

Equality in Politics ● An Overview of Key Findings

A Survey of Women and Men in Parliaments



Inter-Parliamentary Union

FINDING 1 Women face greater obstacles entering politics

Prejudice and cultural perceptions about the role of women, together with a lack of financial resources, are among the greatest obstacles to women entering politics. For male respondents, perceived lack of support from the electorate is the most important deterrent. Women parliamentarians cite domestic responsibilities as the greatest impediment to a life in politics, which is a far less significant challenge for men.

FINDING 2 Women bring different views, perspectives and talents to politics

More than 90 percent of all respondents, male and female, agree that women bring different views, perspectives and talents to politics. Women lead efforts to combat gender-based violence and to ensure that issues such as parental leave, childcare, pensions, gender-equity laws and electoral reforms that enhance women's access to parliament appear on the legislative agenda. While most women feel that they have a responsibility to represent women, some emphasize that they also advocate on behalf of the wider community, moving beyond what is perceived as a women's agenda to contribute to a broad range of political discussions.

FINDING 3 Numbers do matter

Two-thirds of respondents say there are not enough women serving on their parliament's committees. Fewer women means less influence by women and less progress on gender equality within parliament, and on incorporating their perspective in the work of *all* committees, whether they are dedicated to issues of gender equality and the status of women, or other concerns, such as finance, national security and foreign affairs.

1. Top 5 factors that deter men and women from entering politics

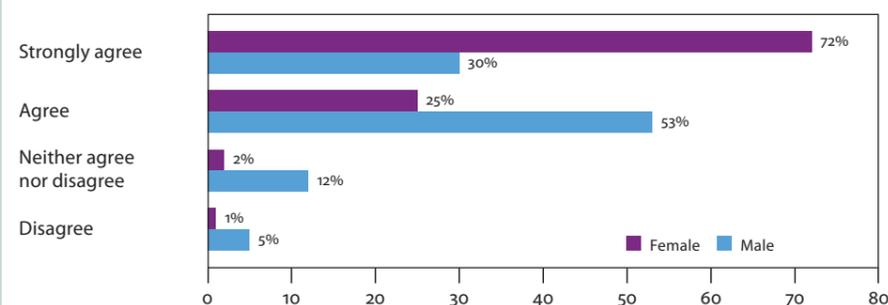
Deterrents for women

- Domestic responsibilities
- Prevailing cultural attitudes regarding the roles of women in society
- Lack of support from family
- Lack of confidence
- Lack of finances

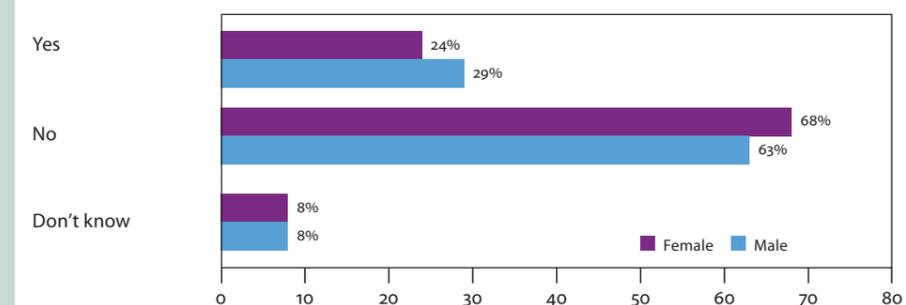
Deterrents for men

- Lack of support from the electorate
- Lack of finances
- Lack of support of political parties
- Lack of experience in "representative functions": public speaking, constituency relations
- Lack of confidence

2. Women bring different views, perspectives and talents to politics



3. Do a sufficient number of women serve on your parliamentary committees?



4. Policy areas in which men and women are most active

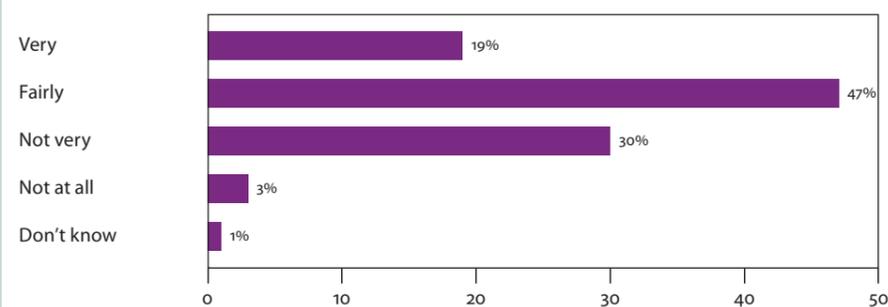
Among women respondents

- Women's issues
- Gender equality matters
- Social and community matters
- Family-related matters
- Education
- Health care
- Foreign affairs

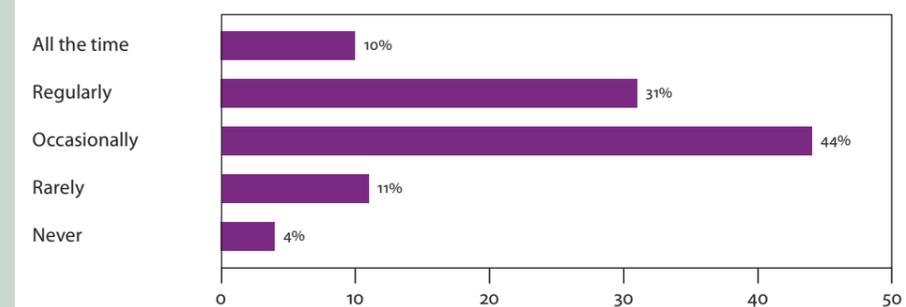
Among male respondents

- Foreign affairs
- Economic and trade matters
- Education
- Justice and constitutional matters
- Social and community matters
- Infrastructure and development
- Public administration

5. Are women well represented in the policy making bodies of your political party?



6. How regularly is gender mainstreamed into the work of parliament?



FINDING 4 Women and men prioritize differently

Male and female respondents who participated in the survey identify themselves as engaged in different policy areas.

- Men claim to be most active in foreign affairs, economic and trade issues, education and constitutional affairs, while they report low levels of activity in gender equality, labour and women's issues.
- Among women, the reverse is true: nearly half of all women respondents note that they are very active on women's issues and gender-equality matters, but less active in economic and trade matters, finance and defence.

FINDING 5 Political parties matter

Political parties are important arenas for policy development and for setting political priorities, and are therefore one of key institutions through which gender equality should be promoted. However, far from all political parties that promote gender equality uphold their manifesto pledges in practice, and women are not sufficiently represented in the policy-making bodies of political parties. This research found the support of the ruling party to be the most important factor in introducing and enacting gender-related legislation, making change at this level is vital.

FINDING 6 Parliaments are not gender-sensitive institutions

More than half the respondents believe that gender equality is only "occasionally" or "rarely" mainstreamed in parliament. While there have been sporadic attempts to modernize some parliaments, by and large much more needs to be done to improve the gender sensitivity of parliaments by changing cultural mores and modernizing working arrangements to accommodate the specific needs of parliamentarians. Gender equality should be one of the measures of institutional performance of parliaments.