

Women's Political Engagement

G+W Factsheet

State of Women's Political Participation

Global

- One in four of all parliamentary seats are held by women. [UN Women](#)
- Women hold 36 percent of elected seats in local deliberative bodies. [UN Women](#)
- Only 14 countries have at least 50 percent women in their cabinets. [UN Women](#)
- With the current pace, it is estimated that it will take 95 years to close the political empowerment gender gap. [WEF](#)
- Fifty-three percent of men and 43 percent of women believe men make better political leaders than women. [UN Women](#)
- Female politicians constantly face violence, harassment, threats and attacks. The full extent of this has not yet been quantified on a global scale. However, in 2015, the UN has recorded and verified 187 killings of female human rights defenders, journalists and trade unions. [UN Women](#)

Women in Parliament, 25 years review since the declaration of the Beijing Platform of Action (1995 – 2020) [IPU](#)

- The overall percentage of women in parliaments has more than doubled, increasing from 11.3 percent in 1995 to 24.9 percent in 2020.
- The percentage of seats held by women in lower and single houses of parliament increased from 11.6 in 1995 to 24.9 percent in 2020, whereas in upper houses, it increased significantly from 9.4 to 24.6 percent.
- No parliament had reached gender parity in 1995. In 2020, there are four countries with at least 50 percent women in their lower or single chambers, with Rwanda taking the lead with over 60 percent seats held by women.
- Over the last 25 years, gender quotas have been a key determinant of progress in women's political participation. Out of the top 20 countries with the largest share of women in parliament in 2020, 16 apply some type of gender quota. Other factors include strong women's movements, awareness-raising efforts and policies that promote women's recruitment by political parties.

United States of America

- Currently, 127 women out of 535 members serve in the U.S. Congress (26 in the Senate and 101 in the House of Representatives). Out of these 127 women, 47 are women of color: 22 Black; 13 Latina, 8 Asian American/Pacific Islander, 2 Native Americans, 1 Middle Eastern/North African, and 1 multiracial. [CAWP](#)
- There are 90 women serving in statewide elective executive offices out of 311 seats, 16 of which are women of color. [CAWP](#)
- As of 2019, there were 27 women mayors among the 100 largest cities in the US; 7 are Black, 1 is Latina, and 2 are Asian Pacific Islanders. [CAWP](#)

Benefits of Women's Political Participation

- Evidence shows when women take hold of political spaces and power, they tend to champion issues of gender equality and advocate for social issues that benefit all; resolve the national crisis without resorting to violence and ensure reform of discriminatory laws and allocate budgets to health and education. [UN Women](#)

Gender Quotas

- Well-designed quotas lead to significantly more women MPs (members of parliament). [IPU](#)
- In the 2019 elections, women gained 30% of parliamentary seats in countries with quotas, compared to 18% in countries without a quota. [UN Women](#)
- Simply mandating quotas without the proper mechanisms or sanctions in place to implement and sustain change often fails. [UN Women](#)

Women's Voting Rights

- The first country to grant women the right to vote was New Zealand after years of campaigning. [Historic Newspapers](#)
- In the U.S., the 19th amendment granted women the right to vote in August 1920. However, this amendment mostly benefited white, middle, and upper-class women. [SPLC](#) Many Native American women were excluded from voting until the Indian Citizenship Act of 1924, some states and localities still passed laws effectively barring Natives from voting until the late 1940s. Barriers to voting for Asian Americans were removed around the late 1940s and 1950s. Black women were not able to fully exercise their right to vote until the Voting Rights Act of 1965 due to poll taxes, literacy tests, intimidation, and violence prevalent in the segregated South. Barriers to black voting still exist today. [WVCI](#)
- During the declaration of the Beijing Platform of Action in 1995, women in Palestine, Qatar, Oman, Kuwait, United Arab Emirates, and Saudi Arabia did not yet have the right to vote. [Historic Newspapers](#)
- Saudi Arabia is the most recent country to grant women the right to vote in 2015. [Historic Newspapers](#)