, has sparked controversy on the unbroken record of no-women Politburo Standing Committee and absence of female top leaders in any legislature in China's political history, apart from the exceptions of Vice Premier, Liu Yandong and Vice Foreign Minister, Fu Ying. The public has been compelled to draw parallel with Hong Kong and Taiwan where female presidents – Carrie Lam and Tsai Ing-wen – took office in 2018 and 2016 respectively.^[67]

The male-heavy politics amidst the favorable women's right protection in China can be examined from the following underlying causes:

(1) Deprivation of upward mobility

While the implied prerequisite of national appointment is years of experience serving at middle-to-top management, women in the PRC government often struggle to obtain promotion to high-ranked positions, such as party secretary or principal governor.^[65] The reason contributing to the captioned phenomenon is gender division of labor across all levels of political structures. Contrary to Mao Zedong's saying that 'Women hold up half of the sky', Confucians principles' deeply ingrained advocacy "nan zhu wai, nu zhu nei" (men working on the outside, women's place remains on the inside) has shaped gender division of labor.^[68] Being assigned highly gender-biased responsibilities within the spectrum of 'women affairs', such as family planning that are reproduction-oriented or with connection to social construction, women's public role and scope of duty are framed under constraints. Women are, at the same time, missing the opportunities to keep a foothold in strategic national affairs, including but not limited to economic development, military planning and diplomatic involvement. The mentioned dilemma is reflected by an actual example in Ning Xiang County, Hunan Province. Women commonly maintain highest authority as Head in women-related bodies, administering concerns on women's unfair treatments and suggesting for children's health development.^[69] By the same token, the gendered portfolio gives rise to empowerment of male in the political hierarchy. Consequently, with the lack of exposure to the exemplary official posts and the exclusive offering of key national assignments for men, women's upward mobility is aggravated, resulting in the substantially dwindling likelihood of taking residence in key leading positions.

(2) Biased retirement precondition prejudicing against women

In China, there is an apparent discrepancy in the mandatory retirement age between men and women, in which men are entitled to enjoy 10 more years of work. This policy was established on the ground that women are primary and central support for domestic subjects and their early retirement (at the age of 50-55) would be beneficial to their overall family functioning.^[67] This discriminatory policy mirrors the cause in the previous part, in which the working capacity of women is restricted by the society's stereotype on their gender role and corresponding gender responsibilities. In addition, the average age of Chinese chief in Central Committee is 56.1 years old; Top leaders in Politburo were appointed at an average age of 61.1 years old; Whereas Standing Committee of Politburo has the highest average age of 63.4 for its office.^[70] All figures being examined, the aggregated average age of appointed leaders exceeds the legal retirement age of women in the nation, meaning that women are least likely to become the center of power before their career come to an end.

(3) Anti-feminism

While in foreign countries, women's socio-economic status is uplifted and gender division of labor is largely wiped out by feminist movements to open up the availability and variety of work for women, the conservative and politically-sensitive Chinese government's censorship on feminism within the country has spread fear among feminism advocates. An illustrative case of which is the backlash of 'Feminist Five' in China. The activists suffered from interrogation, detention and month-long imprisonment due to the distribution of stickers on Beijing subways for drawing the wider community's awareness to sexual harassment against women.^[71] Followed by the forced suspension of Weibo account 'Feminist Voices' due to the government's tightened censorship, feminist encountered escalated obstacles in promoting gender equality. Feminist movements are yet to achieve their goals.

Finland

The Finnish national quota law, introduced in 1995, mandates that among all indirectly elected public bodies (at both a national and a local level), neither sex in the governing body can be under 40%.^[72] The 1995 law was a reformed version of a similar 1986 law. Unlike other countries' quota laws, which affect party structure or electoral candidate lists, the Finnish law addresses indirectly elected bodies (nominated by official authorities)—the law does not address popularly elected bodies. The Finnish law heavily emphasizes local municipal boards and other subnational institutions. From 1993 (pre-quota law) to 1997 (post-quota law), the proportion of women on municipal executive boards increased from 25% to 45%. The quota law also affected gender segregation in local governance: before the passage of the law, there had been a gender imbalance in terms of female overrepresentation in "soft-sector" boards (those concerned with health, education, etc.) and female "underrepresentation" in "hard-sector" boards (those concerned with economics and technology). In 1997, the boards were balanced horizontally. However, areas not subject to quota laws continue to be imbalanced. In 2003, it was determined that only 16% of the chairs of municipal executive boards are female—chair positions in this area are not quota-regulated.^[73] Presidential elections were held in Finland on 16 January 2000, with a second round on 6 February;^[74] the result was a victory for Tarja Halonen of the Social Democratic Party, who became the country's first female President.

Germany

The gender quotas implemented across parties in Germany in the 1990s serve as a natural experiment for the effect of sub-national party political gender quotas on women participation. Davidson-Schmich (2006) notes, "the German case provides the variance needed to explain the successful (or failed) implementation of these political party quotas".^[75] Germany's sixteen state legislatures, the *Länder*, feature a variety of party systems and varied numbers of potential female candidates. Germany is rated highly in its gender gap, but is an example of a developed country with a low percentage of female leadership in politics. Davidson-Schmich's study shows that there are many factors that influence how effective a political quota for women will be. Because Germany's quotas cover culturally diverse areas, Davidson-Schmich was able to see which cities best responded to the increase in women running for office. In her bivariate study, the quota was more successful when the city had a PR electoral system, when more women held inner-party and local political offices, and when there were more women in state-level executive offices. The quota was less successful in rural areas, areas with a large number of Catholic voters, electoral systems with a preferential system, in extremely competitive party systems, and with greater rates of legislative turnover. In her multivariate study of these regions, however, Davidson-Schmich narrowed these factors down even further to the most significant variables of: Catholicism and agricultural economics (Davidson-Schmich, 2006, p. 228). This is very intriguing, and as she explains, "the success of voluntary gender quotas in the German states hinged not on the political structure of these Lander, but rather the willingness of within the system to act on the opportunities inherent in these structures" (Davidson-Schmich, 2006, p. 228). Social factors and inherent gender discrimination are more important in the success of a female political quota than the structure of the quota itself.

India

In an effort to increase women's participation in politics in India, a 1993 constitutional amendment mandated that a randomly selected third of leadership positions at every level of local government be reserved for women.^[76] These political reservation quotas randomly choose one third of cities to implement a women-only election.^[77] In these cities, parties are forced to either give a ticket to a women candidate or choose to not run in those locations. Due to the randomized selection of cities who must enforce the reservation for women each election year, some cities have implemented the quota multiple times, once or never. This addresses the political discrimination of women at various levels: parties are forced to give women the opportunity to run, the women candidates are not disadvantaged by a male incumbent or general biases for male over female leadership, and the pool of women candidates is increased because of the guaranteed opportunity for female participation.^[77] The effects of the quota system in India have been studied by various researchers. In Mumbai, it was found that the probability of a women winning office conditional on the constituency being reserved for women in the previous election is approximately five times the probability of a women winning office if the constituency had not been reserved for women.^[77] Furthermore, that even when the mandates are withdrawn, women were still able to keep their positions of leadership. Given the opportunity to get a party ticket, create a platform and obtain the experience to run for a political position, women are much more likely to be able to overcome these hurdles in the future, even without the quota system in place.^[77] The quota system has also affected policy choices. Research in West Bengal and Rajasthan has indicated that reservation affected policy choices in ways that seem to better reflect women's preferences.^[78] In terms of voter's

perception of female leaders, reservation did not improve the implicit or explicit distaste for female leaders—in fact, the relative explicit preference for male leaders was actually strengthened in villages that had experienced a quota. However, while reservation did not make male villagers more sympathetic to the idea of female leaders, it caused them to recognize that women could lead. Moreover, the reservation policy significantly improved women's prospects in elections open to both sexes, but only after two rounds of reservation within the same village.^[79] Political reservation for women has also impacted the aspirations and educational attainment for teenage girls in India.^[80]

Israel

Japan

Japan ranks 127 in the world for the number of women in national parliamentary worldwide as of March 2014, which is lower than that of 2013 in which Japan ranked at 122.^[81] As of February 28, 2013, there are a total of 39 women in the House of Representatives out of 479 incumbents.^[82] Since the enactment of the modern Japanese Constitution in 1947, Japanese women have been given the right to vote, and the new version of the constitution also allows for a more democratic form of government that guarantees women equality under the law. The first female cabinet member, Masa Nakayama was appointed as the Minister of Health and Welfare in Japan in 1960.^[83] Until 1996, the electoral system for the House of Representatives was based on a single non-transferable vote in multi-member districts. That system was not conducive to women's advancement in public office because it promoted contestation between competing parties and rival candidates within the same party, but overall, the new electoral system was introduced to reduce the excessive role of money and corruption in elections, which ultimately helped women who were running for public office.^[84] In Japanese politics, the kōenkai is a major factor for a successful outcome of an election. The kōenkai, or "local support groups", serve as pipelines through which funds and other support are conveyed to legislators and through which the legislators can distribute favors to constituents in return. Because gaining support from these groups is usually based on personal connections, women's historically disadvantaged position in networking circles hurts their ability to run for public office.^[85] By 1996, Japan adopted another new electoral system for the House of Representatives that combines single-seat districts with proportional representation. Out of 480 seats, 300 are contested in single seat constituencies. The other 180 members are elected through allocations to an electoral list submitted by each party. Candidates who lack a strong support system are listed on a party's proportional representation section. In the 2009 election, only two of eight female Liberal Democratic Party members were elected from a single-seat district, which indicates that few female candidates have enough political support to win a single-seat election.^[86] While changes in the electoral process have made positions of public office more accessible to women, the actual participation of women in the Diet remains relatively low. As for the future of women in politics in Japan, Prime Minister Shinzō Abe announced in his speech at the Japan National Press Club on April 19, 2013, that a major goal of his national growth strategy is "having no less than 30 per cent of leadership positions in all areas of society filled by women by 2020."^[87]



Indira Gandhi



Pratibha Patil

Lebanon

Lebanese women are considered to have more rights and freedom compared to other women in the Gulf and Middle East. Women in Lebanon are able to dress more liberally and move around with relative ease in certain parts of the country, unlike other countries in the region. Lebanese women enjoy almost equal civil rights as men. However, due to the large number of officially recognized

religions in Lebanon, Lebanese family matters are governed by at least 15 personal statute codes. Lebanese women have legal protection that varies depending on their religion.

Local and regional NGOs have helped to increase awareness of violence against women in Lebanon.^{[88][89]} Government policies regarding this are poor however, and attempts to improve this area have been met with resistance.^[90] Lebanon's laws do not recognize the concept of spousal rape,^[91] and attempts to add this to law have been attacked by Lebanese clerics.^[92]

Netherlands

In 2016, the Dutch government achieved their goal for women in top jobs within the government. A 30% female share was achieved two years earlier than anticipated.^[93]

In business, the amount of women in top jobs is behind on the political sector. In 2013, the listed companies inserted a 'one on three' rule, which meant that of every three top jobs, one must be exerted by a woman. Not long after, it turned out companies did not put effort to achieve this goal, as in practice even less than 1 on every 10 top jobs was occupied by women. The goal for women in top jobs was postponed to 2023. Government and the business sector agreed that if every one in five top jobs is not exerted by women, a 2018 the 30% rule will become mandatory.^[94]

Meanwhile women's quote received a fair share of critique. It has been argued that women should be employed based on their own qualities, not because of their gender.^[94]

Romania

No political gender quotas exist in Romania, however the Equality Act of 2002 provides that public authorities and institutions, political parties, employers' organizations and trade unions must provide an equitable and balanced representation of men and women at all decisional levels.^[95] Following the 2016 elections, women gained only 20.7% of seats in the Lower House (Romanian Chamber of Deputies) and 14.7% in the Upper House (Senate of Romania).^[48] These figures are up from the 4.9% of women in the Romanian Parliament in 1990.^[96] On the other hand, women are well represented in the central public administration, including the Government, with more than half of decision-making positions held by women, according to a 2011 study commissioned by the Ministry of Labor.^[97]

Rwanda

Since the election of 2008, Rwanda is the first country to have a majority of women in legislature.^{[98][99]} Rwanda is an example of a developing country that does not have spectacular gender equality in other aspects of society, but radically increased its female leadership because of national conflict. After the genocide that killed 800,000 Tutsis in 100 days, women in legislature went from 18% women before the conflict to 56% in 2008. Two pieces of legislature enabled and supported women into leadership positions: the Security Council Resolution of 1325 urged women to take part in the post-conflict reconstruction and the 2003 Rwandan Constitution included a mandated quota of 30% reserved seats for all women in legislature. Of the 24 women who gained seats directly after the quota implementation in 2003, many joined political parties and chose to run again. Though it took almost 10 years, after implementing the gender quotas, Rwanda reached levels of female representation which are amongst the highest in the world.^[2] Once again we can see the quota working as an "incubator" for driving women's participation in leadership.

It is argued that the increase of female leadership in Rwanda also led to an increase in gender equality. World Focus (2009) writes, "Rwandan voters have elected women in numbers well beyond the mandates dictated by the post-genocide constitution."^[100] And though women in Rwanda still face discrimination, female legislators have influenced major reforms in banking and property laws."



Lebanese women marching for their rights

A parliamentary women's caucus in Rwanda (FFRP) has also "led a successful effort to pass ground-breaking legislation on gender-based violence in part by involving and garnering support from their male colleagues"^[99].

While some researchers see reform, others see dominant party tactics. Hassim (2009) writes, "It could be argued that in both countries [Uganda and Rwanda] women's representation provided a kind of alibi for the progressive, 'democratic' nature of new governments that at their core nevertheless remained authoritarian, and increasingly so".^[101] Rwanda shows that increased participation by women in democracy is conducive to progress in gender equal legislature and reform, but research must be careful not to immediately relate increased gender equality in politics to increased gender equality in policy

Spain

In 2007, Spain passed the Equality Law, requiring a "principle of balanced presence" by mandating political parties to include 40–60% of each sex among electoral candidates.^[102] This law is unique in that surpasses the 40% parity figure established by the European Commission in 1998; a figure which (according to the EC) indicates "parity democracy." Though there is anecdotal of increasing female representation on a local and national level, there has not yet been national-level data to quantitatively bolster this assertion.

United Kingdom

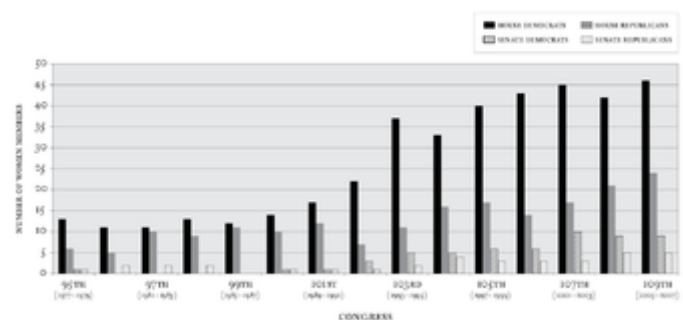
In the United Kingdom, 32% of the lower house, the House of Commons, and 25% of the upper house, the House of Lords, are women which ranks it 40th in the world as of September 2017.^[103] The current government of the United Kingdom includes a number of women ministers in the Cabinet and other government departments. The UK has had two female prime ministers, Margaret Thatcher (1979-1990) and Theresa May (2016-). The UK also has a female head of state Queen Elizabeth II.

United States

In the United States no political gender quotas exist, mandatory or voluntary. The proportion of women in leadership roles in the Senate, House of Representatives, and Presidential positions reflect this. Although the proportion has grown since the first female elected into the Senate,^[104] the current position of women representation in the U.S. is precarious. In the elections of 2012, the greatest number of female incumbents ever were up for re-election in the Senate. Ten female Democrats, six of them incumbents, were nominated, with one Republican nominated for Senate ran for office.^[105] Steinhauer notes that in Congress, both in the Senate and the House of Representatives, women historically and currently lack representation. The results from the 2012 election could greatly affect female representation in the Senate:

"If all or most of the incumbent women prevail in 2012, and even just a few women of the many recruited win new seats, women would reach an all-time high in the Senate. But the loss of just one female Senate seat with no replacements would cost women ground in the Senate for the first time since 1978, when the number of women in the Senate went to one from two".^[105]

*Party Affiliation: Women in Congress, 95th–109th Congresses (1977–2006)**
This chart shows the party breakdown only for women Members for this time period.



*As of August 1, 2006

The number of women in the U.S. Congress (both the House and Senate) from 1977–2006.

With the 2012 elections women Senators could either make the highest percentage of seats or the ~~w~~est proportion since 1978.

The United States is one of the shrinking number of industrialized democracies to not have yet had a woman as its leader. Worldwide, female prime ministers include Canada's Kim Campbell, the UK's Margaret Thatcher, Australia's Julia Gillard, Israel's Golda Meir, and France's Édith Cresson. Other female national leaders include Chancellor Angela Merkel of Germany, President Dilma Rousseff of Brazil, and President Isabel Perón of Argentina. Even Pakistan and Turkey, countries often viewed as particularly male-dominated have had female prime ministers. Therefore, the United States, a country which promotes the rights of women and girls around the world, is conspicuous for having only male presidents.

In popular media in the United States, female politicians see some focus on their appearance; more so than their male counterparts. A 2011 feminist journal by Carlin and Winfrey focuses on the portrayal of female politicians in the media. According to the journal, the way media perceives women and men is very distinct in the language they chose to use. The language chosen to talk or describe other people can either hurt or help them in a political campaign. As a result of women being talked about in sexist terms it can greatly affect her reputation and credibility.^[106] The journal claims the media uses terms that indicative of women not being valued as individuals. "This is especially true when women are described using metaphors that draw on animals, children, or food. Animal terms focus on the appearance and sexuality of young women (foxy), and as women grow older, or are seen as too aggressive, they may be called barracuda, old bat, shrew, or cow."^[106] Females tend to have less issue coverage than males (due to fewer female politicians), but tend to have more coverage on things such as their appearance than male politicians.^[106] Men candidates don't get coverage on what kind of suite they are wearing or who designed it. This is due to innate purpose of the media to appeal to demands of their audiences for sales - in this case the popular female focus on fashion that dominates the media. Studies done on women candidates have shown that women receive more attention in the media for factors such as appearance, clothes, size, and emotional state^[106]. In 2008, campaigns for both Sarah Palin and Hillary Clinton were taken in great interest by fashion articles read mostly by women. The journal claims that Clinton was perceived as masculine and Palin was seen as feminine. "Palin's attractiveness resulted in frequent and varied references to her "sexiness; *whereas, Clinton was viewed as not feminine enough in pantsuits that covered her "cankles* (thick ankles).^[106] Various newspapers covered on how Palin was part of beauty pageants and this really affected the seriousness of her campaign. They took Palin as a joke and various individuals began to state that this was a political campaign and not another beauty pageant. On the other hand Clinton was perceived as a "nut cracker" and "where boners go to die". Clinton's physical appearance and her choice of clothing, pantsuits over skirts and dresses, were the source of considerable ridicule.^[106] Carlin and Winfrey believe that Clinton was not perceived as a sex symbol because she chose to wear pants over skirts, and also because she was older than Palin. Due to the smaller proportion of women who pursue political careers, there is greater pressure on female politicians to succeed. The importance of criticisms about "cankles" and the like on public popularity in a presidential election is disputed. Many think these criticisms are negligible, but Carlin and Winfrey believe this criticisms have a large effect. This analysis done on both Senator Clinton's and Governor Palin's campaign concluded that media coverage had a vast responsibility on how both women were viewed due to their gender stereotypes and language used to "influence the public",^[106] though others argue that the style of media coverage is entirely the result of existing demand by the audience. There was national sample done that concluded that 51% of respondents *believed* that Americans were not ready for a women to be elected into high office.^[107] 40% of those same individuals *believed* that women were still discriminated in all areas in societies including politics.^[107]

In 2015 Rachel Silbermann conducted a study that time spent traveling to and from work is particularly burdensome for those who spend time caring for children, and as women do a majority of the child care and housework, commuting is particularly burdensome to them. Silbermann also found that female students weigh proximity to home twice as heavily as male students do in a hypothetical decision of whether to run for higher office. She suggests that to achieve equal representation of women in government men and women will need to share household responsibilities more equally^[108]

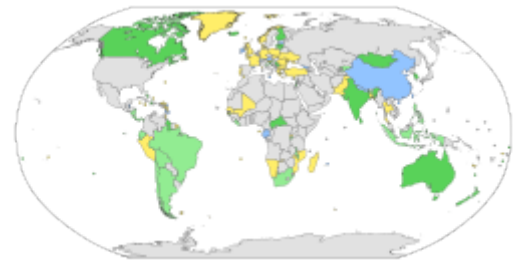
A 2016 study found no evidence that the low share of women in the U.S. House of Representative was due to gender discrimination by voters.^[109] According to the author of the study, "these results suggest that the deficit of female representation in the House is more likely the result of barriers to entering politics as opposed to overt gender discrimination by voters and campaign donors."^[109]

A 2017 study found that over the last decade, public opposition to electing a woman as president was reduced from approximately 26% to 13%.^[110]

Women in government office

Women in government have historically been fewer in numbers in Western societies compared to men. Some women, however, have served as heads of state and government.

Historic firsts for women in government



Map showing countries which since independence have had (counting Governors-General as heads of state, but excluding monarchs):

- Female head of government^[a]
- Female head of state^[b]
- Female head of state/government (combined)
- Female head of state and female head of government

Three former sovereign states (East Germany, Tannu Tuva, and Yugoslavia) have also had a female Head of State or Head of Government

- Khertek Anchimaa-Toka, Tuvan People's Republic(1940–1944): The first female head of state (Chairperson of the Presidium of the Little Khural) of a partially recognized country.
- Sukhbaataryn Yanjmaa, Mongolia (1953–1954): The first female acting head of state (Chairperson of the Presidium of the State Great Khural).
- Sirimavo Bandaranaike Ceylon, now Sri Lanka (1960–1965): The first female prime minister (head of government). She served again 1970–77 and 1994–2000; in total she served for 17 years.
- Golda Meir, Israel (1969–1974): The first female prime minister in the Middle East.
- Indira Gandhi, India (1966–1977): The first female prime minister of a present-day G20 country. She served again 1980–1984.
- Soong Ching-ling, China (1968–1972): The first female acting co-head of state (Co-Chairperson). She later served as Honorary President for 12 days in 1981.
- Isabel Perón, Argentina (1974–1976): The first female president, head of state and head of government.
- Elisabeth Domitien, Central African Republic(1975–1976): The first female prime minister of an African country.
- Margaret Thatcher, United Kingdom(1979–1990): The first female prime minister of a G7/P5 country.
- Vigdís Finnbogadóttir, Iceland (1980–1996): The first democratically directly elected female president. With a presidency of exactly sixteen years, she also remains the longest-serving elected female head of state of any country to date.
- Jeanne Sauvé, Canada (1984–1990): The first female head of state in North America.
- Benazir Bhutto, Pakistan (1988–1990): The first female prime minister of any muslim majority country. She served again 1993–96.
- Kim Campbell, Canada (1993): The first female head of government in North America.
- Lala Shevket, Azerbaijan (1993–1994): The first female Secretary of State.
- Chandrika Kumaratunga, Sri Lanka (1994–2000): The first time that a nation possessed a female president (Chandrika Kumaratunga) and a female prime minister (Sirimavo Bandaranaike) simultaneously. This also marked the first time that a female prime minister (Sirimavo Bandaranaike) directly succeeded another female prime minister (Chandrika Kumaratunga).
- Ruth Perry, Liberia (1996–1997): The first female head of state in Africa. Carmen Pereira of Guinea-Bissau and Sylvie Kinigi of Burundi had previously acted as head of state for 2 days and 101 days respectively.
- Mary McAleese, Ireland (1997–2011): The first time that a female president directly succeeded another female president, Mary Robinson.
- Jóhanna Sigurðardóttir, Iceland (2009–2013): As prime minister, she was the world's first openly lesbian world leader, first female world leader to wed a same-sex partner while in office.
- Elizabeth II, United Kingdom(1952–present): In 2015, she became the longest-reigning queen regnant and female head of state in world history. In 2016, she became the longest currently serving head of state and longest currently reigning monarch.
- Carrie Lam, Hong Kong (2017–present): The first female chief executive of Hong Kong, elected with 777 votes in the 1,194-member Election Committee.

Some of the most prominent female leaders of world powers in recent decades were (listed by name then position):

- Cristina Fernández de Kirchner, President of Argentina
- Corazon Aquino, 11th President of The Philippines
- Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, 14th President of The Philippines
- Indira Gandhi, Prime Minister of India
- Margaret Thatcher, Prime Minister of the United Kingdom

- [Tansu Çiller](#), Prime Minister of Turkey
- [Helen Clark](#), Prime Minister of New Zealand
- [Benazir Bhutto](#), Prime Minister of Pakistan
- [Golda Meir](#), Prime Minister of Israel
- [Angela Merkel](#), Chancellor of Germany
- [Kim Campbell](#), Prime Minister of Canada
- [Julia Gillard](#), Prime Minister of Australia
- [Edith Cresson](#), Prime Minister of France
- [Gro Harlem Brundtland](#), Prime Minister of Norway
- [Pratibha Patil](#), President of India
- [Soong Ching-ling \(AKA Rosamond Soong\)](#), Honorary President of the People's Republic of China
- [Director of the Cultural Revolution Jiang Qing](#), wife of [Mao Zedong](#)
- [Jenny Shipley](#), Prime Minister of New Zealand
- [Megawati Sukarnoputri](#), President of Indonesia

Current women leaders of national governments

The following women leaders are currently in office as either the head of their nation's government or the head of state:

Date term began	Title of office	Name	Country
22 November 2005	Chancellor	Angela Merkel	Germany
16 January 2006	President	Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf	Liberia
6 January 2009	Prime Minister	Sheikh Hasina	Bangladesh (also Prime Minister 1996–2001)
12 July 2009	President	Dalia Grybauskaitė	Lithuania
16 October 2013	Prime Minister	Erna Solberg	Norway
11 March 2014	President	Michelle Bachelet	Chile (also President 2006–2010)
4 April 2014	President	Marie Louise Coleiro Preca	Malta
18 February 2015	President	Kolinda Grabar-Kitarović	Croatia
21 March 2015	Prime Minister	Saara Kuugongelwa	Namibia
5 June 2015	President	Ameenah Gurib	Mauritius
22 August 2015	President	Bidhya Bhandari	Nepal
16 November 2015	Prime Minister	Beata Szydło	Poland
6 April 2016	State Counsellor	Aung San Suu Kyi	Myanmar
20 May 2016	President	Tsai Ing-wen	Taiwan
28 January 2016	President	Hilda Heine	Marshall Islands
13 July 2016	Prime Minister	Theresa May	United Kingdom
10 October 2016	President	Kersti Kaljulaid	Estonia
29 June 2017	Prime Minister	Ana Brnabić	Serbia
14 September 2017	President	Halimah Yacob	Singapore
17 September 2017	Prime Minister	Mercedes Aráoz	Peru
26 October 2017	Prime Minister	Jacinda Ardern	New Zealand
30 November 2017	Prime Minister	Katrín Jakobsdóttir	Iceland

Women as cabinet ministers

Women holding prominent cabinet posts have grown in numbers worldwide during the 20th and 21st centuries, and in recent years have increasingly held the top profile portfolios for their governments in non-traditional areas for women in government, such as national security and defense, finance, revenue and foreign relations.

Ministers of foreign affairs

The following women have held posts in recent years as ministers of foreign relations or the equivalent for their respective national governments:

Date term began	Title of office	Name	Country
1957–03 and 1983–07	<u>Minister of Foreign Affairs</u>	<u>Tahira Tahirova</u>	Azerbaijan
1983–07 and 1983–12	<u>Minister of Foreign Affairs</u>	<u>Sima Eyvazova</u>	Azerbaijan
1983–12 and 1987–12	<u>Minister of Foreign Affairs</u>	<u>Elmira Gafarova</u>	Azerbaijan
1993–07 and 1994–01	<u>Secretary of State</u>	<u>Lala Shevket</u>	Azerbaijan
2007–08 and 2011–	-	<u>Erato Kozakou-Marcoullis</u>	Cyprus
2008–	-	<u>Rosemary Museminali</u>	Rwanda
2008–	-	<u>Carolyn Rodrigues</u>	Guyana
2008	-	<u>Eka Tkeshelashvili</u>	Georgia
2008	-	(Acting) <u>Helen Clark</u>	New Zealand
2008–	-	<u>Maxine McClean</u>	Barbados
2008–	-	<u>Antonella Mularoni</u>	San Marino
2009–13	-	<u>Dipu Moni</u>	Bangladesh
2009	-	<u>Maria Adiato Diallo Nandigna</u>	Guinea-Bissau
2009–13	<u>Secretary of State</u>	<u>Hillary Clinton</u>	United States
2009	-	<u>Patricia Isabel Rodas Baca</u>	Honduras
2009–	-	<u>Aurelia Frick</u>	Liechtenstein
2009–	-	<u>Maite Nkoana-Mashabane</u>	South Africa
2009–11	-	<u>Sujata Koirala</u>	Nepal
2009–11	-	<u>Etta Banda</u>	Malawi
2009–	-	<u>Naha Mint Mouknass</u>	Mauritania
2009–	-	<u>Marie-Michele Rey</u>	Haiti
2009–	-	<u>Louise Mushikiwabo</u>	Rwanda
2010–	-	<u>Baroness Ashton of Upholland</u>	the European Union
2010	-	(Acting) <u>Rasa Juknevičienė</u>	Lithuania
2010–11	<u>Minister of Foreign Affairs</u>	<u>Lene Espersen</u>	Denmark
2010–11	-	<u>Aminatou Maïga Touré</u>	Niger
2010–	-	<u>María Ángela Holguín Cuéllar</u>	Colombia
2010–11	-	(Acting) <u>Vlora Çitaku</u>	Kosovo
2010–	-	<u>Trinidad Jiménez García-Herrera</u>	Spain
2010–11	-	<u>Michèle Alliot-Marie</u>	France
2011–13	-	<u>Hina Rabbani Khar</u>	Pakistan
2011	-	(Acting) <u>Erlinda F. Basilio</u>	Philippines
2011–	-	<u>Yvette Sylla</u>	Madagascar
2013–14	-	<u>Emma Bonino</u>	Italy
2013–	-	<u>Julie Bishop</u>	Australia
2013–	-	<u>Dhunya Maumoon</u>	Maldives
2014–	-	<u>Federica Mogherini</u>	Italy
2014–	<u>Minister of External Affairs</u>	<u>Sushma Swaraj</u>	India
2014–	-	<u>Margot Wallström</u>	Sweden

2014-	-	<u>Retno Marsudi</u>	Indonesia
2015-	-	<u>Susana Malcorra</u>	Argentina

Ministers of defense and national security

The following women have held posts in recent years as ministers of defense, national security or an equivalent for their respective national governments:

Date term began	Title of office	Name	Country
1992–07	Information and Analysis Center of Ministry of Defence	<u>Leyla Yunus</u>	Azerbaijan
2002–04	Minister of Defence	<u>Michelle Bachelet</u>	Chile
2005–10	Minister of Defence	<u>Nilda Garré</u>	Argentina
2006–07	Minister of Defence	<u>Viviane Blanlot Soza</u>	Chile
2006–11	Minister of Defense	<u>Cristina Fontes Lima</u>	Cape Verde
2007–09	Minister of Defence	<u>Vlasta Parkanová</u>	Czech Republic
2007	Minister of Defence	<u>Guadalupe Larriva González</u>	Ecuador
2007	Minister of Defence	<u>Lorena Escudero Durán</u>	Ecuador
2007	(Acting) Minister of Defence	<u>Marina Pendeš</u>	Bosnia and Herzegovina
2007–	Secretary General of Defence with Rank of Minister	<u>Ruth Tapia Roa</u>	Nicaragua
2007	Minister of Defence	<u>Yuriko Koike</u>	Japan
2007–09	Minister of Defence	<u>Cécile Manoro hanta</u>	Madagascar
2008–	Minister of Defence	<u>Carme Chacón i Piqueras</u>	Spain
2008–10	Minister of Defence	<u>Elsa Maria Neto D'Alva Teixeira de Barros Pinto</u>	São Tomé e Príncipe
2008–	Minister of Veterans' Affairs	<u>Judith Collins</u>	New Zealand
2008–	Associate Minister of Defence	<u>Heather Roy</u>	New Zealand
2008–	Minister of Disarmament and Arms Control	<u>Georgina te Heuheu</u>	New Zealand
2008–	Minister of Defence	<u>Ljubica Jelusič</u>	Slovenia
2008–	Minister of Defence	<u>Rasa Juknevičienė</u>	Lithuania
2009–13	Secretary of Homeland Security	<u>Janet Napolitano</u>	United States
2009–12	Minister of Defence and Veterans' Affairs	<u>Lindiwe Nonceba Sisulu</u>	South Africa
2009–11	Minister of Defence	<u>Bidhya Devi Bhandari</u>	Nepal
2009–11	Minister of Defence	<u>Angélique Ngoma</u>	Gabon
2010–2011	Minister of Defence	<u>Gitte Lillelund Bech</u>	Denmark
2010	(Acting) Minister of Defence and Security	<u>Lesego Motsumi</u>	Botswana
2010–13	Minister of Security	<u>Nilda Garré</u>	Argentina
2011	Minister of Defence	<u>María Cecilia Chacón Chacón</u>	Bolivia
2012–	Minister of Defence and Military Veterans	<u>Nosiviwe Mapisa-Nqakula</u>	South Africa
2012–	Minister of Defense	<u>Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert</u>	Netherlands
2013–	Minister of Defence	<u>Mimi Kodheli</u>	Albania
2013–	Minister of Defence	<u>Ine Marie Eriksen Søreide</u>	Norway
2013–15	Minister of Security	<u>María Cecilia Rodríguez</u>	Argentina
2013–	Minister of Defence	<u>Ursula von der Leyen</u>	Germany
2014–	Minister of Defence	<u>Roberta Pinotti</u>	Italy
2015–	Minister of Defence	<u>Marise Payne</u>	Australia

2015–	Minister of Security	<u>Patricia Bullrich</u>	Argentina
2017–	Minister of Defence	<u>Radmila Šekerinska</u>	Republic of Macedonia

Ministers of finance or revenue

The following women have held posts in recent years as ministers of finance, revenue, or an equivalent for their respective national governments:

Date term began	Title of office	Name	Country
1952–07	Minister of Social Security	<u>Zuleykha Seyidmammadova</u>	Azerbaijan
1988–11	Minister of Social Security	<u>Lydia Rasulova</u>	Azerbaijan
1990–91	Minister of Economy	<u>Zélia Cardoso de Mello</u>	Brazil
1990–93	Minister of Finance	<u>Ruth Richardson</u>	New Zealand
1998–02	Minister of Finance	<u>Brigita Schmögnerová</u>	Slovakia
2005–10, 2016–	Minister of Finance	<u>Sri Mulyani Indrawati</u>	Indonesia
2005–07	Minister of Economy and Public Finances	<u>Felisa Miceli</u>	Argentina
2008–11	Minister of Economy and Competitiveness	<u>Fátima Maria Carvalho Fialho</u>	Capo Verde
2008–11	Minister of Finance	<u>Diana Dragutinović</u>	Serbia
2008–	Minister for the National Investment Plan	<u>Verica Kalanović</u>	Serbia
2008	Minister of Finance	<u>Wilma Josefina Salgado Tamayo</u>	Ecuador
2008–	Minister of Finance	<u>María Elsa Mterí Acaiturri</u>	Ecuador
2009–	Minister of Economy	<u>Helena Nosolini Embalo</u>	Guinea-Bissau
2009–	Chairperson of the Council of Economic Advisors	<u>Christina Romer</u>	United States
2009–	Minister of Finance	<u>Clotilde Niragira</u>	Burundi
2009–11	Minister of Finance	<u>Syda Namirembe Bumba</u>	Uganda
2009–11	Government Councillor of Finance and Economy	<u>Sophie Thevenoux</u>	Monaco
2009–	Minister of Finance and Economy	<u>Elena Salgado Méndez</u>	Spain
2009–	Minister of Finance	<u>Ingrida Simonytė</u>	Lithuania
2009–	Minister of Economic Affairs	<u>Michelle Winklaar</u>	Aruba (Dutch External Territory)
2009–11	Minister of Finance	<u>Raya Haffar al-Hassan</u>	Lebanon
2010–11	Minister of Economy	<u>Lamia Assi</u>	Syria
2010–	Minister of Economic Policy	<u>Katiuska Kruskaya King Mantilla</u>	Ecuador
2010–	Chairperson of Economic Planning Council	<u>Christina Y. Liu</u>	Taiwan
2010–	Economic Secretary to the Treasury	<u>Justine Greening</u>	United Kingdom
2010–	Minister of Economic and Stability Development	<u>Vera Kobalia</u>	Georgia
2010–	Minister of Economy	<u>Darja Radić</u>	Slovenia
2010–11	Minister of Finance	<u>Wonníe Boedhoe</u>	Suriname
2010–13	Minister of Finance	<u>Penny Wong</u>	Australia

2010–	Federal Councillor of Finance	<u>Eveline Widmer-Schlumpf</u>	Switzerland
2010–	Minister for Economy	<u>Kim Wilson</u>	Bermuda (British Dependent Territory)
2010	(Acting) Minister of Finance	<u>Elfreda Tamba</u>	Liberia
2010–	Finance Minister	<u>Martina Dalić</u>	Croatia
2011	(Acting) Minister of Finance	<u>Dinara Shaydieva</u>	Kyrgyzstan
2011–	Federal Minister of Finance	<u>Maria Fekter</u>	Austria
2011–	Minister of National Revenue	<u>Gail Shea</u>	Canada
2011–2014	Minister of Finance	<u>Jutta Urpilainen</u>	Finland
2011–	Minister of Budget	<u>Valérie Pécresse</u>	France
2011–	Minister of Economy and Finances	<u>Adidjatou Mathys</u>	Benin
2011–	Minister of Budget, Finances, Taxes, Numeric Economy	<u>Sonia Backès</u>	Nouvelles Calédonie (French External Territory)
2011–	Minister of Finance and Economic Planning	<u>Maria Kiwanuka</u>	Uganda
2011–	Minister of the Treasury	<u>Anne Craine</u>	Isle of Man
2011–2014	Minister of Economy	<u>Margrethe Vestager</u>	Denmark
2012–2013	Minister of Finance	<u>Katrín Júlíusdóttir</u>	Iceland
2013–	Minister of State and Finance	<u>Maria Luís Albuquerque</u>	Portugal
2013–	Minister of Finance	<u>Siv Jensen</u>	Norway
2014–	Minister of Finance	<u>Magdalena Andersson</u>	Sweden

Comparing women's integration into branches of government

Executive branch

Women have been notably in fewer numbers in the executive branch of government. The gender gap has been closing, however, albeit slowly^[11] The first women other than monarchs to hold head of state positions were in socialist countries. The first was Khertek Anchimaa-Toka of the Tuvan People's Republic from 1940–1944, followed by Sükhbaataryn Yanjmaa of the Mongolian People's Republic 1953–1954 and Soong Ching-ling of the People's Republic of China from 1968–1972 and 1981.

Following the socialist countries, the Nordic countries have been forerunners in including women in the executive branch. The second cabinet Brundtland (1986–1989) was historical in that 8 out of 18 cabinet members were women, and in 2007 the second cabinet Stoltenberg (2005–2013) was more than 50% women.

In 2003, Finland had a historical moment when all top leaders of the country were women and also represented different political parties: Social democrat Tarja Halonen was President, Riitta Uosukainen from National Coalition Party was Speaker of the Parliament and after the parliamentary elections of 2003 Anneli Jäätteenmäki from Center party was on her way to become the first female Prime Minister of Finland. By June 22, 2010 Mari Kiviniemi of the Centre Party was appointed the second female Prime Minister of Finland

Between 2007 and 2011 the Finnish cabinet was 60% female, with a female Prime Minister from 2010 to 2011. Between 2014 and 2015 the Finnish cabinet was 59% female.

The present Danish government is a coalition between the Social Democrats, the Social-Liberal Party and the Socialist People's Party All three parties have female leaders. Helle Thorning-Schmidt is Prime Minister^[111]

The world's first elected female president was Vigdís Finnbogadóttir of Iceland, whose term lasted from 1980 to 1996.

In 2005, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf of Liberia became Africa's first elected female head of state.

Legislative branch

It was not until World War I and the first socialist revolutions that the first few women became members of governments. Alexandra Kollontai became the first female to hold a minister position, as the People's Commissar for Social Welfare in Soviet Russia in 1917.^[112] Nina Bang, Danish Minister of Education from 1924–26, was the world's second full female cabinet minister

The first female head of government was Evgenia Bosh, the Bolshevik military leader who held the People's Secretary of Internal Affairs position in the Ukraine People's Republic of the Soviets of Workers and Peasants from 1917–1918, which was responsible for executive functions.^{[113][114][115]} Nevertheless, development was slow and it was not until the end of the 20th century that female ministers stopped being unusual.

The first government organization formed with the goal of women's equality was the Zhenotdel, in Soviet Russia.

According to a 2006 report by the Inter-Parliamentary Union, 16% of all parliament members in the world are female. In 1995, the United Nations set a goal of 30% female representation.^[116] The current annual growth rate of women in national parliaments is about 0.5% worldwide. At this rate, gender parity in national legislatures will not be achieved until 2068.^[4]

The top ten countries in terms of number of female parliamentary members are Rwanda with 56.3%, Sweden (47.0%), Cuba (43.2%), Finland (41.5%), the Netherlands (41.3%), Argentina (40.0%), Denmark (38.0%), Angola (37.3%), Costa Rica (36.8%), Spain (36.3%).^[117] As of 30 August 2008 Cuba has the highest percentage for countries without a quota. In South Asia, Nepal is highest in the rank of women participation in politics with (33%).^[118] Among East Asian countries, Taiwan has the highest percentage of women in Parliament (38.0%). In the United States in 2008, the New Hampshire State Senate became the first state legislature upper house to possess an elected female majority

The United Kingdom and United States are roughly in line with the world average. The House of Lords has 139 women (19.7%), while there are 125 women (19.4%) in the House of Commons of the United Kingdom

On November 6, 2012, New Hampshire made US History by having all-female congressional delegation to Congress with Annie Kuster being elected to represent New Hampshire's 2nd congressional district in the House of Representatives, Carol Shea-Porter regained her House seat to represent New Hampshire's 1st congressional district in the House of Representatives, and with Jeanne Shaheen and Kelly Ayotte both represented New Hampshire in the United States senate.^[119]

On November 8, 2016, New Hampshire again made US History by having an all-female, all-Democratic delegation to the US Congress. Incumbent Republican senator, Kelly Ayotte, was defeated by then-New Hampshire Governor, Maggie Hassan, a Democrat, in the senate election to serve alongside Democratic senator, Jeanne Shaheen. Representative Carol Shea-Porter, a Democrat, defeated incumbent representative, Frank Guinta, a Republican, again in New Hampshire's 1st congressional district to serve alongside Ann Kuster, who represents New Hampshire 2nd congressional district in the House of Representatives to achieve another historic "women's first".^[120]

Local representation

There has been an increasing focus on women's representation at a local level.^[6] Most of this research is focused on developing countries. Governmental decentralization often results in local government structures that are more open to the participation of women, both as elected local councilors and as the clients of local government services.^[11] A 2003 survey conducted by United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG), a global network supporting inclusive local governments, found that the average proportion of women in local council was 15%. In leadership positions, the proportion of women was lower: for instance, 5% of mayors of Latin American municipalities are women.

According to a comparative study of women in local governments in East Asia and the Pacific, women have been more successful in reaching decision-making position in local governments than at the national level.^[4] Local governments tend to be more accessible and have more available positions. Also, women's role in local governments may be more accepted because they are seen as an extension of their involvement in the community

Indian panchayats

The local panchayat system in India provides an example of women's representation at the local governmental level.^[6] The 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments in 1992 mandated panchayat elections throughout the country. The reforms reserved 33% of the seats for women and for castes and tribes proportional to their population. Over 700,000 women were elected after the reforms were implemented in April 1993.

See also

- [European countries by percentage of women in national parliaments](#)
- [List of the first female holders of political offices](#)
- [List of elected or appointed female heads of state](#)
- [List of elected or appointed female deputy heads of government](#)
- [Council of Women World Leaders](#)
- [Women in positions of power](#)
- [Critical mass \(gender politics\)](#)
- [Women in Parliaments Global Forum](#)
- [Women in the House of Commons of the United Kingdom](#)
- [Women in the House of Lords](#)

Notes

- Although the Peruvian constitution and the government itself state that the President is the Head of Government,^{[121][122]} other sources name the President of the Council of Ministers as the head of government.^[123]
- Including female representatives of heads of state, such as [Governors-General](#) and [French Representatives of Andorra](#)

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External links

- "Raising Female Leaders" J-FAL Policy Briefcase, April 2012
- Centre for Advancement of Women in politics (Queens University Belfast)
- Current female leaders
- *Political Women* (Vol. 1 of 2) by Sutherland Menzies (fl. 1840–1883)
- Women in the labyrinths of working life and power, Nordic Labour Journal, March 8, 2013

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